



COX IN ALL RIDGEWAY

*Consultation report and strategic advice for
improving the provision of specialist
homelessness services for Aboriginal people in
NSW*

For the NSW Department of Communities and
Justice

February 2020



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Cox Inall Ridgeway (CIR) acknowledges and pays respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations of Australia.

This report, the contents and recommendations have been authored by CIR. The report represents the independent insights and analysis of CIR, not DCJ, the NSW Government or any other organisation. While all care has been taken by CIR to present quotes and other information accurately, transcripts were not taken, so quotes are not verbatim. Please contact CIR if you have any concerns about any aspects of the report or identify a correction that is needed.

Thank you to all the organisations, staff and community members who participated in this project, and shared their advice, knowledge and insights. For more information about the project or this report contact CIR Head of Research Sylvie Ellsmore at sylvie.ellsmore@coxinallridgeway.com.au or 0403 977 213.

Terminology used in this report

The term Aboriginal: refers to the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters of New South Wales. Indigenous is the term sometimes used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who collectively are the Traditional Owners of Australia's lands and waters.

In NSW it is common practice for government agencies and community organisations to use the term Aboriginal, rather than Indigenous or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, to refer to services or policies which are primarily for Aboriginal people but are also inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people who are living in NSW. For example, Torres Strait Islanders clients may be included in counts or descriptions of 'Aboriginal' specialist homelessness services clients in NSW.

In this report:

- The term **Aboriginal** is used when referring to NSW organisations, services (including homeless services) or NSW policies which are aimed primarily at Aboriginal people, notwithstanding that these services are also open to Torres Strait Islanders.
- In relation to the reporting of data, either **Aboriginal**, **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**, or **Indigenous** is used depending on the term used in the source where the data was reported.
- The term **non-Indigenous** is sometimes used when referring to services or programs for the general Australian population which are not specifically targeted to Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander people, or figures which only count people who identify as other than Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander.

- The term **Aboriginal organisation** is used to refer to Aboriginal-led organisations in NSW.
- Specific Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander nation names are used where known.
- Terms used in quotes, titles or extracts from other documents are unchanged.

The term '**specialist homelessness services**' is used to refer to the types of services being delivered to people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. The term '**specialist homelessness service providers**' is used in this report to refer to the range of not for profit organisations that are contracted by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to provide homelessness services. This includes both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations.

Where an organisation that is providing specialist homelessness services is Aboriginal-led they are referred to in this report as an **Aboriginal homelessness service provider**. Other services are referred to **non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers**.

It is noted that the term **Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS)** is commonly used in the sector to refer to the range of homelessness services that are funded by DCJ, as well as to refer to the specific SHS funding program which is administered by DCJ.¹ '**SHS providers**' is a common term used in NSW to refer to the organisations funding by DCJ to provide homelessness services, regardless of the specific program under which they are funded. For example, the Service Support Fund (or **SSF**) also provides funding for a small number of organisations that support and contribute to the delivery of specialist homelessness services.

To avoid confusion about the sources of funding for organisations in this report the terms Specialist Homelessness Services (capitalised), SHS and SHS providers are generally avoided in this report, unless included in a quote or referring to the *specific* SHS funding program.

Department of Communities and Justice: During the course of the CIR's engagement with the former **Department of Family and Community Services** or **FACS**, for this project, the name of the department changed, following a re-structure and merger with the former Department of Justice. In this report, the name DCJ is used throughout to refer to the department. It may be read as interchangeable with FACS.

In consultations with the sector, the names FACS or Family and Community Services were predominantly used, due to the sector's familiarity with those terms. Where used in quotes these names are unchanged. FACS or Family and Community Services are also used when referring to or quoting from historical documents.

1. Executive Summary

a. Introduction

People who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness represent some of the most vulnerable people in Australia. Homelessness² can profoundly affect a person's mental and physical health, their education and employment opportunities, and their ability to participate fully in society. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are much more likely to experience homelessness than other Australians.³

Specialist homelessness services provide support to people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.⁴ These services can take the form of casework, referrals to dedicated housing services, domestic violence prevention and response, mental health services, assertive outreach for people sleeping on the streets, drop-in services and temporary accommodation assistance, crisis accommodation and other forms of support. Organisations funded to deliver specialist homelessness services vary in size and in the services offered and may receive funding from multiple sources.

In NSW the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) provides funding for not for profit organisations to deliver specialist homelessness services.⁵ Specialist homelessness services are provided under six separate program funding streams, which include individual one-off projects. The funding streams include:

- Specialist Homelessness Services program (SHS),
- Inner City Restoration (ICR),
- Service Support Fund (SSF),
- Domestic Violence Response Enhancement (DVRE),
- Homeless Youth Assistance Program (HYAP), and
- Youth Crisis Accommodation Enhancement (YCAE).

Specialist homelessness services are focused on those groups at greatest risk of homelessness including Aboriginal people, young people, families, single men and women (with or without children) escaping domestic and family violence. Under the *Going Home Staying Home* reforms of 2013-14, all specialist homelessness services in NSW were re-tendered resulting in the current Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) program. The other funding streams and one-off projects represent subsequent initiatives to supplement or complement the core SHS program to respond to specific circumstances, needs, or government priorities.

Aboriginal people access specialist homelessness services at a significantly higher rate than other Australians. In 2017-18 nearly one third (29%) of the clients accessing NSW's specialist homelessness services were Aboriginal.⁶

The NSW Government is committed to increasing Aboriginal involvement in the design and delivery of services impacting Aboriginal people, including specialist homelessness services. Currently the number of Aboriginal organisations funded to provide specialist homelessness services is low – of 224 current contracts⁷ supporting the delivery of specialist homelessness services, only 14 of these involve Aboriginal providers.⁸

In most parts of NSW there is no Aboriginal-run service for Aboriginal people to access, and the level of Aboriginal staff across the sector does not reflect the makeup of the clients seeking to access services. In addition, there is no current formal mechanism for Aboriginal organisations to provide advice to the NSW Government about the design and delivery of homelessness services or policy at the strategic level.

b. About this report

In July 2019 DCJ engaged Aboriginal social change agency Cox Inall Ridgeway (CIR) to collect feedback about ways to strengthen the role of Aboriginal people in the homelessness sector. The community engagement and related research undertaken by CIR informed the development of strategic advice to the Department.

The focus for community engagement activities was Aboriginal organisations representing Aboriginal people in NSW (i.e. state-wide and peak Aboriginal community-controlled organisations), and Aboriginal organisations or staff working in the homelessness sector. Other priority stakeholder groups were: DCJ staff, agencies involved in District Housing Implementation Groups, representatives of the Industry Partnership and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers. The report is also informed by local level consultations undertaken in inner-Sydney and the Hunter.

Organisations were contacted asking for feedback and participation in the project. Community engagement was undertaken over July to September 2019 and took the form of:

- Phone interviews and phone meetings,
- Face-to-face meetings held at the CIR office in Ultimo or at the offices of SHS providers in Sydney,
- Group face-to-face meetings in Newcastle,
- An Aboriginal state-wide forum held in Redfern, and
- Exchange of information through email.

CIR spoke to approximately 50 individuals from 34 organisations. The majority of individuals consulted were Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander. The organisations who participated in the project were:

- Four (4) Aboriginal peak community-controlled organisations: the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC), the NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec), the Aboriginal Community Housing Industry Association (ACHIA), and the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ ACT (ALS NSW/ACT),
- The Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO),
- Homelessness NSW, representing the Industry Partnership (Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) and Yfoundations),
- Ten (10) Aboriginal homelessness service providers, including members of the NSW SHS Aboriginal Reference Group (Homelessness NSW),
- Seventeen (17) non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers, prioritising Aboriginal staff within those organisations and organisations based in the inner-Sydney or Hunter regions, and

- DCJ staff involved in the SHS program, the inner-Sydney or Hunter regions or the Aboriginal Outcomes team (10 people in total).

This report presents the outcomes of the community engagement and related research undertaken by CIR for the project. It provides strategic advice in the form of possible actions and directions for change which could strengthen the voice and role of Aboriginal people in the design and delivery of specialist homelessness services.

The insights collected from the community engagement and research is presented below against key themes or issues which were a focus of the consultations:

- The accessibility of specialist homelessness services for Aboriginal people,
- The suitability of specialist homelessness services for Aboriginal people, including whether services are culturally appropriate,
- Aboriginal involvement in the specialist homelessness services workforce,
- Specialist homelessness services contract management, and
- Procurement of future specialist homelessness services contracts.

c. Selected insights

Homelessness is a growing issue in Australia. The five years from 2011 to 2016 have seen a marked increase in the number of homeless people in Australia, with the overall national homelessness rate rising by 14% in the period, and rough sleeping growing by 20%. Homelessness is growing fastest in NSW (by 27% from 2011 to 2016) and in capital cities (estimated homelessness in Sydney increased by 48% from 2011 to 2016).⁹

While the *rate* of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless reduced over the same period (that is, the proportion of people within the community that is homeless), the *number* of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless continues to grow overall, as the population increases.¹⁰ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain much more likely to be homeless than the non-Indigenous population.¹¹ While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 3.5% of the NSW population, they represented 7.3% of the people who were homeless in NSW on Census night in 2016.¹²

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience homelessness differently to other Australians. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be sleeping rough or be a victim of crime and of family violence.¹³

Types of homelessness, national figures, 2016

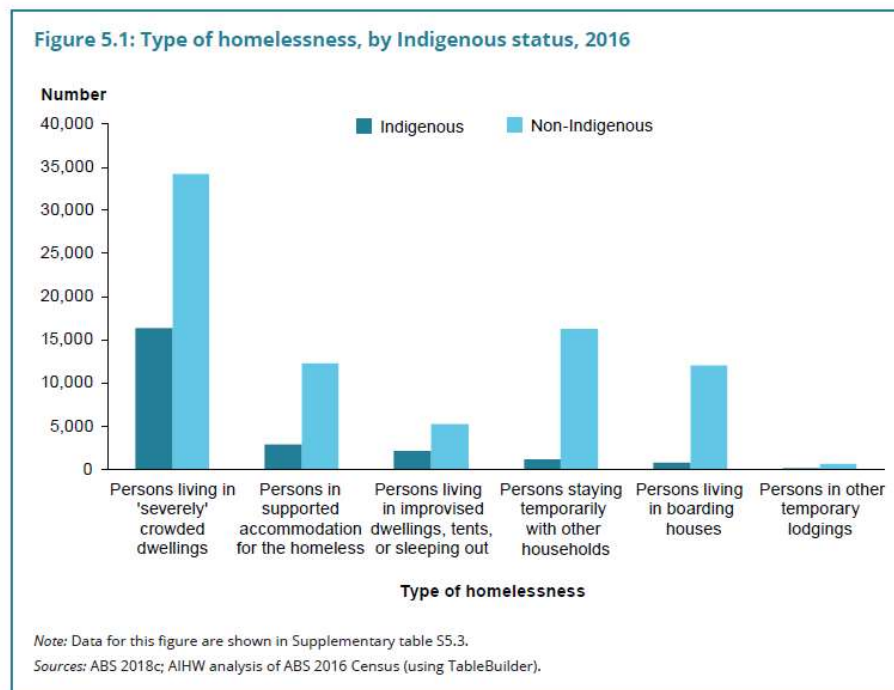


Table extracted from AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians: A focus report on housing and homelessness*. Figures are national.

Accessibility of specialist homelessness services for Aboriginal people

The provision of specialist homelessness services support has grown across all population groups in recent years.¹⁴ The growth in the number of people accessing specialist homelessness services is likely to be a result of both increased demand for services due to increased homelessness; and better assessment, referral and reporting of service provision.¹⁵ This includes more accurate reporting of the Aboriginal status of clients accessing specialist homelessness services.¹⁶

Between 2011 and 2018, the number of Aboriginal specialist homelessness service clients in NSW increased from 11,140 to 19,419 clients, according to data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).¹⁷ Over 60% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who access specialist homelessness services nationally are female, often having experienced domestic violence.¹⁸

The consultation for this project heard that within the growing homelessness population Aboriginal people have high and complex needs. CIR asked specialist homelessness service providers about the priority areas of need or gaps that exist for Aboriginal clients. The key areas identified by specialist homelessness service providers through the consultations were:

- A lack of access to appropriate and affordable long-term housing, and a lack of transitional housing.
- A lack of services including refuges for victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence was reported as impacting between 30 and 60% of specialist homelessness service clients.
- A gap in support for Aboriginal tenants at risk of losing existing housing, and a gap in support for new tenants to maintain housing. Some Aboriginal homelessness service providers

expressed frustration that they were increasingly being asked to provide support when a tenancy was breaking down, but support was not available to ensure tenancies were sustained.

- A lack of integrated or holistic approach to clients' needs (as discussed below).
- A lack of drug and alcohol programs, particularly rehabilitation places.
- For people sleeping rough especially, a lack of access to mental health services, and
- More people exited from custody who have no place to stay or supports. One specialist homelessness service provider estimated that 20% of people sleeping rough in inner Sydney were people exiting custody.

There is significant diversity across and within regions. While within NSW the greatest number of Aboriginal homeless people are found in south eastern (including inner) Sydney and the Hunter region (including Newcastle), there are particular difficulties in regional and remote areas where there are often fewer local services to access.

Specialist homelessness service providers reported that a key driver for Aboriginal people seeking to access specialist homelessness services either within or out of area was lack of social, community or affordable housing or temporary housing when leaving a domestic violence situation. A specialist homelessness services provider on the Central Coast reported an increase in homeless people staying in the Central Coast due to its proximity by rail to Sydney, and opportunities for relatively safe rough sleeping in bush land.

It was suggested through the consultation that any Aboriginal homelessness sector strategies or solutions developed should:

- Acknowledge regional and local diversity,
- Acknowledge the high and complex needs of Aboriginal people facing homelessness, and
- Ensure resources are directed to priority areas of need.

The consultation heard that Aboriginal homelessness service providers, particularly smaller providers, regularly operate at or above capacity. Cooperative service delivery arrangements and referral pathways exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers, however it was also reported that some non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers may be referring Aboriginal clients to Aboriginal homelessness service providers at rates that exceed what Aboriginal homelessness service providers are funded to deliver, and are therefore not sustainable.

Suitability of services

The consultation heard that Aboriginal clients prefer, in the main, to access an Aboriginal-run service, where one is available. Existing Aboriginal homelessness service providers and Aboriginal staff have strong connections to their respective local Aboriginal communities, and this knowledge supports effective service delivery. Due to the low numbers of Aboriginal homelessness service providers, most Aboriginal clients do not have access to an Aboriginal-run service.

Aboriginal homelessness service providers were reported to deliver appropriate, holistic and culturally safe¹⁹ service where possible within existing resources.

“We work with them on a holistic level, to provide them all the inputs they need in order to create a stable outcome re housing. ... We deal with much more than housing. Helping with payments, dealing with social workers if they have them, or getting them access to ones if they

don't. We help them with medical and mental health appointments, getting a mental health plan. For job network meetings or to get to work we provide them transport. We accompany them to court. We're involved in restoration programs, where people are seeking to have their children returned to them from care. At the moment I'm working with a woman who had her son removed at 4 weeks old. He's now nearly 3. We're working on getting him back to mum, it's taken 7 months so far." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

Many non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers have also implemented detailed strategies to increase the cultural competence of their workforce and organisation. Activities to support cultural competence which are being implemented by organisations included:

- Cultural awareness training, typically as one-off training,
- Aboriginal employment strategies, including recruitment strategies, and mentoring, supervision and professional development programs for Aboriginal staff,
- Community outreach programs, for example support for NAIDOC Week events,
- Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs),
- Aboriginal service development units within organisations,
- Cultural camps for staff,
- Participation in forums and conferences about Aboriginal issues,
- Signing up to the *Redressing Aboriginal Homelessness Accord* (as discussed below),
- Partnerships with Aboriginal organisations, and
- Including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, Aboriginal art and/or organisational commitments to self-determination in offices.

DCJ supports and works with the homelessness sector around a number of sector-led development activities, including programs to increase the cultural capacity of homelessness services. Homelessness sector initiatives are coordinated by the Industry Partnership (or IP), which was established in 2013 between DCJ and the three sector-peak organisations: Homelessness NSW, Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) and Yfoundations. A proportion of funding provided by DCJ to Homelessness NSW supports the employment of an Aboriginal Senior Project Officer based at Homelessness NSW.

Initiatives coordinated by the Industry Partnership include the *Redressing Aboriginal Homelessness Accord*, which was launched in 2017. The Accord is a voluntary, high level document which aims to increase Aboriginal participation in specialist homelessness services and support the capacity of Aboriginal organisations providing specialist homelessness services. Homelessness NSW reports that as of July 2019, 56 organisations had signed up to participate in the Accord.²⁰

Across the sector both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers reported that some non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers are providing more culturally appropriate services than others. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness services emphasised that where good practice was being implemented, it tended to rely on 'good' managers within an organisation, or the skills of Aboriginal staff. Increased cultural awareness training, cultural competence training, trauma informed training, support for specialist homelessness service providers to 'embed' culturally safe practice within their organisations was suggested, and potentially mandated cultural competence standards in service contracts should be considered.

"One of our programs has 30% Aboriginal clients, the other 15%. We don't have any Aboriginal staff. We recognise the gap. We include cultural awareness in our selection criteria for staff

now. We're developing a RAP. We have an internal working group. We talk to other organisations – local Aboriginal partner organisations- to get advice. We are organising cultural awareness training.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

Specialist homelessness services workforce

Recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff in the sector remains a challenge. Aboriginal staff play a key role in ensuring effective service delivery for Aboriginal clients and increasing the cultural competence of the homelessness sector.

The consultation heard that many mainstream organisations have none or only one Aboriginal worker. It was reported by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers that there was high pressure for Aboriginal staff to work outside the scope of their role and beyond hours for which they are paid, because of the expectations from clients, the community and the organisation. Where only one Aboriginal worker was employed in a non-Aboriginal organisation, it was reported that they may be expected to be involved in ‘all things Aboriginal’ for the organisation.

Suggestions of ways DCJ could support increased Aboriginal employment in the sector from the consultation included but were not limited to:

- Increased sharing of examples of good recruitment and staff development practices,
- Sponsoring Aboriginal mentoring and professional development initiatives,
- Sponsoring traineeship programs, and
- Mandated Aboriginal employment targets.

Some specialist homelessness service providers reported success with caseload management for managing workload issues, including negotiating lower caseloads through DCJ contracts. However, reducing caseloads appeared to be a solution which had only been implemented by larger organisations, or organisations with partnerships with larger organisations which allowed clients to be transferred. Most Aboriginal homelessness service providers are small to medium organisations, some employing less than two (2) full time staff.²¹

Aboriginal-led specialist homelessness services delivery

A key theme from the consultation across stakeholder groups was the need for greater resources to be invested in the delivery of specialist homelessness services to Aboriginal people, and greater funding certainty for Aboriginal homelessness service providers. Aboriginal homelessness service providers are more likely to rely on government funding compared to other organisations.²² The small scale of most Aboriginal homelessness service providers was an additional challenge reported. These factors have a significant impact on the sustainability of existing Aboriginal homelessness service providers.

Relationships with the other organisations in the sector were identified as a key area of support for some Aboriginal staff and for Aboriginal homelessness service providers. The consultation heard multiple examples of long-running cooperative arrangements between specialist homelessness services in different areas. The pooling of resources - with the support of the Industry Partnership - to meet regulatory challenges was identified as a successful strategy implemented in the past by organisations in the Hunter and Sydney, for example several services pool resources to engage the same auditor to meet audit requirements.

There was general support from stakeholders consulted for new Aboriginal organisations to be encouraged into the sector, as a means to increase diversity and client choice in regions where there are no Aboriginal-led services. Throughout the consultations Aboriginal peak organisations noted that many Aboriginal organisations generally are overstretched and struggle to meet existing requirements to receive government funding, including accreditation standards. Entering the homelessness space was not seen as a priority or attractive for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. A comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy was suggested to encourage more Aboriginal organisations in the long term. In the short term it is suggested that the priority should be support for existing Aboriginal homelessness service providers and Aboriginal staff working in non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers.

Strengthening Aboriginal voices in the design and delivery of specialist homelessness services

In terms of further consultation and the development of a specific Aboriginal homelessness sector strategy, there was interest from Aboriginal homelessness service providers and sector representatives to be involved in the future.

While it was acknowledged that the voice of Aboriginal people in designing and delivering Aboriginal homelessness responses needs to be strengthened, there wasn't a consensus of support for the formation of a new Aboriginal peak body or a specific Aboriginal homelessness forum at the State-level. The preference from state-wide, regional and local Aboriginal organisations consulted was to find ways to strengthen existing forums in the short term as the mechanism for Aboriginal people to provide advice at the State level, and the local level rather than start something new.

Suggestions about potential forums that could be used or strengthened to provide advice at the state level included:

- The Aboriginal Reference Group convened by the Industry Partnership. This forum could be strengthened through resources to facilitate larger numbers of Aboriginal organisations and staff travelling to participate in meetings.
- The Premier's Council of Homelessness. This forum could be strengthened with expanded Aboriginal membership.
- The Aboriginal Peak Reference Group for housing, convened by AHO to consult on the existing policy review process. This forum could be extended beyond its current Aboriginal housing policy review process.

In the short to medium term there was interest in supporting key Aboriginal stakeholders who participated in the consultation to meet again, and work with DCJ towards on a shared agenda.

