

Chapter 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Overview

In May 2011, the Review of the National Partnership on Homelessness (NPAH) Working Group (the Working Group) was established to undertake a mid-term review of the NPAH. The objectives of the review were broadly to provide an assessment of progress towards the achievement of the outcomes of the agreement; address the performance reporting issues identified by a review by the Heads of Commonwealth and State Treasuries (HoTs) and in reports by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Reform Council; and to review the NPAH performance framework.¹

The NPAH was agreed in late 2008, committing resources of \$1.1 billion by the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments to address homelessness.

The NPAH is designed to contribute to the following outcomes:

- fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough;
- fewer people will become homeless more than once;
- people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation; and
- people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing.

The review was undertaken by representatives of Commonwealth and State and Territory First Ministers' Departments, Treasuries and line agencies with responsibilities related to homelessness, supported by data agencies².

In assessing progress against outcomes, the Working Group considered the jurisdictions' NPAH annual reports (the Annual Reports) and additional material on effective strategies, reviewed available data and publications on homelessness and consulted key community stakeholders with expertise in homelessness.

The Working Group analysed each of the performance indicators in the current NPAH performance reporting framework³ according to the HoTs conceptual framework⁴, considered the effectiveness of each indicator in measuring the targets of the NPAH and deliberated on the policy justifications for particular indicators.

In light of the National Disability Strategy and the Closing the Gap strategy, the Working Group was also asked to give separate consideration in this review to outcomes for people with disability and Indigenous Australians. In arriving at its recommendations for a revised performance reporting framework, the Working Group considered whether particular indicators could be disaggregated by Indigenous status and disability, as well as age and gender.

¹ The Terms of Reference of the NPAH review are Appendix 1

² Members of the NPAH Working Group are listed at Appendix 2

³ Provided at Appendix 3

⁴ http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/performance_reporting/conceptual_framework_performance_reporting_feb_11.pdf

For each indicator, a judgement was made as to whether there was sufficient justification for its retention and, if so, whether it should be revised to make it more effective. Consideration was also given to the introduction of new performance indicators. The appropriateness of the current benchmarks for the indicators was also considered.

Finally, the Working Group undertook cost benefit analyses of both its proposed changes to the performance reporting framework and of an alternative option to develop data that would enable robust measurement and reporting of the homeless population.

1.2 Structure of the Report

This report comprises five chapters. Chapter 2 provides the background and context for the commissioning of the report, including information on the National NPAH and where the agreement fits in the context of the COAG, HoTs Review, and the role of the COAG Reform Council (CRC).

Chapter 3 reports on progress to date against the stated outcomes of the NPAH. It also examines the NPAH's contributions to these outcomes and lessons learnt. Chapter 4 examines factors outside the NPAH which may have contributed to NPAH outcomes, including national investment outside the NPAH and economic and social factors that may have contributed to changes in homelessness over the life of the NPAH. Findings from consultations with stakeholders are used to provide further insight.

Chapter 5 includes an analysis of the NPAH's 11 performance indicators using the HoTs conceptual framework and an assessment of the conceptual and data robustness of each indicator and the role that each indicator plays in measuring the targets of the NPAH. The recommendations of the CRC's *National Partnership Agreement: Early Assessment of Progress* are addressed, as well as the relative costs and benefits of two options for revising the performance reporting framework. A revised performance framework for the NPAH is proposed.

1.3 Findings and recommendations

The review found some evidence of progress towards NPAH outcomes from survey data and stakeholder consultations, with indications that homelessness is reducing or at least stabilising and that improved access to services and to housing has been achieved during the course of the agreement.

However, the NPAH is only one part of a complex service system and it is difficult to attribute causality for progress against outcomes. For example, the increased access to social housing associated with the completion of stock under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (the Stimulus Plan)⁵ was identified by a number of stakeholders as a significant factor contributing to progress against NPAH outcomes.

Nevertheless, information from jurisdictions and consultations with stakeholders indicate that investment under the NPAH has funded considerable assistance to

⁵ <http://www.economicstimulusplan.gov.au/housing/pages/default.aspx>

homeless clients and improved coordination of services. The NPAH has generally been seen as a useful mechanism for delivering a range of new programs and services in response to different localised needs and challenges and has allowed jurisdictions to address key service gaps.

Improved collaboration between service providers and government agencies, as well as improved coordination among government agencies, has been noted by many jurisdictions and stakeholders as an important feature of the NPAH.

Planning has also been important, particularly the use of jurisdictions' Implementation Plans and their continual improvement through an annual review process, and the development of linked state and regional plans to ensure a better connected service system.

Through the NPAH, the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments have signalled the importance of homelessness to their reform agenda. This has been effective in raising the profile of homelessness in mainstream services and the wider community and contributing to the overall effort to address homelessness.

It is difficult to assess whether the NPAH is on track to meet its 2013 targets, in part because of the data deficiencies and partly because 2010-11 data is not yet available. There was no evaluative material available to the Working Group at the time of the review to confirm the success of funded projects in reducing homelessness and the Annual Reports do not explicitly identify contributions to NPAH outcomes.

A number of jurisdictions have commenced evaluations of NPAH initiatives which will provide further evidence regarding the effectiveness of NPAH service models and could assist any future review with attribution of outcomes and assessment of the longer-term impact of NPAH investments. The availability of data from the 2011 Census of Population and Housing (the Census) in 2012 and the need to consider whether, and in what form, specific investment for homelessness should be continued, would make a further examination of outcomes in 2012 timely.

1.4 Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Given the current gaps in data availability, a further stock of progress should be undertaken in 2012. Attention should be given to ensuring that there is as much information as possible on outcomes of investment, including through the NPAH Annual Reports, evaluations and performance indicators, to help inform decisions on appropriate arrangements following the termination of the NPAH in June 2013.

Recommendation 2

Consideration should be given to including a high-level summary of progress against outcomes in 2011-12 Annual Reports.

Recommendation 3

Mechanisms for assessing and reporting progress against outcomes should be considered at the development phase of any future agreement following the NPAH.

1.2. Performance reporting framework – findings and recommendations

1.2.2 Findings

The Working Group's analysis identified two broad categories of indicators: broad indicators of population change reliant on census data and indicators relying on proxy measures relating to service users to assess performance. Some performance indicators were found to suffer from data limitations and/or conceptual issues that prevented adequate measures of performance. The analysis further identified a range of progress measures that may assist in evaluating jurisdictions' performance against the targets.

The Working Group considered that the indicators that related to key homeless population groups should be retained, in recognition of the impact that concerted government action for these groups is likely to make in reducing the overall level of homelessness. For these indicators, proxy performance measures, based on specialist homelessness services data, were identified to be used as long-term proxy measures from 2011-12, since whole-of-population data are not expected to be available during the life of the NPAH for most indicators.

To remove ambiguity, the Working Group felt that all performance indicators (PIs) should be expressed in terms of proportions, rather than numbers and differences in expressions should be standardised, including removing references to increases or reductions in the performance indicator descriptor.

The Working Group also considered the appropriateness of current benchmarks and proposed that where a benchmark is not recommended for a particular indicator, outcomes be monitored to enable a basis for future benchmarking.

In addition, the Working Group found that wherever possible indicators should be disaggregated by Indigenous status and disability, as well as age and gender.

1.2.3 Recommendations

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that Performance Indicators (PI) 8, 10 and 11 be removed from the Performance Indicator Framework of the NPAH, due to either the difficulty of obtaining data (PI8) or weak links with outcomes (PI 10 and 11).

Recommendation 5

In recognition of the importance of addressing Indigenous homelessness, it is recommended that the following PIs be added to the Performance Reporting Framework of the NPAH:

- The proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless; and
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping).

Recommendation 6

The following PIs in the current Performance Reporting Framework of the NPAH be revised to read as follows:

- PI 3 – *The proportion of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence;*
- PI 4 – *The proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing*

- *PI 5 – The proportion of people in social housing and private rental who are supported to maintain or secure sustainable housing*
- *PI 7 – Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, school or work*
- *PI 9 – The proportion of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive case management*

Recommendation 7

The performance measures and benchmarks associated with the performance indicators in recommendations 4-6 above be revised as shown in the table below. The rationale for these recommended measures and benchmarks is detailed in Chapter 5 of this report.

Revised Number	Performance Indicator	Performance Measure	Baseline/ Data Source	Performance Benchmark
Performance Indicator 1	Proportion of Australians who are homeless	Proportion of Australians who are homeless	2006 Census (baseline)/ 2011 Census	7 per cent reduction in the number of homeless Australians by 2013.
Performance Indicator 2	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless	2006 Census (baseline)/ 2011 Census	33.3 per cent reduction in the number of Indigenous homeless Australians by 2013.
Performance Indicator 3	Proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping).	Proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)	2006 Census (baseline)/ 2011 Census	25 per cent reduction in the number of rough sleepers by 2013.
Performance Indicator 4	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping).	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)	2006 Census (baseline)/ 2011 Census	Preferred direction: decrease
Performance Indicator 5	Proportion of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence	Proportion of clients accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing following family violence	2011-12 to 2012-13 /SHS	Preferred direction: increase.
Performance Indicator 6	Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing	Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings accessing specialist homelessness services who secure sustainable housing	2011-12 to 2012-13 /SHS	Preferred direction: increase.
Performance Indicator 7	Proportion of people in social housing and private rental who are supported to maintain or secure sustainable housing	Proportion of people in social housing and private rental and accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing	2011-12 to 2012-13/ SHS	Preferred direction: increase.
Performance Indicator 8	Proportion of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness	Proportion of people accessing specialist homelessness services who experience repeat periods of homelessness	2007-08 SAAP (baseline)/ 2008-09 to 2010-11 SAAP; 2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS	25 per cent reduction in the number of people experiencing three repeat periods of homelessness at an emergency service in 12 months by 2013.
Performance Indicator 9	Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, school or	Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) accessing specialist homelessness services who get support to access education, training or	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS	Preferred direction: increase.

	work	employment services		
Performance Indicator 10	Proportion of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive case management	Proportion of specialist homelessness services case managed clients with goals achieved	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS	Preferred direction: increase.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

At its meeting of 13 February 2011, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed that the underlying reform principles of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations continue to provide a strong foundation for progressing COAG's agreed reform agenda and for achieving better policy and service delivery outcomes for all Australians.

COAG also agreed to the key recommendations from the Heads of Treasuries (HoTs) review¹ and the COAG Reform Council (CRC) reports² and to make improvements to the governance and performance reporting frameworks under the six National Agreements.

The HoTs Review and CRC Recommendations Implementation Steering Group (the Steering Group) was subsequently established. The Steering Group tasked each of six Working Groups, comprising senior officials from First Ministers' Departments, Treasuries and relevant portfolio agencies, to undertake reviews of agreements to improve performance information and public accountability. The review of the National Partnership on Homelessness (NPAH) was also to bring forward the mid-term review of the NPAH, which was defined under paragraph 45 of the NPAH as reviewing progress in achieving agreed outcomes and any issues regarding the agreement, the Plan and performance monitoring.

In May 2011, the Review Working Group (the Working Group) was established. The broad objectives of the review were to:

- provide an assessment of progress towards the achievement of the outcomes of the agreement;
- address the performance reporting issues identified by the HoTs review and CRC reports; and
- review the NPAH performance framework, using the conceptual framework developed by the HoTs Review.

The Working Group was originally to report to the Steering Group by 31 August 2011. Following agreement by COAG, the deadline for reporting was subsequently extended until November 2011, to allow for the 2010-11 State and Territory Governments' NPAH annual reports to be considered in the review.

The Working Group held its first meeting on 13 May 2011 at which the terms of reference were agreed³ and a work plan developed. The group met a total of x times over a period of six months - the final meeting being held on 10 November 2011.

¹ Heads of Treasuries, Report of the Review of National Agreements, National Partnerships and Implementation Plans under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations, December 2010

² reference

³ The Terms of Reference of the NPAH review are Appendix 1

2.2 The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

The NPAH was agreed in late 2008, providing funding to the State and Territory Governments to support homelessness initiatives that focused on prevention, early intervention and breaking the cycle of homelessness through a better connected service system. Further detail of funding and key strategies and reforms is provided in Chapter 3.

The NPAH is designed to contribute to the following four outcomes:

1. Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough.
2. Fewer people will become homeless more than once.
3. People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation.
4. People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing.

Particular focus is placed on rough sleepers; people experiencing homelessness more than once; people escaping violence especially women and children; children and young people including those exiting care and protection; Indigenous people; and people exiting social housing and institutional care.⁴

2.3 The COAG Reform Council

The CRC assesses and publicly reports on the performance of governments against the objectives, outcomes and indicators of National Agreements. The Council reported in July 2010 on an early assessment of progress by jurisdictions under the NPAH.⁵

In its report, the CRC highlighted concerns relating to data limitations and proposed recommendations to improve the performance reporting framework. The CRC concluded that some data are reported infrequently, such as through the Census of Population and Housing (the Census) on a five year reporting cycle. This makes it difficult to measure annual progress. For this reason the NPAH includes a range of proxy indicators that aim to allow progress to be assessed in the years in which the targets cannot be directly measured.

On the performance reporting framework, the CRC found that:

- the performance indicators as currently set out in the agreement—with the exception of the three population indicators that utilise data from the Census—cannot be reported against; and
- the performance reporting framework is incomplete and, despite substantial data development efforts underway, it is likely to remain so for the life of the agreement.

⁴ NPAH, Paragraph 4,

⁵ CRC, National Partnership Agreement: Early Assessment of Progress, provided at Appendix 4

2.4 The Heads of Treasuries (HoTs) Review

In December 2009, COAG requested HoTs undertake a review of the implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations. In considering the effectiveness of the performance frameworks of the existing National Partnerships, the HoTs Review⁶ identified data limitations and conceptual inadequacy as the two broad issues affecting the efficacy of performance indicators.

The review noted that data limitations include data that: is of poor quality, is unreliable or infrequent; is not comparable over time or between jurisdictions; and cannot be sufficiently disaggregated by Indigenous or socio-economic status. It concluded that indicators with data limitations are problematic where they do not provide sufficient information to allow an assessment of progress against the outcomes of the agreement.

In relation to conceptual adequacy, the HoTs Review concluded that to be a useful measure, a performance indicator should be clearly and logically linked to the outcome and these links should be evident to the general public. In addition, a performance indicator must detect a real change in the outcome over time, and a shared understanding of the direction of change that represents progress is required.

⁶ Heads of Treasuries, Report of the Review of National Agreements, National Partnerships and Implementation Plans under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations, December 2010 unpublished

Chapter 3

PERFORMANCE AGAINST OUTCOMES

3.1 Overview

This chapter considers the available evidence on progress towards outcomes of the NPAH and assesses the extent to which the initiatives and strategies funded under the NPAH may have impacted on homelessness.

Section 3.2 examines relevant available ancillary and qualitative data to draw some tentative conclusions about progress that has been made towards meeting the NPAH outcomes. Section 3.3 examines key outputs across jurisdictions and progress under NPAH in implementing reforms to the homelessness service systems. Section 3.4 draws together some of the lessons learnt at the mid-way point of the NPAH and suggests opportunities going forward.

3.2 Assessing overall progress towards achievement of outcomes

Data required to comprehensively measure the progress made towards achieving the four NPAH outcomes is not available.

The COAG Reform Council report on the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness: Early Assessment of Progress identified a number of key data gaps that have impacted on capacity to measure the outcomes specified in the agreement, as outlined below:

- there is a lack of longitudinal data on housing and socio-economic outcomes for homeless and at risk populations;
- ABS Census of Population and Housing data (2011) and the homelessness estimates that rely on this data are not currently available to assess population indicators and interim targets;
- the 2011 census data does not align with the performance benchmark year of 2013. Some of the initiative and reforms under the NPAH may not have reached sufficient maturity by 2011 to assess their full impact; and
- caveats are also required regarding attribution and causation. Population indicators may be influenced by a range of other investments and external factors, such the global financial crisis, unemployment and housing affordability trends. Some of these issues and trends are discussed further in Chapter 4.

However, significant work is currently occurring across government to address these gaps and enhance data collection and the range of evidence available to assess outcomes, including:

- the commencement of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection¹;
- research projects funded under the National Homelessness Research Strategy; and
- evaluations of key NPAH initiatives across a number of jurisdictions.

¹ The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) developed a new national Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Data Collection in conjunction with the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, which commenced on 1 July 2011. The new collection replaces the current Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) data collection. The scope of the SHS Collection includes specialist homelessness providers funded under the NPAH or NPAH.

In the meantime, much of the evidence base used by the Working Group to assess the effectiveness of the NPAH to date was built by accumulating qualitative and anecdotal evidence and using relevant proxy and ancillary data to complement the scarce direct data sources currently available.

3.2.1 Ancillary data sources

Analysis of quantitative ancillary data suggests some desired improvements as a result of funded programs under the NPAH and other joint efforts of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments.

Summarised below are the findings from trend analysis of such data, sourced from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection; capital city street counts of rough sleepers; public housing tenant and state-owned managed Indigenous housing data; and data derived from the Centrelink Homelessness flag². A more detailed analysis by outcome measure is then provided.

In summary, these data suggest:

- a slow-down or turn-around in the trend of increasing homelessness and rough sleeping;
- emergency accommodation is better able to meet daily demand and fewer people are being turned away into potential primary homelessness;
- repeat homelessness is dropping and there is a trend towards better continuity of support for emergency accommodation clients;
- there has also been slight but continuous increases in the proportion of emergency accommodation clients receiving financial/employment services, personal support and case management;
- more households in greatest need were allocated public housing and sustained their tenancy for more than 12 months; and
- SAAP intervention has helped clients who are leaving social housing or private rental and are at risk of homelessness from progressing to full homelessness.

