

Homelessness Action Plan
Extended Evaluation

Support for people at risk of
eviction

Tenancy Support Service
Mid North Coast

Housing NSW
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tenancy Support Service (TSS) operated by The Samaritans Foundation aims to prevent people at risk of eviction from losing their tenancy and becoming homeless. The TSS operates throughout the mid north coast of NSW with primary service delivery centres in Port Macquarie, Taree, Kempsey and Coffs Harbour. The target group for the TSS is families (including single parent families) with accompanying children including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families whose tenancies are at risk.

The TSS provides brokerage for case management, rental arrears, goods and services over a 16 week support period. Case management may be provided by other organisations through their own resources or brokered through the TSS. Total funding to the TSS from 2009/10 to 2011/12 was \$1,508,465.

A key feature of the model is the operation of four multi-agency Coordination Groups based in Port Macquarie, Taree, Kempsey and Coffs Harbour whose role includes approval of the client support plan and the brokerage budget. The Coordination Groups have supported improved partnerships between service providers and acted to strengthen client referral and support processes with improved outcomes for clients.

Additional key partnerships developed through the TSS include those with real estate agents who have been responsive to the TSS initiative and now actively refer private rental tenants to the TSS as well as cooperating with rent arrears repayment plans.

The TSS has significantly exceeded its target number of individual clients. Over the two year period 2010/11 to 2011/12 the TSS assisted 2159 individuals (inclusive of accompanying children) against a target of 700. Aboriginal people make up a significant proportion of individuals assisted, accounting for 35% of clients in 2011/12. While support to social housing tenants remained stable over the two year period there was a slight increase in the proportion of private tenants assisted in the second year although rates of assistance to private tenants was fairly high at the outset of the project in part due to the Samaritans prior experience of working collaboratively with real estate agents in the mid north coast region.

There has been a high success rate in relation to housing outcomes for TSS clients. In 2010/11, of the 911 individuals assisted, 901 had sustained their tenancy (99%) at the 16 week exit point and in 2011/12 of the 1239 individuals assisted, 1207 (97.4%) sustained their tenancy. Anecdotally, service providers interviewed reported a reduced need for referrals to crisis services due to the increased capacity to respond to issues for families early and to act in a coordinated way to provide support and financial assistance to prevent homelessness.

Key to success in sustaining tenancies is the emphasis placed on supporting clients to learn budgeting and financial management skills as well developing affordable debt repayment arrangements. There have also been a range of beneficial non housing outcomes for clients of the TSS including a significant reduction in stress, improvements in physical and mental health, family relationships, confidence and social support. Some clients have also gone on to employment or study. The provision of brokerage funding for case management hours over an extended period of 16 weeks enables service providers to put in place sustainable strategies to avoid rental arrears in the future as well as addressing underlying issues contributing to placing the tenancy at risk including domestic violence, mental health and alcohol and drug issues.

In relation to expenditure, staffing and administration accounts for 42.9% of the TSS budget while brokerage for goods and services (including case management) accounts for 57.1%. In 2011/12 brokerage was primarily spent on payments for rent arrears (46.3%) and utility payments (11.2%), removalists costs (10.1%) and brokered case management (6.6%). Expenditure on rent arrears is an essential component of securing 'buy in' from real estate agents and landlords.

It is clear that efforts to engage real estate agents have been particularly beneficial and any future efforts focused on preventing eviction in the region need to continue this focus. Real estate agents who were interviewed for the evaluation expressed a greater awareness of the difficulties which tenants could find themselves in as a result of the TSS and were willing to work with services in most situations to save the tenancy. This is an important finding for responses to homelessness in the region.

In 2011/12 the total cost per client was \$592 per individual and \$1815 per family. The average brokerage/payments were \$346 per individual and \$1061 per family. The overall cost is considered to represent value for money. While comparable benchmarks are difficult to identify the literature suggests that the cost of preventing eviction is significantly less than the costs resulting from eviction.

There are some challenges for the effective operation of the model. The model currently relies on a single coordinator to service all four Coordination Groups; provision of a second part-time Coordinator for the northern half of the mid north coast may reduce the number of hours currently lost in transit and may provide an additional mechanism to ensure out of session approvals are robust. Other improvements around data access and monitoring of referral pathways may also be facilitated. Currently, client related data is not held by the Samaritans but rather individually by service providers who are taking the lead role in provision of service to the client.

Overall, it was concluded that the TSS is an efficient, cost effective means of preventing evictions and homelessness and reducing the future risk of homelessness. The evidence suggests that the homelessness system in the region has been strengthened by the operation of TSS with significant achievements in engagement of Aboriginal services and integration between Specialist Homelessness Services and 'mainstream' service providers. The TSS has demonstrated the importance of projects to prevent eviction as part of responses to homelessness to reduce demand on crisis services and promote better outcomes for people at risk.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the NSW Homelessness Action Plan

In 2009 the NSW Government released the NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009-2014 ('the HAP'). It sets the direction for state wide reform of the homelessness service system to achieve better outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The HAP aims to realign existing effort, and increase the focus on prevention and long-term accommodation and support.

The HAP also aims to change the way that homelessness and its impact on the community is understood; change the way services are designed and delivered to homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless; and change ways of working across government, with the non-government sector and with the broader community to improve responses to homelessness.

Under the HAP there are three headline homelessness reduction targets, which are:

- A reduction of 7% in the overall level of homelessness in NSW.
- A reduction of 25% in the number of people sleeping rough in NSW.
- A reduction of one-third in the number of Indigenous people who are homeless.

The HAP includes approximately 100 NSW Government funded local, regional and state-wide projects which assist in achieving the homelessness reduction targets. As at June 2012, 55 of the projects were funded through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness ('the NPAH'). The remaining projects include other programs or services that contribute to addressing homelessness.

The projects are aligned to one of three strategic directions:

- Preventing homelessness; to ensure that people never become homeless
- Responding effectively to homelessness: to ensure that people who are homeless receive effective responses so that they do not become entrenched in the system
- Breaking the cycle: to ensure that people who have been homeless do not become homeless again

Ten Regional Homelessness Action Plans (2010 to 2014) were developed to identify effective ways of working locally to respond to local homelessness and provide the focus for many of the HAP projects.

The HAP Evaluation Strategy has been developed in consultation with government agencies and the non-government sector. It involves three inter-related components, which are:

- I. **Self evaluations** – The purpose of self evaluation is to gather performance information about each of the HAP projects across key areas in a consistent way, and to collect the views of practitioners about the effectiveness of their projects.
- II. **Extended evaluations** – The purpose of the extended evaluations is to analyse and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of 15 selected projects and the service approaches to addressing homelessness that those projects represent. The service approaches covered by the extended evaluations are; support for women and children escaping domestic violence, youth foyers, support for people exiting institutions, tenancy support to prevent evictions and long term housing and support.

- III. **Meta-Analysis** – The purpose of the meta-analysis is to synthesise the aggregated findings from the self evaluations and extended evaluations as well as other evaluations available on HAP activities.

The HAP evaluation will assist with measuring progress towards meeting the HAP targets as well as provide evidence of effective responses and lessons learnt that should be considered in the future response to homelessness in NSW.

1.2 Overview of service model and projects included in the evaluation

Robyn Kennedy Consultants were commissioned to undertake the extended evaluation of three projects grouped under the heading of supporting people who are at risk of eviction. These are projects that provide assistance to prevent people from being evicted from either social or private rental housing. The three projects that were evaluated are:

- Tenancy Support Program Far North Coast managed by On Track Community Programs
- Tenancy Support Service Mid North Coast managed by Samaritans Foundation
- Coastal Sydney Aboriginal Tenancy Support Service managed by Mission Australia

This report is focused on the **Tenancy Support Service Mid North Coast, managed by Samaritans Foundation**. Separate reports are available on the other two projects.

All three projects are based around a case management model supported by brokerage to purchase goods or services or to assist in managing debts such as rent arrears. All projects aim to connect clients to services that are appropriate to their needs as well as addressing the immediate issues that place them at risk of eviction. Each service does however, have differences in their operating models. Individual reports on each project describe the service model in detail.

1.3 Contextual factors from the literature

A literature review was undertaken on models aiming to support tenants at risk of eviction. The literature review is included in the Summary Report on all three of the tenancy support projects evaluated. References to studies are fully cited in the literature review. As is outlined in the literature review, many jurisdictions both nationally and internationally have established tenant support programs in an effort to avoid the social and economic costs associated with eviction.

Studies confirm that the vast majority of evictions are caused by the failure to pay rent and the accumulation of rent arrears. This applies to both public and private tenants although rental arrears is a much more significant factor for private renters than public housing tenants while property standards, damage to property and anti-social behaviour are more significant factors for public tenants than private renters. Tenant support programs therefore need to have a primary focus on assisting tenants to address rent arrears while also supporting tenants to address other factors that result in the threat of eviction.

There are a myriad of personal drivers for tenancy problems including mental and physical illness, relationship breakdown, loss of employment, hospitalisation/rehabilitation, experiences of family and domestic violence and incarceration of one of more household members. Anti-social behaviour by tenants is often related to personal vulnerabilities and difficulties such as mental health problems and drug and alcohol abuse. For many tenants on low incomes, bills and rent are juggled regularly and an unexpected expense such as a medical bill can “fatally derail” the ability to maintain rental payments. Private renters often have higher levels of rent arrears and debts and/or outstanding fines to utilities, store credit, banks and financial institutions. Public housing tenants at risk of eviction are more likely to present with high and complex needs and require additional support with respect to mental health support services as well as family reunification, drug/alcohol support/rehabilitation/intervention and

health/medical services. Research shows that Indigenous tenants are one of the demographic groups most vulnerable to eviction. Indigenous households in mainstream public housing are much more likely than non-Indigenous households to receive tenancy termination notices and to be evicted.

These findings suggest that to successfully avoid eviction, tenancy support programs need to provide different forms of assistance to clients to address the issues that underlie tenancy problems and to be responsive to the higher risk of Indigenous tenants. Referrals to other services such as counselling, mental health and drug and alcohol services and financial counsellors are a key element of many programs. Many tenant support programs also aim to improve family relationships, to build the capacity of clients in terms of their life skills, to increase their self esteem and to increase their confidence and trust in those delivering services. Tenancy advice and support designed to enhance the skills required to maintain a tenancy are also important particularly for Indigenous tenants where sustainable tenancies were also linked to culturally appropriate service provision. In order to meet the varying needs of tenants at risk of eviction, multi-agency partnerships are a key component of sustaining tenancies and successful tenant support programs include strong linkages with a range of service providers supported by coordinated referral processes.

The literature found that evictions generally took place before formal action commenced. Those at risk of eviction tend to move out quickly and early on in the process. Evictees often do not seek advice, information, support, or advocacy to defend their housing nor do they contact the landlord/manager to discuss the situation before it escalates further. In addition, evictees often do not make use of formal dispute resolution procedures to resolve the immediate tenancy issue. Tenants in the private rental sector are more likely to leave early than persons in the public rental sector facing eviction. These findings highlight the importance of tenancy support models assisting tenants as early as possible and wherever possible before any formal eviction process begins.

The literature review concluded that those at risk of losing their tenancy overwhelmingly maintain it with support and effective tenancy support programs enable improvements to housing circumstances to be sustained over time. Research has shown that tenancy support programs can also result in improvements in health, wellbeing, financial security, labour market outcomes, the ability to cope with serious problems and feelings of safety. Effective tenant support programs should enable these kinds of outcomes according to the needs and circumstances of tenants at risk.

The literature review found a number of elements that reflected a good practice approach to tenant support models aimed at preventing eviction. These included:

- **Early intervention** is essential as the risk to tenancies increases the longer the tenant is without the appropriate information and assistance. If intervention occurs at the point of crisis, for example when an eviction notice is presented to a tenant, the options for preventing eviction are more limited.
- **Case management** - a case management approach is adopted for each client. Case management has a focus on understanding the range of issues that may be relevant to the risk of eviction. Case management ensures that counselling, and specialised social services are coordinated and that all support services are kept informed.
- **Partnerships** – tenant support models require building of relationships with a wide range of organisations that form part of the case management of tenants at risk. This may include government and non government agencies. Clear service agreements and communication protocols with partner agencies around case management, referral practices and the provision of support services form part of effective partnerships.