Other future issues

The introduction of Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES) accreditation standards for specialist homelessness services is the focus of a number of providers over the next 12 months. The Industry Partnership is implementing a number of programs to support services to prepare for accreditation.

In terms of future contract procurement processes, the key message was that it was important to learn the lessons from the *Going Home Staying Home* process. A future procurement process is most likely to successfully engage Aboriginal organisations if Aboriginal organisations are

prioritised, and a tailored strategy is developed which allows flexibility and longer lead time for organisations to engage.

2. Recommendations and potential future directions

The key strategic recommendation from the community engagement is that **DCJ develop and fund an Aboriginal homelessness sector development strategy**. The strategy should aim to improve homelessness services for Aboriginal people, by supporting existing Aboriginal organisations and staff in the homelessness sector and an expanded or stronger role for Aboriginal organisations and communities in the future, including in the design and delivery of future homelessness services. Improving homelessness services should assist to reduce Aboriginal homelessness, including by supporting Aboriginal people at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless, and by increasing the number of Aboriginal people who are supported to secure suitable, sustainable housing and other forms of supports. The strategy should be informed by the consultations undertaken to date through this project.

The strategy should prioritise service delivery to Aboriginal clients by Aboriginal organisations, consistent with the NSW Government's commitment to supporting self-determination. The strategy could prioritise one or more avenues for regular, ongoing Aboriginal input or advice to the NSW Government, in relation to homelessness policy and service delivery. Such a mechanism should be a topic of further discussion and consultation (see strategic recommendation three, below).

It was an original intention of this project to develop such a strategy. Through the life of the project it became clear that development of such a strategy required a longer consultation process, greater discussion to find areas of consensus between key stakeholders, and greater involvement of industry representatives who are currently leading a range of sector development activities relevant to any future strategy.

The second key strategic recommendation is that **DCJ reaffirms its commitment to self-determination**. It was suggested during the consultations that DCJ could make a written statement affirming its support for Aboriginal self-determination, consistent with the *Redressing Aboriginal Homelessness Accord* being voluntarily implemented within the sector. The commitment would be positively received by stakeholders as a gesture of good will and indication of the department demonstrating leadership for change from the top.

The third key strategic recommendation is that **DCJ commit to, and resource, further Aboriginal community consultation to inform future decisions regarding specialist homelessness service design and delivery**.

The bringing together of key Aboriginal state-wide organisations, Aboriginal homelessness service providers, Aboriginal staff and homelessness sector representatives was identified as a valuable outcome of the consultation, and the start of a conversation about increased coordination. Future or ongoing consultation should include peak Aboriginal organisations, Aboriginal homelessness service providers, Aboriginal DCJ staff, DCJ SHS program staff, and key Aboriginal staff or program leads within the sector.

While there is no one peak Aboriginal homelessness body in NSW or Australia, a number of Aboriginal peak bodies' work relates to or intersects with homelessness. One of the aims of this project was to investigate the establishment of a formal mechanism for Aboriginal input at the

strategic (State) level. The consultation heard a range of views about the most appropriate structure for ongoing engagement between the Aboriginal sector and DCJ.

Generally, there wasn't support for the establishment of a new ongoing mechanism for Aboriginal input into homelessness policy or service design at the strategic level. Instead it was recommended that existing avenues continue to be used, such as direct discussions between DCJ and Aboriginal peaks, program-based forums such as those convened by the AHO and practitioner forums convened by the Industry Partnership.

There was strong consensus that the conversations continue between key stakeholders which are focused on strengthening Aboriginal voices and improving integrated responses to address homelessness, with the support of DCJ. In the first instance, it is recommended that the key stakeholders who met as part of this project have the opportunity to provide a response to the report back and strategic advice arising from this project. Additional stakeholders that could be included in that discussion are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board of DVNSW, additional members of the Homelessness NSW Aboriginal Communities of Practice, and the Aboriginal program within the Tenants Union of NSW.

Other considerations and proposed directions for improving and developing service provision for Aboriginal people are outlined below.

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
1. DCJ develop and fund an Aboriginal homelessness sector development strategy	DCJ Central/ Corporate Industry Partnership Aboriginal State- wide organisations Aboriginal staff and services in the sector
2. DCJ reaffirms its commitment to self-determination	DCJ Central/ Corporate

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
<p>3. DCJ commit to, and resource, further Aboriginal community consultation to inform future decisions regarding specialist homelessness service design and delivery</p>	<p>DCJ Central/ Corporate</p> <p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>DCJ Districts</p> <p>Aboriginal State-wide organisations</p> <p>Aboriginal staff and services in the sector</p>
<p>4. DCJ prioritise strategic alignment and clearer linkages between other government and sector frameworks and policies that impact on Aboriginal homelessness, such as housing policy, in the development of any future Aboriginal sector development plans or strategies</p> <p>Homelessness policy exists within a complex framework of housing, community services, health and other policies. It is recommended that in the development of any Aboriginal sector development plans or strategies DCJ prioritise strategic alignment and clear linkages with other government and sector initiatives that impact on Aboriginal homelessness.</p> <p>One area where better alignment was suggested was in relation to the AHO <i>Aboriginal Social Housing Strategy</i>. It is recommended that DCJ, AHO, AbSec, ACHIA and NSWALC in particular work more actively with the Industry Partnership (sector peaks) to leverage opportunities to align relevant key strategies such as this.</p> <p>It is also recommended that DCJ discuss with the sector and Aboriginal peaks the potential development of an integrated Aboriginal homelessness and housing strategy as has been developed in other jurisdictions.</p>	<p>DCJ Central/ Corporate</p> <p>Industry Partnership</p> <p>Aboriginal State-wide organisations</p>
<p>5. DCJ to work in partnership with Homelessness NSW to build on sector development activities that are already underway.</p> <p>These include the <i>Redressing Aboriginal Homelessness Accord</i>, the Communities of Practice forum, the Community Housing for Aboriginal People (CHAP) train the trainer program, and ASES accreditation support. There are opportunities to strengthen the relationship between Homelessness NSW and DCJ.</p>	<p>DCJ Central/ Corporate</p> <p>Industry Partnership</p>

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
<p>6. DCJ improve strategies for mapping the needs of Aboriginal communities, to ensure that future homelessness services and resources for Aboriginal communities are being directed to priority areas of need</p> <p>The consultation heard from providers and Aboriginal organisations that there is a need to better map the needs of Aboriginal communities to inform where and what homelessness services are delivered or will be needed (for example to respond to the projected growth in the number of Aboriginal youth people). It was suggested that available knowledge and data was not shared or used to maximum effect.</p> <p>This mapping was seen as particularly important in terms of designing or approving future SHS funding packages to service communities across the State. Identification of priority needs should be linked to the development of service packages and funding arrangements.</p> <p>Closer collaboration between DCJ, service providers, homelessness peaks and relevant agencies is recommended, to ensure relevant knowledge sharing and effective mapping and planning of future service delivery.</p>	<p>DCJ Central/ Corporate</p> <p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>DCJ Districts</p> <p>Relevant agencies and services</p>
<p>7. DCJ review the effectiveness of current forums, including District Housing Implementation Groups (DHIGs), to identify and coordinate agency and services responses to emerging Aboriginal homelessness needs</p> <p>The consultation heard from providers that current cross-agency forums are of varying effectiveness as a mechanism to identify and respond to emerging unmet local or regional homelessness needs. This includes DHIGs, which bring together a range of relevant government agencies and services in some regions.</p> <p>Suggested improvements from the consultations included the creation of clearer or more robust pathways to escalate urgent issues identified by the DHIG or equivalent forums to relevant, senior government decision makers, to address gaps that have been identified in the region.</p>	<p>DCJ Central/ Corporate</p> <p>DCJ Districts</p>
<p>8. DCJ review the implementation of the 'No Wrong Door' policy, to ensure it is operating as intended</p> <p>The consultation heard from Aboriginal homelessness service providers across different regions that they are regularly being referred Aboriginal clients which could be supported by a non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider, or that they do not have the capacity to support. The No Wrong Door policy requires the provider at the point of contact to support clients unless there is a good reason to refer.</p> <p>It is recommended that DCJ review how the current policy is operating in light of these reports and consider if action is needed to ensure non-Aboriginal providers are offering appropriate support to Aboriginal clients, and are not inappropriately referring clients to other services.</p>	<p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>DCJ Districts</p>

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
<p>9. DCJ work with the sector to expand the sharing of best practice examples, templates, case studies and options for non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers, and other relevant Aboriginal services, to grow the cultural competence of services and build culturally safe organisations</p> <p>The consultation heard many positive examples of cultural capacity building work being voluntarily undertaken by specialist homelessness service providers, in many cases with the support of the Industry Partnership. However, significant examples of culturally unsafe service provision were also reported.</p> <p>It is recommended that existing training and sector development activities being led by the Industry Partnership, with the support of DCJ, be further expanded particularly in relation to practical, cultural capacity building support for non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers working with Aboriginal clients.</p> <p>Non-Aboriginal providers consistently suggested that they would appreciate more guidance to increase cultural competence for working with Aboriginal clients.</p> <p>Noting that the capacity, size, context and nature of specialist homelessness service providers varies, the importance of sharing diverse or flexible examples of good practice was emphasised throughout the consultation.</p> <p>Industry resources should be co-developed with Aboriginal people working in the sector and draw on best practice cultural principles and evidence of success in other program areas.</p>	<p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>DCJ Districts</p> <p>Industry Partnership</p> <p>Aboriginal State-wide organisations</p> <p>Aboriginal staff and services in the sector</p>

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
<p>10. DCJ explore opportunities to expand the delivery of training in cultural competence and trauma informed care</p> <p>Specialist homelessness service providers consistently reported that cultural awareness training for working with Aboriginal people was being provided in some form to staff. However, it was also reported that training was often challenging to organise or access, or inadequate – for example did not address the needs of clients who have lived experience of trauma.</p> <p>It is recommended that relevant training be more readily available. It is also recommended that training focus on building cultural <i>competence</i>. That is, training should aim to provide staff with the skills and support they need to put their awareness or knowledge of cultural differences into practice appropriately. This will help create services that are culturally safe for Aboriginal people.</p> <p>It is also recommended that DCJ work with the sector to improve the availability of relevant, high quality training. The Industry Partnership, AbSec, the AHO and ACHIA are amongst the state-wide organisations consulted for the project who identified they were currently developing or delivering relevant training and would be interested to discuss partnership opportunities with DCJ and the homelessness sector to expand the delivery of training.</p>	<p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>DCJ Districts</p> <p>Industry Partnership</p> <p>Aboriginal State-wide organisations</p>
<p>11. DCJ implement specific requirements that organisations demonstrate their ability to provide culturally competent services, in order to receive funding to provide homelessness services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</p> <p>The new ASES will require services to be culturally appropriate, but do not specify core capabilities or requirements in relation to delivering culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal clients. It is recommended that specific requirements be included in DCJ funding requirements, which spell out an appropriate standard of training or expected demonstrated capability from specialist homelessness service provider staff. Such requirements should be developed in consultation with the sector.</p>	<p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>Industry Partnership</p>
<p>12. DCJ prioritise the implementation of comprehensive cultural competence training and strategies within the department</p> <p>The consultation heard that the improving the cultural capability of DCJ staff would assist effective homelessness service delivery and design. Skills or experience developing positive relationships with Aboriginal organisations and communities was also identified as valuable, particularly for staff responsible for engaging with Aboriginal homelessness service providers and managing contracts.</p>	<p>DCJ Central/Corporate</p> <p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>DCJ Districts</p>

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
<p>13. DCJ investigate implementing mandated cultural competence standards for all specialist homelessness service providers, drawing from examples of effective practice in other sectors</p> <p>While it is recommended that cultural competence minimum standards be established, further investigation is needed to articulate what the standards should include, and how they would be assessed and enforced.</p> <p>DCJ should refer to existing work undertaken by the Industry Partnership such as the <i>Aboriginal Cultural Competence Standards</i> project, and in other jurisdictions such as the South Australian <i>Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion Self-Assessment Instrument</i>.</p> <p>The health sector in particular has made considerable progress in embedding and mandating cultural competence measures into national safety and quality standards for all health services. The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care has developed supportive resources including user guides for effectively servicing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health which could provide guidance.</p>	<p>DCJ Central/ Corporate</p> <p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>Industry Partnership</p>
<p>14. DCJ ensure appropriate priority to Aboriginal employment levels in selection processes for service contract extensions and future tenders</p> <p>The homelessness workforce should be as reflective as possible of their client group. It is recommended that organisations be required to demonstrate their capacity to recruit and retain Aboriginal staff, if they are to receive funding to service Aboriginal clients.</p> <p>In terms of growing the capacity of the sector generally, it is recommended that DCJ work with the Industry Partnership and take an enabling approach to helping organisations in recruitment, retention and career development strategies for Aboriginal staff. Models and examples of good practice approaches that have worked in other sectors are available.</p>	<p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>Industry Partnership</p>
<p>15. DCJ prioritise increasing and retaining Aboriginal staff at all levels in both Central and District offices</p> <p>The consultation consistently heard that there are a low number of Aboriginal staff, and a high turnover of Aboriginal staff, within DCJ. Increasing Aboriginal employment within DCJ would benefit the sector and improve relationships with Aboriginal organisations and communities.</p> <p>The NSW Government has committed to growing its Aboriginal workforce, and the FACS <i>Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2017 to 2021</i> identifies increasing Aboriginal staff as a focus area.</p> <p>It is recommended that DCJ prioritise increasing Aboriginal staff numbers in Central and District offices that work on homelessness issues. Strategies to retain and promote Aboriginal staff should also be reviewed, in coordination with the Aboriginal Outcomes Team.</p>	<p>DCJ Central/ Corporate</p> <p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>DCJ Districts</p>

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
<p>16. DCJ provide existing Aboriginal providers with funding certainty through multi-year contracts</p> <p>Current Aboriginal homelessness service providers receive funding from a range of DCJ programs. A significant number reported that they had previously received funding on a short term basis, for example on a 6 or 12 months basis, and are concerned about future funding certainty. It is recommended the sustainability of existing Aboriginal organisations in the sector be supported through secure multi-year funding, ideally for three years or more.</p>	DCJ SHS Program
<p>17. DCJ increase funding available to existing Aboriginal homelessness service providers</p> <p>Levels of funding to service Aboriginal homelessness clients was identified as a key challenge for Aboriginal organisations currently delivering specialist homelessness services. The majority of Aboriginal homelessness service providers reported that they were operating at unsustainable levels.</p> <p>Increasing funding would help sustain Aboriginal involvement in the delivery of homelessness services in the short to medium term, pending the development of future strategies to expand Aboriginal involvement in the sector in the future.</p>	<p>DCJ Central/ Corporate</p> <p>DCJ SHS Program</p>
<p>18. DCJ support expanded service delivery by existing Aboriginal homelessness service providers</p> <p>A number of Aboriginal homelessness service providers consulted for the project expressed an interest in expanding their service delivery, if increased funding became available.</p> <p>It is recommended that DCJ work directly with existing Aboriginal providers in a flexible and ground-up approach to understand how services want to grow, acknowledging great diversity among regions and organisations.</p> <p>Beyond strategies to sustain the existing level of specialist homelessness service delivery by Aboriginal organisations currently in the sector, it is recommended that DCJ discuss with individual Aboriginal providers their interest in expanding geographical reach, servicing more clients, and increasing services focused on prevention and early intervention.</p>	<p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>Aboriginal providers</p>

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
<p>19. DCJ investigate the creation of a funding model that acknowledges the additional costs of servicing Aboriginal clients in line with culturally safe best practice and in light of the likelihood of complex needs</p> <p>Within the homelessness client cohort, Aboriginal clients tend to have high and complex needs. It is recommended that DCJ investigate developing a funding structure which acknowledges that Aboriginal clients more often require intensive support from service providers.</p> <p>It is recommended that DCJ investigate options such as a ‘service loading’ for Aboriginal clients. Evidence of the successful use of Aboriginal client loadings in creating positive incentives for services to provide culturally appropriate care to Aboriginal people in the health sector (such as the Medicare Practice Incentives Payments Program) could be drawn on.</p> <p>Such an approach would incentivise specialist homelessness services providers to support Aboriginal clients, and may assist in addressing the potential inappropriate referral of Aboriginal clients with complex needs which was reported during the consultation for this project.</p>	DCJ SHS Program
<p>20. DCJ review existing JWAs with Aboriginal partners to establish the viability of creating new, separate contracts for service delivery</p> <p>The consultations collected feedback from a number of parties to current JWAs – that is, arrangements where a lead organisation sub-contracts to other services and Aboriginal organisations.</p> <p>The consultation heard concerns about how some JWAs were operating. However, it was outside the scope of this project to investigate options for specific JWAs currently in operation. It is recommended that DCJ have further discussions with current organisations involved in JWAs.</p>	DCJ SHS Program
<p>21. DCJ hold further discussions with Aboriginal peak bodies and Aboriginal homelessness service providers about their interest and capacity to auspice, mentor or support other Aboriginal organisations in the sector</p> <p>The consultations heard interest among some Aboriginal organisations, for example, to take on auspicing roles to support or mentor other Aboriginal organisations, in order to support Aboriginal organisations to take on the provision of specialist homelessness services in the future, or for existing Aboriginal organisations to expand the services they provide, including to other geographical areas. Resource requirements of providing such support should be included in the discussions.</p>	DCJ SHS Program Aboriginal State-wide organisations

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
<p>22. DCJ further investigate including mandated targets with future contracts in relation to: levels of service to Aboriginal clients; levels of Aboriginal staffing; and Aboriginal involvement in the governance of organisations</p> <p>The consultation heard mixed views across specialist homelessness service providers about the inclusion of targets within service contracts.</p> <p>The key reasons that targets were supported by Aboriginal organisations in particular was accountability. It would be consistent with the feedback received through the consultation for commitments to be included in specialist homelessness services contracts in the form of targets, or an explicit Aboriginal 'service level objective'.</p> <p>Further investigation is required regarding the practicality of inclusion of targets, including how they would be audited and enforced.</p>	<p>DCJ SHS Program</p>
<p>23. DCJ adopt a strengths-based approach to contract management</p> <p>A strength-based approach would encourage DCJ and service providers to work together to ensure issues are identified and resolved early. It would involve an approach to contract management which acknowledges the particular strengths of Aboriginal providers, including understanding of client needs. It would facilitate flexibility and trust, enabling Aboriginal providers to implement innovative, community-based service models and solutions to any challenges identified.</p> <p>DCJ should consider whether its contract management functions are sufficiently developed and resourced to implement this kind of approach.</p>	<p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>DCJ Districts</p>

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
<p>24. DCJ to investigate opportunities to provide start up incentives or establishment grants to support Aboriginal organisations to take on future specialist homelessness services contracts</p> <p>One of the areas explored through the consultation was the barriers and opportunities for more Aboriginal organisations to become involved in the delivery of specialist homelessness services. Homelessness service delivery is complex and multi-faceted, and the requirements for specialist homelessness services are in the process of change with the introduction of ASES standards.</p> <p>Start-up grants, establishment grants or ‘capability supplement’, could encourage more Aboriginal organisations to consider becoming involved in the sector, or to expand their existing role within the sector – for example to extend service delivery to additional regions.</p> <p>Funding would ideally be sufficiently flexible to support accreditation processes, administration and systems building, staff training and recruitment, and any required asset purchasing. A similar approach has been trialled in other sectors such as Out of Home Care and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.</p> <p>It is recommended DCJ work in partnership with Aboriginal organisations to develop and deliver appropriate training and capacity building, for example by funding access to governance and other training offered by the CHIA/ACHIA NSW and AbSec (which is a Registered Training Organisation).</p>	DCJ SHS Program
<p>25. DCJ work with the sector and peak Aboriginal organisations to develop tender requirements for non-Aboriginal organisations which facilitate genuine partnership approaches with Aboriginal organisations</p> <p>Some specialist homelessness services and Aboriginal organisations consulted for the project expressed concern that processes for organisations to prove that they had a successful track record providing culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal people were not sufficiently robust.</p> <p>It is recommended that future funding requirements include revised criteria for organisations to demonstrate they have a ‘footprint’ within relevant local Aboriginal communities, as an indicator of organisation’s ability to provide appropriate services to Aboriginal clients. Priority should be given to organisations that can demonstrate that they have established long running relationships and/ or successful partnerships with Aboriginal organisations in the local area, rather than one-off projects or events.</p>	<p>DCJ SHS Program</p> <p>Industry Partnership</p> <p>Aboriginal State-wide organisations</p>

Recommendation or suggested area for action	Who
<p data-bbox="193 235 1179 342">26. DCJ develop an earmarked, Aboriginal-specific tender process for future specialist homelessness services funding which prioritise funding for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations</p> <p data-bbox="193 387 1179 495">DCJ should consider the opportunities provided through NSW Government Aboriginal procurement policies to facilitate this approach to future procurement.</p> <p data-bbox="193 539 1179 719">The NSW Government has established Aboriginal procurement policies and targets which enable government contract and tender processes to be leveraged to support Aboriginal employment opportunities, expand Aboriginal owned businesses, and increase Aboriginal involvement in the delivery of government services.</p> <p data-bbox="193 763 1179 862">Aboriginal procurement policies can support greater flexibility in traditional tender processes, for example by allowing agencies to prioritise Aboriginal organisation to receive funding for services.</p>	<p data-bbox="1182 235 1426 271">DCJ SHS Program</p>

3. Details of the project

a. Project background

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) is the lead NSW agency with responsibility for homelessness services in NSW. DCJ is committed to increasing Aboriginal involvement in the governance, service design, monitoring and delivery of specialist homelessness services in NSW, consistent with the principle of self-determination. DCJ is also committed to increased cultural competence in specialist homelessness services by non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers.²³

Although the number of Aboriginal people accessing specialist homelessness services is high (nearly 30%), Aboriginal involvement in the design and delivery of homelessness services is relatively low. As discussed in more detail later in this report, Aboriginal organisations are involved in 14 of the 224 current contracts to deliver specialist homelessness services. In most regions there is no Aboriginal-run specialist homelessness services for Aboriginal people to access. It is estimated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff comprise 13% of the specialist homelessness services workforce.²⁴ The level of Aboriginal involvement in the delivery of specialist homelessness services to Aboriginal people is not consistent with NSW Government's commitments.²⁵

In 2018-19, DCJ prepared a Background Paper summarising key research about the drivers of specialist homelessness services usage by Aboriginal clients, the experience of Aboriginal clients and the involvement of the Aboriginal community in specialist homelessness service provision. The *Background Paper: SHS Re-commissioning in 2020 and Aboriginal Service Provision* outlined a range of issues and suggested actions which could be implemented to strengthen the role of Aboriginal people in specialist homelessness services.