Outcome: Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough

Progress towards this key outcome is measured by a reduction in the total numbers of homeless people and rough sleepers over time. Such complete counts have not been available in the inter-censal years between 2006 and 2011. However, early trends based on SAAP client and demand data and a small number of other data sources seem to suggest a slow-down or turn-around in the trend of increasing homelessness and rough sleeping. One or two more years of data are required to confirm these early positive signs.

A large increase in the number of homeless people would usually result in a higher demand for crisis or SAAP accommodation. However, this was not observed post NPAH implementation. The estimated daily turn-away rate for those seeking or continuing in SAAP accommodation has declined steadily from around three per cent in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to 2.4 per cent in 2009-10, a reduction of 20 per cent (see Figure 1, Appendix 5). This suggests that post NPAH implementation, SAAP

² Introduced in January 2010, the homelessness flag alerts Centrelink staff to a customer's vulnerable circumstances, and prompts the staff member to provide flexible servicing options.

accommodation is better able to meet daily demand and fewer people are being turned away into potential primary homelessness.

Additional early evidence for a declining incidence of primary homelessness is provided by the percentage of SAAP 'support periods' following an episode of improvised dwelling/sleeping rough (see Figure 2, Appendix 5). Over the three years prior to NPAH implementation there were increasing levels of improvised dwelling/rough sleeper identification before support, reaching a maximum of 10.8 per cent in 2008-09. Post NPAH implementation, in 2009-10 the level had declined to 10.7 per cent.

Over the last few years, the local councils of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, and the Government of South Australia have been conducting regular street counts of rough sleepers. Although the data for different locations are not comparable and may not be in line with other research findings, the street counts in each city have indicated downward or stabilising trends in rough sleepers over time (see Figure 3, Appendix 5).

In January 2010, Centrelink introduced a homelessness flag which supports the delivery system by alerting staff to a customer's vulnerable circumstances, and prompts the staff member to provide flexible servicing options when the person comes into contact with Centrelink. Over the first 18 months, the point-in-time count of customers with a flag steadily increased to stabilise at about 48,500 in June 2011. Over time, it is expected to become an increasingly valuable indicator of flows into and out of homelessness.

Outcome: Fewer people will become homeless more than once

No data are available to measure the number of people in the total population experiencing repeat homelessness. Instead, the COAG Reform Council (CRC) has adopted a proxy measure, using the proportion of clients of a SAAP agency who were identified by an agency worker as needing accommodation support more than once in a 12-month period. A key limitation of this is that it only captures those people who accessed SAAP services, whereas the ability to identify repeat need is likely to be influenced by the availability and nature of the services provided within a jurisdiction. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to expect the experience of SAAP clients would reflect any significant increase/decrease in repeat homelessness in the total population.

The trend in the SAAP proxy measure from 2006-07 to 2009-10 shows some progress towards this outcome, with repeat homelessness dropping from 10.4 per cent of clients and children with an identified accommodation need in 2006-07 to 8.5 per cent in 2009-10 (see Figure 4, Appendix 5). Although this is a relative measure using limited data, it does indicate a trend towards better continuity of support for SAAP clients.

Outcome: People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation

No data are available to directly assess connections with families and communities. However, some insight into this outcome is provided by SAAP proxy measures (see

Figure 5, Appendix 5). For clients aged 12 to 17, the level of re-engagement with family, school and work has declined from 13.5 per cent in 2006-07 to 10.6 per cent in 2009-10. The percentage of accompanying children under 12 who were provided with school liaison assistance declined from 9.0 per cent in 2006-07 to remain stable at 8.0 per cent for the following three years. What is missing from these measures is the level of need for re-engagement or liaison, so a declining level of service provision may reflect a declining level of need rather than an increasing level of unmet need.

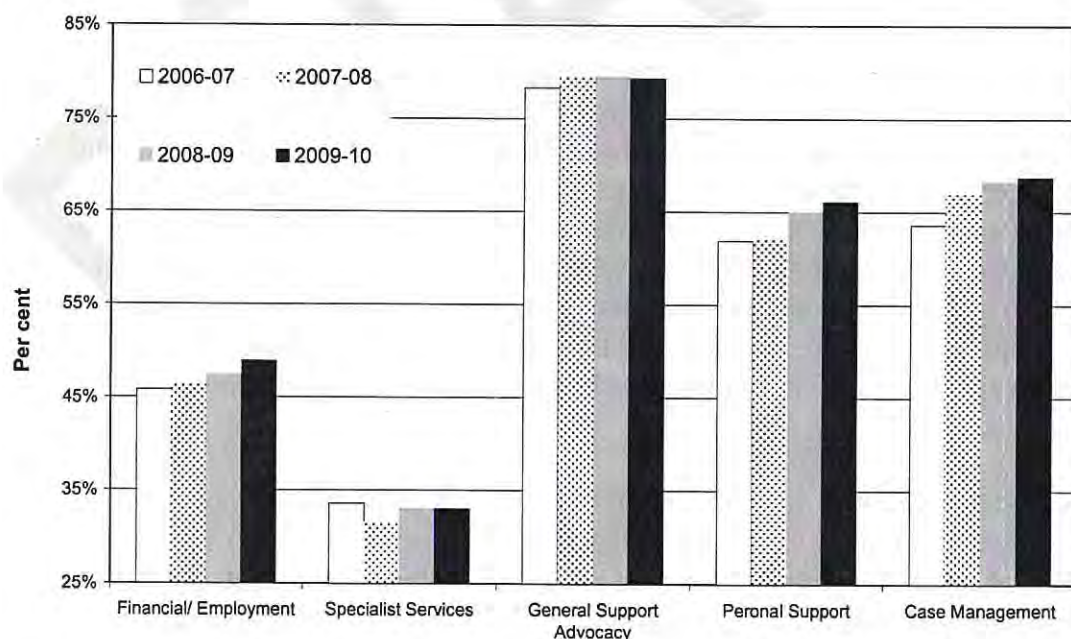
The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) reports that since the commencement of Job Services Australia (JSA) on 1 July 2009, nearly 90,000 job placements have been achieved for homeless job seekers.

Outcome: People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing

SAAP data indicate that there have been slight but continuous increases in the proportion of SAAP clients receiving financial/employment services, personal support and case management, as shown in Figure 1, pointing to one segment of the population receiving improved access to services. In 2009-10, 68.7 per cent of SAAP clients received case management assistance, thus allowing better identification of client needs and more appropriate service provision.

Figure 1

Trends in per cent of SAAP clients provided with financial/employment services, specialist services, general support/advocacy, personal support and case management



Source: FaHCSIA's analysis of SAAP client data

Consultations held by the Working Group indicated that the Social Housing Initiative funded in 2009-10 under the Nation Building and Economic Stimulus Plan (the Stimulus Plan) was a significant factor in improving access to social housing.

In 2009-10:

- 15,070 households in greatest need (a proxy measure for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness) were allocated public housing. This was an increase of 1,363 households (or 10.1 per cent) compared to 2008-09; and
- 11,656 households in greatest need that were allocated public housing had sustained their tenancies for 12 months or more. This was an increase of 1,310 households (or 12.7 per cent) compared to 2008-09.

Data on two proxy measures for one of the outputs of the National Agreement on Housing Affordability (NAHA): 'People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are assisted to secure and sustain their tenancies' (adopted by the CRC) also show some progress towards the access to housing component of this outcome.

The two proxy measures are:

- number of households newly assisted into social housing that were homeless or at risk of homelessness at the time of allocation; and
- number of households assisted into social housing that were homeless or at risk of homelessness at time of allocation and who sustain their tenancies for 12 months or more.

The percentage of SAAP clients (and accompanying children) who exited social housing or private rental into homelessness has declined steadily from 64.3 per cent in 2006-07 to 56.8 per cent in 2009-10 (see Figure 7, Appendix 5). This suggests that SAAP intervention has helped those clients who are leaving social housing or private rental who are at risk becoming homeless.

3.3 Impacts of the NPAH

3.3.1 Outputs and reforms under the NPAH

The NPAH provides for direct investment of \$1.1 billion to expand existing efforts or invest in new activities to achieve the NPAH outcomes, as well as encouraging the implementation of significant reforms. Underpinning the NPAH is the recognition that service system reform is required to produce a more effective, responsive and targeted service system that will deliver better client outcomes.

Four core outputs are funded to achieve the NPAH outcomes:

1. Implementation of *A Place to Call Home* initiative;
2. '*Street to home*' initiatives for people who are chronically homeless or rough sleeping;
3. Support for private and public tenants to help sustain their tenancies; and
4. Assistance for people leaving child protection services, correctional or health facilities to access and maintain stable, affordable housing.

Jurisdictions are also able to fund twelve additional outputs according to the priorities of each government. Appendix 7 provides a detailed analysis of the programs funded under the NPAH and assistance provided under each output. Overall, 171 initiatives were implemented in 2010-11, with assistance provided to clients on around 115,000 occasions. Service targets were exceeded for the majority of outputs (13 out of 16 outputs) in 2010-11.

Reform effort under the NPAH is focused around three key strategies:

1. Prevention and early intervention: More effort is required to intervene early to stop people from becoming homeless;
2. Breaking the cycle of homelessness: Investment is required in services that can help people who are homeless to get back on their feet, find stable accommodation and, wherever possible, obtain employment; and
3. A better connected service system: Reforms to the service system need to build more connected, integrated and responsive services which achieve sustainable housing, and improve economic and social participation of those at risk of homelessness.

3.3.2 Contribution to outcomes under the NPAH

The NPAH provides that the State and Territory Governments will each provide a detailed annual report to the Commonwealth on the outputs, performance indicators and timelines detailed in their implementation plans. The Working Group considered the jurisdictions' 2010-11 Annual Reports as key inputs into this review. Indeed, the timeline for the review was extended to allow these reports to be considered.

Consistent with the NPAH requirements, the annual reports do not directly report against the NPAH outcomes or performance indicators. However, the Working Group considered there would be value in requiring future annual reporting to include a high-level summary of progress against outcomes. In addition, mechanisms for assessing and reporting progress against outcomes should be considered at the development phase of any future agreement following the NPAH.

The Working Group also obtained detailed case studies from jurisdictions to allow closer consideration of the impacts of funded projects on the NPAH's four outcomes. A sample of these case studies are summarised in the boxes below.

To provide a broader perspective, the Working Group also consulted key advisory groups and peak bodies with expertise in homelessness. Eighteen separate consultations were undertaken, with organisations and individuals from all states and territories represented, including national and state bodies and advisory groups. The Working Group heard the views of more than 100 people, including service providers and some individuals with first hand experience of homelessness.

Participants spoke about homelessness issues in general as well providing their views on specific programs, initiatives and strategies under the NPAH. While some of the feedback was consistent across most groups consulted, there were also some contradictory views and particular opinions or comments were raised by only one or two of the groups. Details of the methodology used for the consultations, the groups consulted and the views expressed, according to prevalence, can be found at Appendix 6)

Outcome 1: Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough

*The Road Home - The Australian Government White Paper on Homelessness (The Road Home)*³ and the NPAH both recognise that more effort is required to intervene early to stop people becoming homeless and/or to lessen the impact of homelessness. Jurisdictions have provided a significant focus on preventing homelessness and rough sleeping. The Working Group's consultations also highlighted specialist or intensive tenancy support as being particularly effective in preventing people at risk from becoming homeless.

Box 1

Case studies – outcome 1

- In November 2010, the Australian Capital Territory established a Supportive Sustaining Tenancy Service (SSTS), which has a strong focus on early intervention by targeting people at risk of losing their housing and becoming homeless. The service provides intensive case management for clients across a range of tenures including private renters, mortgagees and tenants of public and community housing. A total of 383 at-risk tenancies were sustained after referral in 2010-11.
- Queensland has implemented a RentConnect Advisory Service to help people who are at risk of homelessness to find and secure properties in the private rental market. During 2010-11, a total of 3,860 discrete clients were assisted and 1,098 tenancies were known to be secured by clients in the private rental market.
- The Tenancy Sustainability Program (TSP) in the Northern Territory provides intensive case management and life skills training to public housing tenants and applicants on the waitlist, as well as residents of Community Living Areas (Town Camps), who require assistance to manage and sustain their tenancies. TSP provides early intervention for individuals and families at risk of eviction, or who would otherwise benefit from support and skill development. TSP clients are predominantly Indigenous and many are from remote areas and unfamiliar with rights and obligations associated with a public housing tenancy. In 2010-11, 897 clients were supported.
- Western Australia has established a Remote Rough Sleeper Assertive Outreach that is successfully operating in the remote areas of Broome and Kalgoorlie. The program recognises that large regional centres with essential services act as meeting places for Aboriginal people from different communities and language groups. Assertive Outreach Workers employ a case management approach that recognises that clients require a range of accommodation options that may change with the client's needs. The program complements other programs assisting homeless people, including rough sleepers. A total of 65 primary clients were assisted during 2010-11, and 98 people in all benefitted from the initiative.
- The Northern Territory announced the Alice Springs Transformation Plan on 2 May 2009, which aims to expand social-support services to reduce homelessness in Alice Springs and deliver housing and infrastructure upgrades in town camps. Territory and Commonwealth governments are working in partnership with the corporate and community sectors, particularly Aboriginal organisations, to achieve the transformation and deliver sustainable improvements in service delivery. A key NPAH initiative has been the establishment of the Apmere Mwerre Accommodation Park. With a capacity to accommodate 150 visitors, Apmere Mwerre is helping to reduce overcrowding in town camps and provides a safe place for people from bush to stay when visiting Alice Springs. The facility is staffed 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

Outcome 2: Fewer People will become homeless more than once

Jurisdictions have implemented a number of initiatives that target people who are: regular rough sleepers; repeatedly homeless; living with a high risk of homelessness; disempowered due to mental illness; and unaccompanied children. Some examples are provided in Box 2 below. 'Housing First' approaches, which focus on achieving housing as a primary goal were identified in some consultations as being particularly

³<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/whitepaper/Documents/default.htm>

successful, although it was also recognised that for some clients, such as vulnerable young people, this approach may need higher levels of support.

Box 2

Case studies – outcome 2

- Queensland has implemented a Street to Home initiative, which aims to support people who are sleeping rough or experiencing chronic homelessness to move into stable, long-term housing. Support also focuses on achieving long-term lifestyle changes to enable engagement with community, education or employment where appropriate. Key principles of service delivery include:

- undertaking assertive outreach to identify and support people who are rough sleeping and people experiencing chronic homelessness where they are (i.e. parks, squats, shelters)
- using a 'housing first' approach to work with the client to move from rough sleeping or chronic homelessness into appropriate stable housing
- providing intensive case coordination to assist the client to remain in long-term stable housing and link clients with ongoing support as appropriate
- linking clients with other ongoing support as appropriate.

A total of 818 people were assisted in 2010-11 across 4 sites. The Street to Home Initiative has introduced a number of innovations and reforms in the housing and homelessness system to assist in improving the outcomes of people sleeping rough or experiencing chronic homelessness. For example, the 50 Lives 50 Homes campaign aims to identify and house the 50 most vulnerable people in inner Brisbane and to raise public awareness. As of May 2011, 56 people have been provided with accommodation. The campaign is now working with the next 50 clients and will continue to focus on housing rough sleepers. The Department of Communities worked with the campaign to ensure quick access to social housing.

- Tasmania has implemented two initiatives (the Stay and KEYS initiatives) that work together to provide an intensive, holistic and long-term response to assist clients to sustain their tenancies at key transition points when they are at significant risk of homelessness. Target groups include young people leaving care and protection or youth justice; adults leaving correctional and health facilities; and people experiencing multiple episodes or extended periods of homelessness. During 2010-11, 265 referrals were received by the Stay service, with 98 clients receiving casework support and 82 clients are residing in KEYS properties.

Outcome 3: People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation

A number of jurisdictions have implemented initiatives that link access to accommodation with support to improve education training and employment outcomes. A number of consultations indicated that initiatives which combined access to training, education and employment with housing are particularly likely to be successful in assisting young people overcome disadvantage and secure sustainable housing.

Box 3

Case studies – outcome 3

- The first Victorian Foyer model opened in February 2011 in Ballarat Karrung, providing 17 one and two bedroom self-contained units with communal living, kitchen and training space. The initiative is providing integrated housing, education, employment and training and life skills support on site. Two units at Karrung are for young people transitioning from care orders or guardianship orders who need support to engage in education, employment and training. In the first five months of operation, 20 young people were supported at Karrung. In addition to accommodation services, outreach support has assisted 20 young people to complete accredited training courses and 80 young people to attend skill development workshops.
- The Australian Capital Territory has implemented the Youth Integrated Education and Accommodation Program aimed at supporting young people who have experienced or been at risk of homelessness. By providing high quality and affordable housing within a supportive environment, the program is able to link young people with education, training and employment opportunities. Young people engaged in the program also have the opportunity to participate in

mentoring and life skills activities, helping to build supportive relationships and prepare for independent living. The program has already experienced positive outcomes for young people involved. A total of 23 young people were accommodated during 2010-11 and 23 young people were engaged in employment, training or work.

Outcome 4: People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing

The NPAH notes that reforms are required to build more connected, integrated and responsive services. Improved linkages between specialist homelessness services and mainstream services will: assist clients to navigate through complex service systems and achieve better outcomes; reduce duplication of effort; and facilitate the transition from temporary accommodation to stable housing. The case studies in the box 4 below illustrate effort to help ensure that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness will be supported by quality services with improved access to sustainable housing.