- **Information, advice and advocacy** is provided to the client including on their rental housing rights and responsibilities and legal rights in order to ensure the fair and efficient implementation of tenant-landlord regulations. This information may be provided directly by the case manager or through a partner agency.
- **Practical support is varied and flexible according to individual need.** Practical support may include rent arrears assistance/utilities assistance, direct debit schemes or repayment schemes for rent and other payments, assistance and training in budgeting/money management and referrals to other support services.

In addition to these elements a good practice approach to tenant support for Indigenous tenants also requires knowledge of local Indigenous communities and the development of trust within communities as well as the use of service providers who are local and have credibility in the community; and support workers who are culturally sensitive and able to understand and acknowledge cultural issues including kinship obligations.

Evaluation of the Tenancy Support Service Mid North Coast has been undertaken within the framework of research that has highlighted key objectives and elements of successful tenancy support projects, as briefly outlined above. A more detailed description of the research is included in the Summary Report.

2 EVALUATION SCOPE AND METHODS

2.1 Ethics process

HAP evaluation projects were required to obtain ethics approvals from an appropriate body before commencing detailed consultation. The evaluation of support for people at risk of eviction was not required to obtain separate ethics approval as it was considered that the scope of approval obtained by other HAP evaluation projects from the University of NSW was broad enough to include the evaluation of support for people at risk of eviction. The evaluation has also been informed by the SAAP Ethical Research Protocols 2006.

2.2 Summary of methods

The methodology for the evaluation included:

- Consultation with the Regional Homelessness Committee
- Interviews with managers and staff of the TSS
- Interviews with Community Services regional staff
- Interviews with 21 primary clients (with 31 dependent children) recruited from each of the service areas of the Tenant Support Service.
- Interviews with nine service providers who have a referral relationship and/or are members of a Coordinating Group
- Interviews with four real estate agents who work with the TSS
- Review of various documents including forms used to assess and approve clients for assistance, Coordination Group terms of reference, HAP self evaluations and portal reports
- Review of financial and administrative data

2.2.1 Client interviews

The Samaritans and organisations referring to the TSS were requested to assist in providing access to clients for consultation. Services contacted clients to seek their interest and willingness to participate in a phone interview. For those clients who consented to be interviewed, the consultants were provided with their contact phone numbers. Clients were rung to arrange a suitable time to be interviewed and subsequently a phone interview was conducted. All interviews were based on a standard format.

A number of clients were willing to provide feedback but did not want to participate in an interview. In these cases a copy of the client questionnaire was provided through the contact organisation and the survey was returned to the consultant via fax. All clients who participated were provided with a \$30 Coles or Woolworths voucher. Demographic and service usage data on interviewed clients is included at Appendix 1. Note that data on Aboriginality of interviewed clients was not collected.

2.2.2 Stakeholder organisation interviews

The Samaritans TSS Coordinator provided contact details for a number of referring organisations in each of the coordination area and number of these organisations participated in phone interviews including real estate agents. Phone interviews were conducted using a standard format. A list of participating organisations is included at Appendix 2. Appendix 3 sets out stakeholder responses to interview questions not otherwise presented in the body of the report.

2.3 Limitations

Some difficulty was experienced in identifying clients for consultation. A number of clients did not return calls after several messages were left resulting in the consultants having to request more clients from Samaritans and the decision to accept client feedback via fax as well as through phone interview. However, overall it was considered that there was a sufficient sample of clients able to be interviewed and these clients provided very useful information.

3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 Service origins and description

The need for a program of support to prevent eviction of tenants was identified as a priority under the *North Coast Homelessness Action Plan 2010-2014* (2010). The project aimed to curtail the significant number of people in the Richmond/Tweed and Mid North Coast accessing specialist homelessness services from long term accommodation. The loss of jobs in the region and increased housing demand stemming from upgrades to highway infrastructure has impacted on rental costs and the abilities of families to maintain housing. Samaritans noted vacancy rates of less than 1% at the time of tendering for the TSS.

In late 2009 Community Services ran a select tender process and contracted the Samaritans Foundation (Newcastle) to develop and implement the MNC Tenancy Support Service. The project aimed to identify at risk tenancies at an early stage and put in place time limited case management to minimise eviction. The project commenced in May 2010.

The Samaritans Mid North Coast is a well established community service with service delivery areas including:

- Children's services
- Youth services
- SAAP crisis and medium term transitional housing, including a small brokerage service
- Disability services and
- Community services

The TSS provides early intervention, case management support and service coordination to prevent families with accompanying children from becoming homeless. The program's geographic spread extends from Coffs Harbour in the north to Forster and Gloucester in the south.

3.2 Objectives

The MNC Tenancy Support service's objectives are to:

- Assist families with accompanying children to sustain their tenancies and prevent evictions from all types of tenures (public and private).
- Increase collaborative service delivery across government agencies in responding to homelessness.
- The program aims to primarily focus on:
 - Sustaining tenancies to prevent homelessness.
 - Identifying at risk tenancies at an early stage and intervening with time-limited case management support and service coordination.
 - Contributing to the reform agenda by better integrating the homelessness and mainstream service system.
 - Providing cross-agency supports to clients and allocate funding based on client needs identified in a coordinated case plan. The funding for cross-agency support will follow the client regardless of tenure.

3.3 Target group

The client group for this service is families with accompanying children whose tenancies are at risk (public and private) who reside in the geographic area of the Mid North Coast (Coffs Harbour, Nambucca, Bellingen, Kempsey, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Greater Taree, Gloucester and Great Lakes LGAs).

This target group includes “people who are in crisis and at imminent risk of becoming homeless” and “people who are experiencing domestic violence and are at imminent risk of becoming homeless”¹. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families whose tenancies are at risk are included in this target group.

3.4 Service model

The Samaritans Foundation has the lead agency role in the provision of brokerage and funding support to existing community services agencies to provide services to eligible families at risk. At the outset of the project the Samaritans TSS coordinator worked closely with the funding body to devise a service delivery model that would build upon and enhance the existing service delivery infrastructure and secure the support and buy-in of community services working with people at risk of homelessness in the region.

The service model involves a lead agency coordination role for the Samaritans TSS Coordinator who also supports four cross-agency and cross-sectoral Co-ordination Groups located in Taree, Kempsey, Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour who have responsibility for approving brokerage support for clients, as discussed further below.

Services delivered through the Mid North Coast Tenancy Support Service include:

- multi-disciplinary case managed brokerage support that includes a mix of case management and practical financial support to enable a client to sustain a tenancy at risk
- material aid including purchase of goods or equipment, emergency relief and food vouchers
- financial aid including one off financial assistance such as payment of rent arrears, fares for travel, utilities bill
- support to access existing services and programs such as financial counselling and budgeting, counselling, links to life skills programs, one-off cleans, anger management advice and referral to support groups and services, including domestic violence support services.

Support is provided to families for a period of 16 weeks.

A diagram of the MNC TSS service model developed by Samaritans MNC at the outset of the project is shown below. Experience through the evaluation would suggest all aspects of the model are as shown in practice, with the exception that the roles defined for the Coordination Group shown below appear to be shared between with the Samaritans Coordinator and the area based Coordination Groups.

¹ Service Specifications

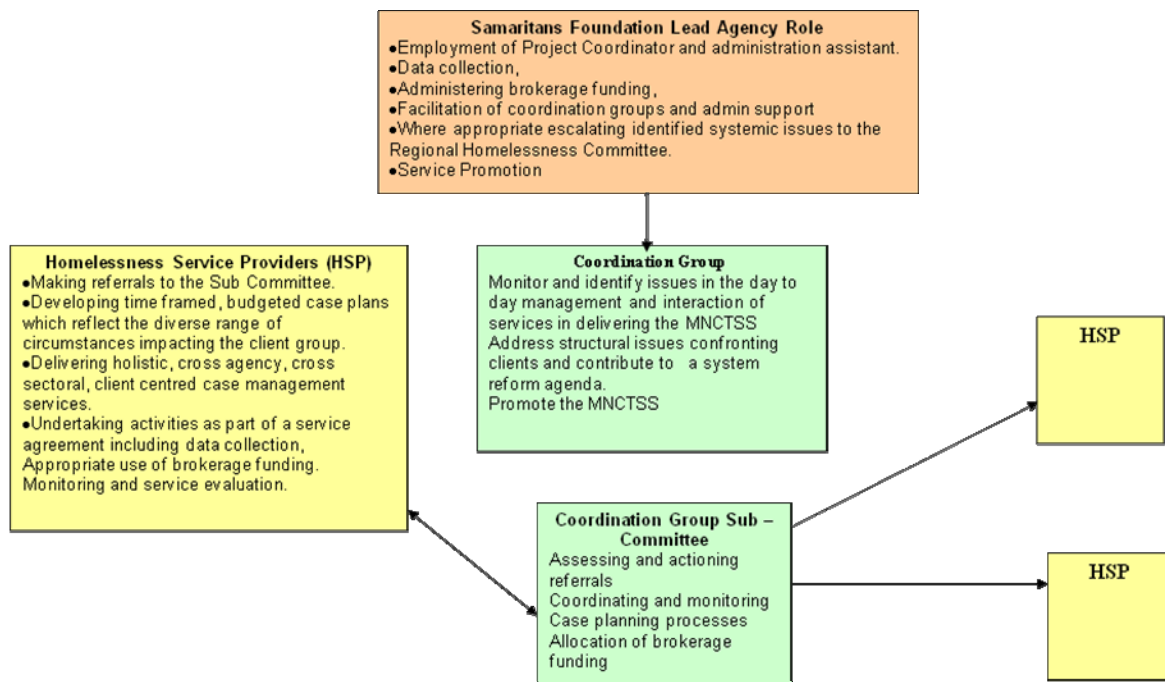


Diagram 3.1 TSS Service Model

3.4.1 Referral

A broad range of services refer families to the MNC TSS. Most of these services participate in the TSS in some way through attendance at Coordination Group meetings, although attendance patterns can vary. Services referring to the TSS include, Housing NSW, Centrelink, Community housing providers, neighbourhood centres, family support services, Housing Support and Assistance Services, women’s refuges, Aboriginal health services and real estate agents. A proportion of clients interviewed for the evaluation also indicated they self referred to the TSS after hearing about it through another service or via a friend.

The number of referrals to the service varies widely depending on the organisation and their area of core service delivery, however on average most organisations interviewed refer around 2-3 clients per month, with some organisations such as neighbourhood centres identifying higher numbers of referrals to the service over the past year.

The typical referral process as outlined by the Samaritans involves a family (client) presenting at a service. If appropriate, the service conducts a holistic assessment utilising an assessment tool provided by the Samaritans TSS and develops a client centred case plan which outlines:

- reasons for referral
- who else will be involved in the case
- fully costed budget for service provision
- goals and actions
- timeframe
- exit plan

If the service is unable to take the lead role in relation to provision of assistance and support to the client, an appropriate referral is made within the local service network.

This process was reiterated by organisations interviewed for the evaluation that made the distinction between referral for case management (support and assistance) as opposed to referral for financial assistance alone. Where case management was felt to be required, organisations noted that their

referral pathway may not be direct to the TSS; rather it often involved a referral to another organisation that then referred to the TSS as part of the range of supports that a family might receive. Examples identified by service providers include:

“A mum presents at the health service and the family nurse assesses her needs. When rental arrears or unsafe housing is identified a referral for assistance is made. If this involves a need for case management then a referral will be made to other services i.e. the neighbourhood service.”

“The service may be supporting a family in relation to parenting and family support. The family may experience an additional point of crisis where rental arrears or related issues arise. Brighter Futures will seek financial assistance from the brokerage funds, but no other support dollars are applied for. Application is made to the committee by filling in the necessary documentation. Approval is received, sometimes another service will also be working with the client and this is identified. Payments and purchases are made directly by the Samaritans.”

Other services may refer a client to TSS directly (or service known to be linked to the TSS), with the tenants consent:

“For a real estate agent they may have a good tenant who has come across some problems. They get agreement from the tenant to pass on the tenants name to the TSS or a service who refers to the TSS, who then makes contact with the tenant”.

Organisations providing an existing service to a family, for example a women's refuge will identify a tenancy issue and a referral will be made to the Coordination Group. The service then actions the case plan recommendations made through the TSS application and approval process.