Consideration of the role of Aboriginal people in the design and delivery of specialist homelessness services is timely because existing specialist homelessness services contract terms are due to end in 2020. DCJ is currently in discussions with existing specialist homelessness service providers about the re-contracting of existing specialist homelessness services contracts. DCJ is also working to implement client outcomes measurement, to implement a 'commissioning for outcomes approach', and to support the introduction of Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES) accreditation for homelessness providers by 30 June 2023.

b. Project aims

In July 2019 Cox Inall Ridgeway (CIR) was commissioned by DCJ to lead a community engagement process and undertake related research which could progress DCJ's commitments to Aboriginal people, including to increase the provision of services to Aboriginal people by Aboriginal people, and to increase cultural competence by non-Aboriginal providers in the delivery of the specialist homelessness services.²⁶

The purpose of the community engagement was to inform the development of suggested actions and strategic advice that could be implemented at the State level and at the local level in two defined areas. Sydney (focused on the inner-city) and the Hunter were the two DCJ Districts identified as the focus of the local consultations.

The community engagement focused on collecting insights about:

- Structural changes that could be made to the delivery of specialist homelessness services to make it work better for Aboriginal organisations, clients and community at the State level,
- Long-term actions to bring additional Aboriginal providers into the specialist homelessness services sector, including future tender processes,
- Practical processes such as a governance mechanism to increase Aboriginal input and guidance into the design, planning and monitoring of specialist homelessness services at a strategic level,
- Ways to increase Aboriginal involvement in the design and delivery of specialist homelessness services at the local level,
- Ways to build the capability for existing specialist homelessness service providers to deliver culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal clients at the local level,
- The experience of Aboriginal clients using specialist homelessness services and how Aboriginal clients can be better supported at the local level, and
- The challenges and implications of implementing changes in practice at the local level.²⁷

c. This report

This report provides an overview of the State-wide insights and advice. It includes reference to the research and suggestions outlined in the *Background Paper: SHS Re-commissioning in 2020 and Aboriginal Service Provision*.

d. Project planning

i. Deliverables

The key deliverables for the project were originally: a community engagement process with identified stakeholders, including the delivery of a state-wide Aboriginal stakeholder workshop, summary reports outlining community feedback, and draft strategic documents.

A Project Plan was developed by CIR at the start of the project following an inception meeting and workshop with DCJ. A community version of the Project Plan was developed and circulated by DCJ and CIR to key internal and sector stakeholders including Homelessness NSW.

In response to feedback received through the community engagement, aspects of the Project Plan were revised during the life of the project including to: extend the project timeline, amend the deliverables, and update the community engagement to include a stronger focus on individual rather than group consultations.

The project deliverables were revised as follows:

Original project deliverables

Community engagement with key stakeholders

Internal Consultation Summary Reports

A Strategy for improving and developing service provision for Aboriginal people under the SHS Program including mechanisms to ensure ongoing involvement of Aboriginal stakeholders in guiding the development of the sector.

Two Local Aboriginal Community and SHS Service Action Plan to increase Aboriginal decision making and culturally appropriate service provision in SHS sector (in two locations)

Community feedback report(s)

Revised project deliverables

Community engagement with key stakeholders

Strategic advice report on improving and developing service provision for Aboriginal people under the SHS Program, incorporating a summary of consultation and research findings.

Report back and advice on local consultations and suggested strategies and action for improving Aboriginal service delivery

Community feedback report(s)



Sydney (focusing on the inner-city) and the Hunter were identified as the two focus sites by DCJ following an internal consultation, and taking into account factors such as the numbers of Aboriginal clients of specialist homelessness services and the location of existing Aboriginal homelessness service providers.

The original timeline for the project was July to September 2019. The updated project timeline for the project is July 2019 to February 2020.

ii. Key project stages

The key project stages, as revised and implemented through the project, were:

1. Preliminary stakeholder mapping and desktop research,
2. Inception meeting, DCJ-CIR co-design workshop, confirmation of two local sites, and formation of the Project Working Group,
3. Development and approval of the detailed Project Plan,
4. Confirmation of stakeholder lists and contacts,
5. Development of background papers and indicative interview questions,
6. Community engagement at the State and local levels,
7. Further research (undertaken concurrently with the community engagement),
8. Provision of report outlines and draft advice for feedback by DCJ,
9. Circulation of information for key stakeholders and a final opportunity for comment,
10. Finalisation of draft reports incorporating advice, and

11. Community report backs including a public version of the reports.

e. Project governance

CIR was responsible for delivering the project in line with the agreed contract with DCJ and the Project Plan. The Design and Stewardship, Housing branch was responsible for the project within DCJ.²⁸

A Project Working Group made up of CIR and DCJ staff including:

- CIR Director and CIR Senior Consultants,
- DCJ Design and Stewardship, Housing branch,
- DCJ Aboriginal Outcomes Team, and
- DCJ Sydney and Hunter District, Commissioning & Planning Managers.²⁹

The Project Working Group met semi-regularly throughout the life of the project.

f. Project approach

i. Cultural principles

The project was implemented in line with the following principles:

- ***Co-designing projects and solutions*** – by working flexibly and in ways that are responsive to the client (DCJ) and the needs of communities. CIR adopts a co-design approach with clients to ensure effective project planning. CIR also adopts a co-design approach with the client and the community to developing solutions, particularly where projects involve reforming or developing new community programs or policies.
- ***Taking a knowledge-informed approach*** – to understand issues and identify solutions that are evidence-based. CIR builds on existing research, identifies best practice where it exists, and collects and presents new data and insights where possible.
- ***Using a strengths-based approach*** – by focusing on the opportunities, abilities and strengths of clients and communities, so that solutions identified are those that are most likely to succeed.
- ***Presenting quality, accessible information*** – by delivering reports and materials that present information clearly and will be readily understood by different audiences.
- ***Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols*** – consultations were led by experienced CIR community facilitators. Group community engagement forums were led by senior CIR Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander community facilitators. Individual community engagements were led by a senior CIR staff member, including both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Consistent with best practice when conducting research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,³⁰ community participants in the project were kept updated about the status of the project. Participants were advised that they would be provided an opportunity to provide feedback on how the information they provided through the consultations was used. A community version of the final project report will be prepared and circulated so that stakeholders can see how the information they provided has been used.

ii. Community engagement

The focus for community engagement activities was Aboriginal organisations representing Aboriginal people in NSW, and Aboriginal organisations or staff working in the homelessness sector. Other priority stakeholder groups were: DCJ staff, agencies involved in District Housing Implementation Groups, representatives of the Industry Partnership and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers.

A large number of organisations were contacted asking for feedback and participation in the project. In summary the organisations who participated in the project were:

Stakeholder group	Project target	Engagement
Aboriginal State-wide organisations	6	<p>5 organisations by individual face or phone interviews, total 8 staff 5 organisations attended State-wide forum (8 individuals)</p> <p>5 x organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) • NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec) • Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO)* • Aboriginal Community Housing Industry Association (ACHIA) • Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ ACT (ALS NSW/ACT) <p><i>*For de-identification purposes, the Aboriginal Housing Office is coded as an Aboriginal organisation for the purposes of the report – though it is noted that it is a government agency.</i></p>
Non-Aboriginal homelessness sector representatives	3	<p>3 x phone interviews (3 staff) 1 x face to face interview with one organisation (3 staff) 2 x providers (3 staff in total) 1 x attending Hunter meeting (1 staff member)</p> <p>1 x organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness NSW, representing the Industry Partnership (Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) And Yfoundations)
Aboriginal Reference Groups	3	<p>Nil though some individuals consulted were members of the following reference group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW SHS Aboriginal Reference Group (Homelessness NSW)

Stakeholder group	Project target	Engagement
Aboriginal homelessness service providers, and other Aboriginal organisations	6	<p>7 x phone interviews (10 individual staff) 4 x organisations attended state-wide forum with (6 people) 2 x organisations attended Hunter meetings</p> <p>10 x organisations: <i>Sydney organisations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innari Housing Inc • Aboriginal Women and Children's Crisis Service (formerly Marrickville Women's Refuge Ltd) • Aboriginal Corporation for Homeless and Rehabilitation Community Services (ACHRC) • <i>Aboriginal state-wide bodies listed above based in the Sydney District include AbSec, AHO, ALS NSW/ ACT and ACHIA</i> <p><i>Hunter organisations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation • Wandiyali ATSI Inc • Warlga Ngurra Womens and Childrens Refuge Inc <p><i>Other regions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobwabba Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) • Bungree Aboriginal Association Ltd • Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation • Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)
<p>Non-Aboriginal specialist homelessness service providers at local levels [prioritising organisations involved in JWAs or with Aboriginal staff]</p> <p>Related organisations providing related services</p>	6	<p>8 x phone interviews (15 individual staff) 2 x face to face interviews in Sydney 10+ attended Hunter DHIG consultation 2 x Aboriginal staff from non-Aboriginal orgs attended state-wide forum</p> <p>Seventeen organisations: <i>Sydney organisations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neami Way2Home • Newtown Neighbourhood Centre • City of Sydney Council <p><i>Hunter organisations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samaritans Foundation Diocese Of Newcastle* • NOVA for Women and Children • Jenny's Place • Hunter New England Mental Health Service • Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Services • Carrie's Place • Compass Housing Services • St Vincent De Paul • Hume Community Housing • Allambi <p><i>Other regions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Momentum Collective* • Samaritans Kempsey • Macarthur Gateway Resource Services • Uniting Care Burnside <p><i>*Involved in JWAs with Aboriginal organisations</i></p>

Stakeholder group	Project target	Engagement
DCJ staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Outcomes Team District Aboriginal staff 	6	In addition to the Project Working Group (including Sydney District Manager, Hunter District Manager and Manager of the Aboriginal Outcomes team) 3 x Hunter Aboriginal staff at face to face Hunter meeting
District Homelessness Implementation Groups (DHIGs)	6	1 x Hunter DHIG
Stakeholder Forum	10 participants	22 participants from 16 organisations, held in Redfern: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AHO ACHIA NSW Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) NSW Homelessness NSW AbSec NSWALC ALS NSW/ ACT Samaritans Kempsey Bungree Aboriginal Association Ltd ACHRC Innari Housing Inc Tobwabba AMS Aboriginal Women and Children's Crisis Service Jali LALC DCJ Aboriginal Outcomes Team – for part of the forum

Community engagement took the form of:

- Phone interviews and phone meetings,
- Face-to-face meetings held at the CIR office in Ultimo or at the offices of specialist homelessness service providers in Sydney,
- Group face-to-face meetings in Newcastle,
- A state-wide forum held in Redfern, and
- Exchange of information through email.

The original Project Plan included group consultations in the two local sites, followed by a return group consultation to discuss a draft action plan. Only one initial group consultation was held in Newcastle.

Consultations for the State report and the local reports were undertaken simultaneously. A number of the stakeholders consulted for the State-wide advice were also consulted in relation to local issues and actions which could be implemented in inner-city Sydney or the Hunter.

The community engagement faced a number of challenges including:

- Throughout the project, limited capacity of community organisations to take part in consultation activities due to resources constraints and other commitments,
- Organisations not directly involved in homelessness service delivery not considering participation in the project to be a priority,

- Initial concerns from some homelessness sector representatives and some Aboriginal homelessness service providers about the level of sector input into design and delivery of the project, including the timeline for the consultations,
- Some concerns by Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal staff about providing feedback which could be perceived as criticism of DCJ, and
- In relation to the group consultations, a lack of existing relationships or consensus about key issues between key stakeholders, including between Aboriginal specialist homelessness service providers and DCJ, and between Aboriginal organisations currently involved in homelessness sector and other Aboriginal organisations.

CIR sought to mitigate the challenges by:

- Making multiple approaches to organisations,
- Extending timeframes from consultations,
- Ensuring that experienced Aboriginal facilitators led engagements with Aboriginal stakeholders,
- Providing financial support for Aboriginal homelessness service providers staff to attend the face to face forum in Sydney,
- Ensuring information could be provided confidentially,
- Allowing for individual or Aboriginal specific forums where Aboriginal stakeholders felt more comfortable raising issues, or where discussion could be constructively facilitated, and
- Generally revising the community engagement approach to focus on engagement methods preferred by the stakeholders, such as individual meetings at their offices.

As noted above, the project deliverables were also revised during the life of the project in response to stakeholder feedback and practical considerations, including timelines.

iii. Research

Key research relied upon included: the DCJ's *Background Paper: SHS Recommissioning in 2020 and Aboriginal Service Provision*, the KPMG report on the review of the *Going Home Staying Home* reforms, the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) (University of NSW) reports including into the *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program* and into specialist homelessness services staffing, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reports into the delivery of specialist homelessness services, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data on population and homelessness, and Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) research into funding for homelessness service and specialist homelessness services programs. CIR also reviewed published and unpublished reports provided by the Industry Partnership.

iv. Analysis and presentation of report data

The project adopted a mixed methods approach which aimed to bring together first-hand sources from the consultations with published and unpublished information about the specialist homelessness service program and issues impacting homelessness.

Interviews were delivered in a semi-structured way, tailored to different stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback was coded by type and de-identified where possible. Some individuals were part of more

than one stakeholder category. The stakeholder categories used in this report to present the insights from the community engagement are below:

Type of organisation	Stakeholder coding used in report
Aboriginal State-wide organisation including Aboriginal peak representative organisations	Aboriginal State-wide organisation
Homelessness sector representative including Homelessness NSW, where speaking in this capacity	Homelessness sector representative
Aboriginal homelessness service provider, including those which are subcontractors under Joint Working Arrangements (JWA)	Aboriginal homelessness service provider [Metropolitan – referring to Sydney and Newcastle based services only] [Regional – all areas outside Sydney and Newcastle]
Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider	Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider [Metropolitan – referring to Sydney and Newcastle based services only] [Regional – all areas outside Sydney and Newcastle]
Aboriginal staff who are working for an Aboriginal or a non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers and Aboriginal DCJ staff	Aboriginal staff or Aboriginal homelessness service providers staff
DCJ staff including both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff	DCJ staff
Member of the Hunter District Homelessness Implementation Group (Hunter DHIG) or Hunter meeting of Aboriginal organisations	Hunter Forum participant
Organisation which participated in the State-wide Forum held at the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence, Redfern	State-wide Forum participant

g. Data limitations and disclaimer

The primary source of data for the report was the views and impressions of specialist homelessness service providers. Where possible CIR sought to verify information received from specialist homelessness service providers by consulting other sources. However, in most cases this was not possible. For this reason, the data refers to issues “reported by” or “asserted by” specialist homelessness service providers.

Quotes in the report are based on notes taken by CIR during the interviews. Interviews were not recorded or transcribed word for word. The quotes have not been checked with individual interviewees. Where a series of quotes are used in the report to support an insight, only one quote per organisation is used.

While care has been taken by CIR to present quotes and other information accurately, the notes collected during the community engagement were not circulated to stakeholders to review and confirm before being included, so may contain some errors.

The voices of Aboriginal homelessness service providers were prioritised in the community engagement. While CIR was able to consult with 10 of the 14 Aboriginal organisations that currently receive specialist homelessness services funding, only a selected number of non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers were consulted – a total of 17 non-Aboriginal homelessness service

providers out of more than 200. The non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers interviewed were primarily based in Sydney and the Hunter, and do not represent a regional sample.

It was outside the scope of the project for CIR to speak to clients of specialist homelessness services; or to conduct in-depth research about a number of issues raised during the consultation, including assessing client outcomes; the effectiveness of the current reporting framework to accurately measure client outcomes; or assessing the adequacy of funding levels for services.

The findings and conclusions presented in the report are those of CIR and not DCJ, the NSW Government, or any other organisation. The research and data included in this report has been collected and analysed by CIR.

4. Context

a. Aboriginal homelessness

Homelessness is a growing issue in Australia. The five years from 2011 to 2016 have seen a marked increase in the number of homeless people in Australia, with the overall national homelessness rate rising by 14% in the period, and rough sleeping growing by 20%. Homelessness is growing fastest in NSW (by 27% from 2011 to 2016) and in capital cities (homelessness in Sydney was up 48% from 2011 to 2016).³¹

While the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless reduced over the same period (that is, the proportion of people in the community who are homelessness), the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless continues to grow overall, as the population increases.³² Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain much more likely to be homeless than the non-Indigenous population.³³ While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 3.5% of the NSW population, they represented 7.3% of the people who were homeless in NSW on Census night in 2016.³⁴

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience homelessness differently to other Australians. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to live in 'severely crowded' dwellings.³⁵ Overcrowding is driven by a range of issues including a lack of access to suitable, affordable housing, and to the preferences that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may have to live with extended family either temporarily or permanently.³⁶

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are much more likely to sleep rough than other homeless people, and the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people sleeping rough is growing faster than for other people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be a victim of crime and of family violence. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also experience higher rates of homelessness in regional and remote areas.³⁷

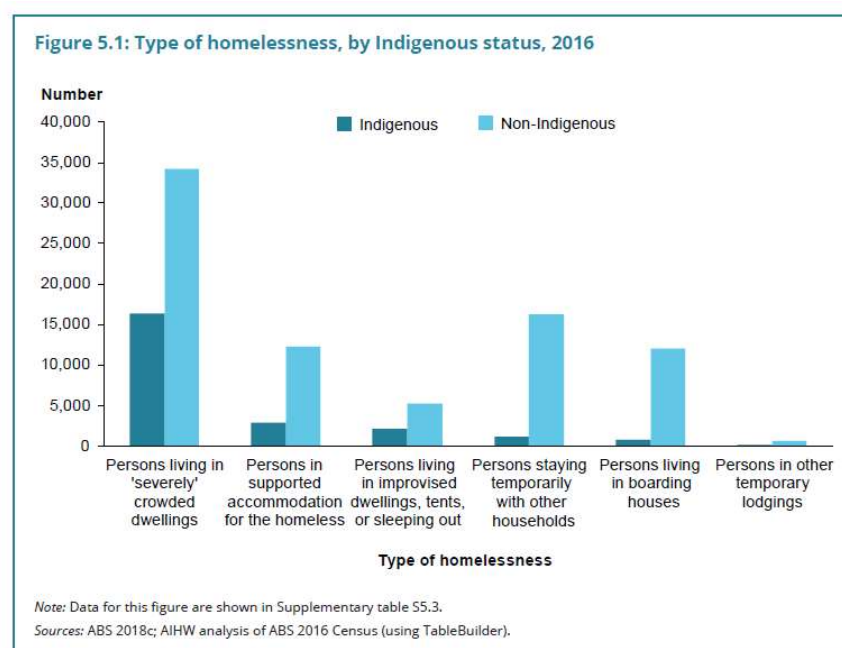


Table from AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians: A focus report on housing and homelessness*. Figures are national.

b. Introduction to the specialist homelessness services program

Specialist homelessness services provide support for homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless. These services can take the form of casework, referrals to dedicated housing services, domestic violence prevention and response, mental health services, assertive outreach (ie services delivered to where homeless people are based, including people sleeping on the streets), drop-in services, in-house services and temporary accommodation assistance. Services are focused on those groups at greatest risk of homelessness including Aboriginal people, young people, families, single men and women escaping domestic and family violence.

Organisations funded to deliver specialist homelessness services vary in size and in the services offered and receive funding from multiple sources. The services that specialist homelessness service providers deliver range from basic, short-term interventions such as advice and information, to longer term casework support. Some may provide more specialised services such as financial advice and counselling or legal support or may have a focus on particular areas of need such as young people. Some services may also offer material assistance by way of meals and shower/laundry facilities. Some specialist homelessness service providers directly provide temporary accommodation, crisis accommodation (e.g. refuges) or transitional accommodation.

Some organisations that receive specialist homelessness services funding from DCJ are not primarily homelessness services, and for example may primarily operate as a mental health service, as a major secular or faith based welfare organisation, or be a registered Community Housing Provider (CHP), with specialist homelessness support being just one of other services offered.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) is the lead NSW agency with responsibility for homelessness services in NSW. The NSW budget for specialist homelessness services, including services such as Link2Home totals \$202.8 million in 2018-19.³⁸ DCJ administers funding to organisations to deliver specialist homelessness services through contracting arrangements known as Program Level Agreements (or PLAs). In total there are currently 224 separate service components contracted to specialist homelessness service providers,³⁹ across several funding streams as follows:

Breakdown of existing specialist homelessness services in NSW (2019)

149	Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) services
8	Inner-City Restoration (ICR) services
27	Service Support Fund (SSF) services
19	Homeless Youth Assistance Program (HYAP) services
30	Youth Crisis Accommodation Enhancements (YCAE) services
7	standalone Domestic Violence Response Enhancement (DVRE) services
37	DVRE service supplementation to SHS services
5	One-off initiatives.