Box 4

Case studies – outcome 4

- New South Wales has established a Rural Interagency Project that is using service integration to improve client outcomes in the Riverina/Murray and New England regions. The project facilitates access to social housing and provides intensive support packages for young people, single adults and families who are homeless, sleeping rough or experiencing complex issues. Brokerage funds are used to purchase case management, specialised support services and material items, such as furniture and financial aid. Coordination Groups (comprising government and NGOs) have been established to support inter-agency case management with agreed referral processes and case management protocols. During 2010-11 the two projects supported a total of 166 clients. Of these clients, 132 were housed and 139 were able to sustain their tenancies.
- Tasmania is implementing a Service Coordination and Improvement Program (SCIP) that will underpin significant changes to the social housing service system. Its primary focus is on: redesigning access and entry to Tasmania's social housing service system so it is easier for people to use and more efficient in its operations; improving service coordination and engagement of mainstream services, to streamline access to housing and support.
- Queensland is implementing Homelessness Community Action Plans in seven locations across the state. The aim is to produce locally-owned plans to guide the activity of human service providers, all tiers of government, the private sector, philanthropic organisations and volunteer groups, in their efforts to reduce homelessness. Community consultation forums were held across the 7 locations attracting over 400 participants from government and non-government organisations. Local implementation and leadership groups (drawing together government and non-government stakeholders) have collaborated to produce draft Homelessness Community Action Plans, with the implementation of identified actions commencing in late 2011.
- The ACT implemented a Central Intake Service for Homelessness Services (First Point) which became fully operational in November 2010. The service is auspiced by Connections ACT and co-located with Housing ACT's Central Access Point (CAP). First Point provides placement into homelessness and housing support services and facilitates access to other relevant services as required. It streamlines service entry points into the homelessness service system, ensuring that clients do not have to negotiate multiple agencies to access services. During 2010-11 a total of 2626 people contacted First Point and received a service response; 701 people were referred to accommodation; and 1590 people received support services.
- South Australia has undertaken substantial development work on a new, purpose designed, web-based case management and data collection system (Homeless to Home – H2H) to assist in information sharing and the case management of client who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Full implementation occurred in July 2011. The new system facilitates improved access to services and reduces the need for clients to retell their stories. It will also enhance reporting at a jurisdictional level and is linked with the Specialist Homelessness Service Collection managed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
- The Australian Government is also working to drive service integration and improvements across Commonwealth agencies. The Homelessness Delivery Review Board (HDRB) was established in

December 2009 to monitor the implementation and progress of the reforms set out in the White Paper on Homelessness, *The Road Home*. The HDRB is comprised of Deputy Secretary level representatives from relevant Commonwealth departments. The Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness has also been established as a key national governance body overseeing homelessness reforms and the targets set out in both the White Paper and the NPAH. The Council has taken a strategic approach to the homelessness reform agenda and undertakes a detailed assessment of policy areas.

In addition to the case studies provided by jurisdictions, a majority of consultations identified one of the most positive aspects of the NPAH as being the degree to which it has increased cooperation, partnerships, engagement, communication and respect for and between services and agencies. Many also considered that its national approach enabled better consistency within the sector, between providers and State and Territory and Commonwealth agencies. The development of state and territory and regional homelessness action plans was seen as a positive initiative.

Consultations also confirmed the importance of access to housing, noting that the roll-out of the social housing initiative linked to Nation Building and Economic Stimulus Plan was important to the success of a number of programs. 'Housing First' was supported as a good approach to reducing homelessness, although some groups stressed that for some, such as vulnerable young people, it is critical to ensure it is accompanied by appropriate levels of support.

3.2.3 Overall impact of the NPAH and contribution towards outcomes

Information from jurisdictions and consultations with stakeholders indicate that investment under the NPAH has funded considerable assistance to homeless clients and improved coordination of services. The NPAH has generally been seen as a useful mechanism for delivering a range of new programs and services in response to different localised needs and challenges and has allowed jurisdictions to address key service gaps.

Improved collaboration between service providers and government agencies, as well as improved coordination among government agencies has been noted by many jurisdictions and stakeholders as critical success factors. Despite some initial implementation issues, success has also been achieved through the use of evidence-based program development and by ensuring new programs were integrated with the existing service system.

Linking homelessness projects to additional social housing funding through the Stimulus Plan has also increased the attainment of successful outcomes, such as securing appropriate long term sustainable housing for clients.

Improved commitment from the sector and flexibility of organisations to deliver good outcomes in a timely fashion have also been valuable in progressing outcomes.

Consultations indicated that the NPAH resulted in a signalling by the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments of the importance of homelessness to their reform agenda, effectively raising the profile of homelessness in mainstream services and the wider community. The NPAH has also allowed education of the community

and key stakeholders about homelessness to engender ongoing support for homelessness initiatives

Planning has been important, particularly the use of jurisdictions' Implementation Plans (and their continual improvement through an annual review process) and the development of linked state and territory and homelessness regional plans, to ensure a better connected service system.

In addition, the NPAH has provided an opportunity for jurisdictions to develop and implement more contemporary and targeted models of service delivery. The NPAH has provided the State and Territory Governments with the imprimatur to improve or reconfigure their strategies and actions to reduce homelessness and has been a useful mechanism for leveraging reform in homelessness services statewide. In some cases, it has enabled a re-tendering and restructuring of services to reduce inefficiencies and better target services.

This work has the potential to make a valuable contribution towards the evidence base from which longer term reform of the broader homelessness service system can be modelled, including the integration of specialist homelessness services and mainstream services. However, information on the specific outcomes of funded activities is limited. The Annual Reports do not specifically identify contributions to NPAH outcomes and there was no evaluative material available to the Working Group to confirm the success of funded projects in reducing homelessness or to judge whether investment under the NPAH had, in some cases, substituted for previous effort. The latter was raised as an issue in one consultation

While data from the former SAAP collection have shown some improvement in access to services in the period to June 2010, data were not available to the Working Group for 2010-11, a period in which impacts of the NPAH may have been clearer. This is because services funded under the NPAH were still being established during 2009-10 and may not have been operational for the full financial year. Data from 2010-11 and subsequent years will provide a clearer picture, given that initiatives should be well-established by then.

Given the current gaps in data availability, there is a need to take further stock of progress in 2012. A number of jurisdictions (Queensland, Western Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia) have commenced evaluations of NPAH initiatives, which will provide further evidence regarding the effectiveness of new NPAH service models and whether they are making a difference in improving client outcomes. Well-designed evaluations will also provide greater methodological rigour when addressing issues such as attribution of outcomes and the longer-term impact of NPAH investments.

The availability of data from the 2011 Census in 2012 and the need to consider whether, and in what form, specific investment for homelessness should be continued, would make further examination of progress towards achievement of the NPAH outcomes in 2012 timely.

3.4 Lessons Learnt

3.4.1 Appropriately skilled personnel

Recruiting and retaining appropriately skilled staff, particularly in non-urban areas and under current remuneration levels, has been noted by jurisdictions as a common barrier to success. This is compounded by a shortage of affordable housing for clients and staff, particularly in remote areas. Longer lead times were needed to establish new services and programs, especially those delivered by the non-government sector and in remote communities, and where clients' needs were increasingly complex. It was suggested at some consultations that there have been instances when it would have been quicker and more effective for existing services to have delivered services, rather than establishing new services.

Opportunities have also been identified to educate and support staff, through sharing of resources developed by case managers; undertaking regional forums to identify gaps, barriers, solutions and provide information on new policy directions, research, and practice guides; and using of brokerage funds to buy in capacity. However, the latter is less successful where there is limited availability of capacity from other organisations.

3.4.2 Awareness and availability of related services

Consultations identified the risks associated with increasing awareness without ensuring the availability of corresponding resources to meet increased demand, especially in relation to family violence programs. In addition to services providing accommodation, stakeholders encouraged the development of programs that help people become 'safe at home' and examples were provided of models that are working well and some that are not proving effective. The value of sharing information on service models was also highlighted.

In Indigenous communities (particularly in Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia), barriers included cultural factors, such as concepts of home and homelessness, and the need for more time to develop longer term relationships, particularly where the assistance takes the form of consultation rather than direct support.

In some instances, negative community response to placement of homeless people in supported accommodation in their community led to delays with placement of tenants in appropriate properties.

Consultations noted that in some instances existing services have been able to deliver new services more efficiently than new services.

The breadth and complexity associated with the reforms has resulted in mixed responses from the sector in some jurisdictions and subsequent difficulties in getting cooperation and buy-in from some organisations. Garnering commitment from other areas such as hospitals and mainstream services was also a barrier, given that there is already a large demand on these services and it is often easier for the services to tend to people who are compliant and seeking assistance.

Gaps in data availability and ability to measure performance were barriers to developing, monitoring, reviewing, and improving services and programs. More engagement with the university sector could be undertaken to further enhance research and data collection efforts, to identify the most effective services.

Chapter 4

FACTORS OUTSIDE THE NPAH IMPACTING ON HOMELESSNESS OUTCOMES

4.1 – National investment on homelessness outside the NPAH

The NPAH comprises a small, yet targeted, amount of funding compared to investment in broader ongoing National Agreements, National Partnerships and other initiatives. In assessing the factors that may have affected achievement of the NPAH targets since its commencement in 2009, it is important to look at the impacts of other mainstream programs and targeted initiatives.

4.1.1 – National homelessness and/or housing initiatives

In addition to the NPAH, national agreements and programs targeted towards housing and/or homelessness which are most likely to have affected the changes to homelessness reflected in this review are outlined below. While many of these programs were developed independently of the NPAH, others may reflect the increased priority accorded to addressing homelessness associated with the NPAH and the Commonwealth's National Approach to Reducing Homelessness, *The Road Home*.

The National Affordable Housing Agreement

The National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) aims to ensure that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing. The NAHA provides greater flexibility for the State and Territory Governments to address housing affordability issues that are specific to their own jurisdiction and to direct funds towards the programs and services that have the greatest impact. The NAHA highlights the importance of addressing both homelessness and housing supply issues.

The National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing

The National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing (NPASH) aimed to increase the supply of social housing through new construction and to contribute to a reduction in homelessness and improved outcomes for homeless and Indigenous Australians. The NPASH specifically identifies people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and Indigenous Australians as target groups for the new social housing dwellings. Commonwealth funding of \$400 million was provided to the State and Territory Governments from 2008 to 2010.

As at 30 June 2011, 1,960 new dwellings were either under construction or complete, including 1,781 social housing dwellings and an additional 179 affordable housing dwellings. Of these, 1,322 dwellings were tenanted as at 30 June 2011, including more than half by households identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness. [\[Can FaHCSIA update this figure?\]](#)

The Social Housing Initiative

The Social Housing Initiative (SHI) is a component of the Commonwealth's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan and supports both the construction of new social housing and the repair and upgrade of existing homes, through the provision of \$5.6

billion over 2008-2012. The objectives of the SHI include providing increased opportunities for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to gain secure long term accommodation. This initiative was announced in early 2009 after the NPAH was agreed and represents a significant boost in funding for new social housing dwellings.

At 31 August 2011, more than 12,200 new dwellings under the initiative had been tenanted with 55 per cent allocated to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Around 80,000 existing social housing dwellings received repairs and maintenance works, including major upgrades to around 12,000 social housing dwellings that were vacant or would have become uninhabitable without this work.

By 30 June 2012, the Commonwealth expects that construction of over 19,300 new dwellings will be complete, with the assistance of the not-for-profit sector, at a total cost of \$5.2 billion.

The importance of the Social Housing Initiative in creating capacity to house people who are homeless and those at risk of homelessness was emphasised by participants in the consultation process, who identified this program as a significant contributor to the NPAH outcomes.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing provides \$5.5 billion over 10 years to improve housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities. Since the commencement of the NPAH more than 800 new houses have been completed and over 3,100 houses have been rebuilt or refurbished nationally.

The investment is underpinned by property and tenancy management reforms. These include the introduction of priority allocation of housing and intensive tenancy support that helps tenants to understand and manage their responsibilities, ultimately providing more stable tenancy arrangements. The agreement aims to reduce the incidence of homelessness in remote Australia by 30 per cent by 2013 and by 50 per cent by 2018.

National Rental Affordability Scheme

The National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) is a long term, \$4.3 billion commitment by the Commonwealth Government to invest in 50,000 affordable rental homes that are rented out at least 20% below market rent. As at 31 August 2011, there were 4,178 dwellings rented or available to rent and 20,408 reserved incentives for proposed dwellings.

4.1.2 – National non-homelessness and/or housing initiatives that impact homelessness

Some national programs that are not primarily aimed at addressing homelessness, may impact on changes to homelessness, either through providing direct assistance to people who are homeless or by contributing to the early intervention and

prevention goals of the NPAH. A number of such programs that may have had an impact on homelessness since the start of the NPAH are outlined below.

Youth Connections – under the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions, this initiative funds providers to work with at-risk young people, including young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to help them attain Year 12 or equivalent qualifications and assist them make a successful transition through education and onto further education, training or work.

National Youth Participation Requirement – an entitlement to education or training places for 15 to 24 year olds, and changes to Youth Allowance and Family Tax Benefit Part A, making education and training a precondition for these payments.

headspace – provides a national coordinated focus on youth mental health and related drug and alcohol problems and aims to improve access to appropriate services for young people aged 12-25 years and to ensure better coordination between services. Additional funding was provided to headspace in the 2010-11 Commonwealth Budget, with homeless young people identified as a target group from December 2010. Further funding was announced in 2011 to strengthen the focus on homelessness.

Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHAMs) program – provides one-on-one support through outreach services to people whose lives are severely affected by mental illness. As at 30 April 2011 there were 8,469 active PHAMs participants, 11 per cent of whom identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Emergency relief – provides support to address immediate needs in times of crisis. Within the \$64.4 million provided by the Commonwealth in 2010-11, \$6.1 million over 2 years has been assigned to 23 organisations to better support clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Community legal centres – under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services, additional funds were provided to nine community legal centres for four years from 2010, to enhance access to justice for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Job Services Australia – includes an Employment Pathway Fund to target disadvantaged job seekers, including those who are homeless. Under Job Services Australia (JSA) there are over 100 organisations delivering employment services, seven of which deliver specialist services at 29 sites for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

More than 26% of job seekers who identified as being homeless in Stream 4 of JSA, which caters for the most disadvantaged job seekers, are achieving employment outcomes following assistance. Homeless job seekers are also undertaking education and training following assistance in Stream 4 at more than twice the rate of homeless job seekers under the former Personal Support Programme.¹

¹ Explanation of stream numbers and PSP/JSA background?

Jobs Fund and Innovation Fund projects – target disadvantaged job seekers. Of the 77 Innovation Fund projects to date, six target job seekers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Within the Jobs Fund, nine projects had a specific focus on targeting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Weekly income support payments to vulnerable Australians – since 2009-10? [need some explanation that these are not new payments – made weekly is the new aspect?] payments have been made available for up to 12,000 vulnerable people to assist them to better budget their income, including to meet their rent payments. This will help reduce the risk of homelessness and delivers on the Government's commitment announced in December 2008 in the *White Paper on Homelessness: The Road Home*. [consistency? Need a Global check of all chapters]

Regional Development Australia Fund – established to support the infrastructure needs and economic growth of Australia's regions including funding facilities that provide specialist services and accommodation to homeless people.

The Australian Government's White Paper on Reducing Homelessness, *The Road Home* found that 17% of SAAP clients in 2004-05 reported a mental health problem. The National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health, which begins in [date] provides \$201.3 million to focus on stable accommodation and support; the presentation, admission and discharge planning in major hospital and emergency departments; and related support services. This focus will benefit people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and may contribute to the NPAH outcomes in its remaining period.

4.2 The changing Context of the NPAH

This section looks at the economic and social context in which the NPAH has been operating to illustrate how external factors may have contributed, both positively and negatively, to changes in homelessness over the life of the NPAH so far.

4.2.1 The economic context

Economic factors affecting changes to homelessness since the commencement of the NPAH, but not attributable to actions directly under the agreement, include housing affordability; utilities prices; jobs supply and incomes. In addition, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and a number of natural disasters occurring during this period are likely to have had some impact on homelessness.

However, as can be seen from the summaries below, the economic climate since the introduction of the NPAH has been generally benign and it is unlikely that, overall, these factors have impacted significantly to changes in homelessness over this period. [Julie to make wording more cautious as per Brad's em]

Housing affordability and utilities prices

Housing affordability and housing stress have been affected by a range of macroeconomic factors over the past few years. These factors have at times worked in opposing directions, and have affected households differently, depending on whether they are renters, outright owners, or owner-occupiers with a mortgage.

From a mortgagor perspective, measures of housing affordability have generally eased from three years ago, in line with slightly lower mortgage interest rates. For example, the Reserve Bank of Australia measure of housing affordability improved a little from 80.3 in the September quarter 2008 to 87.0 currently.

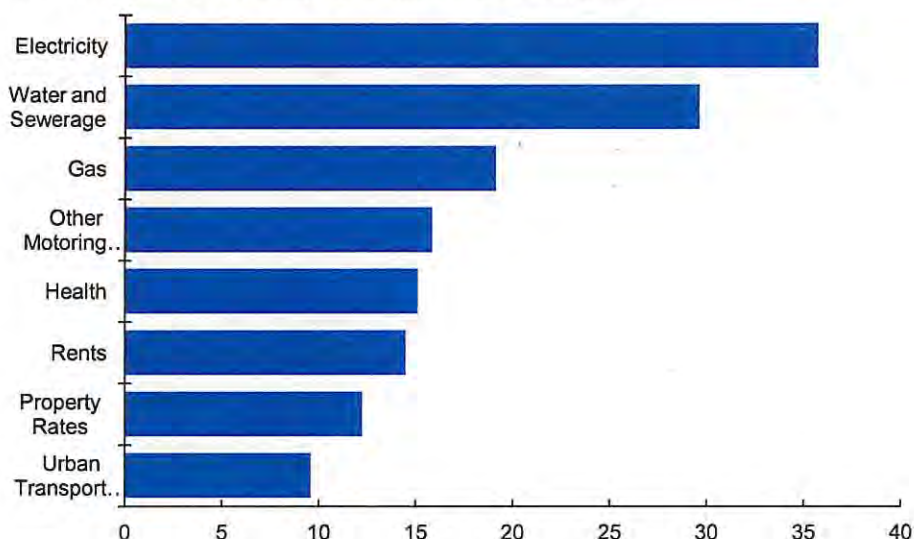
However, mortgage arrears have increased from around 0.5 per cent of the value of outstanding home loans to 0.8 per cent over this time, with increases in all major states, particularly Queensland².