“A neighbourhood centre may be working with an existing client and a crisis occurs that results in rental arrears. The service will refer the client with a documented client history and request for case management hours. Alternatively a new client may show up in crisis and trigger immediate referral and support dollars for both case management and funds to support establishment of housing (furniture etc)”

“A housing provider makes a referral to the coordinating committee either for assistance or support plus assistance and then accepts the brokerage \$ on behalf of the client to either expand the capacity to provide case management support or purchase practical assistance.”

3.4.2 Assessment

The assessment process involves the following steps:

- The submission of a request for assistance and case plan to a Coordination Group for review. The Coordination Group meets monthly to discuss and determine all referrals; however urgent referrals can also be submitted via email groups with all attending paper work between meetings.
- The Coordination Group either accept or reject the referral, based on the needs and support strategies identified, the identification of other services who may be working with the family, the extent of financial support requested and available funding.
- Where the referral is assessed and approved, amendments to the implementation plan may be suggested.
- Where the referral is assessed and not approved reasons will be provided and other options for assistance may be offered.

Where brokerage funding is provided for support (case management) plus financial assistance the service provider will coordinate the case management service for the family in line with the MNCTSS integrated case management protocol, including facilitating case conferences and updating the Coordination Group on case progress as per the service agreement.

At completion of the support period the service working with the family submits relevant documents to the TSS Coordinator including relevant data collection and exit form.

3.4.3 Coordination structures

There are four Coordination Groups based in Kempsey, Taree, Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour. Coordination Groups are primarily comprised of non government agencies. Membership is open to all services in the Coordination Group area that are likely to come across people at risk of homelessness however, there appears to be core members who attend regularly and other members with more irregular attendance. The groups run fairly autonomously and receive secretariat support from the Samaritans TSS Coordinator and administration staff. The Samaritans TSS Coordinator attends all Coordination Group meetings to ensure service consistency.

The Coordination Groups are responsible for reviewing, amending and approving case management plans and brokerage. They also operate as a general advisory committee on managing client needs and as an information sharing forum.

Each Coordination Group meets monthly. Membership of the four groups is shown below.

Table 3.1 TSS Coordination Group Members by Area

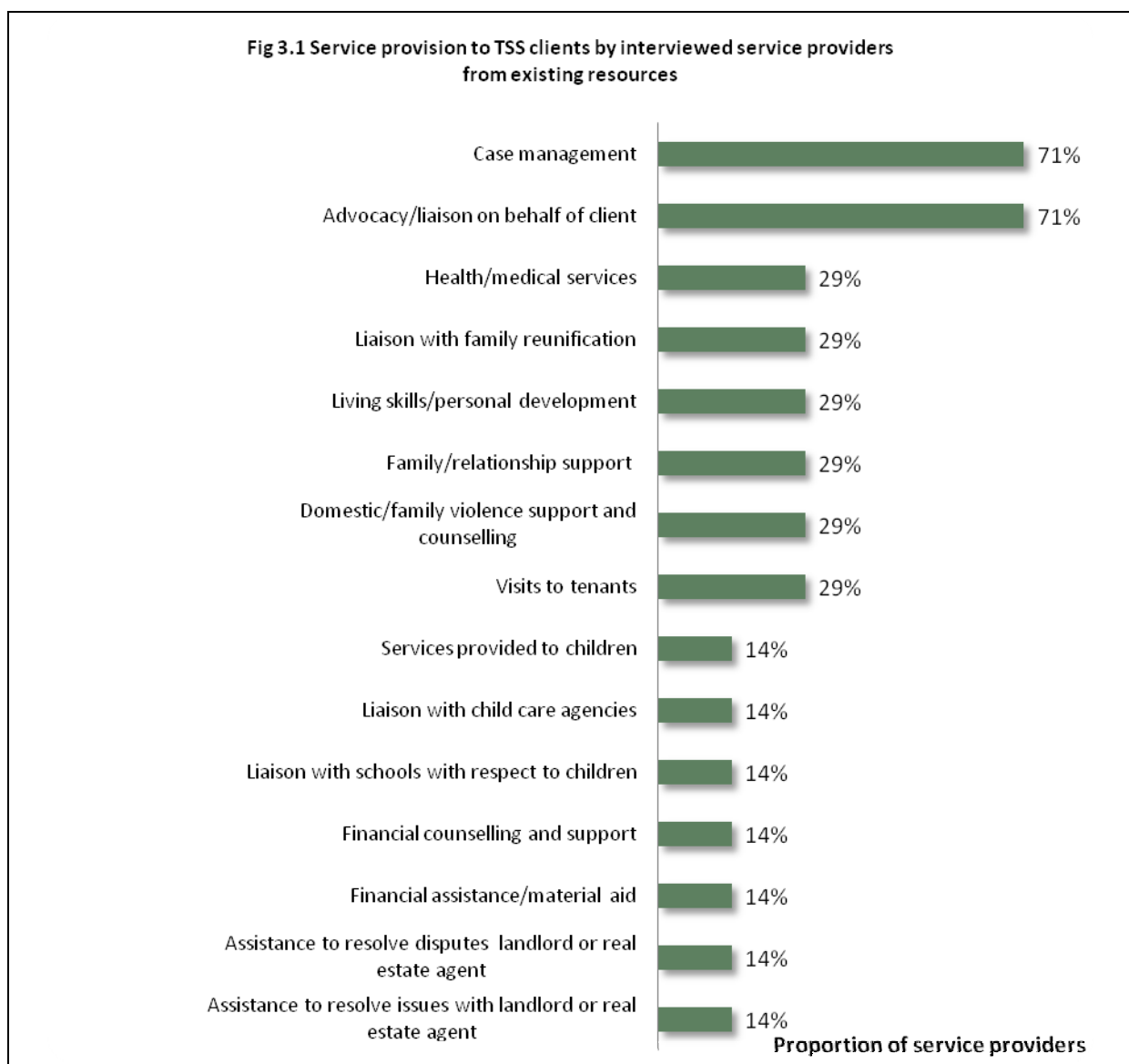
Taree	Port Macquarie	Kempsey	Coffs Harbour
– Family Support Service Taree	– Youth Housing Support	– Kemspey Womens Refuge	– Coffs Harbour Accommodation Brokerage and Housing Support
– Homebase Youth Foster Tuncurry	– Hastings Womens Refuge	– Domestic Violence Project	– Warrina Women’s Refuge
– Manning Valley Neighbourhood Centre	– Werrin	– Kemspey Family Support Services	– Jetty Bunker Youth Refuge
– Forster Neighbourhood Centre	– Port Neighbourhood Centre	– Reconnect	– Burnside
– Samaritans	– Burnside	– Kempsey Neighbourhood Centre	– Aboriginal Wellbeing Service
– Biripi	– Domestic Violence Project	– Nambucca Valley Family Support	– Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Family Community Care Center Inc
– Lyns Place Womens Refuge	– Reconnect	– Nambucca Valley Neighbourhood centre	– Northern Aboriginal Tenancy Advice Service
– Brighter Future			– Salvation Army
– Centrelink			– Housing NSW
			– Aboriginal Case Worker

3.4.4 Partnerships

The establishment of the four Coordination Groups has acted to strengthen local partnerships between participating services. While Samaritans MNC have partnerships with a range of organisations to support their broader service delivery, there are no additional partnership mechanisms for the TSS other than those facilitated locally through the Coordination Group structures and it would appear based on the service provider feedback, that these are robust and effective.

Involvement of Aboriginal specific services in the Coordination Group is notable with a significant proportion of Aboriginal families using the service despite the absence of any Aboriginal identified TSS staff position. The TSS has worked closely with Aboriginal specific services to ensure good engagement in the Coordination Groups and referral practices which has ensured good representation of Aboriginal people as clients of the service.

The following graph shows the type of support provided by interviewed stakeholder agencies through their own resources (that is, excluding brokered support.) As can be seen a wide range of services are provided to clients of the TSS through partnerships with other service providers without drawing on brokerage funds. As shown these services include case management, client advocacy and liaison, health and medical and family support and domestic violence support services, perhaps reflecting the primary funding streams and core service delivery areas of the services participating in the Coordination Groups and the evaluation.



A key outcome of the TSS reported by organisations across the region are the improved relationships with real estate agents and the emergence of preventative practices in relation to tenants renting in the private market, and improved linkages between real estate agents and local family and community support services.

The interviews with tenants also indicates this area of improvement with the TSS able to provide a mediation and advocacy function with the immediate provision of brokerage funding towards a rental arrears payment plan or direct assistance to maintain the upkeep of a house markedly improving the tenant / real estate agent relationship.

3.4.5 Brokerage funds

Brokerage funds are administered by the Samaritans in accordance with the TSS brokerage policy. The policy defines brokerage as “dedicated funds allocated to our partner/agencies which are used to purchase material aid, specialist services, and/or essential services to meet the immediate and/or short term needs of children and families”².

Brokerage is allocated in accordance with an appropriate case plan and budget which is approved by the relevant Coordination Group. Samaritans administer the brokerage payments in accordance with the brokerage policy and Coordination Group recommendations.

Brokerage funding may be used for:

Material aid including one of purchase of goods or equipment, emergency relief and food vouchers.

Financial aid including one off financial assistance such as payment of rent arrears, fares for travel, utilities bill. Assistance with the payment of rental arrears occurs only after other Housing NSW avenues have been exhausted and a payment plan or co-contribution plan is in place with the family.

Fee for service including purchase of:

- time limited case management support and service coordination
- removalist costs to assist in relocations
- financial counselling
- personal counselling
- one off cleaning and grounds maintenance
- life skills training

Some case management is able to be offered by referral organisations where the client is already involved with the service; examples include women’s refuges or community health services where funding for case management/coordination is integrated in the service funding. Where case management hours are purchased, these tend to be from community housing or family support services, where case management to sustain a tenancy may be an additional cost to the service. Where case management hours are purchased these tend to be in block hours allocated over 3 months and are separately accounted for by receiving organisations. The brokerage funds have

² Mid North Coast TSS Brokerage Policy 2010

acted to extend the capacity of community housing providers to work with families at risk. Without brokerage funds the providers would not be able to extend their work in this direction.

The brokerage policy clearly articulates the requirement for case managers to exhaust all existing government entitlements and benefits and availability of goods through charitable organisations. The Housing NSW Rentstart product Tenancy Assistance is potentially available to assist private renters with rent arrears but a range of eligibility criteria need to be met including for example, that a notice of termination has been given. Not all private renters in rent arrears are able to meet the eligibility criteria or assistance available may be insufficient. Additionally, social housing tenants are not eligible for Tenancy Assistance. The TSP offers a more flexible approach to the payment of rent arrears.

Other funding sources that have been accessed to support the TSS include:

- Electricity (EPA) vouchers
- No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)
- Salvation Army brokerage service
- Staying Home Leaving Violence financial assistance to travel for court attendance

The brokerage policy also identifies an expectation that clients enter into co-payment plans and/or undertake financial counselling in order to better manage their finances into the future including entering into Centrepay direct debit arrangements. The payment split in relation to rent arrears (client payment plan and TSS upfront payment of arrears) typically works out at about 50/50. This arrangement ensures that not only is the tenancy saved but facilitates the client taking responsibility which contributes to minimising the reoccurrence of the situation.

Relocations from Sydney and within the region are supported in a range of ways such as relocation costs where other circumstances mean the family is at risk of becoming homeless.

Financial counselling services may also be purchased where additional hours are needed in order to meet demand. In other instances financial counselling is usually obtained at no cost through the existing resources of the service provider.

3.5 Management and governance arrangements

The service is managed by Samaritans Mid North Coast Service Manager who also has responsibility for all Mid North Coast programs including a youth crisis service and brokerage services in relation to temporary housing assistance.

Community Services is the lead agency overseeing the funding and service accountabilities. The service manager provides updates to the Regional Homelessness Committee.

The service coordination approach developed at the outset of the project includes a reporting link between the Coordination Groups at the Area Management Committee (AMC). Reports are made to the AMC on an as needs rather than regular basis. Key issues of impact in the field such as the direct impacts experienced by families and services as a result of the changes to Temporary Accommodation policies are the types of policy impacts that are referred up to the AMC.