Source: Data provided by DCJ to CIR November 2019. DCJ advises: It should be noted that more than one of the above service funding components may be included in a single Program Level Agreement, and one organisation may have entered into more than one Program Level Agreement. Consequently the 224 separately funded service components do not neatly correspond to either the number of Program Level Agreements (ie. contracts) or the number of service providers.

c. Aboriginal involvement in the delivery of specialist homelessness services

Twelve (12) specialist homelessness services contracts are currently being delivered by Aboriginal organisations, either as the lead organisation or as a partner in a Joint Working Arrangement (JWA). The contracts involve 14 Aboriginal organisations, 10 of which have been awarded contracts as lead providers.⁴⁰

Contracts with Aboriginal organisation as lead

Program	FACS Ref	District	Service name	Aboriginal Service Provider	JWA Partners
SHS	SP01-08	Central Coast	Central Coast Homelessness Support Service for Aboriginal People	Bungree Aboriginal Association	n/a
SHS	SP03-01	Hunter New England	Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens Aboriginal Youth Homelessness Support Service	Wandiyali	n/a
SHS	SP03-02	Hunter New England	Lower and Upper Hunter Aboriginal Youth Homelessness Service	Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation	n/a
SHS	SP03-03	Hunter New England	Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens Aboriginal Women and Family Homelessness Support Service	Warlga Ngurra Womens and Childrens Refuge Inc	n/a
SHS	SP14-13	Western NSW	Bathurst Homelessness and Housing Support Service for Adults and Families	Orange Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)	n/a
DVRE	1-6928135031	Hunter New England	Moree Homelessness Support Service: <i>Moree and Narrabri D&FV After Hours Intake and Support</i>	Byamee Proclaimed Place Inc	n/a
SHS	SP04-08	Illawarra Shoalhaven	Illawarra-Shoalhaven Aboriginal Homelessness Community Connections Service	Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation	n/a
SSF	SSF 13-01	Sydney	Aboriginal Outreach Casework Project	Aboriginal Corporation for Homelessness	n/a
SSF	SSF 13-04	Sydney	Innari Inc.	Innari Housing Inc	n/a
SSF & DVRE	SSF 13-06	Sydney	Aboriginal Women and Children's Crisis Service	Marrickville Women's Refuge Ltd	n/a

Contracts with Aboriginal organisations as partners

Program	FACS Ref	District	Service name	Mainstream Service provider	Aboriginal JWA Partners
SHS & DVRE	SP03-15	Hunter New England	Great Lakes Manning Homelessness Support Service: <i>Greater Taree D&FV After Hours Intake</i>	Samaritans Foundation Diocese of Newcastle	Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council
SHS	SP08-03	Northern NSW	Northern NSW Aboriginal Homelessness and Prevention Service	Third Sector Australia Ltd	1. Casino Boolangle Local Aboriginal Land Council 2. Gurehlgam Corporation 3. Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council

Tables 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 FACS (2019b) *Background Paper: SHS Recommissioning in 2020 and Aboriginal Service Provision*, unpublished. Since publication of the Background Paper, Worimi LALC has withdrawn from the JWA and been replaced by the Tobwabba Aboriginal Medical Service. Districts references are pre-July 2019 FACS District boundaries.

As a result of the competitive tendering process and structural changes implemented through the NSW Government's 2013-2014 *Going Home Staying Home* reforms to the homelessness sector, some pre-existing Aboriginal providers of homelessness services did not pre-qualify or were not successful for funding under the Specialist Homelessness Services Program. Some partnered in the

tender process and became subcontractors to a non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider under a Joint Working Arrangement. A number of the Aboriginal organisations which did not receive SHS funding following the reforms have since received funding under the Service Support Fund (SSF).

At the time the DCJ *Background Paper* was prepared in early 2019, nine (9) out of the 15 DCJ Districts had no Aboriginal homelessness service providers. Aboriginal providers are concentrated in the Hunter and New England, with four lead providers and one JWA partner, and inner Sydney, with three lead providers. Central Coast, Western NSW and Illawarra Shoalhaven districts each have one lead provider, while Northern NSW has three JWA partners. DCJ Districts have since been slightly reconfigured with Hunter and New England separating, and Mid-North Coast incorporating additional LGAs.

There are no state-wide Aboriginal organisations directly involved in specialist homelessness services delivery. As discussed in more detail later in this report, most Aboriginal homelessness service providers are small to medium organisations, some employing less than two full time staff.⁴¹ In terms of the broader specialist homelessness services workforce, it is estimated that Aboriginal staff comprise 9% of the workforce delivering specialist homelessness services in NSW across both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers.⁴² This is significantly above the percentage of the NSW Aboriginal population (3.5%)⁴³, and the percentage of Aboriginal people in the public service workforce (3.2%)⁴⁴, but significantly below the percentage of clients who access specialist homelessness services in NSW (28.9%). Some non-Aboriginal specialist homelessness service providers include Aboriginal people on their boards and committees.⁴⁵

d. Policy context

A range of government plans, policies and frameworks form a complex policy context for the delivery of specialist homelessness services, housing and other social services, involving federal and state funding arrangements. No federal or NSW policy primarily focuses on homeless Aboriginal people.⁴⁶

The national funding framework for addressing homelessness is established under the *National Housing and Homelessness Agreement* (NHHA). The NHHA replaces earlier funding agreements between the Federal Government, and states and territories. It provides annual funding for improved housing outcomes, not limited to homelessness services.⁴⁷

The *NSW Homelessness Policy 2018-23* provides the overall policy framework for delivering homelessness services across NSW. The strategy focuses on: 'Prevention and early intervention', 'Effective supports and responses', and 'An integrated, person-centred service system'.⁴⁸ A range of programs exist as part of the *NSW Homelessness Policy* framework managed by different agencies, including the specialist homelessness services. Aboriginal people are identified as a priority client group under the *NSW Homelessness Policy*.

The *NSW Homelessness Policy* does not include specific targets for the reduction of homelessness. In February 2019, the Premier announced a commitment to halve the number of homeless people who are street sleeping by 2025.⁴⁹ DCJ is the lead agency with responsibility for the homelessness policy.

Other relevant policies include:

- DCJ *Future Directions for Social Housing 2015-2025*, which aims to increase the quantity of social housing, provide more opportunities and incentives to leave or avoid social housing, and improve the experience of social housing.
- AHO's *Strong Families Strong Communities*, launched in July 2018. The ten-year scheme focuses on four areas: asset management; improving the Aboriginal social housing experience; growing the Aboriginal Community Housing sector; and planning and evaluation processes within the AHO.
- The *OCHRE Plan – NSW Government Aboriginal Affairs Strategy (2013)*.⁵⁰
- DCJ *Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2017-2021*.⁵¹
- NSW *Aboriginal Procurement Policy (May 2018)*.⁵²
- DCJ *Aboriginal Impact Statement Guidelines*.⁵³
- DCJ *Statement of Commitment to Supporting Aboriginal People and Families*.
- DCJ *Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion Framework 2015-2018*.⁵⁴

e. Sector development initiatives

DCJ supports and works with the homelessness sector around a number of sector-led development activities. These include the Industry Partnership (or IP), which was established in 2013 between DCJ and the three sector-peak organisations: Homelessness NSW, Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) and Yfoundations. The Industry Partnership provides a forum where sector initiatives have been developed. DCJ provides funding for an Aboriginal Senior Project Officer based at Homelessness NSW.

Initiatives under the Industry Partnership include:

- The *Redressing Aboriginal Homelessness Accord*, launched in 2017. The Accord aims to increase Aboriginal participation in specialist homelessness service providers, as well as supporting the capacity of Aboriginal organisations providing specialist homelessness services. The Accord is a voluntary, high-level guiding document. Specialist homelessness service providers are encouraged to sign up to the Accord, to display it in their organisations and to report on its implementation to the SHS Aboriginal Reference Group (below). Homelessness NSW reports that as of July 2019, 56 organisations had signed up to participate in the Accord.⁵⁵
- The *SHS Aboriginal Reference Group*, convened by Homelessness NSW. The SHS Aboriginal Reference Group includes staff from Aboriginal homelessness service providers. The Chair is a representative from an Aboriginal organisation providing specialist homelessness services.

- An *Aboriginal Community of Practice*, convened by Homelessness NSW. It is one of a number of Communities of Practice convened by Homelessness NSW. The Aboriginal Community of Practice includes Aboriginal staff working in the homelessness sector.

Other homelessness industry and workforce development support from the Industry Partnership for specialist homelessness service providers includes the voluntarily implementation of the Community Housing for Aboriginal People (CHAP) Aboriginal Cultural Competency Standards. Separately the Industry Partnership is also working with DCJ on the implementation of new accreditation standards for specialist homelessness services in NSW under the Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES). DCJ with the assistance of the Industry Partnership is currently undertaking a pilot of the ASES standards with the sector, including with an Aboriginal homelessness service provider.

Membership of the sector peak bodies is voluntary. Membership of Homelessness NSW, which leads the Industry Partnership for the three sector representatives, is open to specialist homelessness services, corporations, community organisations and individuals (including people experiencing homelessness). It is estimated that 100 specialist homelessness service providers and one third of Aboriginal homelessness service providers were members of Homelessness NSW in 2017-18.⁵⁶

f. Aboriginal organisations in NSW

There is no Aboriginal representative body for homelessness issues in NSW or nationally. There exist a number of State-wide Aboriginal organisations that represent Aboriginal people and organisations in NSW whose work relates to homelessness.

The NSW Aboriginal Land Council (**NSWALC**) is the statutory body with responsibility for representing Aboriginal people in NSW. There are 120 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) who have responsibility for representing Aboriginal people living in their local area. Land Councils play a key role in the provision of Aboriginal housing in NSW. NSWALC also provides occasional policy advice in relation to homelessness issues to the NSW Government. Some LALCs hold specialist homelessness services contracts or are involved in JWAs.

The NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation, commonly referred to as **AbSec**, is the peak NSW Aboriginal community-controlled organisation advocating for Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities impacted by the child protection system. AbSec's work intersects with that of the homelessness sector, particularly in relation to actual or potential support or capacity building for community organisations that provide specialist homelessness services.

Aboriginal Medical Services (**AMSs**) are community-controlled health services. The Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AHMRC) represents local AMSs. There are both AMSs and community organisations which are members of AbSec currently involved in the delivery of specialist homelessness services in some local areas.

The Aboriginal Housing Office (**AHO**) is a statutory body established to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to affordable, quality housing. The AHO has responsibility for significant Aboriginal housing, and works in partnership with Aboriginal organisations and other government agencies.

The NSW Government has established Local Decision Making Processes (LDMs) under the OCHRE plan. Regional Alliances are currently being established across NSW. Regional Alliances will provide a forum for consultation and advice to the NSW Government. They will complement but not replace the existing role of Aboriginal peak organisations and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in providing advice to the NSW Government.

g. Future directions for specialist homelessness services

i. Re-contracting to 2023

DCJ is currently in discussions with existing specialist homelessness service providers about re-contracting of existing contracts, which are scheduled to end in 2020. Re-contracting will support stability within the sector.⁵⁷ It allows consideration of issues such as Aboriginal client targets. However, re-contracting limits the scope to re-configure existing 'service packages' to address identified gaps or duplication in services. It also limits opportunities for new Aboriginal providers.

DCJ is also implementing a 'commissioning approach', which means a stronger focus on outcomes for clients, including client outcome measures and performance monitoring systems. The commissioning approach will be gradually introduced to the sector. DCJ is currently working with the specialist homelessness services sector to develop and test proposed outcome measures and a data driven outcomes framework.

ii. Accreditation

Specialist homelessness service providers currently self-assess against the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Quality Assurance Standards.⁵⁸ From 30 June 2023, all DCJ-funded NSW homelessness providers will be required to hold a minimum of certificate level accreditation against a national standard – the Australian Service Excellence Standards (or ASES).⁵⁹

Accreditation under ASES will become a formal requirement of funding from 2023, with organisations progressively being accredited from 2019. ASES includes a general Cultural Inclusion Standard. It does not include specific benchmarks or standards for cultural inclusion in relation to Aboriginal communities.

5. Stakeholder consultations and research: Findings and Insights

a. Accessibility of specialist homelessness services for Aboriginal people

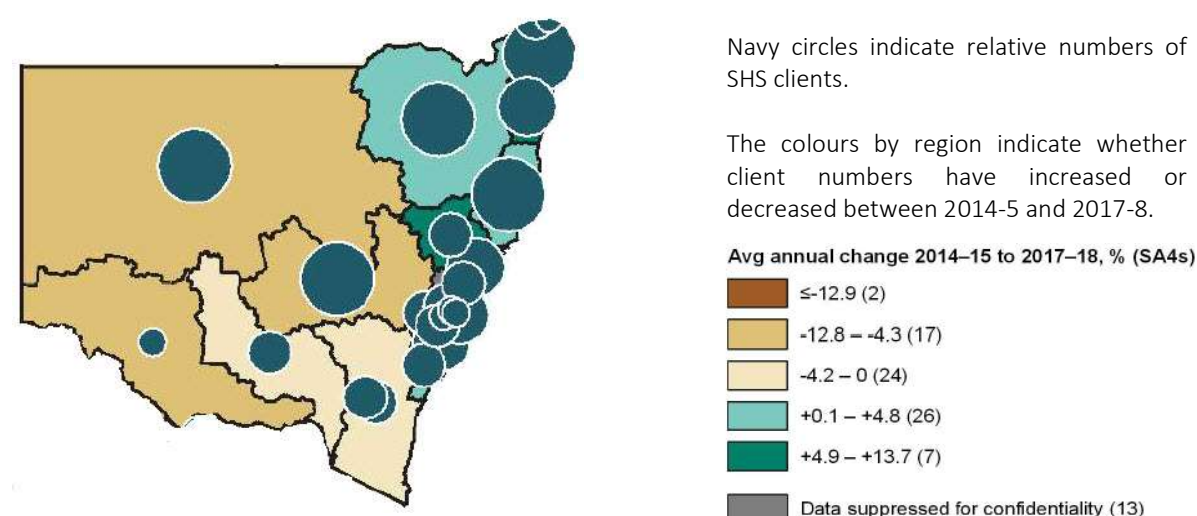
i. Numbers and rates of specialist homelessness services access

The provision of specialist homelessness services support has grown across all population groups in recent years.⁶⁰ The growth in the number of people accessing specialist homelessness services is likely to be a result of both increased demand for services due to increased homelessness, and better assessment, referral and reporting of service provision.⁶¹ This includes more accurate reporting of the Aboriginal status of clients accessing specialist homelessness services.⁶² Between 2011 and 2018, the number of Aboriginal specialist homelessness service clients in NSW increased from 11,140 to 19,419 clients, according to data from the AIHW.⁶³

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders access specialist homelessness services at greater rates than other groups. In 2017-18, the Aboriginal homelessness population in NSW accessed specialist homelessness services at 6.8 times the rate of non-Aboriginal homeless population.⁶⁴ Nationally Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 10-12 times more likely to access specialist homelessness services than non-Aboriginal clients.⁶⁵ Over 60% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who access specialist homelessness services nationally are female, often having experienced domestic violence.⁶⁶

During the consultations for the project, specialist homelessness service providers confirmed that Aboriginal people make up a significant proportion of specialist homelessness services clients consistent with the access rates recorded. In addition to the large numbers of Aboriginal people who are homeless, intersecting factors impacting access rates include but are not limited to: the high rate at which Aboriginal clients re-present in the service system,⁶⁷ more complex needs, a younger age profile, higher rates of domestic and family violence, and greater socio-economic disadvantage decreasing the opportunities to secure housing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SHS clients homeless on presentation in NSW 2017-8, and whether numbers have increased or decreased since 2014-5, by location

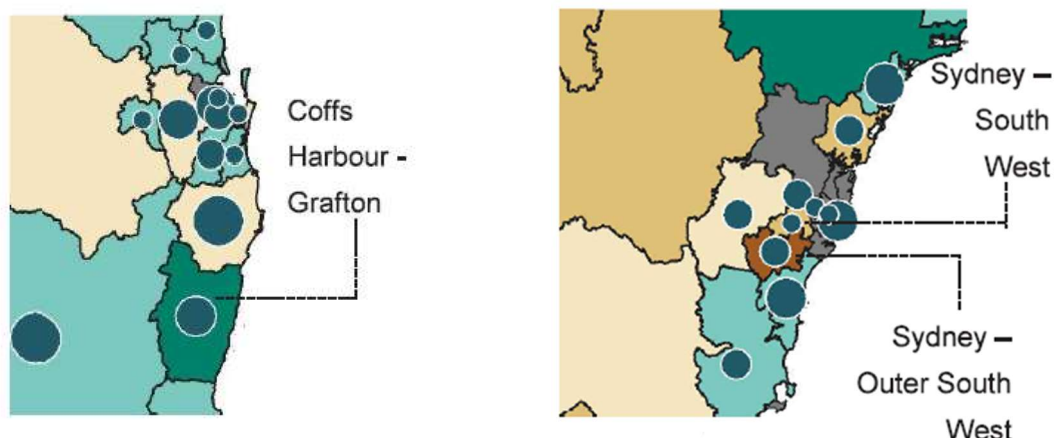


Source: AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*. Figures do not include clients presented 'at risk of homelessness'

ii. Regional diversity

Within NSW the greatest number of Aboriginal homeless people are found in south eastern (including inner) Sydney and the Hunter region (including Newcastle). The number of Aboriginal people accessing services in Western NSW and very remote areas has reduced in recent years, while the numbers accessing services in the east have increased.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SHS clients homeless on presentation in NSW (cont.)



Source: Figure 6.14 from AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*. Figures do not include clients presented 'at risk of homelessness'.

In terms of rates of access, although in Western NSW Aboriginal people make up a higher percentage of the homeless population, internal DCJ figures show that Aboriginal people access specialist homelessness services in that region at a ratio of 3.88 to 1 – ie lower than the State average. There is currently no Aboriginal provider west of Orange. In South Eastern Sydney (incorporating inner Sydney) the rate is much higher 14.53. This includes is a large rough sleeper population.

SHS Support Periods 2017-18 – All clients and Aboriginal Clients			
District	All Clients Support Periods	Aboriginal Clients Support Periods	% Aboriginal Support Periods
Central Coast	4,225	977	23.1%
Far West	1,096	719	65.6%
Hunter New England	14,546	5,498	37.8%
Illawarra Shoalhaven	8,252	2,366	28.7%
Mid North Coast	5,384	2,036	37.8%
Murrumbidgee	4,964	1,534	30.9%
Nepean Blue Mountains	4,556	1,059	23.2%
Northern NSW	8,339	3,540	42.5%
Northern Sydney	3,745	217	5.8%
South Eastern Sydney	22,980	4,464	19.4%
Southern NSW	4,467	1,879	42.1%
South Western Sydney	8,292	1,111	13.4%
Sydney	6,104	1,197	19.6%
Western NSW	7,639	4,411	57.7%
Western Sydney	7,370	1,360	18.5%
Total	111,959	32,368	28.9%

Source: DCJ internal analysis including in Tables 4.1.1 and 4.2.1, *Background Paper*

The consultation for this project heard that there are particular difficulties in regional and remote areas where there are fewer services to access, though a lack of services in metropolitan areas was identified as an issue also.

Specialist homelessness service providers reported that a key driver for Aboriginal people seeking to access specialist homelessness services either within or out of area was a lack of social, community or affordable housing or temporary housing when leaving a domestic violence situation. Examples of out of area clients reported by specialist homelessness service providers included:

- A specialist homelessness services provider on the Central Coast reporting an increase in homeless people staying in the Central Coast due to its proximity by rail to Sydney, and opportunities for relatively safe rough sleeping in bush land.
- Two specialist homelessness service providers in Sydney reporting an increase in Aboriginal people from regional areas travelling to inner Sydney where they were sleeping rough, as a result of factors including no access to housing in Western NSW and the drought.
- A Sydney-based service reporting it was referred Aboriginal clients from Western NSW due to the lack of women's refuge housing.
- One specialist homelessness service reported that 20% of people sleeping rough in inner Sydney were people exiting custody.

iii. Accuracy of client numbers

Accurate reporting of the profile of homeless people remains a challenge. It has previously been reported that recording of Aboriginal status has improved: in 2015-16 the proportion of specialist homelessness services support periods not reporting Aboriginal status was 7%, compared to 13% in 2013-14.⁶⁸

During the consultations for this project a number of specialist homelessness service providers reported that Aboriginal client numbers are likely being under-reported. Reasons given included that services do not always have the time or resources to capture client demographic data and that clients may not want to provide this information. Some specialist homelessness service providers stated that they only report to government that they have met their required Aboriginal client target, rather than the actual number of clients. Other services reported that they accurately report the numbers of clients serviced, even where these exceed targets. Targets and client numbers are discussed later in this report.

iv. Referrals and co-management of clients

The NSW Government has adopted a 'No Wrong Door' policy, which is designed to ensure that a client can be assessed by whichever housing or homelessness service they present to and be referred only as needed.

The consultation heard varying reports about how this was being applied, with some Aboriginal homelessness service providers reporting that non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers turn Aboriginal clients away, or inappropriately refer Aboriginal clients to Aboriginal homelessness service providers who do not have the capacity to take them on. Aboriginal homelessness service providers reported both positive and negative relationships with local non-Aboriginal

homelessness service providers, in terms of referral and co-management arrangements. There was significant variation between and within regions.