Rental affordability has continued to worsen over the period, with rents growing faster than average household income. The strong growth in rents reflects solid growth in underlying demand for housing in conjunction with sluggish growth in housing supply. Rents grew by an average 5 per cent per year, with most renting households devoting a larger share of their incomes to rental payments.

Ongoing strength in rent growth has seen an increase in most indicators of rental stress since 2007. According to the latest data from the HILDA survey (2009), the fraction of disposable income that renting households typically devote to rent payments increased from 22 per cent to 23 per cent between 2007 and 2009. The increase was largest for households in the bottom income quintile, with the median rent payment rising from 32 per cent to 37 per cent of disposable income.

In addition, households have faced strong rises in utility prices, along with strong growth in property rates and charges (Chart 1). Since September 2008, for example, electricity prices have risen more than 35 per cent.

Chart 1: Growth in Key Prices (September 2008-current)



² These increases mainly reflect an earlier cohort of home buyers that entered the market between 2004 and 2008, when lending standards were somewhat looser than they are now and when house prices were rising strongly, particularly in Queensland, Western Australia, and the Western Sydney region of New South Wales. A small contribution from natural disasters earlier this year may also be a factor in Queensland.

Employment

Since the onset of the GFC, the Australian labour market has been relatively resilient, creating over half a million jobs. In June 2009, the unemployment rate peaked at 5.9 per cent, the highest since July 2003. More recently, soft conditions outside the mining sector have seen the unemployment rate has increased from its recent low of 4.9 per cent to 5.2 per cent in September 2011, with only 41,100 jobs created in the nine months to September 2011 compared to 361,900 in 2010³. The effect of this strong demand for labour by the mining industry has contributed to very significant housing affordability issues in those communities.

Labour force participation remained at around record highs throughout the GFC with the participation rate peaking at 66.0 per cent in November 2010. Average weekly hours have also remained buoyant at only around 1.4 per cent below the level seen in September 2008. At the height of the natural disasters, over 30,000 jobs were affected between December 2010 and February 2011 in Queensland. Employment in that state is now around pre-disaster levels.

Wages and Prices

At the height of the GFC, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) peaked at 5 per cent through the year to the September quarter 2008, driven by increased costs of housing, transportation, financial and insurance services and food. CPI growth is now 3.6 per cent through the year to the June quarter of 2011, driven by strong growth in the price of food, in particular bananas, following this summer's natural disasters.

While the increases in CPI raise cost of living concerns and can erode real incomes of low-income workers (if growing faster than wages), pensioners and other beneficiary recipients are compensated, to some extent, for these increases⁴.

Wages growth has also outpaced inflation over the last 12 months to the June quarter 2011. The Wage Price Index (WPI) increased by 3.8 per cent through the year to the June quarter 2011 and private sector wages have recovered to increase by 3.8 per cent through the year. This is up from the recent trough of 2.6 per cent witnessed during the GFC.

4.2.3 The impact of natural disasters [Victoria to provide input]

Between November 2010 and April 2011, Queensland was affected by a series of natural disasters. Significant flooding occurred in many areas of Queensland during late December 2010 and early January 2011. Up to 29,000 homes and businesses experienced some form of inundation and almost 7,000 people were accommodated

³ Since September 2008, the number of long term unemployed males aged 25-54 has increased from 24,900 to 36,800. This is below the aggregate long-term unemployment rate of 0.7 per cent and 1 per cent in September 2008 and September 2011 respectively.

⁴ Benefits are indexed to either CPI or, for pensions, the higher of the CPI or the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI - which places a higher weight on those goods and services more typically incurred by aged pensioners and other transfer recipients). The PBLCI grew faster than the CPI in the past year, rising by 4.5 per cent through the year to the June quarter 2011. Some concerns have been expressed that those benefits indexed to the CPI, including, for example, Commonwealth Rent Assistance, may not keep pace with price rises faced by consumers in specific areas and paying private rents.

in 74 evacuation centres. On 2 February 2011, Tropical Cyclone Yasi caused further destruction and monsoonal rains then caused further flooding impacts in regional Queensland post February 2011. With the combined impact of the floods and cyclone, all of Queensland's Local Government Areas were declared disaster affected as at March 2011.

As at 13 September 2011, 610 applications for social housing had been received from people who reported being a victim of the floods or cyclone. People in flood affected areas were also assisted to find alternative private rental accommodation and there is agreement for an additional 123 rental properties to be made available under the Community Rent Scheme. Over 100 temporary units of accommodation were provided for use by displaced people.

RentConnect Service was an integral part of the government and community response to addressing housing needs in disaster-affected communities, with officers visiting community locations to link with clients. This initiative is funded under the NPAH and provides information, advice and referrals to assist people to find and secure a property in the private rental market.

The Commonwealth also provided support to affected individuals through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Program to support, with the Queensland and the Victorian governments, reconstruction efforts and social support activities - including mental health services, housing assistance and residential housing advice.

The impact of these natural disasters will need to be considered in assessing data from the 2011 Census and key population indicators associated with reductions in homelessness. More information on the floods is provided in Appendix 6.

4.2.4 The social context

The Working Group has considered whether there have been any changes in social factors that may have affected changes to homelessness since the NPAH was signed in 2008. The Group considered changes in population numbers and characteristics; prevalence of mental health disorders; family violence and family breakdown rates; levels of social exclusion; and rates of out of home care and detention.

While the review found incremental changes, these were not of a scale to point to particular impacts on homelessness since the commencement of the NPAH. The key trends were:

- continued population growth⁵ and ageing⁶ of the population which will have long-term pressures on demand for affordable housing;
- a long-term trend of reductions in family violence and family breakdown, a major trigger for homelessness⁷ - although rates of divorce and divorce involving children actually increased between 2008 and 2009⁸;
- increases in the number of people in prison and youth in detention over the long term, both groups at risk of homelessness after they leave custody;

⁵ Australia to 2050: Future Challenges, January 2010 (Intergenerational Report 2010), Attorney-General's Department

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Women's Safety Survey, 1996 and Personal Safety Survey 2005.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2010). *Marriages and divorces, Australia, 2009* (Catalogue no. 3310.0).

- progressive increases in the proportion of Australians estimated to have a long-term mental or behavioural problem between 1995 and 2005, although it is not clear the extent to which this reflects increase in identification and reporting - a third of people who are homeless in inner city areas are estimated as having a severe mental illness.⁹;
- longer-term increases in the number of children on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care, a group at particular risk of homelessness, by 33.5 per cent from 2002-2006.¹⁰

More details of these and other social factors relevant to homelessness are in Appendix 7a

⁹ *National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing*, 2007; Herrman H, Evert H, Harvey C, Gureje O, Pinzone T, Gordon I. Disability and service use among homeless people living with psychotic disorders, in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 2004; 38:965–974; Teesson M, Hodder T, Buhrich N. Psychiatric disorders in homeless men and women in inner Sydney, in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 2004; 38:162–168

¹⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Australia's welfare 2007*, AIHW cat. no. AUS 93, Canberra, 2007

Chapter 4

FACTORS OUTSIDE THE NPAH IMPACTING ON HOMELESSNESS OUTCOMES

4.1 – National investment on homelessness outside the NPAH

The NPAH comprises a small, yet targeted, amount of funding compared to investment in broader ongoing National Agreements, National Partnerships and other initiatives. In assessing the factors that may have affected achievement of the NPAH targets since its commencement in 2009, it is important to look at the impacts of other mainstream programs and targeted initiatives.

4.1.1 – National homelessness and/or housing initiatives

In addition to the NPAH, national agreements and programs targeted towards housing and/or homelessness which are most likely to have affected the changes to homelessness reflected in this review are outlined below. While many of these programs were developed independently of the NPAH, others may reflect the increased priority accorded to addressing homelessness associated with the NPAH and the Commonwealth's National Approach to Reducing Homelessness, *The Road Home*.

The National Affordable Housing Agreement

The National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) aims to ensure that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing. The NAHA provides greater flexibility for the State and Territory Governments to address housing affordability issues that are specific to their own jurisdiction and to direct funds towards the programs and services that have the greatest impact. The NAHA highlights the importance of addressing both homelessness and housing supply issues.

The National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing

The National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing (NPASH) aimed to increase the supply of social housing through new construction and to contribute to a reduction in homelessness and improved outcomes for homeless and Indigenous Australians. The NPASH specifically identifies people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and Indigenous Australians as target groups for the new social housing dwellings. Commonwealth funding of \$400 million was provided to the State and Territory Governments from 2008 to 2010.

As at 30 June 2011, 1,960 new dwellings were either under construction or complete, including 1,781 social housing dwellings and an additional 179 affordable housing dwellings. Of these, 1,322 dwellings were tenanted as at 30 June 2011, including more than half by households identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness. [\[Can FaHCSIA update this figure?\]](#)

The Social Housing Initiative

The Social Housing Initiative (SHI) is a component of the Commonwealth's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan and supports both the construction of new social housing and the repair and upgrade of existing homes, through the provision of \$5.6

billion over 2008-2012. The objectives of the SHI include providing increased opportunities for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to gain secure long term accommodation. This initiative was announced in early 2009 after the NPAH was agreed and represents a significant boost in funding for new social housing dwellings.

At 31 August 2011, more than 12,200 new dwellings under the initiative had been tenanted with 55 per cent allocated to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Around 80,000 existing social housing dwellings received repairs and maintenance works, including major upgrades to around 12,000 social housing dwellings that were vacant or would have become uninhabitable without this work.

By 30 June 2012, the Commonwealth expects that construction of over 19,300 new dwellings will be complete, with the assistance of the not-for-profit sector, at a total cost of \$5.2 billion.

The importance of the Social Housing Initiative in creating capacity to house people who are homeless and those at risk of homelessness was emphasised by participants in the consultation process, who identified this program as a significant contributor to the NPAH outcomes.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing provides \$5.5 billion over 10 years to improve housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities. Since the commencement of the NPAH more than 800 new houses have been completed and over 3,100 houses have been rebuilt or refurbished nationally.

The investment is underpinned by property and tenancy management reforms. These include the introduction of priority allocation of housing and intensive tenancy support that helps tenants to understand and manage their responsibilities, ultimately providing more stable tenancy arrangements. The agreement aims to reduce the incidence of homelessness in remote Australia by 30 per cent by 2013 and by 50 per cent by 2018.

National Rental Affordability Scheme

The National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) is a long term, \$4.3 billion commitment by the Commonwealth Government to invest in 50,000 affordable rental homes that are rented out at least 20% below market rent. As at 31 August 2011, there were 4,178 dwellings rented or available to rent and 20,408 reserved incentives for proposed dwellings.

4.1.2 – National non-homelessness and/or housing initiatives that impact homelessness

Some national programs that are not primarily aimed at addressing homelessness, may impact on changes to homelessness, either through providing direct assistance to people who are homeless or by contributing to the early intervention and

prevention goals of the NPAH. A number of such programs that may have had an impact on homelessness since the start of the NPAH are outlined below.

Youth Connections – under the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions, this initiative funds providers to work with at-risk young people, including young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to help them attain Year 12 or equivalent qualifications and assist them make a successful transition through education and onto further education, training or work.

National Youth Participation Requirement – an entitlement to education or training places for 15 to 24 year olds, and changes to Youth Allowance and Family Tax Benefit Part A, making education and training a precondition for these payments.

headspace – provides a national coordinated focus on youth mental health and related drug and alcohol problems and aims to improve access to appropriate services for young people aged 12-25 years and to ensure better coordination between services. Additional funding was provided to headspace in the 2010-11 Commonwealth Budget, with homeless young people identified as a target group from December 2010. Further funding was announced in 2011 to strengthen the focus on homelessness.

Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHAMs) program – provides one-on-one support through outreach services to people whose lives are severely affected by mental illness. As at 30 April 2011 there were 8,469 active PHAMs participants, 11 per cent of whom identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Emergency relief – provides support to address immediate needs in times of crisis. Within the \$64.4 million provided by the Commonwealth in 2010-11, \$6.1 million over 2 years has been assigned to 23 organisations to better support clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Community legal centres – under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services, additional funds were provided to nine community legal centres for four years from 2010, to enhance access to justice for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Job Services Australia – includes an Employment Pathway Fund to target disadvantaged job seekers, including those who are homeless. Under Job Services Australia (JSA) there are over 100 organisations delivering employment services, seven of which deliver specialist services at 29 sites for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

More than 26% of job seekers **?who?** identified as being homeless in Stream 4 of JSA, which caters for the most disadvantaged job seekers, are achieving employment outcomes following assistance. Homeless job seekers are also undertaking education and training following assistance in Stream 4 at more than twice the rate of homeless job seekers under the former Personal Support Programme.¹

¹ Explanation of stream numbers and PSP/JSA background?

Jobs Fund and Innovation Fund projects – target disadvantaged job seekers. Of the 77 Innovation Fund projects to date, six target job seekers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Within the Jobs Fund, nine projects had a specific focus on targeting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Weekly income support payments to vulnerable Australians – since 2009-10? [need some explanation that these are not new payments – made weekly is the new aspect?] payments have been made available for up to 12,000 vulnerable people to assist them to better budget their income, including to meet their rent payments. This will help reduce the risk of homelessness and delivers on the Government's commitment announced in December 2008 in the *White Paper on Homelessness: The Road Home*. [consistency? Need a Global check of all chapters]

Regional Development Australia Fund – established to support the infrastructure needs and economic growth of Australia's regions including funding facilities that provide specialist services and accommodation to homeless people.

The Australian Government's White Paper on Reducing Homelessness, *The Road Home* found that 17% of SAAP clients in 2004-05 reported a mental health problem. The National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health, which begins in [date] provides \$201.3 million to focus on stable accommodation and support; the presentation, admission and discharge planning in major hospital and emergency departments; and related support services. This focus will benefit people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and may contribute to the NPAH outcomes in its remaining period.

4.2 The changing Context of the NPAH

This section looks at the economic and social context in which the NPAH has been operating to illustrate how external factors may have contributed, both positively and negatively, to changes in homelessness over the life of the NPAH so far.

4.2.1 The economic context

Economic factors affecting changes to homelessness since the commencement of the NPAH, but not attributable to actions directly under the agreement, include housing affordability; utilities prices; jobs supply and incomes. In addition, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and a number of natural disasters occurring during this period are likely to have had some impact on homelessness.

However, as can be seen from the summaries below, the economic climate since the introduction of the NPAH has been generally benign and it is unlikely that, overall, these factors have impacted significantly to changes in homelessness over this period. [Julie to make wording more cautious as per Brad's em]

Housing affordability and utilities prices

Housing affordability and housing stress have been affected by a range of macroeconomic factors over the past few years. These factors have at times worked in opposing directions, and have affected households differently, depending on whether they are renters, outright owners, or owner-occupiers with a mortgage.

From a mortgagor perspective, measures of housing affordability have generally eased from three years ago, in line with slightly lower mortgage interest rates. For example, the Reserve Bank of Australia measure of housing affordability improved a little from 80.3 in the September quarter 2008 to 87.0 currently.

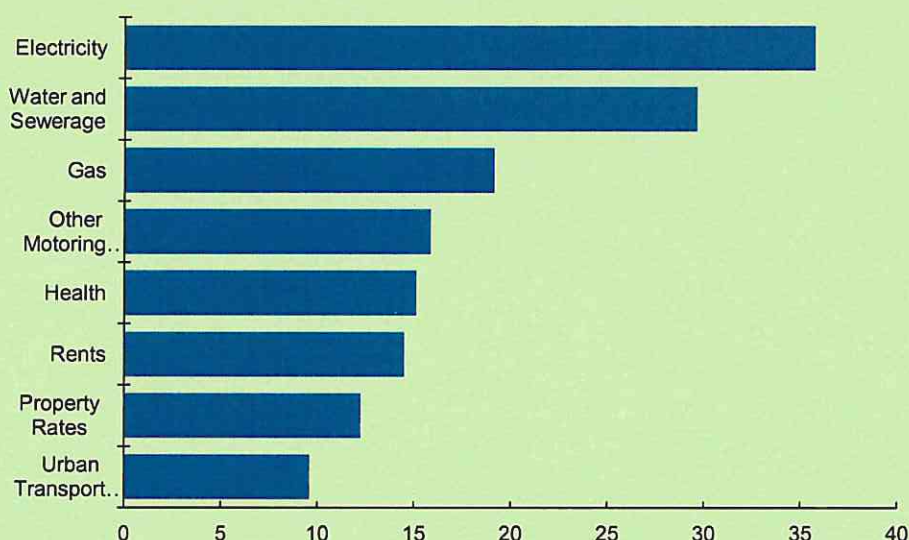
However, mortgage arrears have increased from around 0.5 per cent of the value of outstanding home loans to 0.8 per cent over this time, with increases in all major states, particularly Queensland².

Rental affordability has continued to worsen over the period, with rents growing faster than average household income. The strong growth in rents reflects solid growth in underlying demand for housing in conjunction with sluggish growth in housing supply. Rents grew by an average 5 per cent per year, with most renting households devoting a larger share of their incomes to rental payments.

Ongoing strength in rent growth has seen an increase in most indicators of rental stress since 2007. According to the latest data from the HILDA survey (2009), the fraction of disposable income that renting households typically devote to rent payments increased from 22 per cent to 23 per cent between 2007 and 2009. The increase was largest for households in the bottom income quintile, with the median rent payment rising from 32 per cent to 37 per cent of disposable income.