3.6 Staffing

The staffing structure for the Mid North Coast TSS includes:

- One FTE service coordinator
- One FTE service administrator
- One P/T case manager

The Service Coordinator ensures the ongoing operation of the service. The functions of the Coordinator include:

- liaison with the funding body
- maintaining contact with all participating TSS referral services,
- attending general interagencies where possible, connecting the service to the bigger service system
- attending all Coordination Group meetings across the region
- ensuring follow through for each client referred to the service for assistance
- responsibility for managing data collection and reporting relating to the project

Administrative assistant

The key functions of the administrative assistant include:

- invoicing and purchasing of brokerage items as per client case plans
- reconciling invoices and purchases with brokerage allocations
- maintaining service records
- office administration
- attendance at coordination groups as needed

Part time case manager for the Taree area

This position is the only case management that Samaritans TSS provide and it is geographically limited to the Taree area only. The Taree Coordination Group agreed to build capacity for case management into Samaritans through creation of the position rather than using brokerage funds for additional case management hours among local service providers.

Key functions include:

- Provision of case management to families referred to the service
- Attendance at Coordination Group meetings in Taree
- Providing outreach to facilitate effective case management in the area

3.7 Budget allocation

The budget allocated under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness for the operation of the TSS is shown as follows:

Table 3.2 TSS Budget Allocation

Year	Amount
2009/10	\$293,000
2010/11	\$600,650
2011/12	\$614,825
Total	\$1,508,465

4 ANALYSIS OF CLIENT AND SERVICE SYSTEM OUTCOMES

4.1 Client Services and Outcomes

4.1.1 Numbers assisted

Meeting targets

The service agreement for the MNC TSS set the annual target at 350 family members. It is noted that there was some initial ambiguity as to whether the Commonwealth intended funding for the project to service 350 family units rather than 350 family members but agreement appears to have been reached that the target is 350 family members per annum. As shown in the table below, the TSS has significantly exceeded this target in both years of the project with a total of 2159 family members supported (over 700 family units) since project commencement in May 2010.

Table 4.1 Total number of TSS family members assisted across the life time of the project

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	TOTAL
Target family members	-	350	350	700
Total number of family members assisted	41	911	1207	2159
Family units*	-	307	394	701

*Includes accompanying children.

Source: TSS HAP Self evaluation 2012, TSS data portal report June 2012

Demographic information

The table below provides a breakdown of demographic information on TSS clients for 2010/11 to 2011/12.

Table 4.2 TSS Client Demographic Information

	2010/11	2011/12	Total
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	354	507	861
Female	557	732	1289
<i>Age</i>			
<15 years	551	638	1189
16-24 years	103	199	302
25-64 years	233	339	572
>65 years	9	0	9
Not known	15	31	46
<i>Ethnicity</i>			
ATSI	305	452	757
Other Australian born	594	732	1326
People born overseas English speaking	12	-	12
People born overseas non English speaking	0	-	0
Not known	0	23	23

<i>Maintaining Tenancy by Tenure</i>	2010/11	2011/12	Total
Social Housing	218	202	420
Private rental	680	819	1499
SAAP accommodation	0	12	12
Couch surfing	0	43	43
Boarding House	3	26	29
Other	0	92	92

As shown in the table above:

- A greater proportion of clients assisted through the TSS are female, around 60%. While the count above includes accompanying children and young people the client and stakeholders interviews also reflected a higher proportion of single mother families, compared to two parent families and single father households accessing the service.
- Most families consulted had at least two children with a couple of families interviewed having up to five children, almost a quarter of families interviewed reported having children or adults with disabilities still living at home. This was also reported by the service in early data portal reports with further correspondence between the funding body and lead agency on the numbers of families seeking assistance who had a child with a disability, particularly autism.
- Although the Samaritans do not have an Aboriginal identified position as part of the service model, the involvement of Aboriginal services and Aboriginal workers in Coordination Groups has reportedly been effective, with Aboriginal people making up a third (35%) of all TSS clients.
- The small numbers of people born overseas accessing the service is evident both in the data and was reiterated in consultations with service providers.
- The numbers of families accessing the program who are in private rental is significant (69%) and was established from the outset of the service. Interviews with the Samaritans indicate experience liaising with real estate agents as a preventative approach to working with people at risk of eviction prior to the TSS project; this has been built upon over the duration of the project with linkages to real estate agents across the four coordination group areas. Interviewees also identify the lack of availability of social housing in the mid north coast region as a factor contributing to the smaller proportion of social housing tenants assisted.
- The increase in number of secondary homeless accessing the service in the second year of the project is also noted.

Issues contributing to homelessness of clients seen

The primary reason for families accessing the TSS was the experience of financial difficulty, leading to rental arrears or a potential for rental arrears. For the majority of families a crisis event, such as family separation, removal of children from parental custody, loss of employment, illness or injury, death in the family or relocation, coupled with the accumulation of debt, or a large unplanned bill, were the triggers leading to rental arrears.

Comments from interviewed clients included:

"I needed financial assistance for rental arrears. I was in danger of becoming homeless."

"I needed emergency help regarding food for my children. I couldn't pay my bills."

Relocation of families into new areas either on the promise of work or because of a need to move out of their existing accommodation was a key issue, with many families at risk of moving in to homelessness as a result of the relocation.

"We had relocated to the area as my husband had a job transfer then he sustained an injury not covered by workers compensation. We lost 3/4 of our income and the adjustment process took some time it was overwhelming. We had been in public housing for 28 years, when you were in crisis your rent adjusted. We needed support to manage our budgeting in a situation where that didn't happen and where we hadn't planned for the income change."

"My real estate agent forwarded a letter of demand and I had no spare money due to health issues. I tried to pay but I could not meet the due date."

Seeking financial assistance was the prompt for most clients, but the structure of the TSS delivered through other support services meant that a broader suite of assistance could be provided or financial difficulties were uncovered as a secondary feature of another presenting issue for the family.

"I had lost care of my youngest child; I was seeking restoration and needed stable housing as I was in share accommodation arrangements not appropriate for my youngest child."

"My sister noticed I was going downhill with my mental health and suggested I get help from a family worker and they saw I was struggling with my finances."

4.1.2 Numbers receiving different services

Clients assisted under the TSS receive assistance that varies from immediate one-off financial assistance through to a more complex suite of support and longer term case management. All clients receiving assistance require a case plan in order for brokerage funds to be approved. The TSS MNC does not hold information about individual clients, as this information is held by the service provider delivering the service in each of the coordination areas. As a result the TSS only reported on level of client need in the 2011/12 data. The data portal report states "the Lead Agency [TSS] does not collect hours individual workers spend with clients given the nature of the service delivery model (case management/brokerage supplied by contracted external services)"³.

The first available data in relation to duration of support and level of need was collected in the data portal report for March 2012⁴:

"The Lead Agency recognises 60% of clients referred require high need support", for example referrals of a high priority requiring more urgent attention, often involving out of session email approval and including complex medical and health issues, domestic violence, drug and alcohol issues and large families.

The Lead Agency recognises 25% of clients referred require medium need support" for example property care and maintenance, budgeting, life skills.

The Lead Agency recognises 15% of clients require low levels of support ie do not require additional and specialist supports to meet the needs of the family".

The table below shows the proportion of clients by level of need assessed by the TSS as at June 2012.

³ Data portal report December 2010

⁴ March 2012 data portal report

Table 4.3 proportion of clients by level of need 2011/12

Level of need	Number
High needs	723
Medium needs	303
Low needs	181

Source: Data portal report June 2012

Given the contracted case management model, data relating to support hours is not available. The service model also restricts the collection of data on the extent of case management provided by primary service providers as the Samaritans report that clients assisted are either 'housed with a support package', which includes brokerage for case management hours, or 'housed without a support package' which includes clients housed without brokerage for case management hours, but where case management by the clients primary service is sourced through that service's existing resources.

Given the lack of data over time, no observations on trends in the provision of service are able to be made.

Types of referral

Referral data is difficult to identify due to the structure of the TSS service model which involves contracted service delivery or continued services delivery by project partners with support for clients to access financial assistance. As shared clients may be identified during the course of meetings or through email based assessment and approval processes and services involved in delivery of the client's case plan may similarly be determined through that process, the typical understanding of 'referrals' is difficult to capture.

Assistance to access non-housing services is identified by the lead agency as 'direct assistance' rather than 'referred'. The information is captured from case plans, however referrals where required will be made by the client's lead service provider rather than by the Samaritans. The table below shows the type of non housing assistance provided through partner agencies as shown in the portal report.

Table 4.4 Clients assisted with non-housing services 2011/2012

Type of support	Number
Legal	13
Disability support	16
Drug & alcohol	22
Other	38
Mental health	51
Education training employment	54
General health	68
Family & relationship counselling	313
Financial	1003

Sources: TSS data portal report June 2012, note no data provided for referrals as all services are reported as being directly provided.

As shown in the table above and reported by service providers also most all presenting families in 2012 required financial assistance, with family and relationship counselling also provided to a significant number of clients. Health related assistance was also significant with a small proportion of clients also receiving assistance to resolve legal issues.

Help received by interviewed clients

Clients interviewed as part of the evaluation reported both self referral and referral through their primary service provider. Of those referred through their service provider, all were aware that the TSS was a service that was distinct from, but that added to the support they could receive through their primary service provider.

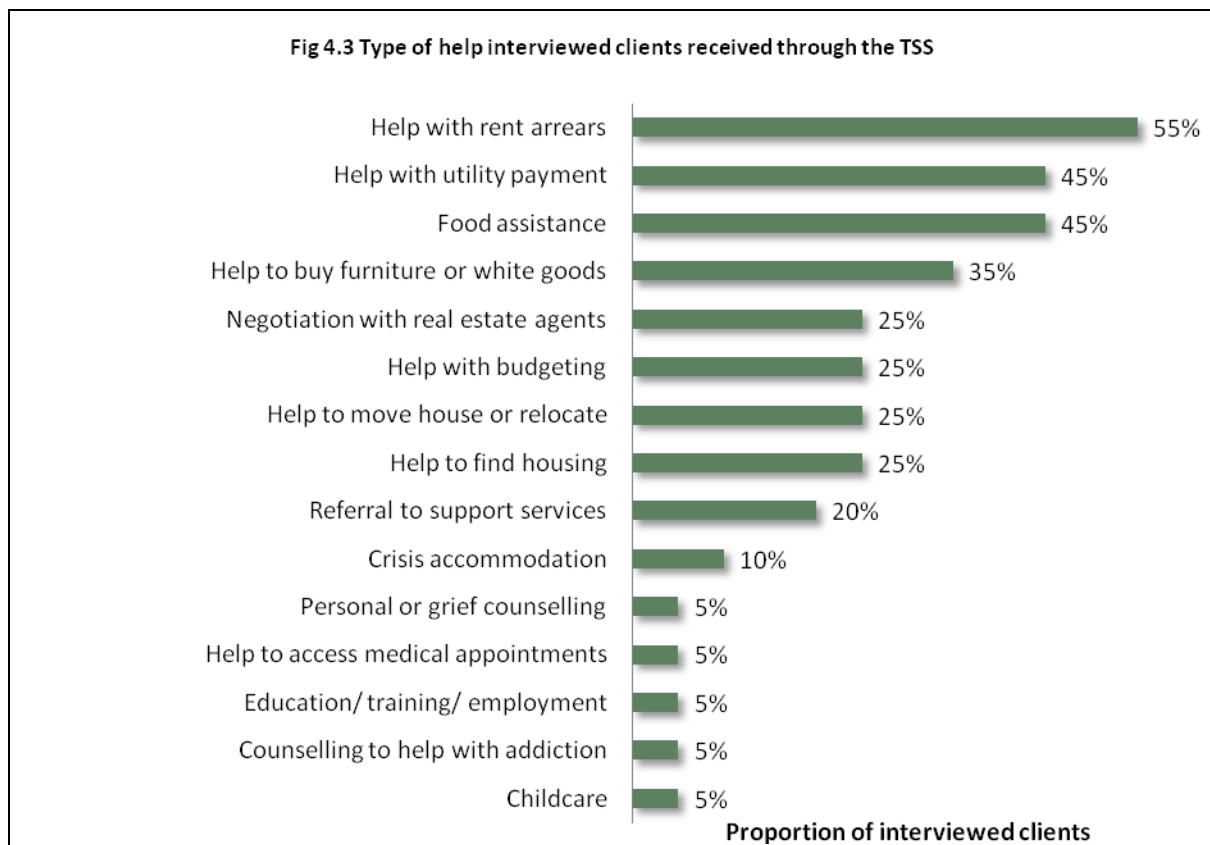
Approximately 20% of interviewees had self referred, with the remainder referred by their primary service. According to the people surveyed, families at risk of homelessness find out about support services from other mainstream services and agencies or through word of mouth from family or friends. Only one client interviewed recalled seeing information about the service in a directory format.