“We don’t have a large number of clients that walk in, possibly because of the geography of our service. ... Housing NSW refers any Aboriginal client to us. [Large non-Aboriginal provider we have a relationship with] refers clients that specify they would like to work with Aboriginal specific provider. They have significant number of Aboriginal clients and we get quite high numbers from them, but they do have Aboriginal staff as well to service clients in house. We also do co-case management with them.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“We apply the No Wrong Door Policy, but other services in the area do turn people away.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“[Local specialist homelessness services provider] instantly refer to us, even if they could deal with it themselves – complex case or making assumptions about client preferences ... In terms of referrals, we get them from the mental health sector, [two local services], Link2home, self-referral. With the [two local services] it’s a tick box exercise. Once they tick the box that they’re Aboriginal they get sent to us.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“The partnerships that exist [in our region] are different- we work very well together. We sit at the table and call each other out. We work on special projects to come up with other ways to deal with rough sleepers as a community. We are lucky in a way- as we had relationships established in the sector anyway.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“We were initially funded for co-case management but [large service that had the lead contact] made it clear that they didn’t want to work with us, they didn’t need us. They [the larger service] have their own case workers, but they aren’t culturally appropriate.” *Aboriginal worker– Metropolitan*

“Co-case management [of clients with another organisation] starts out shared, but I end up with them. The specialist homelessness services mainstream provider will say “they’re (the client) is no longer engaging so we’re closing their file” or “the post-crisis support period is ending so we’re closing the file”. ... We [Aboriginal services] all know that stuff comes out 2 years after being housed. Then the client calls us.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

There was a perception reported from Aboriginal homelessness service providers that non-Aboriginal providers may be referring Aboriginal clients because they will receive a better, more culturally appropriate service. However, some concerns were raised that non-Aboriginal providers receive money for Aboriginal clients and should be accountable for delivering services themselves.

“Sometimes we get passed Aboriginal clients from mainstream organisations. Not every Aboriginal person wants an Aboriginal service, we just get passed them. ... The [non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider] in one of their areas they don’t have an Aboriginal worker. Being in a partnership is great, providing them with cultural knowledge is great but mainstream organisations need to be better placed to deal with Aboriginal clients themselves.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

“Mainstream organisations are important partners – they have the money, the accommodation and the brokerage- but they need to be accountable. For example, they have funding for

pregnancy cases, we don't, and yet we are still taking referrals." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

Conversely, one stakeholder suggested some non-Aboriginal organisations may be reluctant to refer to Aboriginal services:

"There are reasons for inconsistencies in referral between organisations. In some cases, Aboriginal clients prefer mainstream. Some services don't refer to other services because they have concerns about competencies. Or Board relationships – organisations don't work well together." *DCJ staff member*

v. Service targets in specialist homelessness services contracts

Internal research by DCJ which was provided to CIR indicates that nearly all current specialist homelessness services contracts contain statements acknowledging Aboriginal clients as a priority group, and one third of contracts include Aboriginal client targets. Within the 14 service packages involving Aboriginal providers most have a 100% Aboriginal client target. Two service packages delivered by Aboriginal 'lead' providers have both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal targets.⁶⁹

Aboriginal client targets in current contracts to deliver specialist homelessness services

District	Contracts	Contracts with Aboriginal Target	% Contracts with Aboriginal Target	Total Client Target	Aboriginal Client Target	% Aboriginal Client Target
Central Coast	10	1	10.0%	2361	244	10.3%
Far West	5	4	80.0%	570	336	58.9%
Hunter New England	29	25	86.2%	9958	3225	32.4%
Illawarra Shoalhaven	16	2	12.5%	4031	225	5.6%
Mid North Coast	9	0	0.0%	3469	0	0.0%
Murrumbidgee	5	3	60.0%	3414	1047	30.7%
Nepean Blue Mountains	8	5	71.4%	2600	418	16.1%
Northern NSW	9	2	22.2%	4779	1224	25.6%
Northern Sydney	11	0	0.0%	2379	0	0.0%
South Eastern Sydney	32	1	3.2%	8489	10	0.1%
South Western Sydney	14	1	7.1%	5790	300	5.2%
Southern NSW	16	10	62.5%	2660	402	15.1%
Sydney	18	4	16.7%	4661	378	8.1%
Western NSW	19	14	77.8%	4204	2097	49.9%
Western Sydney	18	12	66.7%	5302	510	9.6%
Grand Total	219	84	38.4%	64,667	10,415	16.1%

Note: Table total of 219 is less than total contracts of 224 as there are 5 cross-district contracts with no Aboriginal target not shown in above table.

Source: FACS internal analysis including in Tables 3.4.1, *Background Paper*

In total, specialist homelessness service providers were required to meet targets to deliver services to 10,415 Aboriginal clients in 2017-18. Specialist homelessness service access figures published by the AIHW indicate that 19,419 Aboriginal clients received support in 2017-8.⁷⁰ The data supports that, in total across the state-wide, providers meet or exceed Aboriginal client targets.

The consultation heard mixed views about whether Aboriginal client service targets should be included in future contracts. Aboriginal organisations consulted were more likely to recommend Aboriginal client service targets be established, to ensure accountability for service delivery by non-Aboriginal organisations.

One non-Aboriginal provider suggested requirements for Aboriginal participation and engagement in services were most effective at the tender stage:

“Yes, FACS has played a key role in ensuring we meet our Aboriginal outcomes. The requirement to work with an Aboriginal organisation to get funding [meant] we formed a partnership [with an Aboriginal organisation]. But not otherwise, not in relation to service targets.” *Non-Aboriginal provider*

vi. Key gaps and areas of need

The consultation consistently heard that specialist homelessness services are at capacity or over capacity all the time. Aboriginal homelessness service providers in particular expressed concern about Aboriginal specialist homelessness service clients not being supported adequately, with key gaps in services and increasing demand. Research indicates that the level of demand for specialist homelessness services is increasing over time (ie more people are homeless and are seeking to access specialist homelessness services). In particular, specialist homelessness service providers in Sydney, the Central Coast and the North Coast highlighted through the consultation that there has been a significant increase in homeless people sleeping on the street, including Aboriginal people, in recent years.

The consultation asked specialist homelessness service providers about the priority areas of need or gaps that exist for Aboriginal clients. The key areas identified by specialist homelessness service providers through the consultations were:

- A lack of access to appropriate and affordable long-term housing. Private housing is becoming less affordable and there is a growing waiting list to access social, community and public housing. Several Aboriginal homelessness service providers stated that they did not consider current housing managed by the Aboriginal Housing Office and Aboriginal Land Councils was being made available or prioritised for homelessness clients.
- A lack of transitional housing.
- A lack of services including refuges for victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence was reported as impacting between 30 and 60% of specialist homelessness service clients.
- A gap in support for Aboriginal tenants at risk of losing existing housing, and in support for new tenants to maintain housing. Some Aboriginal homelessness service providers expressed frustration that they were increasingly being asked to provide support when a tenancy was breaking down, but support was not available to ensure tenancies were sustained.
- A lack of integrated or holistic approach to clients’ needs (as discussed in more detail below).
- A lack of drug and alcohol programs, particularly rehabilitation places.
- For people sleeping rough especially, a lack of access to mental health services, and
- More people exited custody who have no place to stay or supports.

It is noted that these service gaps are reported to exist for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients.⁷¹

b. Suitability of specialist homelessness services for Aboriginal people

i. Effective services

While Aboriginal people access specialist homelessness services at high rates, there is limited data about whether Aboriginal people receive appropriate and high-quality services, or whether homelessness services lead to effective and sustainable housing outcomes.⁷² The complex factors leading to homelessness make assessing the impact of homelessness service interventions challenging.

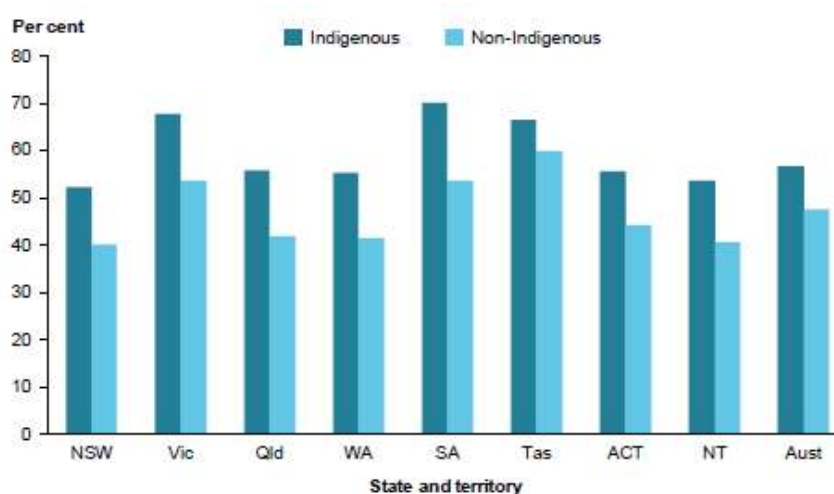
While it was outside the scope of the project to assess the impact of specialist homelessness services on outcomes for clients, such as housing outcomes, questions about the appropriateness and effectiveness of services were explored during the consultation with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers for this project. In particular, the consultation explored the availability of culturally appropriate and trauma informed services.⁷³

ii. Return clients

One potential indicator of whether homelessness services are effectively meeting clients' needs is the rate at which clients return to the specialist homelessness service system for support. Large numbers of clients returning for support can be an indicator of a high level of trust of that service by clients. Conversely, it may be that clients have high and complex needs that require multiple interventions.

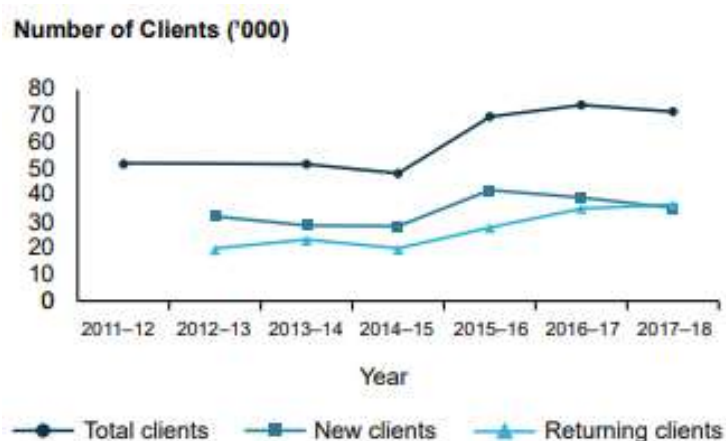
In NSW the number of specialist homelessness services clients seeking repeated support has been increasing over time. Aboriginal clients are more likely to return for support from specialist homelessness services than other clients – 52% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander specialist homelessness services clients returned to specialist homelessness services between 2011-12 and 2017-18, compared to 40% of non-Indigenous clients.⁷⁴ Aboriginal women are more likely to return than Aboriginal men. NSW has a lower rate of clients returning to specialist homelessness services than other states.

Returning specialist homelessness service clients, by Indigenous status, 2011-12 to 2017-18



Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, presented at Figure 6.19, AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*

Trends in New South Wales client numbers 2011-12 to 2017-18



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection unpublished data, presented at Figure 1, AIHW (2019d) *Specialist homelessness services 2017-18: New South Wales*⁷⁵

iii. Client satisfaction

The *Specialist Homelessness Service Client Satisfaction Survey* is the largest and most recent survey of specialist homelessness services clients' views in NSW. Conducted by the NSW Federation of Housing Associations on behalf of homelessness sector peaks (Homelessness NSW, DVNSW and Yfoundations), 257 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander specialist homelessness services clients were surveyed over February-March 2018 (27% of the 955 total responses). The survey involved clients from 51 specialist homelessness services, the majority of which were non-Aboriginal services. The survey was voluntary.⁷⁶

The survey found in relation to Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander respondents:

- 96% were satisfied with the overall services provided,
- 100% said that their service treated them with respect, and
- 97% said that they had participated in setting their case plan goals.⁷⁷

Across all specialist homelessness services client types, 91% of specialist homelessness services clients surveyed agreed that staff were sensitive to their ethnic and cultural background. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents generally had higher levels of satisfaction with services than those with a migrant or refugee background. Satisfaction was higher with rural specialist homelessness service providers (97%) compared to Sydney providers (94%). The majority of specialist homelessness services clients reported improvements in their wellbeing. Limitations from the survey data include that it was voluntary and administered by services directly to their clients.

iv. Holistic, tailored, person-centred services

Community services which are holistic and individually-tailored are widely acknowledged as effective in addressing client's needs. The *NSW Homelessness Strategy* includes a focus on building integrated, person-centred homelessness services. A person-centred service system approach for Aboriginal clients means that clients should be able to:

- Access services that meet their needs in a culturally responsive, competent and safe approach,

- Choose the most appropriate services to meet their needs, including whether they are Aboriginal,
- Access quality services, regardless of whether they are Aboriginal controlled or not, and
- Participate in service design, delivery and monitoring of the services they access (whether Aboriginal or not) to influence service improvement.⁷⁸

Holistic service delivery aims to address the diversity of a client's needs, in a way which is flexible, adaptive, and supports their social and emotional wellbeing. A holistic or 'wrap around' approach to service delivery recognises the interconnection and interdependent nature of factors impacting clients' circumstances.⁷⁹ For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, a holistic approach may also be more consistent with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews that emphasise relationship and connection.

The consultation heard that Aboriginal homelessness service providers deliver holistic, tailored and person-centred services for Aboriginal clients, where possible within existing resources:

"We aim for a holistic service. The majority of our clients are facing a wide range of issues. Rarely is it that they've just stopped paying rent. There's family displacement, health issues, alcohol and other drugs, overcrowding, behind why they are not complying with their tenancy agreement in Housing NSW or private rental." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Regional*

"We're lucky enough to have funding to be able to provide wrap around services. We provide over 20 different types of services." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Regional*

"In our client case management plan we undertake a holistic approach, including referrals where necessary, eg to drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Rarely we will just need to provide a letter of support to advocate for rental placement, usually more complex issues." *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Regional*

"We work with them on a holistic level, to provide them all the inputs they need in order to create a stable outcome re housing. ... We deal with much more than housing. Helping with payments, dealing with social workers if they have them, or getting them access to ones if they don't. We help them with medical and mental health appointments, getting a mental health plan. For job network meetings or to get to work we provide them transport. We accompany them to court. We're involved in restoration programs, where people are seeking to have their children returned to them from care. At the moment I'm working with a woman who had her son removed at 4 weeks old. He's now nearly 3. We're working on getting him back to mum, it's taken 7 months so far." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

"We used to provide wrap around, before our funding was cut." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Urban*

Some Aboriginal homelessness service providers reported that they offer an additional layer of cultural support to their clients, that is not necessarily a feature of the non-Aboriginal providers.

"Because we're an Aboriginal service, we have a majority [of Aboriginal clients] that are not connected culturally, we are a way for them to be culturally connected to their family or community. So, where you have a young person that's just found out they're Aboriginal, they

have no idea, they identify that they are Aboriginal, but don't have connections or knowledge. It's a lot to do with relationship breakdowns within their families, the younger generation are not connected culturally. It's up to them to do the research into their family, but sometimes being connected to an Aboriginal organisation can help." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

Aboriginal housing providers such as the AHO and NSWALC identified that they are moving towards a wrap-around model of housing support for Aboriginal tenants.

v. Culturally appropriate and culturally safe services

As highlighted in the comments above, a key element of 'client-centred' specialist homelessness service delivery for Aboriginal people is that services are culturally responsive. The consultations consistently heard that Aboriginal staff within both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services are those most likely to understand the circumstances of Aboriginal clients, and provide a culturally appropriate service that identifies and responds to their needs, particularly in relation to family issues:

"We're the only Aboriginal service in [region]. They need to build the capacity of mainstream services. They need to work on the education side of it with non-Aboriginal case workers. They deliver cultural awareness training, but it needs to be more invested than that. In order for a non-Aboriginal caseworker to work with Aboriginal clients, they need to know about how Aboriginal families work. A non-Aboriginal case worker will go into a family home and see overcrowding. There might be children, but the parents aren't around. A non-Aboriginal case worker will report that to FACS - there's lack of understanding around family dynamics, the extended family, etc." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Regional*

"If a woman goes to [large service provider] because of domestic violence, with no money and no food, beaten up, there's a risk they'll report on the children. They don't look at, for example, he's left - so the kids aren't at risk anymore. If the woman comes to us we'll ask - is your family in the area, is his family, what's your mob, what support can they give you, how safe are they? We'll make a case plan that's real for her. You need to listen to the story they're telling you." *Aboriginal staff member - Metropolitan*

"Aboriginal clients come with a lot of other associated issues, particularly around family and social issues, not necessarily violence but issues arising out of extended families moving into the one house together. You're dealing not just with your own client but their extended family." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Regional*

Across the sector both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers reported that some non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers are doing it better than others. Consistent with other recent forums and research undertaken with the sector - including the Addressing Aboriginal homelessness forum convened by the Industry Partnership in 2017⁸⁰, and the SPRC (University of NSW) report into the *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program* (2017) - there was concern that some non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers were not providing a culturally appropriate or safe service for Aboriginal clients. A gap in training for trauma informed care was specifically identified, though DCJ advises that there is an expectation that specialist homelessness service providers will provide trauma-informed care.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers emphasised that where good practice was being implemented, it tended to rely on the skills of Aboriginal staff members, or on 'good' managers within an organisation. Activities to support cultural competence which are being implemented by organisations included:

- Cultural awareness training, typically as one-off training,
- Aboriginal employment strategies, including recruitment strategies, and mentoring, supervision and professional development programs for Aboriginal staff (staffing issues are discussed in more detail in section 4.c. below),
- Community outreach programs, for example support for NAIDOC Week events,
- Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs),
- Aboriginal service development units within organisations,
- Cultural camps for staff,
- Participation in forums and conferences about Aboriginal issues,
- Signing up to the *Redressing Aboriginal Homelessness Accord*,
- Partnerships with Aboriginal organisations, and
- Including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, Aboriginal art and/or organisational commitments to self-determination in service offices.

Descriptions of activities organisations being undertaken included:

"One of our programs has 30% Aboriginal clients, the other 15%. We don't have any Aboriginal staff. We recognise the gap. We include cultural awareness in our selection criteria for staff now. We're developing a RAP. We have an internal working group. We talk to other organisations – local Aboriginal partner organisations- to get advice. We are organising cultural awareness training." *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

"We do cultural awareness training, but two days isn't sufficient. We have an Aboriginal services development unit, and ongoing learning plans to help Aboriginal staff in management. We tick the box. ... We have an employment strategy, and a Reconciliation Action Plan." *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

"In addition to all the standard training required (e.g. working with victims of domestic violence etc) all staff undertake cultural awareness training once a year through [local Aboriginal organisation] and all new employees undertake a 2 day cultural awareness training program." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

"We introduced compulsory cultural competency training for all staff. But there has to be a balance. ... We have good Aboriginal staff, but it also has to be a 'safe space' for non-Indigenous staff too, to feel they can ask questions, seek support from their co-workers. ... We use respected and appropriate community members to help in the recruitment of Aboriginal staff." *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

Several specialist homelessness service providers interviewed expressed that the sector would benefit from more advice and support about how it could deliver culturally appropriate services, particularly how to 'embed' culturally safe practice.

"We have an Aboriginal specialist homelessness service representative on our recruitment panels, we're about to launch our RAP. We've recruited more Aboriginal staff and they have

stayed with us. We're working hard to embed cultural competence across the organisation at all levels. The first things we tried didn't work though. We've come a long way. I know that as a manager I would have appreciated some advice or a check list, advice about what works. We would be a couple years further advanced if we had had something like that, instead of needing to make all the mistakes and learn from them." *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

Similarly, the *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program* (2017) found:

Respondents also argued that insufficient resources have been provided to build capacity in Aboriginal services and to build cultural safety and competence in non-Aboriginal organisations: "[GHSB has] so much detail in terms of how service delivery should be provided [but] there's nothing in that space really around how to work with Aboriginal communities, how to ensure that if you're in a broad package how you even prioritise that and what the expectations might be around all of that." (quote from Non-SHS stakeholder).⁸¹

The Industry Partnership, Aboriginal homelessness service providers and Aboriginal staff working within non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers play a key role in supporting cultural competence within the homelessness sector. The consultation heard multiple examples of Aboriginal homelessness service providers and individual Aboriginal staff providing training, being part of recruitment panels, running forums or cultural camps, and providing advice. Some non-Aboriginal specialist homelessness service providers purchase training from Aboriginal specialist homelessness services. However, some Aboriginal homelessness service providers expressed frustration about the expectation that Aboriginal staff or organisations would provide cultural support for free.

The Industry Partnership supports Aboriginal homelessness service providers to self-assess their cultural competence, using the *Aboriginal Cultural Competence Standards: A Self-Assessment Process for Community Housing Providers* (the CHAP Assessment Tool) to provide a 'train the trainer' approach to equip a staff member in the organisation to facilitate the self-assessment.⁸² Some specialist homelessness service providers spoke about the support they receive from Homelessness NSW.