In addition, households have faced strong rises in utility prices, along with strong growth in property rates and charges (Chart 1). Since September 2008, for example, electricity prices have risen more than 35 per cent.

Chart 1: Growth in Key Prices (September 2008-current)



² These increases mainly reflect an earlier cohort of home buyers that entered the market between 2004 and 2008, when lending standards were somewhat looser than they are now and when house prices were rising strongly, particularly in Queensland, Western Australia, and the Western Sydney region of New South Wales. A small contribution from natural disasters earlier this year may also be a factor in Queensland.

Employment

Since the onset of the GFC, the Australian labour market has been relatively resilient, creating over half a million jobs. In June 2009, the unemployment rate peaked at 5.9 per cent, the highest since July 2003. More recently, soft conditions outside the mining sector have seen the unemployment rate has increased from its recent low of 4.9 per cent to 5.2 per cent in September 2011, with only 41,100 jobs created in the nine months to September 2011 compared to 361,900 in 2010³. The effect of this strong demand for labour by the mining industry has contributed to very significant housing affordability issues in those communities.

Labour force participation remained at around record highs throughout the GFC with the participation rate peaking at 66.0 per cent in November 2010. Average weekly hours have also remained buoyant at only around 1.4 per cent below the level seen in September 2008. At the height of the natural disasters, over 30,000 jobs were affected between December 2010 and February 2011 in Queensland. Employment in that state is now around pre-disaster levels.

Wages and Prices

At the height of the GFC, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) peaked at 5 per cent through the year to the September quarter 2008, driven by increased costs of housing, transportation, financial and insurance services and food. CPI growth is now 3.6 per cent through the year to the June quarter of 2011, driven by strong growth in the price of food, in particular bananas, following this summer's natural disasters.

While the increases in CPI raise cost of living concerns and can erode real incomes of low-income workers (if growing faster than wages), pensioners and other beneficiary recipients are compensated, to some extent, for these increases⁴.

Wages growth has also outpaced inflation over the last 12 months to the June quarter 2011. The Wage Price Index (WPI) increased by 3.8 per cent through the year to the June quarter 2011 and private sector wages have recovered to increase by 3.8 per cent through the year. This is up from the recent trough of 2.6 per cent witnessed during the GFC.

4.2.3 The impact of natural disasters [Victoria to provide input]

Between November 2010 and April 2011, Queensland was affected by a series of natural disasters. Significant flooding occurred in many areas of Queensland during late December 2010 and early January 2011. Up to 29,000 homes and businesses experienced some form of inundation and almost 7,000 people were accommodated

³ Since September 2008, the number of long term unemployed males aged 25-54 has increased from 24,900 to 36,800. This is below the aggregate long-term unemployment rate of 0.7 per cent and 1 per cent in September 2008 and September 2011 respectively.

⁴ Benefits are indexed to either CPI or, for pensions, the higher of the CPI or the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI - which places a higher weight on those goods and services more typically incurred by aged pensioners and other transfer recipients). The PBLCI grew faster than the CPI in the past year, rising by 4.5 per cent through the year to the June quarter 2011. Some concerns have been expressed that those benefits indexed to the CPI, including, for example, Commonwealth Rent Assistance, may not keep pace with price rises faced by consumers in specific areas and paying private rents.

in 74 evacuation centres. On 2 February 2011, Tropical Cyclone Yasi caused further destruction and monsoonal rains then caused further flooding impacts in regional Queensland post February 2011. With the combined impact of the floods and cyclone, all of Queensland's Local Government Areas were declared disaster affected as at March 2011.

As at 13 September 2011, 610 applications for social housing had been received from people who reported being a victim of the floods or cyclone. People in flood affected areas were also assisted to find alternative private rental accommodation and there is agreement for an additional 123 rental properties to be made available under the Community Rent Scheme. Over 100 temporary units of accommodation were provided for use by displaced people.

RentConnect Service was an integral part of the government and community response to addressing housing needs in disaster-affected communities, with officers visiting community locations to link with clients. This initiative is funded under the NPAH and provides information, advice and referrals to assist people to find and secure a property in the private rental market.

The Commonwealth also provided support to affected individuals through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Program to support, with the Queensland and the Victorian governments, reconstruction efforts and social support activities - including mental health services, housing assistance and residential housing advice.

The impact of these natural disasters will need to be considered in assessing data from the 2011 Census and key population indicators associated with reductions in homelessness. More information on the floods is provided in Appendix 6.

4.2.4 The social context

The Working Group has considered whether there have been any changes in social factors that may have affected changes to homelessness since the NPAH was signed in 2008. The Group considered changes in population numbers and characteristics; prevalence of mental health disorders; family violence and family breakdown rates; levels of social exclusion; and rates of out of home care and detention.

While the review found incremental changes, these were not of a scale to point to particular impacts on homelessness since the commencement of the NPAH. The key trends were:

- continued population growth⁵ and ageing⁶ of the population which will have long-term pressures on demand for affordable housing;
- a long-term trend of reductions in family violence and family breakdown, a major trigger for homelessness⁷ - although rates of divorce and divorce involving children actually increased between 2008 and 2009⁸;
- increases in the number of people in prison and youth in detention over the long term, both groups at risk of homelessness after they leave custody;

⁵ Australia to 2050: Future Challenges, January 2010 (Intergenerational Report 2010), Attorney-General's Department

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Women's Safety Survey, 1996 and Personal Safety Survey 2005.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2010). *Marriages and divorces, Australia, 2009* (Catalogue no. 3310.0).

- progressive increases in the proportion of Australians estimated to have a long-term mental or behavioural problem between 1995 and 2005, although it is not clear the extent to which this reflects increase in identification and reporting - a third of people who are homeless in inner city areas are estimated as having a severe mental illness.⁹;
- longer-term increases in the number of children on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care, a group at particular risk of homelessness, by 33.5 per cent from 2002-2006.¹⁰

More details of these and other social factors relevant to homelessness are in Appendix 7a

⁹ *National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing*, 2007; Herrman H, Evert H, Harvey C, Gureje O, Pinzone T, Gordon I. Disability and service use among homeless people living with psychotic disorders, in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 2004; 38:965–974; Teesson M, Hodder T, Buhrich N. Psychiatric disorders in homeless men and women in inner Sydney, in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 2004; 38:162–168

¹⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Australia's welfare 2007*, AIHW cat. no. AUS 93, Canberra, 2007

Chapter 5

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

5.1 Overview

A revised performance indicator framework is proposed by the Working Group. This revised framework is summarised below at **Table X** and the group's recommendations against each individual indicator are listed at section 5.2.

Consistent with its Terms of Reference¹, the Working Group undertook a preliminary analysis of the 11 performance indicators in the current performance reporting framework of the NPAH (at Appendix 3) using the HoTs conceptual framework. The Commonwealth Treasury led this analysis, and assessed the conceptual and data robustness of each indicator and the role that each indicator plays in measuring the targets of the NPAH.

The analysis identified that there were strengths and weaknesses associated with the current set of performance indicators. It identified two broad categories of indicators:

- Population-based performance indicators; and
- Performance indicators based on proxy measures relating to users of services.

The analysis further identified a range of progress measures that may assist in evaluating jurisdictions' performance against the targets, as well as some performance indicators that suffer from data limitations and/or conceptual deficiencies preventing adequate measures of performance.

Key to the work of the group was an assessment of whether the performance indicators were sound according to the HoTs conceptual framework. Where indicators were unable to be measured fully by available data sources, the Working Group also considered whether there was a policy justification for retaining output indicators.

In recognition of the impact that concerted government action for these groups is likely to make in reducing the overall level of homelessness, the Working Group agreed that the indicators that related to key homeless population groups should be retained. For these indicators, proxy performance measures, based on specialist homelessness services data, were identified to be used as long-term proxy measures from 2011-12, since whole-of-population data are not expected to be available during the life of the NPAH for most indicators.

The Working Group recommends that:

- all the performance indicators should be expressed in terms of proportions; and
- differences in expressions should be standardised, including removing all references to increases or reductions in the performance indicator descriptor (for example, it is proposed the indicator, 'Increase in the number of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing' be amended to 'Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing').

¹ Provided at Appendix 1

The appropriateness of the current benchmarks for the indicators was also considered. Where a benchmark is not recommended for a particular indicator, it is proposed outcomes be monitored to enable a basis for future benchmarking, should it be required.

The Working Group proposed that, where possible, all indicators should be disaggregated by age, gender, Indigenous status and disability. These disaggregations would assist the NPAH to improve reporting to monitor progress in reducing the gap experienced by Indigenous Australians and to address disadvantage experienced by people with disability. The group noted, however, that disability information will be subject to limitations and reliance on the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) collection would require further data development work to be undertaken once common definitions of disability have been established.

Finally, the Working Group undertook cost benefit analyses of its proposed changes to the performance indicator framework and an alternative option to develop data that would enable robust measurement and reporting of the homeless population.

5.2 Recommendations for revisions to the existing performance indicator (PI) framework

For the purposes of this review, the working group proposes a framework that allows broad performance indicators to be retained despite data limitations to reflect policy intent, by including performance measures alongside the performance indicator which detail what components of the indicator will be measured. Where the whole indicator is able to be measured, the wording of the performance measure is the same as the performance indicator. Where the data is only able to measure some components of the indicator, or does not cover the whole of the population of interest to the indicator, the performance measure specifies the elements that can be measured, or the sub-population to which the data pertains.

5.2.1 Performance Indicator 1

PI 1 – The proportion of Australians who are homeless

It is recommended that this indicator be **retained**.

This PI is an overarching indicator which was considered to be based on relevant data covering the population that is comparable between jurisdictions. It was therefore judged to be a reasonably effective indicator that has minor data limitations and which demonstrates strong conceptual links to the outcome 'Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough'.

The performance measure (PM) recommended for this indicator is:

PM 1 – *The proportion of Australians who are homeless*

It is recommended that the performance benchmark (PB) for this indicator be retained, with minor changes to the wording as follows:

PB 1 – *A 7 per cent reduction in the number of homeless Australians by 2013*

The Working Group noted available data does not align with the baseline (2008) and benchmark (2013) years of the NPAH, since progress against this indicator would be fully measured at the Census data collection points of 2006 and 2011. The group noted that the

use of Centrelink data is being investigated to determine whether, together with SAAP and SHS data, it can be used as a data source to estimate progress for 2013.

5.2.2 Performance Indicator 2

PI 2 – The proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)

It is recommended that this indicator be **retained**.

This PI was considered to be based on relevant data covering the population that is comparable between jurisdictions. It was therefore judged to be reasonably effective indicator which demonstrates strong conceptual links to the outcome 'Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough'.

The performance measure (PM) recommended for this indicator is:

PM 2 – *The proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness*

It is recommended that the performance benchmark for this indicator be retained, with minor changes to the wording as follows:

PB 2 – *A 25 per cent reduction in the number of rough sleepers by 2013*

The Working Group noted available data does not align with the baseline (2008) and benchmark (2013) years of the NPAH, since progress against this indicator would be fully measured at the Census data collection points of 2006 and 2011. The group noted that the use of Centrelink data is being investigated to determine whether, together with SAAP and SHS, it can be used to enable an assessment of progress to be estimated for 2013.

5.2.3 Performance Indicator 3

PI 3 – The number of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence

It is recommended that this indicator be **revised**.

Because this PI uses a number rather than a proportion, it is unclear whether, for example, an increase would represent an improvement or a decline in performance, as this would depend on the corresponding population growth or decline. The PI was assessed as demonstrating weak connections with the two relevant outcomes of the agreement: 'Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough' and 'People at risk of experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'.

Nevertheless, this PI was considered important because domestic and family violence continues to be one of the main drivers of homelessness. Escaping domestic violence is the most common reason provided by people who seek help from specialist homelessness services. Retaining the indicator in a revised form will help to keep the focus on improving performance measurement of this key driver of homelessness.

Revised PI 3 – *The proportion of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence*

The Working Group considered that the performance measure for this indicator should focus on sustainable housing outcomes. The revised measure is a long-term proxy measure of outcomes for people who access specialist homelessness services, as data on outcomes for all homeless people who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence is not available and is not expected to become available during the life of the NPAH.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 3 – *The proportion of people accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing following family violence*

PB 3

No performance benchmark is proposed for this indicator, due to the uncertainties associated with the replacement of the SAAP National Data Collection by the SHS collection in 2011-12. In lieu of a specific benchmark, the preferred direction of this indicator is for an increase.

5.2.4 Performance Indicator 4

PI 4 – **An increase in the number of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing**

It is recommended that this indicator be **revised**.

Because this PI uses a number rather than proportion, it is unclear whether, for example, an increase would represent an improvement or a decline in performance, as this would depend on the corresponding growth or decline of the population in question. The indicator was assessed as demonstrating weak connections with the two relevant outcomes of the agreement: 'Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough' and 'People at risk of experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'.

Nevertheless, this PI was considered important because people leaving prison and other care arrangements are at high risk of homelessness and are a key target for early intervention and prevention programs. Retaining the indicator will help to keep the focus on improving performance measurement of this issue.

Revised PI 4 – *The proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing*

The Working Group considered the performance measure for this indicator should focus on sustainable housing outcomes. The revised measure is a long-term proxy measure of outcomes for people who access specialist homelessness services, as data on the housing outcomes for all people who exit care and custodial settings is not available and is not expected to become available during the life of the NPAH.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 4 – *Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings accessing specialist homelessness services who secure sustainable housing*

PB 4

No performance benchmark is proposed for this indicator, due to the uncertainties associated with the change of from the SAAP to the SHS data collection in 2011-12.

4.2.5 Performance Indicator 5

PI 5 – *Reduce the number of people existing social housing and private rental into homelessness*

It is recommended that this indicator be **revised**.

This PI uses a number rather than proportion, making it difficult to assess performance, as this would depend on the corresponding growth or decline of the population in question. The indicator was assessed as demonstrating weak connections with the two relevant outcomes of the agreement. 'Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough' and 'People at risk of experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'.

Nevertheless, this PI was considered important because eviction from social housing and private rental are common pathways into homelessness and its retention assists with continuing the focus on improving performance measurement on this issue.

Revised PI 5 – *The proportion of people in social housing who are supported to maintain or secure sustainable housing*

The Working Group considered the performance measure for this indicator should focus on sustainable housing outcomes. The revised measure is a long-term proxy measure of outcomes for people who access specialist homelessness services, as data on the housing outcomes for all social housing and private rental tenants who receive support through other programs to maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing is not available and is not expected to become available during the life of the NPAH.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 5 – *The proportion of people in social housing and private rental and accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing*

PB 5

No performance benchmark is proposed for this indicator, due to the uncertainties associated with the replacement of the SAAP National Data Collection by the SHS data collection in 2011-12. In lieu of a specific benchmark, the preferred direction of this indicator is for an increase.

5.2.6 Performance Indicator 6

PI 6 – *The proportion of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness*

It is recommended that this indicator be **retained**.

It was considered that this indicator demonstrates a clear connection the outcome 'Fewer people will become homeless more than once'.

This is a long-term proxy measure of outcomes for people who access specialist homelessness services, as data is not available on outcomes for all homeless people who experience repeat homelessness and is not expected to become available during the life of the NPAH.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 6 – Proportion of people accessing specialist homelessness services who experience repeat periods of homelessness

PB 6

It is recommended that the existing performance benchmark be retained, noting that caveats may be applied to the data when it is reported to assist with interpretation of the results - in particular the extent to which comparability issues between SAAP and SHS data may be influencing the results. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) proposes to produce two measures for 2011-12 to assist with transitioning to the new data source: one SAAP-like measure and one that uses the improvements offered by the SHS -.

5.2.7 Performance Indicator 7

PI 7 – Number of young people (12 to 18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, school and work

It is recommended that this indicator be revised.

Because this PI uses a number rather than a proportion, it is unclear whether, for example, an increase would represent an improvement or a decline in performance, as this would depend on the corresponding growth or decline of the population in question. The indicator was assessed as demonstrating weak connections with the outcome 'People at risk of experiencing homelessness will improve connections with their families and communities and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation', because it only covers young people, not the wider population. Furthermore, the indicator as currently worded construes success only when young people are collectively engaged with family, school and work, which may not be appropriate or desirable for all young people, particularly 12-14 year olds.

The indicator focuses on young people because achieving employment, education and community connectedness is particularly important as a protective factor in reducing the likelihood of homelessness later in life. The revised indicator improves the links to the outcomes by referencing a proportion and developing a measure (below) that focuses on employment, education or training outcomes. It was therefore considered it should be retained, in its revised form, in the new framework.

Revised PI 7 - Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, school or work

The revised measure is a long-term proxy measure of outcomes for people who access specialist homelessness services, as data is not available and is not expected to become available during the life of the agreement on outcomes for all homeless young people who re-engaged with family school or work. The measure focuses on employment, education or

training because using connections to family/community as a measure of success is problematic, since such connection is not always appropriate (for example, where young people are escaping abusive family relationships). It is also problematic from a definitional perspective in reaching agreement on where the concept of family begins and ends.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 7 – *Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) accessing specialist homelessness services who get support to access education, training or employment*

PB 7

No performance benchmark is proposed for this indicator, due to the uncertainties associated with the replacement of the SAAP National Data Collection by the SHS collection in 2011-12. In lieu of a specific benchmark, the preferred direction of this indicator is for an increase.

5.2.8 Performance Indicator 8

PI 8 – **Number of children (under 12 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are provided with additional support to maintain contact with their school**

It is recommended that this indicator be **removed**.

No data source has been identified for this indicator and therefore further data development would be required which is not likely to yield results during the course of the NPAH. Although this PI has some connection with the outcome 'People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation', information on education outcomes of young people is already being captured under PI 7. It is difficult to define what is meant by 'maintain contact with school' as this could cover occasional contact, enrolment but non attendance, through to daily attendance. There are similar issues with the concept of what is meant by 'additional support'.