The majority of clients interviewed waited less than a fortnight for support to commence, where a longer timeframe was identified this was because of meeting scheduling for approval.

Less than 1 week	38.1%
Less than 2 weeks	38.1%
Less than 3 weeks	19.0%
More than 4 weeks	4.8%

Around two thirds of clients interviewed said that they received support for the right length of time while a third would have preferred a longer period of support.

The range of services provided to interviewed clients through the TSS is shown in the graph below. As shown key forms of assistance were rent arrears, help with utility payments, food assistance and help to buy furniture or white goods as well as a range of other support services.



4.1.3 Housing outcomes

Housing outcomes for clients assisted by the MNC TSS have been good with a very high proportion sustaining their tenancy and 100% of clients interviewed reporting that they felt more able to manage their tenancy because of the TSS.

Over the two years since the projects inception over 97% of clients assisted have been able to maintain their tenancy over the 16 week support period as shown in the following table

Table 4.5 Number of clients sustaining a tenancy

	2010-11	2011-12
Clients assisted	911	1239
Total sustaining a tenancy	901	1207
Percentage sustaining a tenancy	98.9%	97.4%

Source: Data portal reports June 2011 and June 2012

Clients interviewed identified a broad range of supports delivered through the TSS and their primary service provider that they felt made a difference to their housing situation. These included advocacy and liaison with real estate agents and other landlords including Housing NSW and community housing providers to secure housing, to negotiate rental arrears payment plans and to process necessary documentation to support applications for a housing transfer. Client comments included:

"I couldn't pay the rent. Once the Real Estate knew the Samaritans were on board they were much more willing to work with me and were more patient. It was good to have someone stand beside me."

"They helped me put in for a housing transfer in a new area. I was able to find a safer housing environment for me and my children and feel safe and have no big debts."

A number of families specifically raised the importance of the housing outcomes for their children:

"It made a big difference to my children not being homeless, after what I went through with domestic violence."

"It made the difference of not losing my house and having a safer environment for my children."

Clients interviewed identified the value of the financial assistance, including financial counselling and advocacy with debtors and learning how to budget and manage expenses as crucial supports that impacts their housing outcome. A number of families made the decision to go on to direct debit arrangements to pay for their rent in order to never get into the same situation again.

"Just to have a service advocating for me and taking the pressure off financially [was a big relief]. I don't want to get into that situation again - my rent is b-paid now so I won't get behind."

"I know I don't want to be in that position with my lease again so I now put rent first."

A number of clients who had accessed the service whilst being in an insecure housing situation were supported to access appropriate housing, through financial support such as contribution to a rental bond and purchase of household goods. The impacts of Housing NSW changes to the Temporary Accommodation Assistance and Rentstart were identified by service providers as contributing to the need for the TSS to assist clients to secure a new tenancy.

"They helped me to find housing and pay bond. The Real Estate was more willing to accept a large family with the support of a service."

"They also helped me find housing to avoid overcrowding."

4.1.4 Non housing outcomes

Clients receiving support through the TSS reported improvements to their stress levels, mental and physical health and family relationships. Feeling they were supported in a non-judgemental way that took in the context of their personal and family situation and developed a holistic response was identified as key to the success of the approach by a number of clients.

“It really helped to ease my stress helping me to manage my bills and finances & my children's needs.”

Clients reported that an impact of their housing insecurity was high stress levels and a feeling of being unable to cope, which made it hard to seek assistance to address the problem. Emotional support was identified by a number of families as being what made the difference to their stress levels and enabled them to access the broader range of services available.

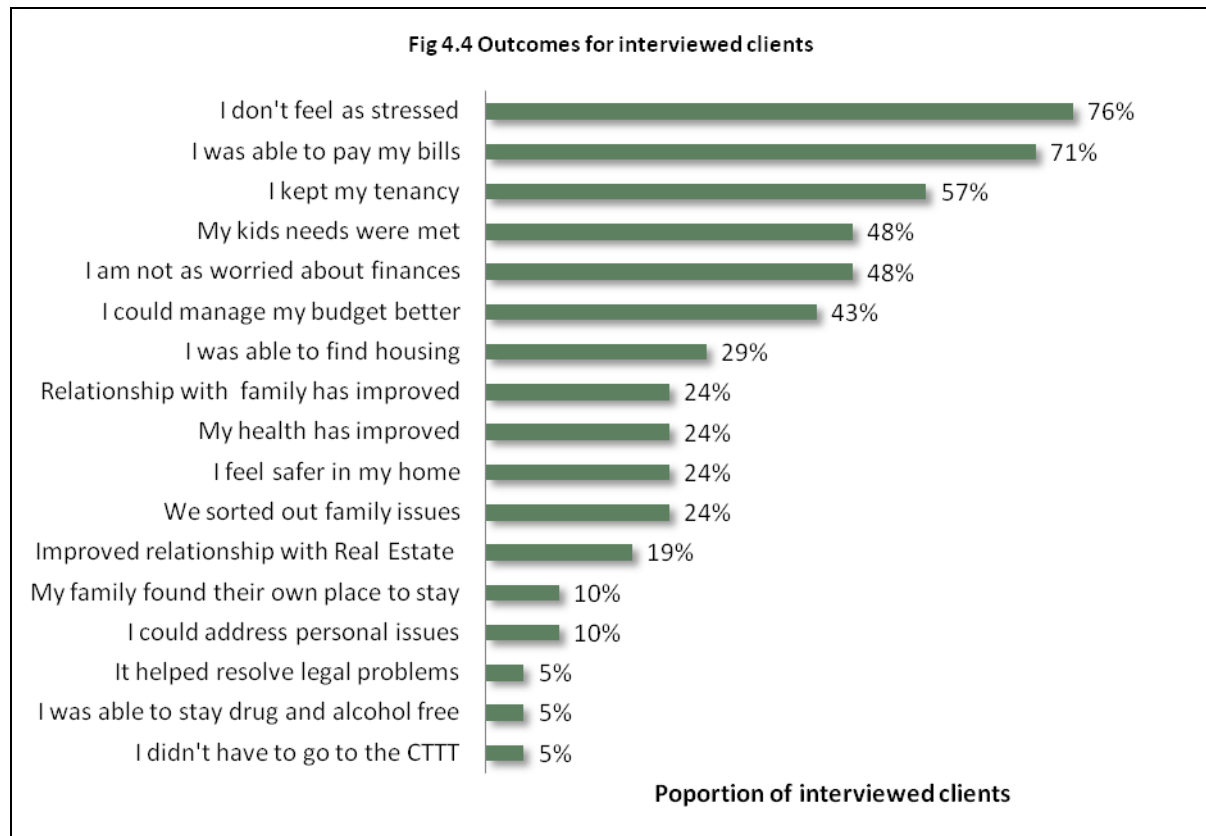
“It helped ease the pressure, even though bigger issues are not completely resolved. I was suffering anxiety and depression and I was able to begin to manage these.”

“My mental health is much better so I am more able to look after the family and myself and know where to get help now if I need it. At the moment I am coping fine.”

Service providers also noticed how reducing stress through immediate practical assistance provided a platform for clients to feel in control of their lives and become more engaged with their communities.

“Clients are more connected to the community and local services system. Clients are able to more effectively manage their lives and become involved in community life often volunteering etc. Real Estate agents also have confidence in giving tenants a second chance when they know the Samaritans are behind them.”

The graph below shows the outcomes identified by clients who were interviewed as part of the evaluation.



As shown in the graph financial support and assistance to manage financial affairs including paying bills and developing skills in budgeting was a key outcome identified by clients and service providers alike. For some families this meant receiving assistance in managing family income when this changed. For others it was assistance understanding, negotiating and advocating around their repayment plans for goods or other loans with high interest charges. One client commented:

“I was paying bills through Baycorp⁵ but couldn’t get my bills down, I couldn’t understand the summary sheet. TSS was able to negotiate with Baycorp on my behalf to pay out the debt.”

Improvements in family relationships and restoration with children were also identified as things that improved for clients after receiving assistance through the TSS.

“They helped me get housing and buy the items I needed in order to show Community Services I could care for my one year old. They helped build my confidence with the kids and that I could keep a house and stable environment for them.”

Service providers identified the value of the case management approach in being able to successfully deliver the housing and non housing outcomes for families.

“A client received support to have her TICA debt removed, she found a tenancy that has been sustained and her children have been restored to her care. The collaborative case management approach provides the level of assistance unable to be provided within HNSW.”

While interviews with clients identified a high proportion accessing family assistance related welfare payments as their primary income, the assistance provided by services as part of the TSS response meant a number were beginning to identify work and study opportunities. Service provider comments included:

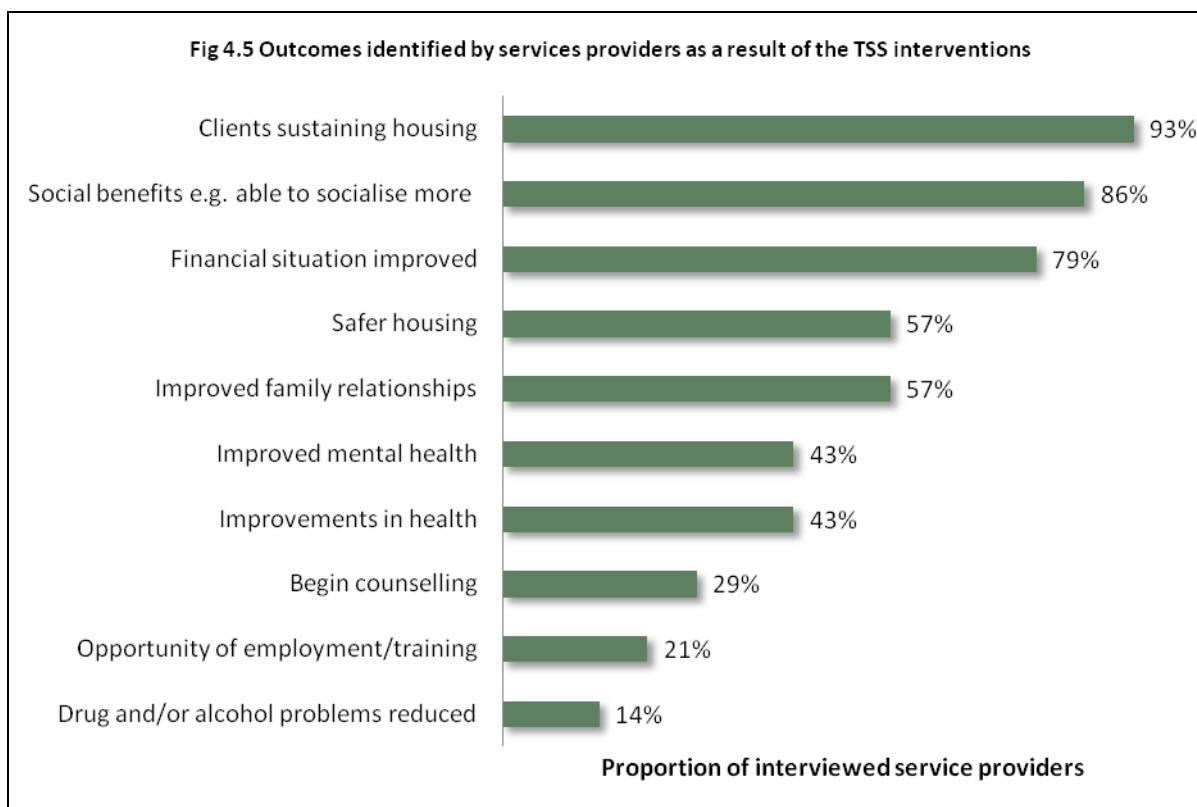
“One young girl struggled to get her life on track. She had accumulated a lot of debts such as phone and electricity, since receiving supports through the TSS she is in secure housing and is working and thriving.”

