



NSW Homelessness Action Plan Evaluation

Evaluation of the South East NSW Community Connections project (5.10)

Final report

Housing NSW

March 2013

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CTTT	Consumer, Trader & Tenancy Tribunal
GSHS	Going Home Staying Home reform
HAP	Homelessness Action Plan 2009–2014
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
LHF	Local Homelessness Forums
LGA	Local Government Area
MA	Mission Australia
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSW	New South Wales
RHC	Regional Homelessness Committees
SERHC	South East Regional Homelessness Committee
SHS	Specialist Homelessness Services
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
UNSW	University of New South Wales

Executive summary

This report provides the findings from the evaluation of the South East NSW Community Connections project.

Homelessness Action Plan evaluation

In 2009, the NSW Government released the NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009–2014 (the HAP), which sets the direction for state-wide reform of the homelessness service system to achieve better outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. As part of the overarching evaluation strategy for the HAP, Housing NSW commissioned ARTD to evaluate four long term housing and support projects delivered under the HAP: the Rural Interagency Homelessness Project in Riverina and New England, the North Coast Accommodation Project and South East NSW Community Connections.

The South East Community Connections project (Community Connections) is focused on working with a range of people at risk of homeless, currently experiencing homelessness, or having a history of homelessness, to facilitate their move to long-term accommodation with support and to provide an early intervention response to homelessness. The project is delivered by Mission Australia, which directly provides case management to clients and purchases additional supports with brokerage funding as needed.

We used a mixed-method approach for the evaluation: drawing on existing data sources (project self-evaluation reports, HAP portal data and the research literature) and collecting new data through an online stakeholder survey (n=46) and in-depth interviews with project stakeholders (n=21) and clients (n=2). We were able to implement our methods largely as planned and to triangulate the findings across the range of data sources. We are confident that the data provides the evidence for a sound assessment.

Key findings

Significantly more clients than initially targeted have been provided with long-term support to obtain housing, maintain existing tenancies and access the services they need. Clients range across a broad spectrum, covering three main categories: people at risk of homelessness, people who have a history of homelessness or people who are homeless.

Stakeholders feel the project helped clients sustain a tenancy and improve well-being and would like to see it continue. The project appears to have filled a service gap

through the provision of flexible and holistic case management, and has done so more widely and efficiently than planned.

The project has met a need in the region

The project had assisted 476 clients over 15 months to the end of June 2012, compared to the initial target of 291 clients over three years, indicating a clear and strong need for the project in the region.

By accepting a broad range of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, the project has been able to fill gaps in the region's service provision, a feature that was valued by referring staff.

Project clients were provided with housing and non-housing support based on their identified needs. Housing support included helping client to access housing and maintain existing tenancies. In addition, a broad range of non-housing services—such as legal support, financial support and education and training—were provided to clients through local agencies or directly by Mission Australia.

There appear to be benefits for clients

Stakeholders are very positive about the benefits of the project for clients in terms of both housing and non-housing outcomes. Most clients (82%) who were assisted with housing are also receiving long-term support, and the majority of stakeholders feel that clients are better able to sustain a tenancy as a result of the project. In addition, most stakeholders feel clients have reduced their use of acute services and that client well-being has improved as a result of the project.

However, there is no data available to measure to what extent clients are sustaining their tenancy after having exited the project. Homelessness is a long-term and complex issue and it is difficult to provide conclusive evidence on whether the project has supported sustainable outcomes or had any impact on rates of homelessness.

The project contributed to improve the service system by coordinating services offered to assisted clients

A range of government and non-government agencies have been involved in the project—primarily through making referrals and providing support services.

The majority of stakeholders reported a greater awareness of stakeholder roles and responsibilities across the sector, resulting in a more efficient and improved service provided to assisted clients. In addition, stakeholders generally feel the level and quality of stakeholder interaction has improved. However, this has occurred mainly through the coordination organised by Mission Australia for each single client, leaving some room for improvement in terms of sharing the responsibility.

The project has improved the existing service system and laid some foundation for change from crisis intervention to early intervention/ prevention.

The initial budget over-estimated client costs, which allowed Mission Australia to assist more clients

In the 2011/12 financial year (the project's first full year of operation) project expenses were well below income. Staff costs were the major component of total costs, followed by operating costs and brokerage costs.

In 2011/12 the average client cost was \$2,841, significantly lower than the budgeted client cost at all levels of support: \$50,000 for intensive case management support, \$35,000 for semi-independent case management support, \$11,000 for low support level and \$3,174 for early intervention. An immediate explanation would be that Mission Australia assisted more clients than expected for the same amount of money. Assuming that assisted clients are in line with the initial target in terms of level of needs, it means on the one hand that client costs were over-estimated in the initial budget and that Mission Australia delivered services efficiently on the other. The average client cost for the project is within the same range as other comparable homelessness programs.