Despite the removal of this indicator due to lack of appropriate data, the Working Group acknowledges the importance of measuring outcomes for homeless children. Information on homeless children will be available through disaggregations of relevant indicators by age (eg PI 1 and PI 3 for accompanying children). The Working Group also noted that the SHS will treat accompanying children seeking services as clients in their own right, which will enable more information to be collected than was previously available under SAAP. While it is still not possible to measure PI 8 in its current form, information will be available on student status or access to education in the SHS and a more appropriate indicator could be developed to enable outcomes for under 12s to be measured, such as an amended PI 7 for under 12s which focuses exclusively on education.

5.2.9 Performance Indicator 9

PI 9 – Number of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive financial advice, counselling and/or case management

It is recommended that this indicator be **revised**.

The Working Group recommends retaining this PI because it is the only indicator that contributes towards measuring the quality services component of the outcome 'People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'. References to financial advice and counselling have been removed because it was felt these services are captured in case management plans, where relevant.

Revised PI 9 – *The proportion of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive case management*

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 9 – *The proportion of specialist homelessness services cased managed clients with goals achieved*

This long-term proxy measure has limitations because it only measures outcomes for people who access the specialist homelessness services system. It is recognised that the measure of goals achieved is a blunt measure that will be influenced by the extent to which the goals set are realistic. However, the working group determined that the measure is valuable because it gives an indication of client outcomes.

PB 9

No performance benchmark is proposed for this indicator, due to the uncertainties associated with the replacement of the SAAP National Data Collection by the SHS collection in 2011-12. In lieu of a specific benchmark, the preferred direction of this indicator is for an increase.

5.2.10 Performance Indicator 10

PI 10 – Number of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who provided with legal services

It is recommended that this indicator be **removed**.

This indicator is a weak output indicator with only a limited connection with the outcome 'People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'. The HoTs conceptual framework does not encourage the retention of this sort of output indicator unless no appropriate outcome indicators are available and the indicator has a reasonable nexus with the outcome. There is no substantive evidence to show that provision of legal services per se will help achieve a change in a person's homelessness status by improving their access to sustainable housing. Furthermore, access to legal services is only one element of service provision and does not demonstrate quality of service.

5.2.11 Performance Indicator 11

PI 11 – Number of staff of specialist homelessness services provided with formal training and development opportunities

It is recommended that this indicator be **removed**.

This PI is an input indicator with a limited connection with the outcome 'People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'. Provision of formal training and development for staff of services will not necessarily improve housing outcomes for clients. Data is not currently available to report against this indicator.

5.3 Recommendations for additions to the existing performance indicator (PI) framework

5.3.1

New PI (PI 2 in proposed revised framework) – Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless

This indicator is proposed as an indicator in its own right. In the current framework, the Indigenous baseline and benchmark are listed underneath PI 1 – Proportion of Australians who are homeless. The aim of adding this PI is to give more prominence to the data and benchmark from the existing performance framework in accordance with the directions of Closing the Gap, given that Indigenous people are overrepresented in the homeless population.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

New PM (PM 2 in proposed revised framework) – *Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless*

It is recommended that the performance benchmark for this indicator be retained, with minor changes to the wording as follows:

New PB (PB 2 in proposed revised framework) – *33.3 per cent reduction in the number of Indigenous Australians who are homeless by 2013*

5.3.2

New PI (PI 4 in proposed revised framework) – Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)

This indicator is proposed as an indicator in its own right rather than relying on the disaggregation of PI 2 – Proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping) - to demonstrate outcomes for Indigenous homeless people, given the over-representation of Indigenous people in the rough sleeper population.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

New PM (PM 3 in proposed revised framework) – *Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)*

PB

The Working Group determined that it was inappropriate to set a new benchmark at this late stage in the agreement, when all initiatives have already been decided and jurisdictions had no opportunity to adjust deliverables to meet new expectations. The ABS review of the methodology for counting the homeless, which is now not due to report until May 2012, may also have unanticipated impacts on Indigenous rough sleeper numbers.

In lieu of a specific benchmark, the preferred direction of this indicator is for a decrease.

5.4 Proposed revised performance indicator framework

Based on the findings of this review, a revised performance indicator framework, including supporting performance measures, data sources and benchmarks, is proposed and is set out at Table X below. The indicators have been re-numbered to reflect the addition and removal of indicators as noted in 4.3 above. The framework contains what the Working Group considers to be either conceptually adequate indicators or robust long-term proxy indicators for key policy directions, with acceptable data. The performance indicator framework currently contained in the NPAH is at Appendix 3

Benchmarks have not been set for a number of indicators due to the uncertainties associated with changing from the SAAP to the SHS data collection in 2011-12. The Working Group recommends against setting benchmarks for these indicators, even once data are available from the SHSC in October 2012, given the short time remaining between then and the end of the term of the NPAH.

However, the Working Group found that jurisdictions should continue to work together to refine available data sets to monitor the incidence of, and changes to, homelessness and associated measures in the future.

5.5 Cost benefit analysis

The Working Group considered the relative costs and benefits of the proposed revisions to the performance reporting framework, as well an alternative option of developing further data to fill existing gaps and better enable robust measurement and reporting.

The changes to the NPAH performance indicators and associated performance measures proposed in this report do not involve additional data development costs as they leverage off work that has already been funded (such as the development by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in conjunction with state and territory governments and the Commonwealth, of a new Specialist Homelessness Services collection (SHSC) to improve reporting on homeless clients).

The proposed approach has considerable benefits in terms of improved information and accountability, including:

- Continued focus on population indicators, including increased emphasis on Indigenous homelessness in accordance with COAG commitment to Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage.
- Continued measurement of outcomes for key homelessness cohorts through service provision measures which will enable focus to be maintained on key policy issues.

- Inclusion of service provision performance measures validates the effort and costs already incurred by the Commonwealth and jurisdictions in developing the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection.

The proposed changes to performance indicators will result in a better alignment with the outcomes of the NPAH, allowing for more meaningful reporting of performance. This will give all jurisdictions access to better information when addressing homelessness and potentially result in improved policy outcomes.

However, there remain limitations in reporting against those indicators that rely on measures drawn from the SHS collection because data are not available on the whole homeless population. The proposed performance measures based on specialist homelessness services data are long-term proxy or partial measures which capture outcomes for people who access these specialist homelessness services.

Despite this, these indicators are included in the proposed revised framework because the clients captured in the SHS data have been identified as the main identifiable and reported group experiencing homelessness. By including indicators for this group, a better assessment of the performance of homelessness programs will be possible.

An alternate option involving undertaking significant further data development work to improve reporting of population level data was considered. However, obtaining accurate population level data would require undertaking what would be, in effect, a more thorough and rigorous version of the national census collection but on a more frequent basis.

Such an exercise would result in better data on homelessness than the proposed approach and would have the advantage of providing an improved understanding and, potentially, enhanced policy outcomes. However, even if a significantly more reliable collection were possible, the Working Group considered that associated costs would be prohibitive, being several orders of magnitude higher than for the national census. Finally, given the lead in time for national censuses or surveys, it would not be possible to complete this further work during the life of the NPAH.

Thus, despite the benefits that would flow from the availability of comprehensive information on homelessness, the working Group did not believe that taking on the cost was justified at this time.

5.6 Transitional Issues

The replacement of the SAAP National Data Collection by the SHS collection will result in data that are not fully compatible, as the two collections vary in both scope and the way information is collected about clients and children in particular. As the SHS collection has just commenced, the full extent of the data comparability issues are still being investigated by the AIHW. The AIHW proposes to produce two measures for 2011-12 to assist with transitioning to the new data source: one SAAP-like measure and one that uses the improvements offered by the SHS. SHS data for 2011-12 is expected to be available before the end of 2012.

SHS data will provide a more comprehensive picture of homelessness in Australia, including improved data on causes of homelessness, repeat homelessness, exits into housing, and children who are homeless. This will enable better assessment of the performance of homelessness programs.

It should also be noted that the homelessness population measures will be affected by the results of the ABS Review of the methodology for counting the homeless, which is currently expected to be released in May 2012. As the review is likely to recommend revised figures for the 2001 and 2006 Censuses, baseline numbers are not able to be specified in this report. The revisions do not affect the quantum of the benchmark, as the ABS will retrospectively adjust the figures for 2001 and 2006 to reflect the revised methodology.

5.7 Response to the COAG Reform Council (CRC) recommendations on performance reporting in the NPAH

As part of this review of the NPAH, the Working Group was asked to address the following recommendations made to COAG by the CRC in its *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness: Early Assessment of Progress 2009-10* in July 2010.

CRC Recommendation 1:

The COAG Reform Council recommends COAG note the council's assessment that:

- the performance indicators as currently set out in the agreement—with the exception of the three population indicators that utilise census data—cannot be reported against
- the performance reporting framework is incomplete and, despite substantial data development efforts underway, it is likely to remain so for the life of the agreement
- continued efforts to develop and measure the problematic performance indicators and benchmarks in the agreement are unlikely to provide useful information during the life of the agreement and risk diverting governments' focus from the broader data development task to measure the outcomes of the agreement
- all governments have shown a strong commitment to the continued improvement of the performance framework. The data development work now being undertaken to improve the quality and scope of homelessness data may in time result in a substantially improved data system on homelessness in Australia.

CRC Recommendation 2:

The COAG Reform Council recommends that COAG request the Housing Ministers Conference to:

- review the performance reporting framework for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, reporting to COAG by December 2010
- use the review to develop and implement a simplified performance reporting framework focused on indicators of the homeless population and program-based performance measures, as proposed in this early assessment
- separately bring forward a plan, during 2011, for the broader development of data to support the reporting of outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The plan should take into account the cost, benefits and relative prioritisation of data development options and COAG's agreed outcomes and objectives.

The Working Group noted that at the time that the CRC report was written there were large gaps in homelessness data, which impacted adversely on governments' ability to report on performance under the NPAH.

This lack of data led to a range of data development projects being progressed over the last eighteen months. In particular, the SHS data collection has been developed and implemented, enabling outcomes focused reporting, which is more consistent with the IGA performance reporting framework than program and output measures. Several indicators proposed in this review utilise this new data.

With regard to the specific recommendations for actions to be taken to review the existing performance framework, develop and implement a revised framework and bring forward a plan for data development in 2011:

- FaHCSIA, with input from the AIHW and state and territory departments responsible for housing and homelessness, began a review of the performance reporting framework for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness in December 2010. This process was superseded by the COAG agreement at its meeting on 13 February 2011 to adopt the recommendations of the Heads of Treasuries review of National Agreements, National Partnerships and Implementation Plans, which included a review of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.
- COAG specifically required that the review of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness consider the performance framework. The Working Group has considered changes to improve the framework, including those recommended by the CRC as a result of its own assessment.
 - The framework proposed in this report retains the population measures drawn from the Census and includes performance measures that draw on Specialist Homelessness Services data to measure sustainable housing and social inclusion outcomes.
 - The performance reporting framework will be supported by more standardised annual reporting on the outputs of NPAH initiatives against jurisdiction Implementation Plans, through a revised reporting template.
 - The new SHS collection will improve data collection and reporting on outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Table X: Proposed Revised Performance Indicator Framework

Revised Number	Performance Indicator	Performance Measure	Baseline/ Data Source	Performance Benchmark
Performance Indicator 1	Proportion of Australians who are homeless	Proportion of Australians who are homeless	2006 Census (baseline) 2011 Census	7 per cent reduction in the number of homeless Australians by 2013.
Performance Indicator 2	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless	2006 Census (baseline) 2011 Census	33.3 per cent reduction in the number of Indigenous homeless Australians by 2013.
Performance Indicator 3	Proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping).	Proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)	2006 Census (baseline) 2011 Census	25 per cent reduction in the number of rough sleepers by 2013.
Performance Indicator 4	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping).	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)	2006 Census (baseline) 2011 Census	Preferred direction: decrease.
Performance Indicator 5	Proportion of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence	Proportion of clients accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing following family violence	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS	Preferred direction: increase.
Performance Indicator 6	Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing	Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings accessing specialist homelessness services who secure sustainable housing	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS	Preferred direction: increase.
Performance Indicator 7	Proportion of people in social housing and private rental who are supported to maintain or secure sustainable housing	Proportion of people in social housing and private rental and accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS	Preferred direction: increase.
Performance Indicator 8	Proportion of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness	Proportion of people accessing specialist homelessness services who experience repeat periods of homelessness	2007-08 SAAP (baseline) 2008-09 to 2010-11 SAAP 2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS	25 per cent reduction in the number of people experiencing three repeat periods of homelessness at an emergency service in 12 months by 2013.
Performance Indicator 9	Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, school or work	Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) accessing specialist homelessness services who get support to access education, training or employment services	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS	Preferred direction: increase.
Performance Indicator 10	Proportion of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive case management	Proportion of specialist homelessness services case managed clients with goals achieved	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS	Preferred direction: increase.

Indicators to be disaggregated by key population groups where appropriate. These may include: Indigenous, age, gender, geographic location, disability etc. Note that disability data have limitations.

Other data sources will be examined where appropriate to provide broader contextual information.

National Partnership (NP) Agreement on Homelessness Review Working Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Preamble

At its meeting on 13 February 2011, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed that the underlying reform principles of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations continue to provide a strong foundation for progressing COAG's agreed reform agenda and achieving better policy and service delivery outcomes for all Australians. COAG established a HoTs Review and CRC Recommendations Implementation Steering Group to review and improve implementation of the IGA.

Role/purpose

The Working Group has been established to review the Homelessness NP on behalf of the Heads of Treasuries (HoTs) Review and CRC Recommendations Implementation Steering Group.

Term

The Terms of Reference are effective from May 2011 and continue until the review is complete (due August 2011, final recommendations to be back to Steering Group by 15 August 2011¹).

Membership

Membership will consist of Senior Officers from First Ministers', Treasuries and relevant portfolio agencies from the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.

Key tasks

The Working Group will:

- Assess the performance reporting framework and reporting arrangements of the Homelessness NP against the conceptual framework developed by the HoTs Review. See http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/performance_reporting/downloads/conceptual_framework_for_performance_reporting_feb11.pdf
- In reviewing the performance framework:
 - limit indicators to those necessary to measure performance and inform the public about reform progress; and
 - include an analysis of the cost of developing data to support new performance indicators and performance benchmarks against the benefit of improved public accountability.

¹ Subsequently revise to November 2011

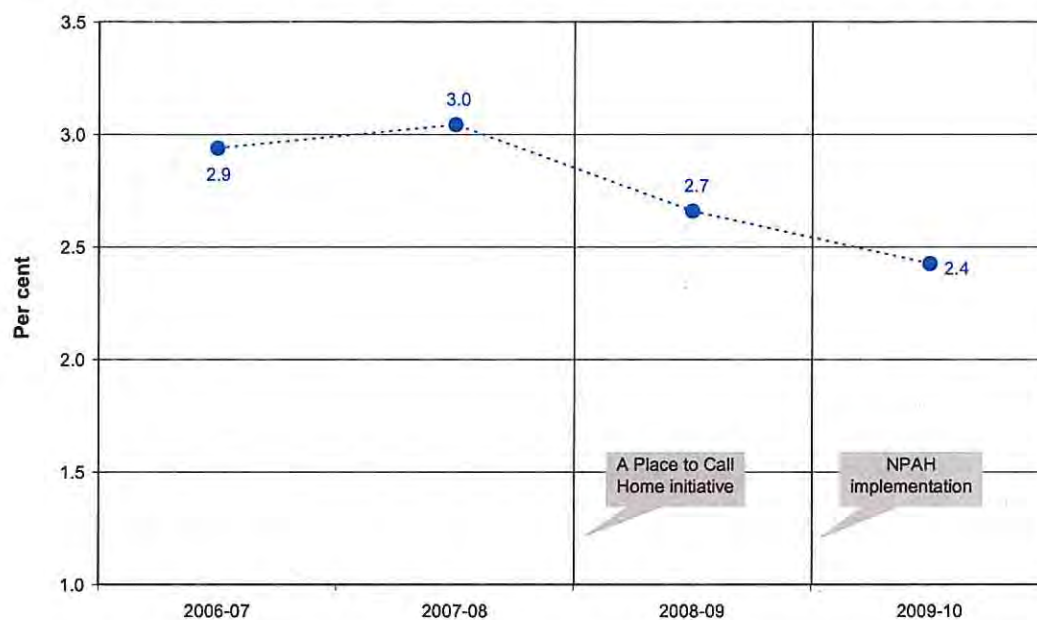
- Assess progress towards the agreed outcomes, including through seeking expert advice from the COAG Reform Council, Ministerial Council data groups, data agencies, the Secretariat for the Steering Committee of the Review of Government Service Provision, and others as appropriate.
- Consider the implications for the National Affordable Housing Agreement's reporting framework homelessness objective.
- Consider any other issues of significance for the operation of the NP or the achievement of its objectives.
- As the review progresses, provide reports to the Implementation Steering Group on key issues.
- Deliver a final report to the Implementation Steering Group on progress towards outcomes and any action required, including specific recommendations for improved performance reporting, measurable performance indicators, a prioritised data development plan that takes into account the cost and benefits, and any issues regarding the Agreement.

Meetings

- The Working Group will meet as required.
- Meetings will be chaired jointly by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the South Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet.
- Commonwealth will provide secretariat support for the Working Group.