“A young woman who was escaping violence was helped to relocate and refurbish her new home. She is learning to drive and is beginning to work. Her life has begun anew; her health and wellbeing have improved significantly.”

As can be seen in the graph below, the outcomes identified by service providers and clients are very similar with both groups identifying housing security, social, health and family relationship benefits as key outcomes of the tenancy supports received.

Service providers assisting women to escape domestic and family violence identify safer housing among the core outcomes for women who were assisted to secure their own accommodation with assistance through the TSS.

⁵ Debt collection and debt management agent



4.1.5 Intended or unintended consequences

It is clear from the 2012 data that a proportion of families experiencing secondary homelessness were assisted through the TSS, although they may not have had a tenancy at the time.

As this data was collected in the last reporting period (June 2012) the improvements in housing security cannot be identified, however through interviews with both clients and service providers it would appear that the service has played a role in helping to establish a tenancy with the necessary support in place for that tenancy to be sustained.

Circumstances where this appears to have occurred more than others relate specifically to instances of overcrowding among Aboriginal families, where a family has relocated to the area but has not been able to secure housing as planned and for women escaping domestic violence who may be in a transitional housing situation. As such assistance provided to these families (help to secure housing and purchase of household goods) would appear to be in keeping with the broad project intentions of ensuring families achieve tenancies that can be sustained, provided the families continue to maintain contact with their primary service providers beyond the tenancy establishment period.

4.2 Impact of the project on reducing/addressing homelessness

4.2.1 Impact of the project

Service providers consulted as part of the evaluation were strongly of the view that the TSS had helped to prevent evictions, with a small number providing crisis services indicating that they felt the need for crisis interventions had reduced as a result of the early intervention framework of the MNC TSS. Service providers commented:

“Absolutely, this program has reduced homelessness in the MNC”.

“It makes a profound effect, taking the stress off families and services in terms of the options available to meet their immediate needs and to avert crisis. It shows the value of an early intervention approach. Crisis responses will always be a part of the service system but the focus on early intervention is important.”

Providing intervention early and in a holistic way is crucial and helping clients in emergency accommodation access stable housing was seen as significant as temporary accommodation measures could contribute to cycles of homelessness.

“The program prevents tenants from losing their tenancies and being forced into crisis accommodation.”

“When the crisis escalates more intense accommodation needs are initiated - this approach avoids that escalation. With Temporary Accommodation delivered through Housing NSW being reduced, offering support in this way is even more important.”

Services providers consulted reported very few instances of tenancies failing where support had been received. Statements include:

“Clients not sustaining housing would show up in the program again and this hasn't happened.”

To determine if there was any measurable impact on reductions in evictions in the Mid North Coast data was obtained from the CTTT on the number of applications for termination on the grounds of non payment of rent in hearing venues corresponding to the primary service delivery locations for the TSS. Non payment of rent was selected as the key data item because rent arrears are the primary risk factor for eviction. The table below shows the number of applications for termination on the grounds of non payment of rent for 2010/11 and 2011/12 for Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Port Macquarie and Taree CTTT hearing venues for the tenancy (private rental) and social housing divisions.

Table 4.6 Applications to the CTTT for termination on the grounds of non payment of rent in TSS locations

	Tenancy Division			Social Housing Division		
	2010/11	2011/12	% change	2010/11	2011/12	% change
Coffs Harbour	112	127	13.4%	45	77	71.1%
Kempsey	75	62	-17.3%	80	101	26.3%
Port Macquarie	114	114	0.0%	26	14	-46.2%
Taree	79	83	5.1%	50	21	-58.0%
<i>Sub total</i>	380	386	1.6%	210	213	1.4%
NSW total	13,727	13,598	-0.9%	6,191	8,294	33.4%

Source: Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal, 2012

As shown, the results for the Tenancy Division in the four TSS primary service delivery centres are inconclusive. While a decline in the number of private rental applications for terminations on the grounds of non payment of rent was recorded in Kempsey there was an increase in Coffs Harbour and Taree with no change recorded in Port Macquarie.

The results for the social housing division are also inconclusive. While there were increases in the number of applications for terminations on the grounds of non payment of rent for social housing in Coffs Harbour and Kempsey there were significant declines in Port Macquarie and Taree and overall, the rate of increase in the number of applications for the region was much less than the state average.

4.2.2 Specific client groups

Consultations with service providers and analysis of the project data identified key client groups for the MNC TSS. Single mothers particularly single young mothers, Aboriginal families, women escaping domestic violence and families with a child with a disability were the client groups identified by service providers as key client groups for the service.

A number of providers identified the need for a service that didn't discriminate against adults *without* accompanying children stating there was a strong need for a service of this kind on the coast, however the value of the TSS taking a definition of 'child' that cut off at 18 years of age as opposed to 16 years was noted as a strength of the service.

The strong participation of Aboriginal health services in the Coordination Groups has been an effective way to ensure service provision to Aboriginal families. The approach of the TSS, delivering flexible and practical financial support and assistance while enabling the family to remain connected to their primary (Aboriginal) service provider appears to be a good approach.

Families with children with a disability were identified through the client consultation and review of project communications reveal the issue was identified by Samaritans and the funding body early in the project, particularly in relation to children with autism. However there is no indication that the incidence of requests for support from families with a child with autism was sustained at the initially high levels over year two of project.

Families receiving assistance through the TSS who needed to resolve housing issues in order to achieve restoration of children was another issue identified, where housing was inappropriate (for example, shared accommodation) or was one component of a restoration plan when other issues for example, substance abuse were also factors likely to be present.

A number of service providers identified the complexity of client issues, noting that rarely did a family seeking TSS have a single contributing issue. The Samaritans noted that in 2012 the majority of clients were complex clients with high needs requiring case management and a range of service responses.

4.3 Service system and delivery outcomes

All service providers contacted as part of the evaluation noted the positive effects including improved service integration that the TSS has had for the homelessness service system and families at risk of homelessness on the mid north coast. The key elements identified by services and by the funding body, were:

- the service model, which secured service buy-in, by investing responsibility in locally based Coordination Groups who took ownership of the approval process and funding allocations to clients in the area
- the initial communication process, where Samaritans invested time in consulting services about the preferred approach to delivering the services, particularly in relation to contract arrangements for case management funding and service capacity
- The value of having of the Samaritans supporting the Coordinating Groups, providing service consistency through the service documentation and managing invoicing and oversight of the funding

While some Coordination Group areas such as Coffs Harbour noted that they had a history of a collaborative community services sector and strong service partnerships, the Coordinating Group was seen to further strengthen these relationships.

In areas such as Kempsey, the capacity of the Coordination Group to make a real difference to local services in terms of the practical financial assistance provided to families has strengthened service networks and improved case management processes and understandings between services as frameworks for discussing clients and related privacy issues and practices have been negotiated and agreed by participating members.

Comments from Coordination Group members included:

“There is a sense of working together that was absent prior to the establishment of the coordination groups and the shared pool of brokerage funds and pragmatic, fair allocation processes assists this.”

“Services have had to agree to the best approach and this had raised the awareness and skills of all services in relation to women escaping domestic violence.”

“The networking has been excellent and my skills have developed through the networks. When the scheme first came into place I had no idea that half of the services existed.”

“No other interagency mechanisms have been as effective as this, in helping to secure involvement of services in collaborative networks over the longer term. There is now a deep level of knowledge not only of the services each organisation can deliver but now of the particular skills sets each worker holds so very direct referrals can be made.”

Where suggestions for improvements have been made these tend to be focused on administrative processes such as communication in relation to Coordination Group meetings but these observations were few in number. It was noted that the service model has enabled each area some autonomy in determining the meeting process that suits them, while this involved some disagreements between services initially there is a view that the coordination committees are now stronger as a result.

“Initially there were differences of opinion between services but these have been resolved and the services are now effectively working together. There was agreement that the recommendations and knowledge of each worker referring a client would be respected.”

The strengthening of relationships with real estate agents is another example of the strengthening of the housing service system, with feedback from real estate agents as part of the evaluation pointing to the value of the service model particularly in supporting good tenants who come across a period of hardship. There was a request from real estate agents who were interviewed, for improved information about the service to enable them to provide this information to their tenants.

“They need to provide more info to us, including products like brochures that can be given to the clients. If you have products, clients can take them from the real estate agents without feeling embarrassed because they've been approached by the agent.”

4.4 Staffing Issues

4.4.1 Impact of staffing issues on the project

No difficulties were experienced in relation to staff recruitment and strong endorsement of the Samaritans TSS establishment staff and current personnel was reiterated by all service providers.

4.4.2 Skills needed by staff

For the position of Tenancy Support Coordinator skills in case management were a requirement as well as the ability to network and maintain networks. Staff were also required to have a Certificate IV in Community Services or equivalent as a basic qualification.

The comments from service providers interviewed regarding the Tenant Support Service staff and their overall coordination and management of the service were extremely positive.

4.4.3 Training required

In the first year of the project the potential need for training in relation to case management processes for Coordination Group members was identified, but over time committee's resolved this need, with observations that the committee structure provided an applied process through which to share best practice methodologies and information between services.

5 COST ANALYSIS

5.1 Total project budget and expenditure

The table on the following page shows the total budget and expenditure for the TSP for 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12.

As shown, over the life of the project up until 30 June 2012 total proportional expenditure was as follows:

Table 5.1 Tenant Support Service Expenditure to 30 June 2012

Category	Amount \$	%
Client service staff	286,660	22.7%
Admin and management staff	130,287	10.3%
Other admin expenses (non staff)	124,780	9.9%
Brokerage - goods and services	719,621	57.1%
Total	1,261,348	100%

In total, staffing and administration accounted for 42.9% and brokerage 57.1%. Note that Samaritans have not supplied disaggregated data in relation to the proportional split between brokerage on goods and brokerage on services over the life of the project however, section 5.3 below discusses the breakup of categories for 2011/12.

Table 5.2 Tenant Support Service Budget and Expenditure 2009/10 to 2011.12

	2009-10 Budget	2009-10 Expenditure	2010-11 Budget	2010-11 Expenditure	2011-12 Budget	2011-12 Expenditure	Total Budget	Total Expenditure	Proportion of expenditure
Client service staff		14,948.73	104,225.00	114,455.01	210,949.00	157,255.89	315,174.00	286,659.63	22.7%
Admin and management staff		4,717.34	58,600.00	53,058.21	72,569.00	72,511.82	131,169.00	130,287.37	10.3%
Other admin expenses (non staff)		10,112.27	47,538.00	43,122.77	72,374.00	71,544.63	119,912.00	124,779.67	9.9%
Brokerage - goods & services		4,572.73	375,637.00	301,448.83	370,000.00	413,599.65	745,637.00	719,621.21	57.1%
Financial Year Totals	-	34,351.07	586,000.00	512,084.82	725,892.00	714,911.99	1,311,892.00	1,261,347.88	100%

5.2 Issues with expenditure

Overall, there is some slight under-expenditure against budget for both brokerage and staffing/administration for the project. Total brokerage expenditure was \$719,621 for the life of the project to 30 June 2012 against a budget of \$745,637 while total staffing and administration was \$541,118 against a budget of \$566,255.

As shown in the table on the preceding page, in 2011/12 there was over-expenditure against budget on brokerage – approximately \$414,000 was expended against a budget of \$370,000. However this over-expenditure was offset by under-expenditure against budget on client service staff.

5.3 Client costs for the project

5.3.1 Spreadsheet categories

The spreadsheet provided by Samaritans attached to the project report provides costing data for the TSS for 2011/12. Table 5.3 below summarises 2011/12 expenditure by major category. As shown, staffing and operating costs accounted for 41.6% of total expenditure while brokerage accounted for 58.4%.