"[Our cultural awareness training and Aboriginal staff professional development] hasn't been contract directed. It has all been voluntary." *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

"Our staff are working with Homelessness NSW on the Train the Trainer CHAP program. Our Aboriginal staff and alliance partners sit on the Homeless NSW Communities of Practice. The Industry Partnership are amazing advocates and supports. They are truly behind the Accord and training/supporting Aboriginal staff." *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

Information about outcomes from the Aboriginal Cultural Competency Standards Train the Trainer Project was not available at the time of completion of the consultation.

vi. Complex needs

The high, complex needs of clients was a repeated theme raised during the consultations, with some Aboriginal homelessness service providers highlighting that Aboriginal clients were increasingly presenting with high, complex needs, particularly rough sleepers.

Reporting of increased complexity in homeless client needs (across client groups) in recent years is consistent with feedback from the 2017 survey of specialist homelessness services. The report entitled *Workforce Issues in Specialist Homelessness Services* was compiled by the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at the University of NSW. It drew on the responses from a community sector survey of 1438 not for profit organisations conducted by the NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) including 72 organisations receiving specialist homelessness services funding. Three (3) of the specialist homelessness service providers surveyed for that research delivered primarily Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services.

This research reported in relation to the needs of specialist homelessness services clients generally: “Several organisations described increases in numbers of clients seeking their services [in the last 12 months to February 2017]... Many [SHS organisations] reported that clients engaged with the service had increasing levels of need, which was compounding demands on organisations and staff. In describing higher levels of complexity among clients, some respondents described how their organisation was working with highly vulnerable clients, including people with substance abuse issues, people who had been homeless for long periods of time before accessing services, and people with multiple complex needs who were seen as difficult to rehouse because of a combination of personal circumstances and because of high costs of private housing.”⁸³

Within an increasingly complex client group, the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients remain the most severe.⁸⁴ Some Aboriginal homelessness service providers across different regions raised concerns that they provided a higher or more extended length of service to Aboriginal clients than other specialist homelessness service providers, to address the higher levels of client need.

“There isn’t support for Aboriginal people in mainstream services. There’s not the support for them.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“With [the clients we intake] they stay with us, we don’t refer them to anyone. We take them through the whole process, from doing housing applications, to seeing them housed, providing establishment support, and then post-crisis support. [You have to] be continuously involved. Sometimes take someone [living on the street] 2-3 years to house.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

vii. Knowledge and connection with Aboriginal communities

The consultation consistently heard that existing Aboriginal homelessness service providers and Aboriginal staff have strong connections to their respective local Aboriginal communities, and that this knowledge supports effective service delivery.

“There are various dynamics of working with Aboriginal clients and in relatively small communities [in regional areas]. We have to be aware of the appropriateness of people coming into the refuge and variables such as connections between clients and other residents. ... Aboriginal people won’t access services they don’t trust. Our clients and staff often know each

other, their kids will go to the same schools. We have a high ratio of Indigenous staff. And all our staff are local. Anyone employed [in our service] needs to live in 1 hour radius of the community” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Regional*

“[Local Aboriginal service] is great, except they are very stretched. They are very much ‘in’ the community.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

Some Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers consulted for this project reported implementing strategies to build or maintain connections within Aboriginal communities, including participating in NAIDOC Week events. However, some Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers expressed concern that non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers who had secured contracts to service Aboriginal clients did not have a genuine connection or ‘footprint’ within relevant Aboriginal communities, or a track record of effectively delivering for Aboriginal communities.

“[A large non-Aboriginal service] held a NAIDOC Week event and got a letter of support from a local Aboriginal service. That’s all they needed to show they had a ‘footprint’. They didn’t have a track record or real history of working with Aboriginal people. They got the Aboriginal funding.” *State-wide Forum participant*

“There’s no large Aboriginal homelessness organisations. There’s no one that big. The big organisations that won the homelessness tenders can’t get or keep Aboriginal staff.” *Aboriginal state-wide organisation*

“[In relation to some Aboriginal program funding that recently became available] FACS made it clear that organisations had to have an Aboriginal organisation on board to get the contract. We approached [leading Aboriginal service in the area]. So did everyone else. [The Aboriginal service] agreed to work with us, and we got the funding. [The Aboriginal service told me] we were the only service that actually went out to visit them. We’ve set up a genuine partnership 50/50 division of the money. But that’s fairly unusual [in the sector].” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

“[There’s a] difference in employing an Aboriginal person who has ‘footprint’ as FACS says, who’s [actually] connected and networked, as opposed to an Aboriginal person who’s just come in [to the area].” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

viii. Aboriginal client preference

Specialist homelessness service providers consistently reported to the consultation that Aboriginal people prefer to see an Aboriginal worker or service.

“[Local non-Aboriginal service] is so large, Aboriginal clients feel overwhelmed, lost in there. [Our service] is smaller.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“About 15% of our clients are Aboriginal. Though Aboriginal clients don’t always want to use our services, they’d prefer to use an Aboriginal service. [The Aboriginal community] is a very closed community.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

Some of the specialist homelessness service providers based in regional areas who were interviewed for the project noted challenges about a lack of client choice, with so few Aboriginal homelessness service providers.

“The big issue I think is there’s only one funded provider - if people have an issue with that provider, then they won’t access services. It’s like with anything, people need to be able to ‘service shop’.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

Several Aboriginal homelessness service providers mentioned the tension between Aboriginal people being able to access a local Aboriginal service, and the need for mainstream providers to offer appropriate services:

“Something that I firmly believe is we don’t want to be a monopoly, we don’t want to be the only service that provides services to Aboriginal clients. It’s important that Aboriginal people know that there are Aboriginal services for them to use but we don’t want to see every single Aboriginal person in [the region] referred to us.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

Client choice, allocation of an appropriate support worker depending on cultural issues, including kinship and gender, and conflicts of interests are issues that Aboriginal homelessness service providers and Aboriginal staff in non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers actively manage.

“Aboriginal clients often feel shame at having to access services and don’t want anyone known to them / too closely associated with them or their families. Also, some Aboriginal case-workers won’t want to work with particular people if they’re known to them.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“Working within your own community brings particular issues. For example [our CEO] knows 80% of the clients personally or through family connections, because she has been around for a long time.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

Solutions to conflict of interest issues being implemented included having multiple staff options available for clients and making it clear upfront to clients so they can be referred to another service. However, referrals to another staff member was not possible for very small organisations, or for specialist organisations or regional organisations who did not have another appropriate services to refer clients to.

c. Specialist homelessness services workforce

i. Identified Aboriginal positions and staffing targets

The *Workforce Issues in Specialist Homelessness Services* (2017) report identified that 63.9% of specialist homelessness services organisations had policies in place relating to the employment of Aboriginal staff, compared to 51% in the community sector. This is consistent with what the consultation heard, with most medium and large specialist homelessness service providers interviewed advising they had formal employment strategies or commitments to employ Aboriginal people, outlined in documents such as Reconciliation Action Plans.

Whilst the consultation consistently heard that increasing employment of Aboriginal people in specialist homelessness service providers is preferred, there were mixed views across specialist homelessness service providers about whether positions should be identified or staffing targets should be set.

Aboriginal homelessness service providers and Aboriginal state-wide organisations strongly supported Aboriginal identified positions, suggesting funding should be tied to the achievement of a minimum level of Aboriginal staffing to keep specialist homelessness service providers accountable. Aboriginal organisations also suggested an organisation should employ at least two Aboriginal staff to prevent staff burnout. A mix of male and female staffing was acknowledged as most culturally appropriate. Two specialist homelessness service providers reported that gender diverse staffing was currently written into their Aboriginal staffing plans.

However, the consultations also heard consistently, as discussed below, that specialist homelessness service providers face challenges filling Aboriginal-identified staffing positions. One non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider noted that they had staffing targets in their existing contract, but that this was not monitored or assessed.

ii. Recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff

The consultation heard that specialist homelessness service providers faced challenges recruiting and retaining staff, particularly Aboriginal staff. This picture is consistent with the *Workforce Issues in Specialist Homelessness Services* (2017) report that found that while a relatively high proportion of staff in specialist homelessness services organisations have degree level qualifications (46.0%), 51.6% of specialist homelessness service providers had difficulty recruiting or retaining degree qualified service delivery staff, compared with 40.7% of all community service organisations.⁸⁵

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers identified low wages and a lack of funding security as a barrier to Aboriginal staffing. The *Workforce Issues in Specialist Homelessness Services* (2017) report found that 29% of specialist homelessness services staff were on fixed term, rather than ongoing, contracts compared to 18.2% across the community sector. The main reason given for short term or insecure employment arrangements was certainty of funding.

“The problem is there’s no guarantee of long-term employment. If you get a really good worker – can’t give them an ongoing contract. It affects our ability to retain staff.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Metropolitan*

Consistent with other research, two Aboriginal homelessness service providers reported that the *Going Home Staying Home Reforms* led to a loss of specialised staff including Aboriginal workers in

the sector. Some Aboriginal homelessness service providers and some state-wide Aboriginal organisations interviewed for this project identified that Aboriginal people were reluctant to work for some of the larger, faith-based organisations which secured specialist homelessness services contracts.

“A lot of these services, the big Christian ones have a history of not being able to help Aboriginal people. One of the services forwarded us their draft selection criteria for identified positions for our comment. They wanted the person to be religious. Religion led to the breakdown of culture - people don’t necessarily want to be associated with religious organisations.”
Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Metropolitan

Funding was identified as the key solution to recruitment and retention challenges. As reported in *Workforce Issues in Specialist Homelessness Services* (2017): “By far the majority of respondents cited higher levels of funding as critical, either so that they could pay higher salaries, offer better conditions, offer positions for more hours or offer access to better training”.⁸⁶

One non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider reported that large specialist homelessness service providers were currently offering higher wages for Aboriginal homelessness service providers’ staff, as an incentive. Conversely, two Aboriginal homelessness service providers interviewed reported that they don’t get access to the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) to supplement staff wages to the minimum wage.

Other solutions to staffing challenges suggested or being implemented highlighted during the consultation were:

- Including a respected Aboriginal person on recruitment panels,
- Sharing examples of good practice from other organisations, including in how to package and advertise roles to Aboriginal people, and
- Programs to ensure Aboriginal staff can progress into management within organisations.

Given the skills shortages and specialised nature of the work, it was recommended that the sector develop traineeship programs. ACHIA identified that it was currently developing a program with the AHO to build Aboriginal people up to work in the housing and homelessness sector.

The Aboriginal Careers in Mental Health initiative (ACIMH) trainee program, delivered in partnership between the NSW Government and community organisations, was cited by one specialist homelessness services provider as an example of a successful Aboriginal traineeship program which could be replicated to develop the Aboriginal homelessness services workforce.⁸⁷

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers noted that there was a low level of Aboriginal staffing in DCJ, and that this was a concern (see further discussion below).

iii. Pressures on Aboriginal staff

The consultation heard that many mainstream organisations have no or only one Aboriginal worker. It was reported by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers that there was high pressure for Aboriginal staff to work outside the scope of their role and beyond hours for which they are paid, because of the expectations from clients, the community and the

organisation. Where only one Aboriginal worker was employed in a non-Aboriginal organisation, it was reported that they may be expected to be involved in 'all things Aboriginal':

"Many services just recruit Aboriginal staff and then expect them to sort themselves out. The sector will bring in an Aboriginal worker as a tick a box sometimes." *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

"A lot of these services [large mainstream specialist homelessness service providers] have the contract, but they don't have Aboriginal workers, or if they do get Aboriginal workers they can't retain them. Their Aboriginal workers are expected to be experts on everything Aboriginal, too much." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

Isolation and burnout for specialist homelessness services staff was a repeated issue raised, particularly for Aboriginal staff. The importance of culturally appropriate supervision and support for Aboriginal staff was noted. External supervisors for Aboriginal staff was put in place by several specialist homelessness service providers who had achieved success maintaining Aboriginal staff, though this was only possible through a pro-bono (ie volunteer) arrangement for one of the small Aboriginal homelessness service providers.

"Staff are stressed and overstretched. It [the work] is soul crushing, discouraging when you can't get outcomes. It is relying on loyalty and passion." *Aboriginal staff in non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Regional*

"There's so much trauma in communities. For the Aboriginal workers themselves too – in their families etc." *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

"For Aboriginal staff, you need to embed that cultural supervision and support. For a young worker coming in they need that support, you need to have that practice support embedded. The work can be quite confronting at times." *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

Some specialist homelessness service providers reported success with caseload management processes and Codes of Conduct for managing workload issues. Some specialist homelessness service providers reported negotiating lower, more sustainable caseloads for staff, or cooperative arrangements with other services. However, reducing caseloads appeared to be a solution which had only been implemented by larger organisations, or organisations with partnerships with larger organisations which allowed clients to be transferred.

"With really complex clients we reduce staff burnout by swapping management between organisations. We will handle each other's cases for a week or two." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Regional*

"Often [Aboriginal services] end up with higher case-loads. [A local larger service] had [staff] overload, and then made the decision to drop the case load. [The Aboriginal services] can't do that. [The Aboriginal services] doesn't/ can't turn people away." *Non-Aboriginal provider*

iv. Training and professional development

There was significant variation across specialist homelessness service providers in relation to training and professional development. The consultation heard both that there are a range of

Aboriginal staff supports being implemented, and that there is a lack of opportunities for Aboriginal staff to access training, peer support, networking, professional supervision or debriefing.

Consistent with the *Workforce Issues in Specialist Homelessness Services* (2017) report, the size of organisations, lack of local training opportunities and an inability to replace absent staff were the main barriers identified to professional development. These issues disproportionately impact Aboriginal homelessness service providers, as small organisations.

“It would be great to be able to support staff better. We need funding for staff to have self-care and resilience support, team building.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“Of course [local Aboriginal specialist homelessness services provider] are more stretched [than other services]. It’s only one or two Aboriginal workers. What do you do if someone is sick? How do you backfill? We are able to move people around, shift the case load, but we’re a large organisation.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Metropolitan*

Services reported participating in DCJ-run training but some specialist homelessness service providers in regional areas noted that they faced challenges travelling to attend, or found training booked out quickly.

d. Aboriginal-led specialist homelessness services delivery

i. Level of funding and resources

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers expressed concern that the current level of resources available to fund specialist homelessness services was leading to Aboriginal clients not being supported adequately, with key gaps in services increasing over time. Along with insufficient access to public, social, community and affordable housing, the consultation consistently heard that the increasing the level of funding for homelessness services was a solution or the key solution to addressing Aboriginal clients' needs.

"Funding is the most important thing - funding Aboriginal services properly and expanding the services they provide. It has to be outcomes based. They've got all the data [about areas of need]. They know what's working and what's not working. Act on it!" *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

"Small services are set up to fail. Staff burnout [is an issue]. Under-funding is chronic." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

"We exceeded our targets (many times over), but we didn't receive any more money. What should I do? Just say to FACS – we've already met our targets, so we're not going to see anyone else?" *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

Some providers interviewed were critical of the specialist homelessness services-funding packages which were previously made available for their particular region.

"FACS decided [our] region didn't need a distinct family violence package. We could only tender for a general package and/or a youth package. The general package does include a domestic violence element, but it's only an element of a broader package. Whereas FACS decided it did need specialist domestic violence service in the neighbouring region. FACS has now changed the borders of its regions, so [our area] is part of a [different region] but the mix of services has not changed. There is [still] only capacity for a general provider and youth provider." *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

As previously noted, various specialist homelessness service providers reported that they, or other providers, were currently operating at capacity or over-capacity. Some Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers reported that they regularly exceeded client targets by two or three times. One non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider suggested that "this is the model"; ie FACS provides funding for a minimum client number, but providers are expected to meet a higher level of demand. Conversely, DCJ staff member interviewed reported that some Aboriginal providers were not meeting their targets.

Internal data provided by DCJ to CIR supports that there is significant variation. In 2017-2018 a number of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers did not meet 100% of client targets in contracts. A small number of providers exceeded targets by 200%.⁸⁸ It was outside the scope of this project to examine what percentage of providers are meeting service contract targets across the State, or any related factors such as providers' data reporting practices.

Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal staff at the State-wide Forum supported the development of an agile homelessness service system that involves working across agencies to match resources

(including funding) to areas of priority and emerging need, to reduce blockages and move towards holistic service delivery was a priority.

The *Going Home Staying Home* reforms process was competitive. A number of current Aboriginal homelessness service providers were not successful with tenders for SHS contracts under the *Going Home Staying Home* reforms. Subsequently additional funding, originally time-limited to 18 months, was made available through the Service Support Fund (SSF) to organisations who were unsuccessful in the *Going Home Staying Home* tender. Aboriginal homelessness service providers who received SSF reported that they felt that this funding was not sufficient or as certain as other funding, and that this increased pressure on their service.

ii. Equity of funding

The consultations heard repeatedly from several Aboriginal homelessness service providers that they perceived specialist homelessness services funding was distributed in an unequal way, with Aboriginal homelessness service providers receiving smaller or less secure funding than non-Aboriginal organisations. Examples of funding inequality cited by various Aboriginal homelessness service providers included:

- Aboriginal homelessness service providers receive shorter term or SSF funding rather than the more stable three (3) year funding.
- Some Aboriginal homelessness service providers reported that their funding was “cut” by up to 30% through the *Going Home Staying Home* reforms.
- Two additional rounds of funding had been released by DCJ in the previous two years which have gone to non-Aboriginal organisations only.
- Aboriginal organisations are not provided the same level of flexibility to ‘re-purpose’ funds as other organisations, for example to use funds as brokerage.
- Some Aboriginal organisations do not receive Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) payments available to other non-government organisations.
- JWA sub-contractors don’t have control over their funding, which is provided to the lead organisation.
- One Aboriginal homelessness service provider reported that as a result of providing information about the additional clients they had been able to service, the provider had been ‘punished’ by having their contract adjusted to require the higher case load to be met in future years, within the same resources.

The review of individual service funding arrangements or specific contracts was not within the scope of this project. In addition, the various specialist homelessness funding streams - eg SHS, SSF - have used different approaches to service funding. This makes any direct comparison of equity or adequacy of funding across services very difficult. For example, under the current 14 service packages involving Aboriginal homelessness service providers, costs per client range from approximately \$1,350 per client through to \$3,980 per client.⁸⁹ It should be noted that service models and other responsibilities of these providers may differ between contracts which further complicates comparison. Some of these service packages are delivered through JWAs.⁹⁰

The perspective of stakeholders who reported that funding is inequitable may also relate to factors such as the complexity of clients supported and the nature of the services provided by Aboriginal

homelessness service providers. Other factors leading to reporting of inequity may include the small scale of most Aboriginal homelessness service providers and historical funding issues. These are discussed briefly below.

iii. Stability and diversity of funding

Funding uncertainty and a strong reliance on government funding was identified by Aboriginal homelessness service providers and Aboriginal state-wide organisations as issues impacting the sustainability of Aboriginal homelessness service providers. Aboriginal homelessness service providers in NSW and nationally are more likely to rely on government funding.⁹¹ The smaller Aboriginal homelessness service providers noted during the consultations that they did not have the capacity to secure large philanthropic funds accessed by larger services, such as St Vincent de Paul, Mission Australia and the Samaritans.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) *Inquiry into funding and delivery of programs to reduce homelessness* (2017) report found in relation to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal providers across Australia:

One of the consequences of the reliance on government funding is that funding for homelessness services is short-term and unpredictable. This is of great concern to services whose key funding requirement is for funding certainty. Funding precariousness is having a major impact on service provision and client outcomes. In an environment where a three-year period is the maximum funding term, and where one-year funding arrangements have become the norm, services are operating at levels well below what they consider to be optimal.⁹²

The AHURI report also found:

Services are vulnerable to the precarious funding environment which has a number of problematic effects on the sector and the effectiveness of services. Short-term funding periods (less than one year) create operational inefficiencies. Some organisations are unable to employ staff. Staff turnover is also high because most services can only offer short-term contracts. Organisations are unable to run services consistently throughout the year, impacting on relationships with clients. Some organisations are unable to innovate and introduce new models of good practice, and opportunities to improve services and address service gaps are missed. These problems are exacerbated by periods of policy change when there is no advice available on future government funding until new arrangements are in place, creating enormous uncertainty in the sector.⁹³

iv. Supporting existing Aboriginal homelessness service providers

The consultation heard consistently from existing Aboriginal homelessness service providers that they were seeking increased funding to be able to provide expanded services in their area. Several Aboriginal homelessness services providers reported receiving higher levels of funding in the past to provide an expanded service, to more clients or to both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal clients.

The consultations heard mixed views about the level of support currently being provided to Aboriginal homelessness service providers, and the sources of support. Relationships with other community services, including other specialist homelessness service providers and Aboriginal organisations, was consistently identified as a key support for Aboriginal homelessness service

providers. The consultation heard multiple examples of long-running cooperative arrangements between specialist homelessness services in different areas.

The pooling of resources - with the support of the Industry Partnership - to meet regulatory challenges was identified as a successful strategy implemented in the past by organisations in the Hunter and Sydney, for example several services pool resources to engage the same auditor to meet audit requirements. The options were seen as more limited for services based in regional and remote areas.

Several Aboriginal homelessness service providers and individual Aboriginal staff reported that they received strong support from the Industry Partnership and forums convened by Homelessness NSW such as the Aboriginal Communities of Practice, though this varied, with not all Aboriginal homelessness service providers aware of or involved in activities with the Industry Partnership, particularly in regional areas.