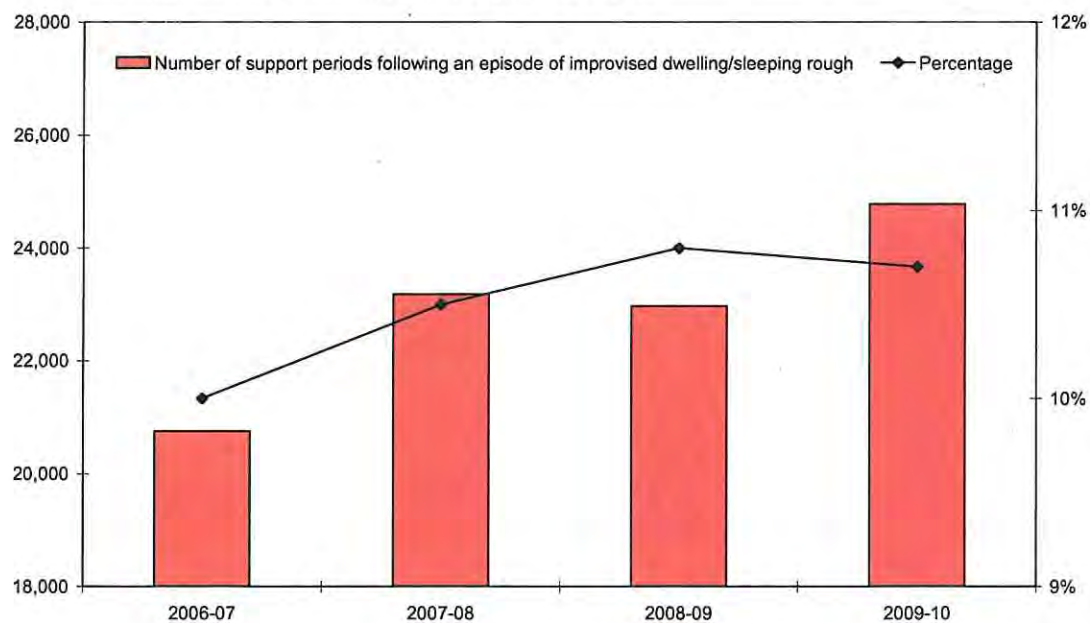
Process

1. Initial analysis of the Homelessness NP performance framework (including reporting) against the HoTs conceptual framework, taking into consideration the recommendations from the CRC and Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision.
2. Analysis of existing performance indicators and performance benchmarks that are identified as poor quality (at step 1) against the HoTs Review Conceptual Framework's guiding principles for rationalisation or change.
3. Analysis of additional and alternative performance indicators and performance benchmarks against a framework for prioritisation, including consideration of the costs and benefits of new or expanded data collections.
4. Consider the overall appropriateness and proportionality of any revised performance framework.
5. Assessment of progress against outcomes.
6. Identification and analysis of any other significant issues relating to the operation of the Agreement and the achievement of its objectives.
7. Draft recommendations and a report with supporting analysis (including a response to the CRC's recommendations).

Figure 1: Trends in SAAP turn-away rate

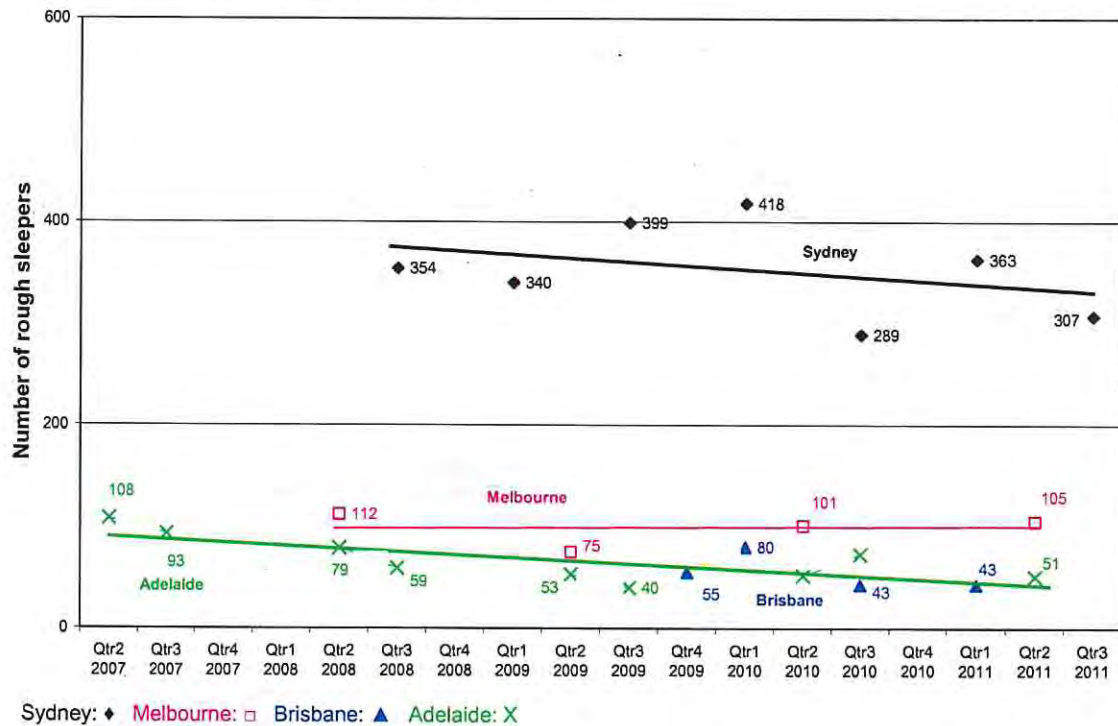
Source: SAAP National Data Collection annual and demand reports (2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10)

Note: Accommodation related data in Victoria has not been recorded in the SAAP NDC on a basis consistent with other states and territories. It is therefore not possible to derive turn-away rates for Victoria that are comparable with those reported by other states and territories.

Figure 2: Trends in SAAP support periods immediately following an episode of improvised dwelling / sleeping rough

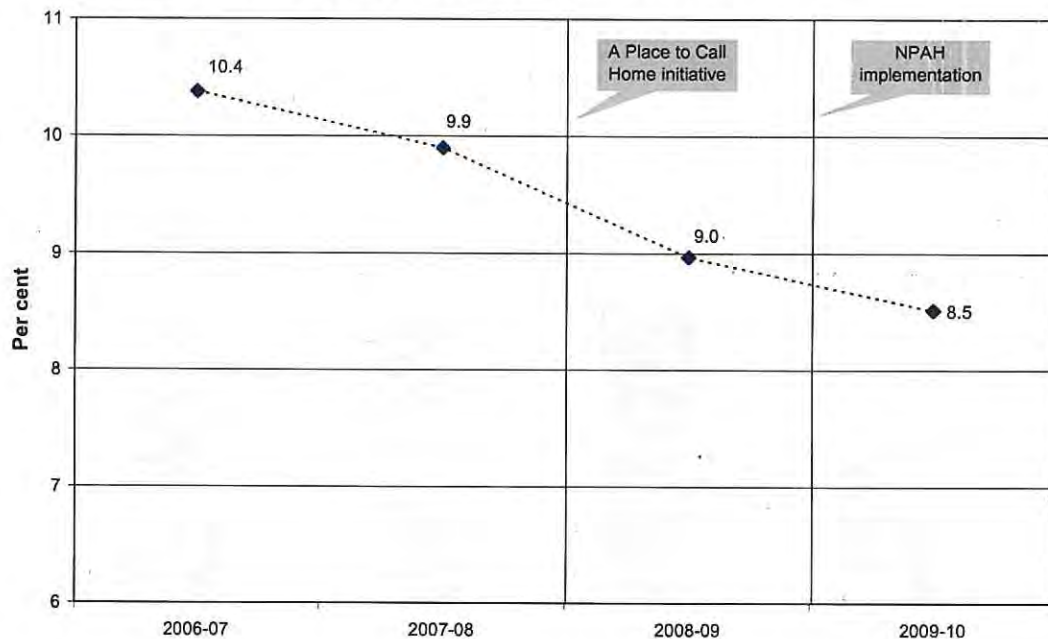
Source: FaHCSIA's analysis of SAAP data

Figure 3: Trends in city street counts of rough sleepers: Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide



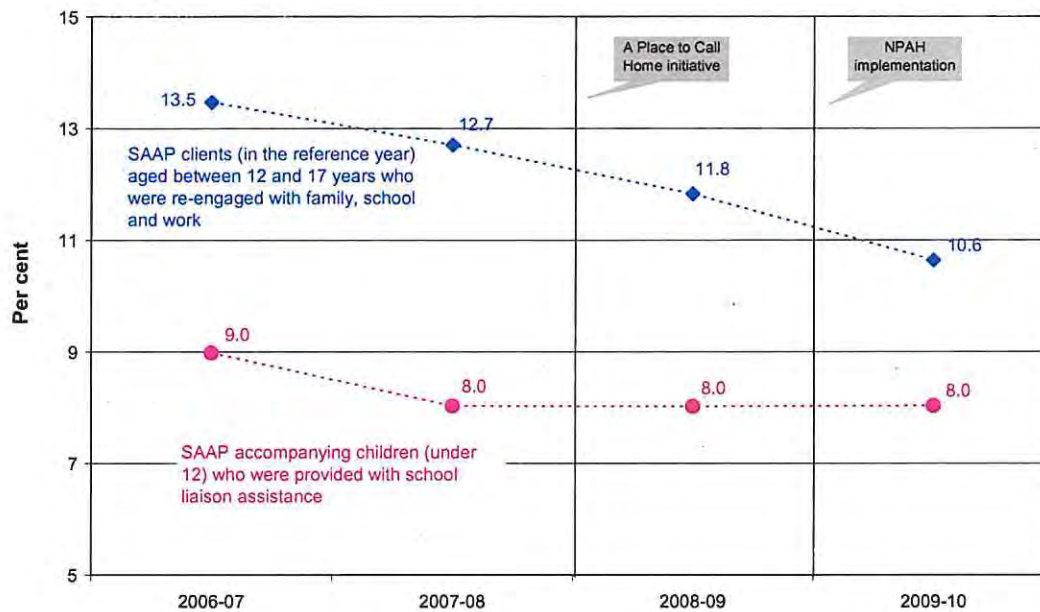
Source: South Australia Government and local councils of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane

Figure 4: Trends in per cent of SAAP clients (and accompanying children) who experienced repeat periods of homelessness



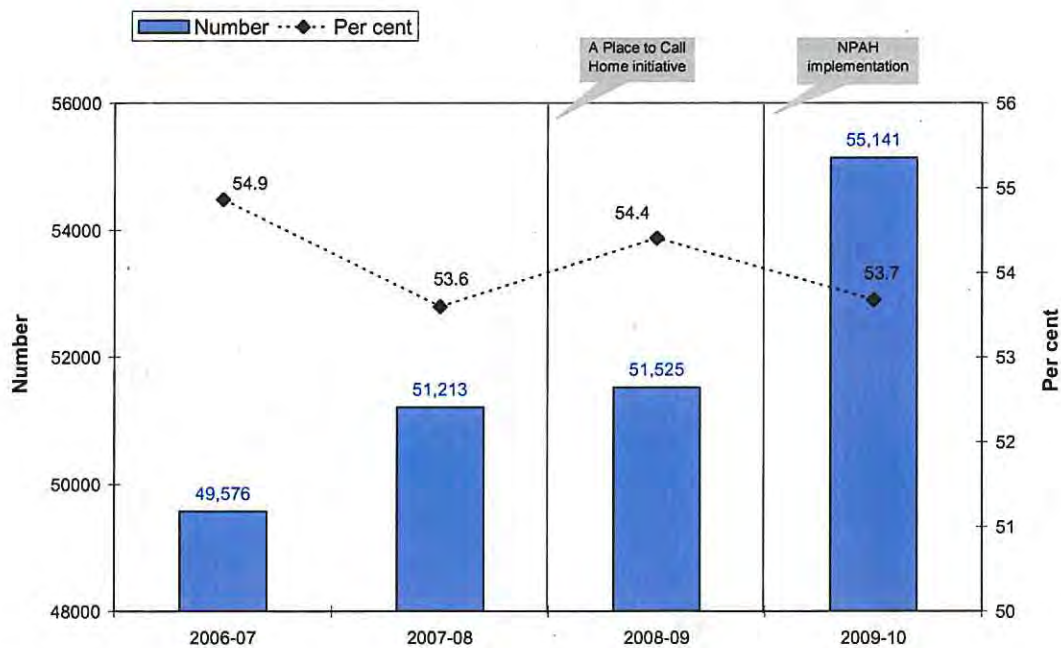
Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Figure 5: Trends in per cent of SAAP clients (aged 12-17) and accompanying children (under 12)



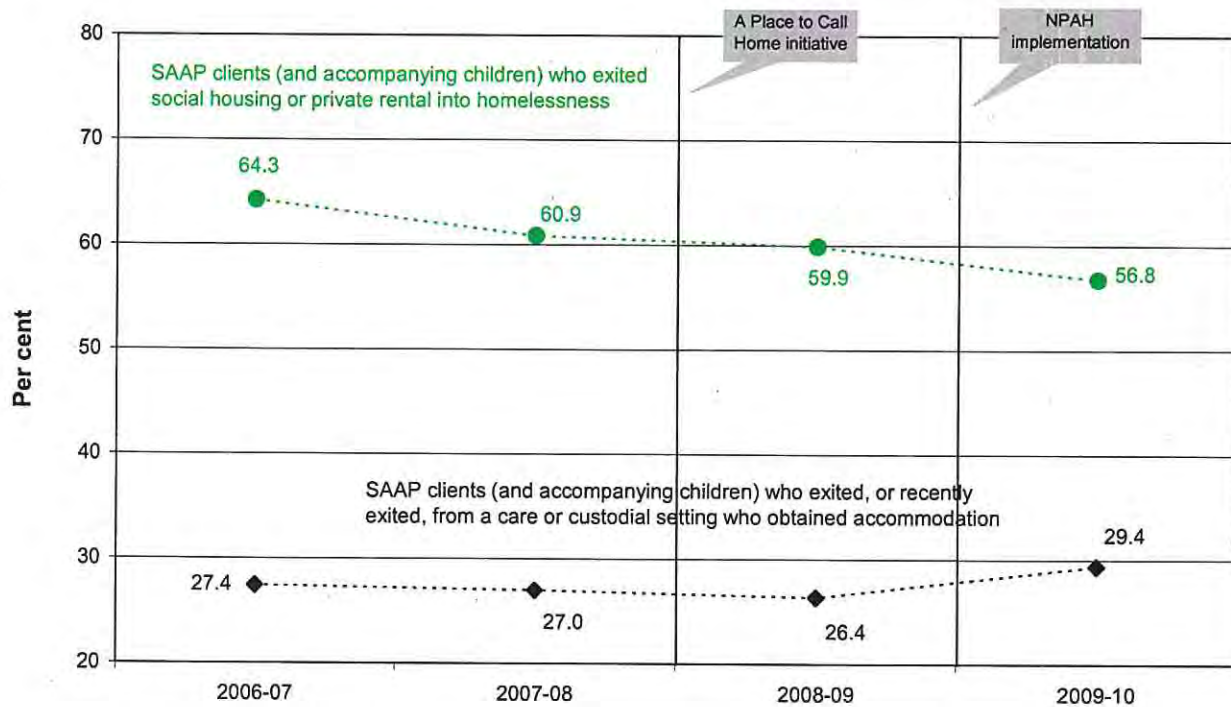
Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Figure 6: Trends in number and per cent of SAAP clients who experienced family violence and were in a house/flat with tenure after support



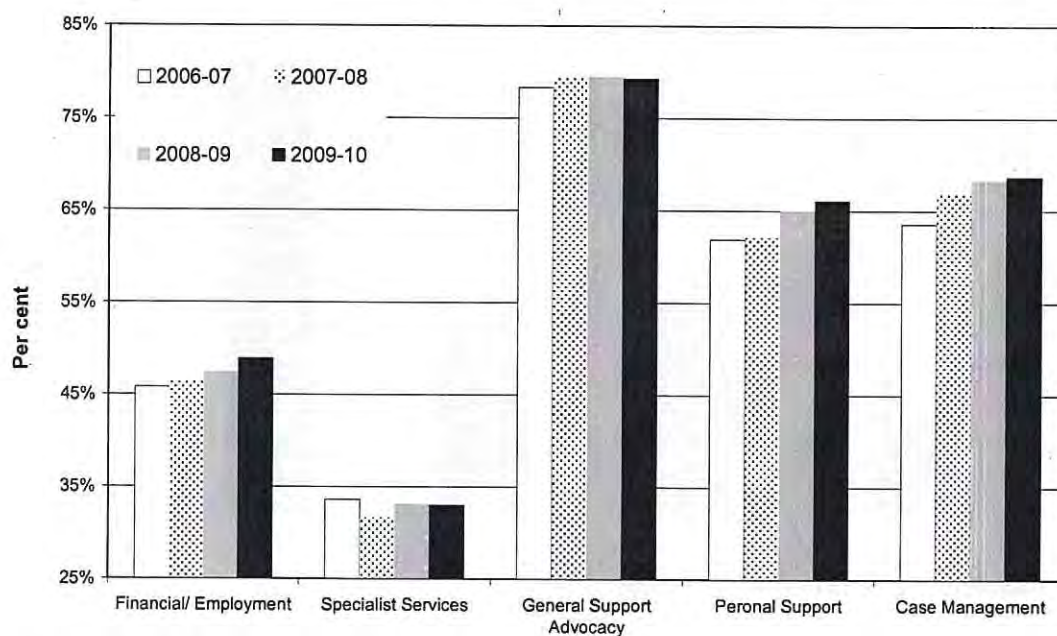
Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Figure 7: Trends in per cent of SAAP clients (and accompanying children)



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Figure 8: Trends in per cent of SAAP clients provided with financial/employment services, specialist services, general support/advocacy, personal support and case management