Table 5.3 Tenant Support Service Total Expenditure 2011/12

Category	Amount	% of total
Staffing costs	\$157,256	22.0%
Operating costs	\$139,666	19.5%
Brokered goods	\$82,221	11.5%
Brokered services	\$85,009	11.9%
Payments	\$250,060	35.0%
Other	\$700	0.1%
TOTAL	\$714,912	100.0%

The following table summarises key components of brokerage/payments expended in 2011/12

Table 5.4 Tenant Support Service Brokerage Expenditure 2011/12

Category	Amount	% of total
<i>Brokered goods</i>		
- Groceries	\$30,443	7.3%
- Home establishment costs	\$51,778	12.4%
<i>Brokered services</i>		
- Removalist costs	\$42,176	10.1%
- Case management (external)	\$27,451	6.6%
- Urgent home repairs	\$14,883	3.6%
- Specialist health	\$499	0.1%
<i>Payments</i>		
- Rent arrears	\$193,662	46.3%
- Utilities bills	\$46,842	11.2%
- Bond assistance	\$5,898	1.4%
- Storage	\$1,506	0.4%
- Other bills	\$2,152	0.5%
- Child care	\$700	0.2%
TOTAL	\$417,990	100%

As shown in the table above, the primary brokerage expenditure category was rent arrears accounting for 46.3% of costs followed by home establishment costs (12.4%) utility bills (11.2%) and removalist costs (10.1%). Brokered case management accounted for 6.6% of brokerage costs. It is noted that where clients repay rent arrears these payments are made directly to the housing provider so rent arrears payments through the TSP represents the balance of rent arrears due.

5.3.2 Cost per client

The data provided by Samaritans through the data portal report indicates that in 2011/12, 1207 individuals were assisted comprising adults and accompanying children. This total equates to 394 families.

As shown in the spreadsheet the total project cost for 2011/12 was \$714,912.

The average cost per client in 2011/12 inclusive of all costs was \$592 per individual and \$1815 per family. The average brokerage/payments were \$346 per individual and \$1061 per family.

The overall cost per individual/family is considered to represent value for money. As discussed in the literature review there are a range of costs associated with a failed tenancy. This may include the cost of crisis accommodation, increased demand for health, mental health, drug and alcohol and child and family services as well as individual costs such as moving costs and loss of rental bonds. Costs to landlords may include legal fees and unpaid and forgone rent. While these costs are difficult to estimate, the literature review suggested that the cost of preventing eviction is significantly less than the costs resulting from eviction.

Comparable benchmarks are difficult to identify although one study discussed in the literature⁶ found that the recurrent per client cost of tenant support programs in Western Australia in 2005-06 were generally comparable to the provision of SAAP crisis accommodation but significantly less than SAAP medium to longer term accommodation as shown the following table which also includes the per family cost of the TSS. In the table, SHAP refers to the Supported Housing Assistance Program a tenant support program for public housing tenants at risk of eviction. The PRSAP refers to the Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program which provides tenant support to private rental tenants. Note that the data excluding the TSS is 2005-06 so it is somewhat dated and costs for 2011/12 for these programs may be higher than that shown in the table.

Table 5.5 Western Australia cost per client per program compared to the Tenant Support Program

Program	SAAP crisis 2005/06	SAAP medium to long term 2005/06	SHAP 2005/06	PRSAP 2005/06	TSS 2011/12
Cost per client per annum	\$2,243	\$15,470	\$3,483	\$2,145	\$1,815

Source: Flatau et al (2008) – see footnote 6

As shown, the cost of the TSS is lower than the Western Australian tenant support programs particularly noting that the Western Australian data is 2005/06. Note that these cost estimates only take account of the recurrent cost of programs. There are many costs associated with eviction apart from the provision of crisis accommodation as discussed above and in the literature review which need to be taken into account when assessing value for money of the TSS.

Value for money for the TSS is not only associated with the actual cost of service provision. There is significant value in terms of the partnerships developed through the project including those with real estate agents, a number of whom are actively assisting in the prevention of eviction through early referral of clients at risk to the TSS.

5.4 Effectiveness of brokerage funding

The Samaritans TSS brokerage policy provides clear advice about the parameters for payment of brokerage which were approved by the funding body at the commencement of the project. The project evaluation finds that brokerage has been applied as detailed in the policy, with flexibility for prioritisation of need by the area Coordinating Group.

As detailed outcome data is not available, assessment of the cost effectiveness of brokerage needs to be ascertained from stakeholder feedback, client exit forms and client feedback.

Stakeholders interviewed through the project identified that significant value was derived through the provision of brokerage and that this was significant in preventing eviction of families into homelessness. A small number of stakeholders felt brokerage was occasionally too generous, however more than 90% of stakeholders interviewed believed the brokerage funding was used effectively. One service provider commented:

“In the majority of cases outcomes are sustained, and episodes of crisis needed a short response to ensure no eviction. Families can only receive assistance through the scheme if they agree to be case managed”.

⁶ Flatau, P., Zaretsky, K., Brady, M., Haigh, Y., & Martin, R. (2008) *The cost-effectiveness of homelessness programs: a first assessment*. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Western Australia Research Centre

Stakeholders indicated that the service approach clearly identified that clients receiving assistance needed to comply with the eligibility criteria for a tenancy at risk and that brokerage expenditure required clients to be case managed either through the existing resources of participating services or through brokerage funds for case management.

“As the service approach is a hand-up not a hand out, all assistance seeks to also build on client’s knowledge and resources.”

While payment of rental arrears appears to be a significant proportion of the brokerage budget it has made a difference to services working with families in private rental:

“We had a client who was constantly in arrears and wouldn’t acknowledge it. This client was referred to a service who worked with Samaritans and they managed to deal with the arrears. Now the client is using CentrePay. Initially the client was facing a 14 day eviction notice, and now is fine.”

The proportion of brokerage funds allocated to case management costs is fairly low, indicating that value is gained from the use of existing service resources through the Coordination Group model. In addition the brokerage funds have built capacity to engage with and case manage clients at risk of homelessness by services including neighbourhood centres and community housing providers in the region.

While clients clearly indicate that access to financial supports made a significant difference to their capacity to sustain a tenancy, no client interviewed indicated that it was the financial support alone; rather all clients identified other outcomes, ranging from improvements in health and wellbeing, family relationships and general budgeting capacity. Of all clients interviewed (21) only two clients indicated they may seek further financial assistance from the service.

Expenditure of funds on emergency food relief, removalists cost and home establishment are not insignificant in the 2011/12 financial year and point to the support received by some families to establish a secure tenancy, rather than sustain an existing tenancy. This could include relocation and housing transfer for reasons of escaping domestic violence or needing to relocate to a house with affordable rent. Some instances of support were provided to people experiencing secondary homelessness although these numbers are small overall and would appear to achieve an outcome in line with prevention of homelessness as a result of building the capacity for effectively managing a tenancy.

Less than 15% of services interviewed believed the outcomes of the service could be achieved without brokerage funds.

“The funds are pivotal to provision of relevant support.”

“Brokerage is essential, it brings together people with a role to play in homelessness prevention and provides an effective means of delivering support to people at risk.”

6 ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MODEL

6.1 Success factors for the model

6.1.1 Establishment and role of lead agency

The approach taken by the Samaritans and funding body at the outset of the project, to develop a service model that would gain existing service buy in and build broader sector capacity has been identified as a significant contributor to the success of the model over a short funding period.

Services noted that the individual consultation with services to explain the service approach was fundamental in gaining service support and the role of the lead agency was crucial in providing the framework for service implementation through provision of documentation, policies and processes for decision making, approval and reporting against client outcomes. One service provider commented:

“The collaborative and respectful way in which the project was set-up was instrumental to the success and buy-in of the services - it could have been a threat, but the Samaritans developed a model and shared approach that was respectful and overcame this.”

6.1.2 Promotion

While the Service Coordinator has played an instrumental role in the promotion of the service through attendance at interagency meetings, housing forums and facilitating opportunities to develop linkages with real estate agents, the responsibility for promotion is also shared with Coordination Group members.

Knowledge of the service within the homelessness sector appears to be strong, with the only opportunities for improvement in service promotion identified by real estate agents who saw benefit in a printed resource that could be provided to clients.

6.1.3 Coordination Groups

The establishment of area based Coordination Groups was repeatedly identified as a significant strength of the service model and the success of local implementation and facilitation of stronger networks between specialist homelessness and mainstream services.

The majority of stakeholders identified that the Coordination Group assessment process including consideration of case plans and brokerage requests was an effective mechanism through which to assess levels of need versus recommendations for purchase of case management hours, goods and other supports, with services indicating that the Coordination Group ensures the use of existing resources first, prevents clients ‘double dipping’ by sharing of information within agreed privacy protocols and by identifying alternative support strategies within service resources.

“The service approach supports better collaboration and shared knowledge of clients in common, so over servicing does not occur.”

6.1.4 Integrated case management

The strengths of the model in developing a locally based integrated case management approach, centred around a collaborative, client centred decision making committee with local responsibility for allocation of brokerage funds has been noted by a broad range of service providers. The integrated client centred approach ensures a holistic assessment of clients needs while ensuring effective use of service system resources.

6.1.5 Flexible, practical brokerage

Flexible and practical brokerage that could be accessed quickly was identified by all stakeholders as a key strength of the service, with adequate but not unnecessary red tape in place to ensure timely approvals for financial support and services. Over 80% of services believed the strengths of the project could not be sustained over the longer term without ongoing access to brokerage funding.

6.1.6 Building on service capacity

While the strengths of the model in terms of service networking were strongly identified the stand out comments from service providers relate to skill development and knowledge of the service system that can be effectively applied in their work with clients. The service model has given existing services access to funds to do more and expand their service provision avoiding the risks of establishing a new stand alone service.

While services identify the importance of access to brokerage funds to sustain the integrated approach achieved through Coordination Groups, most agreed that the skill development and capacity for service collaboration would likely be sustained overtime.

“Services are working together better than ever before and those relationships are now strong and will endure.”

6.2 Challenges for the model

6.2.1 Single service coordinator

While establishment of the service with a single TSS coordination role may have been sufficient at the outset of the project, a number of services expressed the need for a second coordinator to service the northern part of the region. This would overcome the travel and time impost on the sole coordinator of attendance at all Coordination Group meetings and may provide some additional capacity in relation to the approval of brokerage applications made out of session.

6.2.2 Access to affordable housing

The service is working with high needs clients experiencing significant life challenges, yet access to social housing properties is limited despite a growth in the community housing sector. Housing NSW refers clients who have accessed Rentstart and other Housing NSW products to the service where it is identified that clients need further support.

Access to private rental particularly for larger families was noted as a challenge for the model, with some families relying on hotel accommodation and reporting up to 100 housing applications for private rental before receiving assistance through the TSS. Other examples were provided of families who had relocated to the area in search of affordable housing.

6.2.3 Reductions in Housing NSW assistance payments and subsidies

Stakeholders noted the impacts of Housing NSW reductions in rental bond subsidies and temporary accommodation assistance, noting these changes had flow on effects in terms of demand and applications for support to the service from people experiencing secondary homelessness.

6.2.4 Employment

Clients noted challenges in securing employment and training opportunities on the mid north coast, noting that this provided an additional challenge for them in terms of improving families economic wellbeing.

6.2.5 Client data

While the de-centralised approach of the service model has generated good outcomes in terms of service integration, it does pose some challenges in terms of understanding TSS related client referrals between services. As identified earlier in the report, Samaritans is unable to access service specific client data, except for those clients they directly case manage. This can make a deeper assessment of issues like referral patterns unclear as service delivery is identified as 'directly provided' by a member of the Coordination Group and observations about referral patterns within the Coordination Group are not easily made.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of key lessons learnt

- The TSS is a time, resource and cost effective means of intervening to prevent evictions into homelessness for families at risk and may also be effective in improving tenant capacity to manage their tenancies into the future.
- The TSS and locally based Coordination Groups promote effective integrated case management, ensuring appropriate use of service system resources according to family needs. The Coordination Groups have supported improved partnerships between service providers and acted to strengthen client referral and support processes with improved outcomes for clients.
- The availability of brokerage funds for rental arrears, financial assistance, goods and services and to strengthen access to tenancy focused case management is a crucial feature of the TSS. The provision of brokerage funding for case management hours over an extended period enables service providers to put in place sustainable strategies to avoid rental arrears in the future as well as addressing underlying issues contributing to placing the tenancy at risk including domestic violence, mental health and alcohol and drug issues.
- Investing additional funding in building the capacity of existing services rather than establishing new stand alone services offers significant merit in terms of service system buy-in and capacity to implement the project while continuing to develop ongoing sector networks and relationships.
- Investing in strengthening referral relationships with real estate agents through networking and accessing brokerage funding for rental arrears is an effective means of supporting private rental tenants to sustain tenancies during periods of crisis. Real estate agents have been responsive to the TSS initiative and now actively refer private rental tenants to the TSS as well as cooperating with rent arrears repayment plans
- There has been a high success rate in relation to housing outcomes for TSS clients with around 98% of clients sustaining their tenancy at the 16 week exit point. Key to success in sustaining tenancies is the emphasis placed on supporting clients to learn budgeting and financial management skills as well developing affordable debt repayment arrangements. Service providers interviewed reported a reduced need for referrals to crisis services due to the increased capacity to respond to issues for families early and to act in a coordinated way to provide support and financial assistance to prevent homelessness.
- There are non housing outcomes for clients as a result of the TSS, in relation to physical and mental health, social and family functioning. There are positive outcomes for families with complex needs where housing is a limiting factor for example, restoration of children.
- The TSS is well embedded in the MNC service system and has effectively expanded the range of services involved in the prevention of homelessness for families in the region.