“We’re involved with all the peaks, DVNSW, Yfoundations. Homelessness NSW ... Their Aboriginal worker – she helps me out ... If there’s something that comes up I don’t understand – I go to them [Homelessness NSW] straight away ... They talk to FACS. ... There’s a communities of practice group ... brings together workers from all over Sydney, talking about best practice.”
Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan

“We don’t have any involvement with Homelessness NSW. I wouldn’t apportion blame to one side or the other. They haven’t reached out and we haven’t gone and sought to find out what other Peaks do, some room for mutual improvement there.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

v. Scale of Aboriginal specialist homelessness service providers

As noted above, Aboriginal homelessness service providers tend to be small organisations, compared to many other specialist homelessness service providers. The *Workforce Issues in Specialist Homelessness Services* (2017) report found that on average specialist homelessness services organisations employed 61 staff across their services and programs, and around 1/3 of specialist homelessness services organisations employed 10 or fewer staff.⁹⁴ Nearly all current Aboriginal organisations receiving specialist homelessness services funding employ less than 10 staff, and some as few as two.

The KPMG report of the *Going Home Staying Home Post-Implementation Review* (2015) found that the number of small providers reduced significantly as a result of the reforms.

Summary key funding and service data, 2013-14 (pre-GHSH) and 2014-15 (GHSH)

	2013-14		2014-15	
SHS Program grants	\$134m		\$148m	
Total SHS contracts	336		157	
SHS organisations	201		188 – 76* as lead and 147 as partner (services can be both)	
Properties	More than 1,300		More than 1,400	
“Small” providers*	75% of services received less than \$500K**		34% of lead providers will receive less than \$800K pa	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Faith-based organisations*** – no. of organisations	36	18%	28 (17 as lead, 11 as partner)	15%
Faith-based organisations – share of funding	43%		46%	

Source: FACS data, quoted in Table 2-1: Summary key findings and service data, 2013-14 (pre-GHSH) and 2014-15 (GHSH), reported in KPMG (2015) *Going Home Staying Home Post-Implementation Review*

Larger organisations have more capacity generally, including to dedicate to administrative issues such as contract negotiations. A small number of the larger specialist homelessness service providers interviewed for this project identified that they had been able to negotiate changes to their contracts in recent years, to reduce minimum client targets, to a more sustainable level.

“We negotiated with FACS to reduce the numbers for case management. This allowed us to provide less of a revolving door service, and to provide more actual interventions that can make a difference. That was negotiated locally.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

Smaller services have less options to shuffle services internally to respond to changing client trends and needs.

“Aboriginal organisations need to be better funded to meet tender requirements such as completing strategic planning, policy development and so forth. Larger organisations have access to internal resources for such things. For smaller organisations ... [the CEO] essentially has to take [those roles] on in addition to their fulltime job.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

Several Aboriginal homelessness service providers reported that they did not feel that DCJ was responsive to Aboriginal homelessness service provider requests for more funding. No Aboriginal homelessness service provider reported that they had been able to negotiate funding that would allow a lower caseload.

“They funded us because they needed to (to deal with the increasing number of Aboriginal homeless people sleeping rough). We’re always told by FACS “we’re hearing wonderful things” but they won’t increase our funding. ... We’ve spoken to the Minister, to bosses, nothing happens.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

Conversely, DCJ staff consulted for this project advised that the agency had played a key role in advocating and securing funding for Aboriginal homelessness service providers, after organisations were unsuccessful in the *Going Home Staying Home* tender process. The SSF and other supplementary funding arrangements were identified by DCJ as examples of the department actively responding to the specific needs of Aboriginal organisations.

vi. Roles and relationships with DCJ

The consultation heard a diversity of views from specialist homelessness service providers in relation to the role and level of support for services provided by DCJ. It was reported by some providers and some DCJ staff that some DCJ District staff are better connected with the local community, and understand client experiences better, compared to others.

Non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers consulted were more likely to report positive relationships and support from DCJ. Aboriginal homelessness service providers were more likely to report variable or poor relationships with DCJ.

At the State-level, Aboriginal state-wide organisations reported working cooperatively with DCJ on a number of initiatives, but generally reported that a partnership approach consistent with NSW Government policies and the principle of self-determination was not being implemented.

Comments about the current relationship between Aboriginal organisations and DCJ staff included:

“To get outcomes, FACS needs to be genuine – they don’t listen to Aboriginal people. To Aboriginal people, what they see is not reflected, so there is less of a tendency to participate in consultations.” *Aboriginal state-wide organisation*

“But we don’t hear a lot from FACS during the year about how we’re doing. Are we meeting targets? Are there any complaints about us? We’d like to get any feedback about how we’re doing. A closer one-on-one relationship with the funding body would be good, maybe quarterly meetings to track progress? ... There’s a really good FACS officer that we can contact and she visits us if we approach her, not sure if that’s her role. It would be really helpful to have a FACS contact and formalised regular meetings.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“Our FACS worker sits on our [recruitment] panels.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“[FACS doesn’t support our service]. When we bring something up with our CPO - we are always told “we have to take that to our manager” or “head office”, nothing comes of it.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

“FACS is doing some fantastic work at the moment in terms of realising their funding model is not good - trying to lead community consultations to improve. But they are still missing the point about different Country but all within one service delivery area. One organisation across

a broad area is not appropriate for discrete Aboriginal communities.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“The main issue with FACS is trust. They cut the guts out of the sector.” *Non-Aboriginal provider – Metropolitan*

The consultation heard that low levels of trust between some Aboriginal homelessness service providers and DCJ, and between DCJ and the Aboriginal community generally, were acting as a barrier to improving the delivery of specialist homelessness services to Aboriginal people.⁹⁵

At the State-wide forum several Aboriginal organisations raised the issue of accountability, reporting that a lot of accountability was expected of services but not of government. Factors impacting on levels of trust reported included: historical impact from the *Going Home Staying Home* reforms, other activities by the department including child removal, high levels of DCJ staff turn-over, low numbers of Aboriginal staff within DCJ, poor communication, limited visibility within the homelessness sector of program outcomes, government plans and policies, and the perception that DCJ as an agency is not respectful of Aboriginal people. Some of these issues are explored below.

Aboriginal homelessness service providers and DCJ staff both acknowledged that the *Going Home Staying Home* reforms had a major impact on the relationships and trust between the agency and the homelessness sector. The KPMG report of the *Going Home Staying Home Post-Implementation Review* (2015) reported:

(The GSHS procurement process) undoubtedly caused some trust and relationship damage for FACS (and the sector) ...

A key criticism from external stakeholders about the procurement process was the lack of transparency of how the funding outcomes came about. This has led some stakeholders to conclude that outcomes, such as any loss of smaller services from the system that may have occurred, were pre-ordained, and unfair ... However, survey respondents also considered that there was not good visibility of how the decisions were made and who made them. As such, in reality, it would be hard for services to judge whether the outcomes were fair or not ...⁹⁶

Consultation with DCJ staff for this project acknowledged the impact of the *Going Home Staying Home* reforms but characterised these as historical or past issues. However, Aboriginal organisations consulted for this project characterised poor relationships with DCJ and connected the past reforms to current issues.

Through the project CIR itself witnessed low levels of trust and at times adversarial or unsympathetic relationships from some DCJ staff towards some Aboriginal organisations and staff working in the specialist homelessness services sector, and language or behaviour which could be characterised as culturally unsafe.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers identified challenges faced by DCJ which impacted on the relationship between DCJ and the sector, which impeded the ability to develop coordinated or joint solutions. The challenges reported were: high rates of staff turnover with DCJ, underrepresentation of Aboriginal staff at all levels, and regular internal restructures.

Comments included:

“This is something that we really lack, FACS don’t have any Aboriginal staff here. That’s a massive issue.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“Staff turnover in FACS is amazing. They need to improve what is currently in place.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

“We’ve had a dozen different CPO (Community Program Officers) within FACS (the people who manage our funding agreements), they are constantly leaving. There’s no continuity, no corporate knowledge. ... Good to have an Aboriginal CPO, don’t have to explain the cultural significance to them of what we do. ... FACS [staff] are on [temporary] contracts too. They’ve had a lot of changes to deal with. Three districts have combined, health come into them and now justice has come in - it’s disruptive and uncertain for them and for us.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

Contract management was identified as a key area of tension. Aboriginal homelessness service providers reported too much regulation and reporting, especially given their small scale. Failure to identify issues and work through solutions was another concern raised. One non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider suggested contract issues were not identified and resolved early due to inadequate resourcing within DCJ .

“Government is not assessing the [JWA] contract. They not assessing why attrition [loss of Aboriginal staff] is happening. ... We don’t know (???) what measures [the JWA lead] organisation is being assessed against.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

“It’s up to the skills of individual contract managers to complete monthly management meetings, annual accountability processes, have close communications and relationships with services.” *DCJ staff member*

“FACS officers change so much! CPOs have no idea about homelessness. Some of them have come from elsewhere [eg the former Department of Ageing and Community Services]. They are on a learning curve themselves.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

“FACS is quite stretched, they are under-staffed. I think that is a reason for the lack of oversight [of contracts]. There isn’t as much oversight as people think there is. The ones who are called up are the ones who are a real problem.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

vii. Encouraging Aboriginal organisations into the sector

There was general support from stakeholders consulted for bringing new Aboriginal organisations into the sector as a means to increase diversity and client choice.

Throughout the consultations and in the State-wide forum Aboriginal state-wide organisations noted that many Aboriginal organisations are overstretched and struggle to meet existing requirements imposed to receive government funding, including new accreditation standards to receive funding for Aboriginal housing provision. Existing large organisations with diverse funding streams would be the most stable and appropriate to take on a role in delivering homelessness services.

However, entering the homelessness space was not seen as a priority or attractive for existing Aboriginal organisations:

“[How to encourage more Aboriginal organisations into the sector?] The temporary nature of the options offered to organisations is a ‘poisoned chalice’. Government has a reputation for closing things down and withdrawing funding. Not many organisations would put their hand up.” *Aboriginal state-wide organisation*

As discussed in more detail earlier in this report, enablers for new Aboriginal organisations entering the sector which were suggested include: targeted procurement processes for Aboriginal organisations, tailored tendering or selection approaches, start-up incentives or establishment funding to support governance and accreditation processes, and supporting organisations to access existing training and capacity building opportunities, such as the governance training offered by AbSec, AHO and ACHIA.

Capacity building support and establishment costs were two priority areas of support recommended:

“What would it take to establish more Aboriginal homelessness service providers? You would need one off establishment costs, need vehicles etc. Each case manager would need a vehicle and phones. Definitely need to set out a requirement- not lower than a cert 3 or cert 4. Need case management experience, and recruitment support – there should be guidelines around what they are asking for people and qualifications. Has to be standards about the best way to do it. Must have people with case management experience. Our FACS worker sits on the panels. ... Staff need caps on how many crisis cases at a time (3 at a time). ...” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“Would need funding to build capacity - including staff training and development, accommodation, increase staff numbers, admin support, establishment costs.” *Aboriginal state-wide organisation*

Consortia models or auspicing arrangements where an Aboriginal lead agency might take on the support of another Aboriginal organisation were raised as an option. As previously noted, relationships with other community services, including other specialist homelessness service providers and Aboriginal organisations, were consistently identified as a key support for Aboriginal homelessness service providers.

However Joint Working Arrangements (JWAs) have had mixed success. The consultation heard consistently that there had been significant changes in JWA arrangements, and that some Aboriginal homelessness service providers felt they did not receive an appropriate share of JWA funds for the services delivered.

“All JWAs have failed. ... Our JWA was supposed to foster Aboriginal leadership, to grow and improve services for Aboriginal people. It worked initially. Years later most of the CEOs of the organisations have changed. The organisations have changed. There used to be a majority of Aboriginal staff, now there’s a minority. Meanwhile FACS just renewed the contract for another 3 years.” *Aboriginal homelessness service providers – Regional*

Consistent with the feedback heard during this consultation, the SPRC *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Service Program* (2017) reported:

As part of the GSH tender process for the new SHS packages, FACS encouraged individual SHS to work together in consortia models and form Joint Working Agreements (JWAs). ... Survey and interview responses indicated that JWAs were working effectively for the majority of organisations; however, stakeholder and SHS interviews also indicated that some JWAs were extremely difficult for both the lead and non-lead organisations, and required significant support from the Industry Partnership and FACS. A review of the JWA governance structure and legal responsibilities of lead agencies and the sub-contractor status of non-lead agencies would be beneficial. According to service providers and other stakeholders, there are many examples of networks and partnerships to support service integration; however, for the most part these were not produced by the reform.⁹⁷

Negative responses in interviews and survey questions on the effectiveness of JWAs related to the rationale behind JWAs, governance arrangements and relationships with FACS, and the complex legal and management responsibilities imposed on lead agencies in JWAs. The partnerships were described as being organised too hastily between organisations without good working relationships being established and while in some cases these relationships have developed, in other cases they have gone extremely badly.

A number of JWAs include agencies that have different service requirements and lower funding levels than prior to the reform, and whose contracts are now with another SHS rather than FACS; so complaints from them about JWAs are unsurprising. ... Other partnership models and integration of services were described as much more effective than JWAs.⁹⁸

It was outside the scope of this report to evaluate individual JWAs or current consortia arrangements in the sector.

e. Strengthening Aboriginal voices in the design and delivery of specialist homelessness services

While several existing Aboriginal state-wide organisations peaks have strategies that overlap with the homelessness space, there is no one lead Aboriginal organisation that has responsibility for Aboriginal homelessness issues.

“[Our organisation] doesn’t have a ... homelessness element, but we understand the impact. It’s not the core business of a lot of Aboriginal peaks but it is relevant to all.” *State-wide Aboriginal organisation*

The consultation heard consistently that Aboriginal input needed to be increased at the State level. At the regional and local-level the strength of Aboriginal people’s input into specialist homelessness services design and delivery varied.

“[In response to the question - Do you think Aboriginal organisations have a strong voice in the delivery of homelessness services?] Probably not, but that’s not just specific to Aboriginal providers. There was a lot of feedback given that the new SHS model would be problematic, a lot of feedback that people weren’t happy, and no notice was taken.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

“I was always the only voice, but I always felt listened to and heard.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional*

There was a diversity of views about the effectiveness of DHIGS as a mechanism to provide feedback to DCJ at a District level.

“Our DHIG was set up as an interagency, to bring together agencies. But it isn’t really effective. It’s taken two years to work out its Terms of Reference! It doesn’t follow through on systemic issues. It’s just a talking shop. [A local Aboriginal service] attends sometimes. ... All our coordination with other services is really based on personal relationships.” *Non-Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Metropolitan*

“You can’t speak up at these meetings because if you speak-up you’re not cooperating, not assisting. I haven’t been to last 3 meetings.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

“We go to DHIGs. It’s good to bring everyone together to discuss dramas.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

While a coordinated state-wide body or forum for Aboriginal homelessness issues doesn’t exist, there was no support expressed for a new Aboriginal peak body for homelessness to be formed at this time. Reasons included that a new peak would direct money away from on the ground service delivery; the existence of multiple current forums; and consultation fatigue.

“[Our organisation] sits on Housing and Homelessness Collaboration organised by Shelter NSW ... ACHIA also part of Aboriginal Social Housing Strategy Aboriginal Peak Reference Group run by AHO. FACS approached this group to combine with Aboriginal Outcomes Team but the group pushed back, taking on too much.” *State-wide Aboriginal organisation*

“Forums like the Council of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (CAPO) is so busy, it is hard to get homelessness on the agenda. It is better to consult with CAPO members separately.” *State-wide Aboriginal organisation*

The current range of new policy developments and change within the Aboriginal housing sector – being led by AHO – was identified as a factor impacting on the capacity of state-wide organisations to actively participate in any new or additional Aboriginal homelessness forums.

The preference from both state-wide and local Aboriginal organisations was to find ways to strengthen existing forums in the short term as the mechanism for Aboriginal people to provide advice at the State level, and locally tailored forums to address local issues, rather than start something new. The suggestion about potential forums it would be most useful to consider included:

- The Aboriginal Reference Group convened by the Industry Partnership. This forum could be strengthened through resources to facilitate larger numbers of Aboriginal organisations and staff travelling to participate in meetings.
- The Premier’s Council on Homelessness. This forum could be strengthened through additional Aboriginal members.
- The Aboriginal Peak Reference Group for housing, convened by AHO to consult on the existing policy review process. This forum could be strengthened by extending its scope beyond its current Aboriginal housing policy review process.

There was no specific consensus supporting or opposing a particular option across stakeholders or through the state-wide forum convened for this project in September 2019.

In the medium to long term there was interest in supporting the network of people who participated in the State-wide forum for this project to meet again, and work together with DCJ towards on a shared agenda. The forum included Aboriginal state-wide organisations with a housing or community service focus, Aboriginal homelessness service providers and IP representatives.

Participants at the forum stressed that this was the first opportunity for this selection of stakeholders to meet and discuss issues across the sector. The need to better coordinate Aboriginal housing and Aboriginal homelessness services was strongly emphasised. Additional members of the network that could be considered include:

- The DCJ Aboriginal Outcomes Team and relevant policy staff,
- DVNSW noting DVNSW has recently established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board,
- Yfoundations, noting that there is no Aboriginal specific youth homelessness service in NSW and
- Other key housing advocacy groups Shelter and the Tenants Union, which include Aboriginal forums or programs.

Whatever forum is progressed, stakeholders consulted strongly emphasised that there must be strong community input and a genuine partnership approach. The key factor to success for any future Aboriginal consultation highlighted by Aboriginal state-wide and sector organisations was that the approach include clear commitments from the NSW Government, in order to build trust and accountability.

f. Other future issues

i. Procurement

Current specialist homelessness services contracts are scheduled to end in 2020 – DCJ is currently in discussions with existing providers about extending existing contracts. This is the second roll-over of existing contracts since the latest tendering for specialist homelessness services contracts through the *Going Home Staying Home* process.

Some practical suggestions to support Aboriginal organisations to be successful in future tender processes were made at the State-wide Forum. These included:

- DCJ briefing the market well in advance to give organisations the time to develop systems, resources and governance processes. This may include an open EOI process as well as proactively approaching organisations in regions with high levels of unmet Aboriginal client needs.
- Developing a tailored tendering process for Aboriginal organisations, that supports them to communicate their capabilities in flexible ways. This may include the opportunity for verbal rather than written responses to selection criteria.
- Seed funding/start up incentives to support organisations to get ready to take on specialist homelessness services contracts (as has been trialled in other sectors such as Out of Home Care).
- Supporting organisations to access existing training and capacity building opportunities, such as the governance training offered by the CHIA NSW RTO.

A key theme from the consultations was that it was important that the lessons from the *Going Home Staying Home* reforms were learnt. That process involved re-commissioning the budget for specialist homelessness services across the State via a two-stage competitive tendering process: a prequalification scheme and select tendering stage. Criticisms from several stakeholders, particularly small providers, related to the impact of the two-stage process. Larger service providers found it easier to accommodate the tender process whereas many smaller providers struggled with the process.⁹⁹

The KPMG report of the *Going Home Staying Home Post-Implementation Review* (2015) reported:

FACS did attempt to support the sector through the process leading up to and including tendering through the establishment of an Industry Development Fund, procurement support for small organisations and Aboriginal organisations, and limits on the number of new entrants that were eligible to tender – each with varying degrees of success.¹⁰⁰

In relation to potential future procurement support for small and Aboriginal organisations, KPMG recommended that:

- In depth-market analysis and market sounding should be undertaken to ensure FACS is aware of the capacity and experience of some organisations to participate in procurement processes. Although FACS was aware that the sector was not experienced in competitive tendering, the variation in experience, and inexperience of some players, was underestimated by FACS.

- Prequalification support for providers was valuable, but longer timeframes and more specific support is needed.
- Specific market information packages for Aboriginal organisations and other specific groups, were helpful, but a greater information and longer timeframes were needed.
- Guidelines for FACS District offices should be developed to support procurement processes for specific groups, and which set out links with other planning processes (such as regional housing plans) and other funding available.
- Where probity processes need to be implemented, these should be supported by clear communication processes to ensure that all parties are aware of the importance of probity and what can and cannot be achieved.
- New thinking on alternative procurement approaches is needed so that the benefits of co-design are not lost while still meeting probity concerns.¹⁰¹

During the consultations for this project a focus on large regional contracts in any future process was not supported, as it was seen as disadvantaging future Aboriginal specialist homelessness service providers and unable to acknowledge the diverse needs of Aboriginal communities.

“FACS only want to deal with one organisation but it doesn’t necessarily transfer to services on the ground ... FACS is only funding one provider for large geographical areas. I understand FACS likes to do this to make it easier to administer. I was involved during the last Going Home Staying Home reform process at my previous organisation... FACS was not valuing embedded organisations. By being embedded (in local communities), they offer unique expertise and connections to their communities. By requiring consortiums (through JWAs) over large areas diluted the uniqueness – by making communities join with other communities up the road’.

Aboriginal homelessness service provider – Regional

One DCJ staff member commented:

“We need diversity – there is currently only a handful of organisations that keep growing. How do we get players so we are not building monopolies, this causes viability issues, growing too fast.” *DCJ staff*

The consultation heard reluctance to expand the role of JWAs in future procurement processes, at least not under current arrangements. As one stakeholder commented:

“When the *Going Home Staying Home Reforms* happened there was a flurry of JWAs. No discussion about whether [organisations’] constitutions were aligned. It was fake partnership, tokenism.” *DCJ staff*

A strong and consistent recommendation from the consultations was that Aboriginal homelessness service providers should be prioritised through an earmarked, Aboriginal-specific tender process. Since the last competitive tendering process the NSW Government has introduced an Aboriginal procurement approach and policies designed to increase the number of Aboriginal organisations and businesses receiving NSW Government contracts. The Australian Government has also established an *Indigenous Procurement Policy* (IPP), which requires three per cent (3%) of government contracts to go to Indigenous organisations.