Source: FaHCSIA's analysis of SAAP client data

Issues raised during at least two consultations, by prevalence

MESSAGE/LESSON	No. of consultations
NPAH has increased cooperation, empowerment, partnerships, engagement, communication and respect for/between services/agencies; better consistency between sector/state/CW; more of a shared language and approach.	10
Shortage of affordable/appropriate rental housing and importance of ongoing roll-out of NRAS.	9
Confluence of NPAH and stimulus funding: fortuitous timing has facilitated good outcomes for homeless people. Concerns about: a) what will happen when stimulus funding comes to an end; b) appropriate targeting – less visible homeless tend to receive lower priority.	8
NPAH has increased focus on homelessness; demonstrated government commitment; facilitated development of state/regional homelessness plans.	7
Many family violence programs have been extremely effective. However, demand is outstripping ability of services to respond and when 'safe at home' seen as the only answer, can increase the risk of women being unsafe at home.	7
Specialist/intensive tenancy support services effective when appropriate to target group.	6
Effectiveness constrained by lack of data about service need: how many of which projects and where. Otherwise system will continue to grow historically and not in response to evidence. New SH data collection will lead to better outcomes.	6
Importance of family violence as a risk factor/pathway to homelessness for women and children; the value/effectiveness of properly supported (including from the police and justice systems etc) 'safe at home' type programs.	5
Importance of linking NPAH (and its review) to NAHA and other NPs (eg Mental Health) and reviews.	5
Brokerage funds very effective – particularly in rural & regional areas; importance of these funds not being prescriptive; hub approach worth considering.	4
NPAH has played a significant role in breaking down of barriers between specialist services and eg real estate agents, white goods manufacturers.	3
NPAH funds too focused on new projects – at the expense of making structural change and building on existing projects.	3
NPAH outcome measures are not robust – eg someone being housed for 3 months could be a success. No account taken of the fact that success is different for different groups/individuals in different services.	3
Youth (ie being young) seen as a 'plus' eg in DEEWR JSA criteria, whereas, in fact, often a 'minus'/risk factor.	3
For exiting care programs to be effective, pre- and post-leaving planning essential – in some programs not happening.	3
'Housing first' approach can be a risk – particularly for young people.	3
NPAH reporting: while in some ways a 'burden' also has potential to benefit agencies via feedback loops, cross data sharing etc.	3
Increased focus on rough sleepers to detriment of other groups.	2
As a result of NPAH, NFPs have become more strategic/operate more like a business, increased financial literacy; has facilitated capacity building and innovation.	2
Right balance between building capacity/independence and providing enough support is not always achieved.	2
Homelessness Gateways play critical in linking people who are not clients of homelessness services to crisis accommodation.	2
Effective regional and Aboriginal initiatives lacking.	2
JSA has led to better engagement with employment services by people who are homeless. Those with very significant disadvantage are getting access to services, resourced according to need - but vulnerable young homeless/at risk people disadvantaged. Room for improved identification and service integration.	2
'Cultural' aspect of homelessness overlooked.	2
Insufficient account taken of the need for young people to transition at their own pace into training/employment.	2
Programmes that include living skills for young people are valuable.	2
Ability to leverage onto mainstream health services has led to good outcomes for rough sleepers.	2
Private housing rental assistance to obtain housing near services and other amenities, proving effective.	2
Inflexibility of programs/systems detrimental to outcomes.	2

Effectiveness of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

NOMINATED AS MOST EFFECTIVE ASPECT OF NPAH	NOMINATED AS IMPORTANT TO INITIATE OR TO BE CONTINUED TO ALLOW TIME TO REACH POTENTIAL OR WHICH SHOULD BE ROLLED OUT MORE BROADLY	NOMINATED AS LESS EFFECTIVE ASPECT OF NPAH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education programs for young people • Safe at home programs • Brokerage model • Supportive Housing Program + Individual Support Packages • Awareness-raising of youth homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Interagency Project (NSW) • Tenancy support services • Build on the “communication dialogue” that has begun since the NPAH • Need for reporting back to agencies data provided to government – establish a feedback process (not only numbers but also quality of outcomes) • Accommodation options for families • Develop responses for young people with dependent children themselves – critical to address intergenerational risk • More emphasis on early intervention and prevention programs going forward • Common Ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing First and Foyer models: except when used for chronically homeless people with good access to services, can be an ineffective use of housing resources – especially for young people • Coordination and timing between support and housing during critical transition stage needs further attention • Prevention – particularly children entering homelessness • Early intervention focused on initial tenancy concerns in the private rental sector • Common Ground (in the context of people being evicted into homelessness) • Role of mainstream services (eg Child Protection, Mental Health) not working as it should • Link to availability of housing has not been made strongly enough in NPAH

External influences adversely affecting homelessness, nominated during consultations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing population/demand • Visa types that prevent people from working to support themselves • Increased unemployment • Ageing workforce • Work disincentives for young people in social housing • Changes to the way the States and Territory fund wage increases • Changes to tender processes - element of competition resulting from this at odds with collaboration and best practice sharing/learning • Over-riding impact of sector reform • Lack of affordable housing • Community objections, NIMBYism • “3 strikes” rule for evictions

Organisation	Peak Bodies represented	Location
ACT Joint Pathways		ACT
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute		National
Australian Youth Forum		National
Create Foundation		National
Homelessness Community Alliance, NSW		NSW
Homelessness Australia		National
Housing NSW		NSW
National Employment Services Association		National
Northern Territory Shelter		NT
Prime Ministers' Council on Homelessness		National
Premiers Council on Homelessness		NSW
Queensland Homelessness Intersectoral Forum	Queensland Council of social Service Department of Communities Queensland Shelter Queensland Youth Housing Coalition Micah Projects Mission	QLD
South Australia Homelessness Gateway Services Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Uniting Care Wesley – Service to Youth Council 	SA
South Australian Peak Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Homelessness South Australia – South Australian Council of Social Service 	SA
Women's Services Network		National
Western Australian Council on Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Western Australia Council on Social Services Community – Housing Coalition of Western Australia – Women's Council on Domestic and Family Violence 	WA
Western Australian Housing Council		WA
Tasmanian Peak Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shelter Tasmania – University of Tasmania – Housing, Tasmania 	TAS
Victoria Council to Homeless Persons		Victoria

Under the NPAH, Australian Governments are contributing resources of \$1.1 billion from 2009-10 to 2012-13. The Commonwealth is providing \$538.6 million to state and territory Governments including \$150 million for the 'A Place to Call Home' initiative and allocating \$11.4 million for long-term research. State and Territory Governments are matching Australian Government funding. A breakdown of funding by jurisdiction is provided in Table 1.

Table 1.

Summary of financial investment in the NPAH by jurisdiction (2008-09 to 2012-13)

Jurisdiction	Commonwealth Contribution	Jurisdiction Contribution	Total
Australian Government (own purpose expenses)	\$11.40m	0	\$11.40m
Queensland	\$135.13m	\$149.50m	\$284.63m
New South Wales	\$140.40m	\$251.90m	\$392.30m
Victoria	\$105.69m	\$104.00m	\$209.69m
Western Australia	\$66.79m	\$68.37m	\$135.16m
Tasmania	\$14.31m	\$18.60m	\$32.91m
Australian Capital Territory	\$10.06m	\$10.06m	\$20.12m
Northern Territory	\$25.60m	\$29.39m	\$54.99m
South Australia	\$40.62m	\$41.48m	\$82.10m

Note: Figures in the table add up to more than \$1.1 billion as the jurisdictions more than match the Commonwealth Government contribution. However, the Commonwealth only reports on matched funding

Key Strategies and Reforms

Outputs

Table 1 provides an overview of the outputs and progress against service delivery targets aggregated across jurisdictions. Overall, 171 initiatives have been implemented, with assistance provided to clients on around 115,000 occasions. Service targets have been exceeded for the majority of outputs (13 out of 16 outputs)¹.

It should be noted that it is not possible to directly compare data across different outputs. Jurisdictions have implemented a range of service models that vary in terms of target groups, caseloads, output measures and the intensity and duration of support. For example, some initiatives may provide intensive support to clients with complex needs over longer periods of time (e.g. Common Ground), whereas other initiatives (e.g. early intervention initiatives) may provide short-term, less intensive assistance and have high volume caseloads.

As well, it is not possible to provide an overall net count of clients who have received assistance from NPAH funded services, nor to track the flow of clients in and out of homelessness and their utilisation of different services. The data relating to 'Totals of Assistances' may include multiple episodes of service for the one client. As well, the reporting does not support comprehensive reporting on the efficacy of the services provided.²

¹ Figures for initiatives implemented and number of assistances do not include Victoria, which ...

² As above

Table 2. Summary of NPAH Outputs across Jurisdictions – 2010-11

OUTPUTS	INITIATIVES (National Totals)	TARGETS ¹ (National Totals of Assistances)	ACTUALS (National Totals of Assistances)
Core Outputs			
16a – Implementation of the A Place to Call Home initiative	10	80 ¹ dwellings	103 ¹ dwellings
16b – Street to Home initiative for rough sleepers	27	11,802	14,414
16c – Support for private and public tenants to help sustain their tenancies, including tenancy support, advocacy, case management, financial counselling and referral services	17	30,565	53,616
16d – Assistance for people leaving child protection services, correctional and health facilities to access and maintain stable, affordable housing	40	7045	9241
Additional Outputs			
17a – Support services and accommodation to assist older people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	2	78	41 ¹
17b – Services to assist homeless people with substance abuse to secure or maintain stable accommodation	1	171	122
17c – Services to assist homeless people with mental health issues to secure or maintain stable accommodation	2	108	141
17d – Support to assist young people aged 12-18 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to reengage with their family where appropriate and maintain sustainable accommodation and engagement with education and employment	6	572	926
17e – Improvements in service coordination and provision	20	13,450 ¹	11,027 ¹
17f – Support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence to stay in their present housing where it is safe to do so	10	2,912	7,325
17g – Assistance for homeless people, including families with children, to stabilise their situation and to achieve sustainable housing.	17	14,854	16,563
17h – outreach programs to connect rough sleepers to long-term housing and health services	8	769	996
17i – National, state and rural (including remote) homelessness action plans to assist homeless people in areas identified as having high rates of homelessness	2	10 ¹	10 ¹
17j – Support for children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as a result of legal issues including family violence, tenancy or debt	5	865	677
17k – legal services provided to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as a result of legal issues including family violence, tenancy or debt	1	117	52
17l – Workforce development and career progression for workers in homelessness services	3	75 ¹	75 ¹
Total	171¹	83,393 assistances 80 dwellings	115,226 assistances 103 dwellings

Changes in Australian Society Since 2008

Other Social FactorsAustralia's population

The population is projected to grow from around 22 million people currently to 35.9 million people in 2050.¹

Population ageing is projected to continue. The number of children is projected to increase by 45 per cent and the number of prime working-age people is projected to increase by 44 per cent between 2010 and 2050. This is expected to occur at the same time as the number of older people (65 to 84 years) more than doubles, and the number of very old (85 and over) more than quadruples.¹

While the overall life expectancy of Australians continues to climb and educational attainment increases, gaps remain between the health and education outcomes of Australians living in cities and those living elsewhere.¹ Similarly, while there has been some progress in closing the gap of Indigenous disadvantage, Indigenous Australians continue to have poorer health, education and employment outcomes than non-Indigenous Australians.¹

Family breakdown

While family violence rates in Australia have decreased slightly over the last decade, it continues to be a major driver of homelessness in Australia.¹ Many victims of family violence will not seek assistance from specialist homelessness services, but will stay with friends or family members in temporary arrangements. Despite this, escaping violence in the home is the most common reason provided by people who seek help from specialist homelessness services.¹

Family violence is the principal cause of homelessness among women. Approximately half of women with children and young single women who seek assistance from specialist homelessness services do so to escape family violence.¹

Many service providers report that many women who escape abusive, violent relationships return to the perpetrator numerous times, and therefore cycle in and out of homelessness.¹

Family or relationship breakdown is the main reason why males with children seek assistance from a Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).¹ Young people and families in contact with youth homelessness services often cite family violence as reasons for needing assistance. Young people can be the victims of violence or may be violent toward other family members and so may enter the youth justice system or the child protection system as a result.

In 2009, there were 49,448 divorces granted in Australia, an increase of 2,239 (4.7 per cent) compared to 2008 - the first increase in the number of divorces granted since 2001.¹ While the proportion of divorces involving children has been generally decreasing, the number of children affected by divorce increased from 43,184 in 2008 to 45,195 in 2009, representing 49.1 per cent of all divorces granted.¹

Transitioning from care, detention or other institutional settings

People leaving health services, care and protection settings or the criminal justice system are at an increased risk of transitioning into homelessness. Specialist homeless service providers report that many people seek support soon after discharge from hospital. This occurs more frequently for people being discharged from mental health services.¹

People leaving the criminal justice system are also at risk of homelessness. With the numbers of people in the criminal justice system increasing over the last two decades, this is also a growing group of people at risk of homelessness.¹

Young people leaving the youth justice and child protection systems also report high levels of homelessness.¹ Since 2004, there has been a small but steady increase in both the numbers and rates of youth in detention in Australia.¹ Nearly half of all people seeking the support of specialist homelessness services are young people under 18 years of age.¹

Mental health and substance abuse

Mental health and substance use disorders can be key contributing factors leading to homelessness and homelessness can also contribute to the further deterioration of mental wellbeing. People with a severe mental illness who are without family, community and clinical supports are particularly vulnerable to homelessness.

Nearly one in two Australians will experience some form of mental illness at some stage during their life, and between 2006-07 one in five Australians experienced mental illness.¹ It is the largest cause of non-fatal disability of any disease in the country and a bigger barrier to workforce participation than any other illness in the country.¹ The proportion of Australians estimated to have a long-term mental or behavioural problem increased progressively between 1995 and 2005 (this may reflect a real increase, an increase in the self-report of mental disorders, or both).¹

Rough sleepers and people who are chronically homeless are more likely to have complex needs such as mental health issues, substance abuse and disabilities.¹ A third of people who are homeless in inner city areas are estimated as having a severe mental illness.¹

Childhood trauma

Childhood trauma is a principal characteristic of the long term homeless. The majority of people who are long term homeless have experienced major and often repeated childhood sexual or physical abuse, the involvement of child protection, or homelessness at a young age.¹

A significant number of people who are chronically homeless were under the care of child protection systems in the past.¹ From 2002-2006, the number of children on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care increased by 33.5 per cent.¹

Intergenerational disadvantage and social exclusion

Being homeless largely excludes people from full participation in the wider community, making it difficult to obtain or maintain employment or education. Children who experience homelessness are more likely to perpetuate that state into

adulthood and have an increased risk of long-term poverty, unemployment, chronic ill-health, and other forms of disadvantage and social exclusion.¹

Indigenous Australians

Indigenous Australians have a higher rate of homelessness than other Australians and homeless Indigenous Australians are almost twice as likely to sleep rough, or in improvised dwellings and shelters, than non-Indigenous Australians.¹ This rate may underestimate the true extent of Indigenous homelessness given that as well as the recognised challenges of measuring the true rate of homelessness in the broader Australian population, some homeless Indigenous people may not consider themselves as homeless if they have a strong cultural attachment to the place where they live. This may also have implications for service providers in determining the service or accommodation needs of Indigenous clients.

Indigenous Australians are also over-represented as clients of specialist housing services.¹ Similar to the drivers of homelessness for non-Indigenous Australians, family breakdown, family violence and substance abuse have been identified as being factors causing homeless Indigenous Australians to seek support services.¹ However, Indigenous Australians are more likely to cite overcrowding as a reason for seeking assistance from specialist homeless services.¹ Consistent with the complex nature of Indigenous disadvantage, there is a higher prevalence of socio-economic and health and wellbeing factors which may contribute to the higher rate of Indigenous homelessness and the subsequent need for services, such as higher levels of unemployment,¹ low levels of home ownership (although this has increased),¹ more frequent contact with the criminal justice system and poor education and health outcomes.¹

Indigenous homelessness is most likely to occur outside of major cities whereas non-Indigenous homelessness is most likely to occur in major cities.¹ The significant mobility of Indigenous people living in rural and remote Australia¹ (for example due to the need to relocate to be closer to services, particularly health services or for cultural obligations), may also contribute to the higher rate of homelessness for Indigenous Australians, particularly in rural and remote Australia.

Queensland floods

In some Queensland regions, there may be historically high levels of homelessness due to the impact of natural disasters. People in these regions may be housed in emergency or temporary accommodation or staying with friends and relatives because their usual residence is uninhabitable. Contextual information will be required to assist in interpreting trends in homelessness counts, where people impacted by the floods and cyclone are classified as being in primary or secondary homelessness.

As at 13 September 2011, 610 applications for social housing had been received from people who reported being a victim of the floods or cyclone. People in flood affected areas were also assisted to find alternative private rental accommodation, as outlined below:

- 7372 bond loans were provided as at 31 August 2011
- 1351 rental grants were advanced as at 31 August 2011
- 198 Mortgage Relief enquiries were received and 18 Mortgage Relief Loans advanced as at 13 September 2011
- 2014 people received a RentConnect Advisory Service (Level 2 and 3) as at 14 September 2011

There is also agreement for an additional 123 rental properties to be made available under the Community Rent Scheme. Over 100 temporary units of accommodation were provided for use by displaced people.

The Queensland Department of Communities conducted a survey of specialist homelessness services in areas affected by flooding to monitor the impact of natural disasters on demand for additional assistance across Queensland from November 2010 to February 2011.

The survey results showed that 3,633 people requested assistance because their usual place of residence had been affected by floods or cyclone events. An estimated 78 per cent of these people received assistance from the specialist homelessness services. Thirty-three per cent of clients were accommodated with support. The remaining sixty-seven per cent of clients received support services only. The survey documented additional demand on services across the state due to the impact of natural disasters. Some services reported still being overwhelmed by demand several months following the disasters.

RentConnect Service was an integral part of the government and community response to addressing housing needs in disaster-affected communities, with officers visiting community locations to link with clients. This initiative is funded under the NPAH and provides information, advice and referrals to assist people to find and secure a property in the private rental market.

s 47C, s 47B