- Further investment in TSS could be consolidated now establishment efforts for the project are completed and Coordination Groups are functioning effectively, however a lead agency role will continue to be required to ensure the efficient and consistent implementation of the service across the region.
- The cost of the TSS is relatively low compared to the costs to individuals and the service system of eviction and homelessness.

7.2 Implications for future responses to the client group

Single parents especially young mothers, Aboriginal mothers and women escaping domestic violence or experiencing sole parenthood following family separation are primary clients groups for the project so far and the brokerage and case management response has been effective for these groups with a high proportion of financial support delivered that includes family related interventions.

Given the linkages reported by service providers and clients between family restoration and seeking support to sustain a tenancy, government and non government policy and program responses in relation to housing access and child related early intervention and prevention strategies are areas for further analysis, with opportunities needed at the regional level to facilitate further opportunities for integrated service delivery responses.

The approach adopted in this model of engaging Aboriginal services as integral parts of Coordination Group membership has been effective in ensuring Aboriginal families access the service.

The need to extend the project to single people was identified by a number of service providers during the interview process.

7.3 Implications for the homelessness system in the region

According to service providers the TSS has markedly strengthened and expanded the homelessness service system in the MNC. While the service has had some opportunity to connect with the far north coast Tenant Support Program further opportunities should be facilitated to identify learning opportunities and trends across the greater north coast region.

The approach has strengthened awareness of domestic violence services across the region and reduced 'geographic' gaps in service delivery; although some transport challenges for families remain that necessitate outreach responses.

Further development of relationships with real estate agents can only act to strengthen the initial gains made in this regard through the work of the TSS.

7.4 Insights gained that can enrich the evidence base

Integrated case management supported by brokerage funding is an effective way in which to deliver programs seeking to assist families sustain their tenancy. These approaches appear to be effective in intervening early and thereby reduce referrals to services for crisis accommodation while raising broader service awareness around key issues contributing to homelessness including domestic violence.

7.5 Future research that could strengthen the evidence in this area

7.5.1 CTTT data on terminations

As discussed earlier, data was obtained from the CTTT on the number of applications for termination on the grounds of non payment of rent for hearing venues in the mid north coast. Data was obtained for 2010/11 and 2011/12. It would be useful to continue to collect equivalent data for the duration of the operation of the TSS in the region to determine any discernible trends in relation to terminations.

7.5.2 Collection of client data and referrals within Coordination Groups

While the lead agency has moved to tracking of level of need of clients access the TSS, further improvements in relation to recording of support hours provided by services and the number and type of referrals occurring during confirmation and approval of client case plans would add value to the quality of information provided on client outcomes relating to service interventions. As has been suggested for the Far North Coast Tenancy Support Program, it could also be useful to collect client data on quality of life variables at the commencement and completion of the support period to better ascertain non housing outcomes.

7.5.3 Longitudinal study of clients

The TSS operates for 16 weeks and data indicates that very few tenancies end in termination during the period that support is provided. For the future it could be useful to undertake a longitudinal study of a sample of clients assisted to determine whether tenancies are sustained in the longer term.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWED CLIENTS DEMOGRAPHIC AND SERVICE USE DATA

This section contains results of the interviews with clients that are not otherwise presented in the body of the report.

Table A 1.1 Gender of interviewed client

Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	20	95%
Males	1	5%
Total	21	100%

Table A 1.2 Age of interviewed client

Ages	Number	Percentage
21 - 30 years	8	38%
31 - 40 years	9	43%
41 - 50 years	3	14%
51 - 60 years	1	5%
Total	21	100%

Table A 1.3 Family make up of interviewed client

Number of individuals	Number	Percentage
Children < 5	17	33%
Children 5 - 10years	17	33%
Children 11-15 years	5	10%
Young people 16 -20 years	3	6%
Parent	21	23%
Total	52	100%

Table A 1.4 Housing provider for interviewed client

Housing provider type	Number	Percentage
Public Housing	3	14%
Community Housing	5	24%
Real Estate Agent	8	38%
Private landlord	5	23%

Total	21	100%
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Table A 1.5 Income source of interviewed client

Income type	Number	Percentage
Benefit - full (type)	19	91%
Benefit - part (type)	1	5%
Full time employment	1	5%
Education/training	1	5%
Other	2	10%
Total	27*	116%*

* NB: Some clients had more than one type of income

Table A 1.6 Location of interviewed client

Local Govt. Area	Number	Percentage
Taree	4	19%
Kempsey	5	24%
Port Macquarie	5	24%
Coffs Harbour	5	24%
Not known	2	10%
Total	21	99%

Table A 1.7 How interviewed client found out about the TSS

Source	Number	Percentage
Word of mouth (e.g. friends)	1	5%
Aboriginal service	5	24%
Community Services	2	10%
Real estate agent	1	5%
Family Support Service	2	10%
Community Housing Provider	2	10%
Neighbourhood centre	2	10%
Women's Refuge	5	24%

Not known	2	10%
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Total	21	100%
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Table A 1.8 Source of referral to TSS

Source	Number	Percentage
I got in touch with the service myself	4	19%
I was referred to the tenancy support service by another service who was helping me at the time	17	81%
Total	21	100%

Table A 1.9 How long interviewed client waited for TSS assistance

Length of time	Number	Percentage
Less than 1 week	8	38%
Less than 2 weeks	8	38%
Less than 3 weeks	4	19%
Not known	1	5%
Total	21	100%

Table A 1.10 When interviewed client got help from TSS

Number of months	Number	Percentage
Just started	2	9%
About 3 months ago	7	33%
About 6 months ago	6	29%
About 12 months ago	6	29%
Total	21	100%

Table A 1.11 Length of TSS support

Number of months	Number	Percentage
0-3 months	14	67%

3-6 months	3	14%
6-12 months	3	14%
More than 12 months	1	5%
Total	21	100%

Table A 1.12 Was this the right amount of time?

Response	Number	Percentage
It was the right length of time	14	67%
A longer period of time would have been better	6	29%
Not known	1	5%
Total	21	100%

Table A 1.13 Do you think that the help you received will reduce the likelihood of your tenancy being at risk again?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	21	100%
No	0	0%
Total	21	100%

APPENDIX 2: SERVICE PROVIDERS INTERVIEWED

- Housing NSW
- Ray White Real Estate Nambucca Heads
- Schultz Real Estate
- Rocks Real Estate
- Werrin Aboriginal Medical Centre
- Salvation Army
- Kempsey Women and Children's Refuge
- Inspiration Real Estate
- Port Macquarie Community Health Centre
- Hastings Macleay Housing Support Service auspiced by Kempsey Neighbourhood Service
- Kempsey Community Partnerships Against Domestic and Family Violence
- Burnside Brighter Futures Program
- Coffs Harbour Accommodation Brokerage and Housing Support Service

APPENDIX 3: SERVICE PROVIDER INTERVIEW DATA

This section contains results of the interviews with service providers that are not otherwise presented in the body of the report.

Table A3.1 Description of organisation

Organisation type	Number
Community housing provider	1
Health service	2
Non government organisation community/ welfare/ support	5
Real estate agent	4
Housing NSW	1
Total number of respondents	13

Table A3.2 Service coverage of service provider organisation

Location	Number*
Taree	1
Kempsey	7
Port Macquarie	4
Coffs Harbour	4
All LGA's	2

* Some respondents covered more than one location

Table A 3.3 Relationship of organisation to TSS

Relationship	Number*
Refer clients to TSS	13
Accepts referrals – provide brokered (paid) support to TSS clients	4
Accepts referrals – provide support to TSS clients through own existing resources	4

**Some respondents had more than one type of relationship to TSS*

Table A 3.4 Main issues clients present with that lead to making a referral to TSS

Main issue	Number*
Complex client needs	13
Mental health issues	10
Drug & alcohol issues	5
Nuisance and annoyance	1
Rental arrears	14
Needing assistance to transfer to another social housing property	8
Secondary homeless help to establish tenancy	10

** Clients generally have multiple presenting issues*

Table A 3.5 Why clients are referred to TSS

Reasons for referral	Number*
Culturally appropriate	1
Provide case management to complex clients	7
Availability of brokerage funds to get clients services they require	13
Direct assistance	12
Flexible nature of services	11
Only service available	1
Previous good experience with TSS	4
Quality of service	6
Geographic area they cover	2

* Respondents nominated more than one reason for referral

Table A 3.6 Services provided to TSS clients via brokerage

Support provided	Number*
Question not applicable	7
Visits to clients	2
Assistance to resolve issues and problems identified by the landlord or real estate agent	4
Financial assistance/material aid/white goods	3
Financial assistance rental arrears	4
Financial counselling and support	4
Assistance to obtain/ maintain Centrelink/ government allowance	3
Employment and training assistance	2
Domestic / family violence support & counselling	1
Family /relationship support	3
Living/home skills/ personal development	3
Assistance with legal issues/ court support	1
Advocacy/ liaison on behalf of client	1
Services provided to children	5
Liaison with family reunification	2
Organisation of AVO restraining orders	1
Case management	4

** Respondents generally provided more than one form of brokered support*

Table A 3.7 Support provide to TSS clients through existing resources of service provider

Support provided	Number*
Question not applicable	7
Visits to clients	2
Assistance to resolve issues and problems identified by the landlord or real estate agent	4
Financial assistance/material aid/white goods	3
Financial assistance rental arrears	4
Financial counselling and support	4
Assistance to obtain/ maintain Centrelink/ government allowance	3
Employment and training assistance	2
Domestic / family violence support & counselling	1
Family /relationship support	3
Living/home skills/ personal development	3
Assistance with legal issues/ court support	1
Advocacy/ liaison on behalf of client	1
Services provided to children	5
Liaison with family reunification	2
Organisation of AVO restraining orders	1
Case management	4

* Respondents generally provided more than one form of support through existing resources

Table A 3.8 Outcomes seen in clients' lives as a result of TSS

Outcome	Number*
Begin counselling	2
Financial situation improved	6
Clients sustaining housing	8
Drug and/or alcohol problems reduced	4
Improved family relationships	5
Improvements in health	4
Improved mental health	5
Opportunity of employment/training	1
Safer housing	2
Social benefits e.g. less isolated	2

* More than one outcome was generally noted

Table A 3.9 In your experience are these outcomes/improvements sustained over the longer term?

Response	Number
Yes	5
Not known	8
Total	13

Table A 3.10 Perceived strengths of the TSS

Strength of program	Number*
Geographic coverage - a large area with outreach services	7
Quick response time	9
Good case coordination	6
Help clients by increasing the skills/knowledge	6
Not just cash rescue but about building clients abilities to manage their finances	6
Flexible nature of assistance	7
The strong service network	4

** Respondents generally nominated more than strength*

Table A 3.11 *Do you think that the benefits achieved through the TSS can be sustained without access to brokerage funds?*

Response	Number
Yes	1
No	8
Not known	4
Total	13

Table A 3.12 *Research suggests that Tenant Support Programs reduce client reliance on more intense/ crisis services. Do you think the TSS has had this type of outcome?*

Response	Number
Yes	8
Not known	5
Total	13