The NSW *Aboriginal Procurement Policy* aims for Aboriginal owned businesses to be awarded at least three per cent of the total number of domestic contracts for goods and services issued by NSW Government agencies by 2021. Agencies are authorised to provide ‘first consideration’ to Aboriginal owned businesses on prequalification schemes before proceeding to market for procurements valued up to \$250,000 (excl. GST), and to engage directly with one or more Aboriginal owned businesses, before proceeding to market; and ‘direct negotiation’ with suitably qualified Aboriginal owned businesses that can demonstrate value for money and delivery of quality goods and services for procurements not covered under existing prequalification schemes valued up to \$250,000 (excl. GST). It would be consistent with the NSW *Aboriginal Procurement Policy* for DCJ to develop a future procurement process which prioritises Aboriginal organisations for specialist homelessness services service contracts.

ii. Accreditation of specialist homelessness services

The introduction of ASES accreditation standards for specialist homelessness service providers was reported to be the focus of a number of providers over the next 12 months. Some participants in the consultation expressed concern about the introduction of new accreditation standards, on the basis that it would require additional resources to be directed to regulation and administration, and away from frontline service delivery.

The small scale of most Aboriginal homelessness service providers was again highlighted as a key challenge.

“How will organisations know what to do? They have the goodwill, but not the skills to do it.”
Aboriginal worker

“From 2023 organisations will have to be accredited and registered - this will be a lot of paperwork, a lot of hours. That’s why we’ve approached our peak body looking at how to get help.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

“For us as a larger organisation it might be ok, but some of the smaller organisations don’t have much hope of doing accreditation. Accreditation costs are supposed to form [a small percentage] of the tender. A lot of providers will have to reduce staff by a day or two a week to even cover accreditation costs.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider*

The Industry Partnership is implementing a number of programs to support services to prepare for accreditation. The latest Industry Partnership email bulletin (September 2019) reports:

“Over the last 10 months organisations involved in the ASES Pilot have been working through their ASES accreditation. ... ‘Orientation to ASES’ is the first resource available now on the Homelessness NSW website. It includes webinars on the accreditation process, standards & power point presentations, ASES process flowcharts that walk you through the steps to accreditation and experiences of accreditation by NSW SHS services. ... The project is also developing a complete policy manual with 100 policies, including ASES certificate level requirements tailored to homelessness services. Other 'How-to' guides and resources are currently being developed and will be ready by November 2019.”

Specific information about the organisations currently undertaking the ASES accreditation pilot was not available for the consultations, however it is understood that several organisations including existing Aboriginal homelessness service providers will complete accreditation by the end of 2019.

There was concern expressed through the consultation about whether any positive benefits would flow from new accreditation standards, especially in relation to whether accreditation standards are capable of acknowledging the strengths of Aboriginal organisations. Comments by an Aboriginal organisation in one region, and a DCJ staff member in another, demonstrate one of the potential tensions:

“Accreditation is necessary, but has to be specifically moulded to each organisation, look at their client demographic and what they’re delivering. A lot of Aboriginal providers for instance have a board of directors elected on cultural rather than skills grounds. There’s a lot about governance in the accreditation process - but many organisations with culturally based boards are doing well, it’s important to recognise that the outcomes are not necessarily any better or worse because of board make-up. Our board is partly made up on a cultural basis and I hope that won’t count against us. There is a fear that funding will be removed from Aboriginal services.” *Aboriginal homelessness service provider - Regional*

“Governance support – Aboriginal organisations have to want it. We have challenges with Boards that are made up of Elders – may not have an understanding of the work, contractual issues, HR issues, how to support the CEO in their role.” *DCJ staff member*

Some Aboriginal organisations that deliver diverse services or programs are also required to complete accreditation under a number of different national standards (for example, the National Provider Register registration for Community Housing Providers). It was suggested through the consultation that standards and processes could be streamlined or mutually recognised to reduce workload and duplication, though providers may not be aware of the process for standards mapping that currently exist for providers, through DCJ.

Resources and a general ‘reduction in red tape’ were identified as the key supports sought by Aboriginal homelessness service providers, to be able to successfully meet the new accreditation standards. Several services suggested ‘hands on’ support from DCJ could assist services to meet new standards.

“If we’re going down the accreditation path, a useful model might be the one used by the national assessor for community housing (Community Housing Registrar). There are officers just there to assist organisations to get through accreditation. Rather than just giving out lists of “this is what you’ve got to do”, they talk you through expectations and offer suggestions. For instance there were a couple of requirements to be met where we thought “we don’t have this”, and the officer was able to say, “in a similar organisation I saw, they met this criteria this way”, and so we were able to find solutions.” *Aboriginal provider - Regional*

Some specialist homelessness service providers and Aboriginal peak bodies also expressed concern about how standards were being measured and audited appropriately.

“Cultural competency is a buzz word - [mainstream services] say that they do it. But not followed up or audited to confirm they are doing it.” *Non-Aboriginal service – Metropolitan*

It was suggested that an auditing or evaluation process include people with expertise in cultural competence - some Aboriginal homelessness service providers suggested local Aboriginal organisations could play this role, or Aboriginal homelessness service provider staff. It was also suggested that the sector peaks would be best placed to provide specialised peer assessors.

6. Conclusion

This report summarises the findings of research and consultation with key stakeholders involved in the provision of specialist homelessness services in NSW. The stakeholders consulted included Aboriginal organisations representing Aboriginal people in NSW, including state-wide and peak Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, Aboriginal organisations and staff working in the homelessness sector, DCJ staff, homelessness peak bodies and selected non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers.

CIR found that the homelessness sector is facing a number of pressures including the growing number of homelessness people seeking support. The small number of Aboriginal providers currently in the sector are under pressure, and several were reported as providing services at a level which is unsustainable. In many parts of NSW there is no Aboriginal-run homelessness service for Aboriginal people to access.

The consultation for this report heard consistently that there is a strong commitment across DCJ and the homelessness sector to strength and grow Aboriginal involvement in the design and delivery of specialist homelessness services. With current funding arrangements for specialist homelessness services scheduled to be renewed there are strong opportunities for change.

It was an original intention of this project to develop an Aboriginal homelessness sector development strategy and advice about a future consultation mechanism at the State level to strengthen Aboriginal input into policy making and service design and delivery. Through the life of the project it became clear that development of such a strategy or confirmation of an advisory mechanism requires a longer consultation process, greater discussion to find areas of consensus between key stakeholders, and the greater involvement of industry representatives who are currently leading a range of relevant activities in the sector.

This report aims to highlight opportunities in the short or medium term, and directions for reform or further exploration which could be built upon to develop a future strategy and/ or confirm an advisory mechanism. Three key strategic or overarching recommendations for action are highlighted:

1. DCJ develop and fund an Aboriginal homelessness sector development strategy, building on the research and consultation undertaken to date.
2. DCJ reaffirms its commitment to Aboriginal self-determination.
3. DCJ commit to, and resource, further Aboriginal community consultation to inform future decisions regarding specialist homelessness service design and delivery.

The complete list of recommendations arising from the project are outlined in Section 2 of this report.

About Cox Inall Ridgeway

CIR is a proudly Aboriginal-owned business guided by respected Gumbaynggirr leader, Dr Aden Ridgeway. CIR specialises in research, evaluation, policy, strategy, organisational governance, community engagement and communications. CIR is registered with Supply Nation and assured with the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce.

CIR staff responsible for the project were:

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Senior Consultants:	Sylvie Ellsmore, Catherine Wood and Eloise Schnierer
Consultant:	Shannay Holmes
Researchers:	Conal Thwaite and Rebecca Morphy

End Notes and References

¹ **National definition of SHS:** The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) collects and reports national data about specialist homelessness services. It uses the term 'Specialist Homelessness Services' or SHS to refer to the services being delivered, and 'SHS funded agencies' to refer to the organisations that deliver the services. See AIHW (undated) *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection* (SHSC) webpage at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/about-our-data/our-data-collections/specialist-homelessness-services-collection>.

² **Definition of homelessness:** The AIHW advises in relation to the definition of homelessness: "There is no single definition of homelessness. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness, for the purposes of the Census of Population and Housing, as the lack of one or more elements that represent 'home'. The ABS statistical definition of homelessness is '... when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement: is in a dwelling that is inadequate; has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations' (ABS 2012)." From the AIHW webpage (2019a) *Homelessness and homelessness Services Snapshot* (Release Date 11 September 2019) <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/homelessness-and-homelessness-services> (accessed 27 September 2019)

³ AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/1654e011-dccb-49d4-bf5b-09c4607eccc8/aihw-hou-301.pdf.aspx?inline=true> (accessed 27 September 2019)

⁴ AIHW (2019a), *Homelessness and homelessness Services Snapshot*, as above, notes that in relation to SHS data collection, a person is considered homeless if they are living in non-conventional accommodation (such as living on the street), or short-term or emergency accommodation (such as living temporarily with friends and relatives).

⁵ Family and Community Services (FACS) (2019a) Webpage 'Our homelessness programs' at <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/funded/programs/homelessness/specialist-services/our-programs> (accessed 27 September 2019)

⁶ AIHW (2019c) 'Fact sheet: Specialist homelessness services 2017–18: NSW', *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017–18* at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-2017-18/fact-sheets-by-state-and-territory> (accessed 27 September 2019).

⁷ The term 'contract' is used in this context with the general meaning of a service funding component from the six funding streams that a provider has been contracted to deliver. It does not equate to the number of Program Level Agreements (208) which may include funding from more than one funding stream, or the number of contracted providers.

⁸ FACS (2019b) *Background Paper: specialist homelessness services Recommissioning in 2020 and Aboriginal Service Provision*, unpublished.

⁹ Hal Pawson, Cameron Parsell, Peter Saunders, Trish Hill and Edgar Liu for Launch Housing (2019) *Australian Homelessness Monitor 2018*, <https://www.launchhousing.org.au/australianhomelessnessmonitor/>, accessed 2 October 2019

¹⁰ States and Territories table, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2019a) 3238.0.55.001 - *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2016*, Released 31 August 2018, <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001#targetText=The%20final%20estimated%20resident%20Aboriginal,of%20the%20total%20Australian%20population> accessed 2 October 2019

¹¹ AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (31 August 2018) 3238.0.55.001 - *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2016*, as published on the ABS website at <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001>

¹³ AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.

¹⁴ Valentine, K., Zmudzki, F., Fotheringham, M., & Smyth, C. (2017). *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program* (SPRC Report 03/17). Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/file/0006/428127/Early_Review_of_SHS_Program.pdf, accessed 4 October 2019

¹⁵ Valentine et al (2017). *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program* as above.

¹⁶ Valentine et al (2017) *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program*, as above and FACS (undated) *Specialist Homelessness Services data for 2015–16 Analysis of the preliminary data*, at <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=389738>, accessed 4 October 2019

¹⁷ Table S6.10, AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.

¹⁸ At p56, AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.

¹⁹ ‘Culturally safe’ service delivery goes beyond services delivered with cultural awareness. Culturally safe services embed practices that demonstrate competence in working with people from different cultures, rather than demonstrate cultural awareness or competence only in selected programs or amongst selected staff. Culturally safe services provide an overall environment where people of different cultures feel respected and supported (ie ‘safe’). For more information see: see: ‘Cultural Safety Continuum’ by Sadie Heckerberg (2010) as quoted in Heckerberg (2019) *Cultural Safety in Indigenous Research*, presented to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, at <https://aiatsis.gov.au/publications/presentations/cultural-safety-indigenous-research>, ‘What is Cultural Competence? A discussion of the literature’ in Universities Australia and Grote E (2011) *National best practice framework for Indigenous cultural competency in Australian universities* and CIR (2019) ‘Best Practice Service Delivery’ in *Review of the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program*, at <https://www.ag.gov.au/LegalSystem/Legalaidprogrammes/Pages/Legal-assistance-review.aspx>.

²⁰ Homelessness NSW (2019) *Annual Report 2017-18*, <https://www.homelessnessnsw.org.au/about-us/annual-reports>, accessed 10 October 2019

²¹ From interviews conducted by CIR for this project and analysis of internal funding data provided by DCJ (FACS). Funding for providers is also recorded in the FACS Annual Report: *2017-18 - Volume 3: Funds granted to non-government organisations*, at <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=637243>, accessed 4 October 2019

²² Flatau, P., Zaretsky, K., Valentine, K., McNelis, S., Spinney, A., Wood, L., MacKenzie, D. and Habibis, D. (2017) *Inquiry into funding and delivery of programs to reduce homelessness*, AHURI Final Report No. 279, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/279>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-8209001, accessed 14 October 2019. Flatau et al (2017) reports that services with the highest proportion of government funding were those where the main client group was Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) (95.5% of funding), domestic violence (90.5% of funding) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (90.5% of funding): at p25.

²³ FACS (2019c) *Tender Specification: RFT Number FACS.18.47, Title: SHS Aboriginal Sector Development Consultations and Planning* (ie the tender specification for this project)

²⁴ FACS (2019b) *Background Paper*, as above.

²⁵ FACS (2019b) *Background Paper*, as above.

²⁶ Section 1. Business Objectives in FACS (2019c) *Tender Specification*, as above.

²⁷ CIR (2019a) *Project Plan*, as above.

²⁸ At 9 ‘Project Governance’, FACS (2019c) *Tender Specification*, as above.

²⁹ The Aboriginal Housing Office, homelessness peaks, and specific Aboriginal peaks/organisation were not included in the project governance.

³⁰ See for example the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (2019) *Draft Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies*.

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- ³¹ Hal Pawson, Cameron Parsell, Peter Saunders, Trish Hill and Edgar Liu for Launch Housing (2019) *Australian Homelessness Monitor 2018*, <https://www.launchhousing.org.au/australianhomelessnessmonitor/>, accessed 2 October 2019
- ³² States and Territories table, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2019a) 3238.0.55.001 - *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2016*, Released 31 August 2018, <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001#targetText=The%20final%20estimated%20resident%20Aboriginal,of%20the%20total%20Australian%20population.> accessed 2 October 2019
- ³³ AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.
- ³⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (31 August 2018) 3238.0.55.001 - *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2016*, as published on the ABS website at <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001>
- ³⁵ Severely crowded dwellings are defined as those that need 4 or more extra bedrooms. Overcrowding is also a driver of non-Indigenous homelessness: Pawson et al (2019) *Australian Homelessness Monitor 2018*, as above.
- ³⁶ At p47, AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.
- ³⁷ AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.
- ³⁸ FACS (2019c) *Social Housing & Homelessness fact sheet: 2018–19 NSW Budget*, at <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=591395>, accessed 4 October 2019
- ³⁹ FACS (2019b) *Background Paper*, as above.
- ⁴⁰ FACS (2019b) *Background Paper*, as above.
- ⁴¹ From interviews conducted by CIR for this project and analysis of internal funding data provided by DCJ (FACS). Funding for providers is also recorded in the FACS Annual Report: 2017-18 - Volume 3: *Funds granted to non-government organisations*, at <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=637243>, accessed 4 October 2019
- ⁴² From FACS (2019b) *Background Paper*, as above.
- ⁴³ Figure is the estimate for June 2016, ABS (31 August 2018) 3238.0.55.001 - *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2016*, as above.
- ⁴⁴ Figures vary by NSW Government agency. Figure cited is for percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the NSW public service in 2017, from NSW Public Service Commission (2018) *Workforce Profile Report 2017*, as published on the NSW Public Service Commission website at <https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/3218/Workforce-Profile-2017.pdf.aspx>.
- ⁴⁵ From interviews conducted by CIR for this project. It is outside the scope of the project to assess the governance of specialist homelessness service providers.
- ⁴⁶ Spinney, A., Habibis, D. and McNelis, S. (2016) *Safe and sound? How funding mix affects homelessness support for Indigenous Australians*, AHURI Final Report No. 272, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/272>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-5109301, accessed 10 October 2019
- ⁴⁷ Council on Federal Financial Relations (2018) *Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth and New South Wales*, http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/housing_homelessness_agreement.aspx, accessed September 2019
- ⁴⁸ NSW Government (2018) *NSW Homelessness Strategy 2108-2023*, https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/590515/NSW-Homelessness-Strategy-2018-2023.pdf, accessed 8 October 2019
- ⁴⁹ The NSW Government has adopted a goal to half the number of street sleepers. See the Treasurer, *Budget Statement 2019-20, Budget Paper No 1*, at <https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/budget-2019->

[06/2019-20%20Budget%20Paper%20No.%201%20-%20Budget%20Statement%20%281%29.pdf](#), accessed 8 October 2019.

⁵⁰ Aboriginal Affairs NSW, *OCHRE Plan – NSW Government Aboriginal Affairs Strategy*, (https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/OCHRE/AA_OCHRE_final.pdf)

⁵¹ FACS, *Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2017-2021*, <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=592234>

⁵² NSW Government (May 2018) *Aboriginal Procurement Policy*, <https://www.procurepoint.nsw.gov.au/policy-and-reform/goods-and-services-procurement-policies/aboriginal-procurement-policy>

⁵³ FACS (July 2018) *Aboriginal Impact Statement Guidelines*, <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=578872>

⁵⁴ FACS *Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion Framework 2015 – 2018*, <https://www.opengov.nsw.gov.au/publications/15841;jsessionid=9FB3AC8F42A7BE521DE78DBDA2988742>

⁵⁵ Homelessness NSW (2019) *Annual Report 2017-18*, <https://www.homelessnessnsw.org.au/about-us/annual-reports>, accessed 10 October 2019

⁵⁶ CIR analysis based on Homelessness NSW (2019) *Annual Report 2017-18*, as above

⁵⁷ FACS (2019b) *Background Paper*, as above.

⁵⁸ See the *specialist homelessness services Sector Development Project* website, a partnership between Homelessness NSW, Domestic Violence NSW and Yfoundations, developed with the support of FACS, at <https://www.shssectordev.org.au/>

⁵⁹ See the FACS website at <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/homelessness-services/ASES-accreditation-for-providers>. See also the ASES website hosted by the SA Government at <https://dhs.sa.gov.au/services/community-services/australian-service-excellence-standards>.

⁶⁰ Valentine, K., Zmudzki, F., Fotheringham, M., & Smyth, C. (2017). *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program* (SPRC Report 03/17). Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0006/428127/Early_Review_of_SHS_Program.pdf, accessed 4 October 2019

⁶¹ Valentine et al (2017). *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program* as above.

⁶² Valentine et al (2017) *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program*, as above and FACS (undated) *Specialist Homelessness Services data for 2015–16 Analysis of the preliminary data*, as above, and FACS (undated) *Specialist Homelessness Services data for 2015–16 Analysis of the preliminary data*, at <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=389738>, accessed 4 October 2019

⁶³ Table S6.10, AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.

⁶⁴ FACS analysis of ‘support periods’ data, see Section 4.2 FACS (2019b) *Background Paper*, as above.

⁶⁵ At p60, AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.

⁶⁶ At p56, AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.

⁶⁷ AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.

⁶⁸ FACS (undated) *Specialist Homelessness Services data for 2015–16 Analysis of the preliminary data*, as above.

⁶⁹ Confidential SHS contract data, selected, provided to CIR by DCJ (FACS) and FACS (2019b) *Background Paper*, as above.

⁷⁰ AIHW (2019b) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, as above.

⁷¹ Pawson et al (2019) *Australian Homelessness Monitor 2018*, as above.

⁷² FACS (2019b) *Background Paper*, as above.

⁷³ See for example the overview of trauma informed care, cultural competence and cultural safety for Indigenous people in Australia, Canada and New Zealand in Australian Human Rights Commission (January 2018) *Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people: A background paper to inform work on child safe organisations*, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/child-safe-organisations-and-cultural-safety>, accessed 10 October 2019.

⁷⁴ Table S6.19: Returning specialist homelessness services clients, by Indigenous status, sex and state and territory, 2011–12 to 2017–18, in *Data tables: focus report on housing and homelessness*, downloaded from the AIHW website at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/indigenous-people-focus-housing-homelessness/data>, accessed 10 October 2019.

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⁹³ At pp47-48, Flatau et al (2017) *Inquiry into funding and delivery of programs to reduce homelessness*, as above. See also Spinney et al (2016) *Safe and sound? How funding mix affects homelessness support for Indigenous Australians*, as above.

⁹⁴ Cortis and Blaxland (April 2017) *Workforce Issues in Specialist Homelessness Services*, as above.

⁹⁵ The Listen and Yarn consultations commissioned by the Aboriginal Housing Office and undertaken by the Yindyamarra Consultancy between October and December 2018 also identified low levels of trust in the related community housing space. This consultation reported (at p11): Service providers... described the strained relationship between government and non-Aboriginal organisations and the (Aboriginal) community, causing a “siege” mentality in the community. As a result, community members often lack the confidence and trust to communicate with government/ local organisations.” Yindyammara Consultancy (2019) *Listen and Yarn Engagement Activities, Content Report*, unpublished, provided on a confidential basis by DCJ (FACS) to CIR.

⁹⁶ At pp18-19, KPMG (2015) *Going Home Staying Home Post-Implementation Review*, as above.

⁹⁷ At p6, Valentine et al, *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program* as above.

⁹⁸ At p 60, Valentine et al, *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program* as above.

⁹⁹ Valentine et al, *Early Review of the Specialist Homelessness Services Program* as above, referencing KPMG (2015).

¹⁰⁰ At p90, KPMG (2015) *Going Home Staying Home Post-Implementation Review*, as above.

¹⁰¹ KPMG (2015) *Going Home Staying Home Post-Implementation Review*, as above.