Successes and challenges

Overall, the project model appears to be effective in achieving successful client outcomes. In particular, the flexible and focus on long-term nature of the project were identified as key success factors. Main challenge were access to housing (temporary and long-term) and a shortage of staff to meet demand.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the NSW Homelessness Action Plan (HAP)

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

The HAP also aims to change

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

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

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

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

The projects are aligned to one of the following three strategic directions:

- *preventing homelessness* to ensure that people never become homeless
- *responding effectively to homelessness* to ensure that people who are homeless receive effective responses so that they do not become entrenched in the system
- *breaking the cycle* to ensure that people who have been homeless do not become homeless again.

Regional Homelessness Committees (RHCs) were established to support the development and implementation of ten Regional Homelessness Action Plans (2010 to 2014), which identify effective ways of working locally to respond to homelessness and provide the focus for many of the HAP projects.

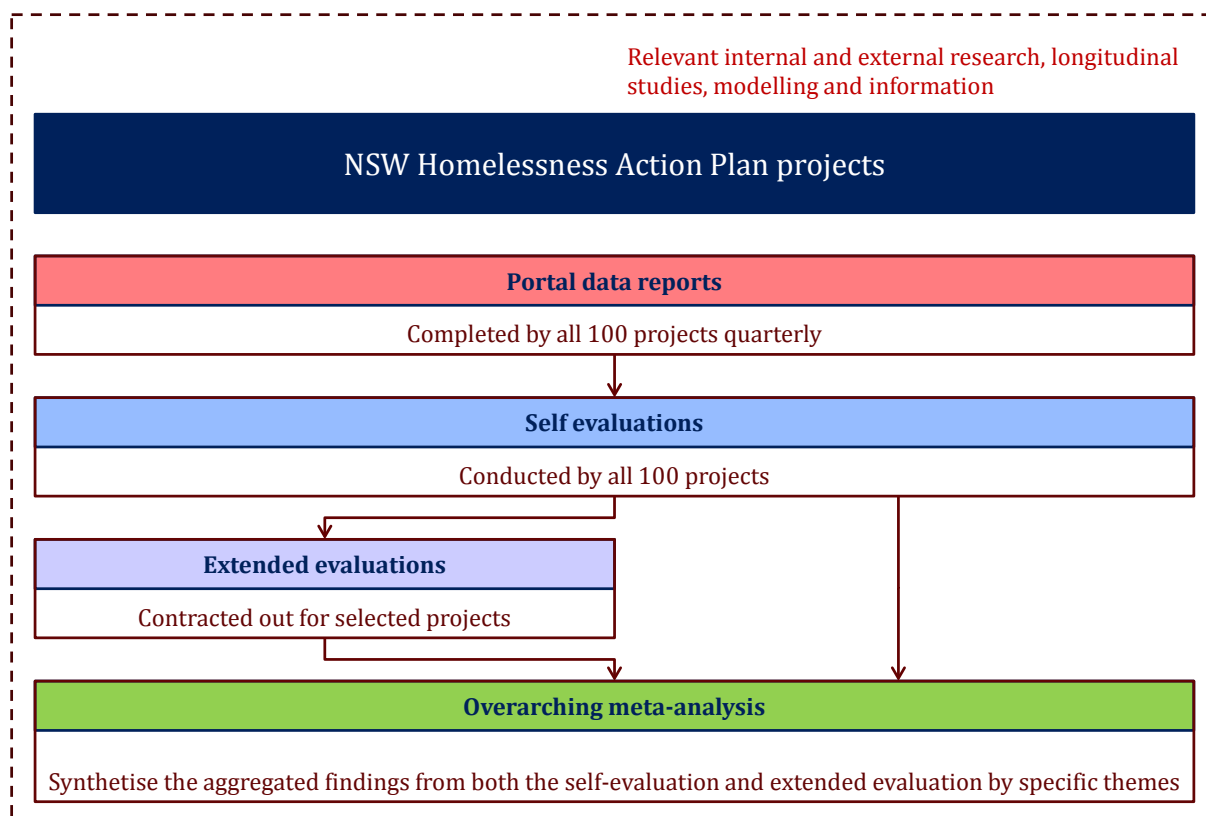
The HAP evaluation strategy

Housing NSW, in consultation with government agencies and the non-government sector, developed an overall evaluation strategy for the HAP. The strategy outlines how each of the 100 projects will be evaluated in a consistent manner, and how critical information from individual evaluations can be aggregated to make state-wide assessments about the impact of the HAP on reducing and preventing homelessness and the potential of different interventions to achieve sustainable reductions in homelessness. The HAP evaluation will also provide evidence of effective responses and lessons learnt that should be considered in the future response to homelessness in NSW.

The strategy involves three inter-related components.

- *Self evaluations*: to gather performance information about each of the HAP projects across key areas in a consistent way and to collect the views of practitioners about the effectiveness of their projects.
- *Extended evaluations*: to analyse and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of 15 selected projects and the service approaches to addressing homelessness that those projects represent.
- *Meta-Analysis*: to synthesise the aggregated findings from the self-evaluations and extended evaluations as well as other evaluations available on HAP activities.

As a key data source for evaluation, monitoring data (collected quarterly from HAP projects through the online data portal) can be considered a fourth element of the strategy (see figure 1).

Figure 1. HAP evaluation strategy

Housing NSW has contracted external consultancies to conduct extended evaluations, covering the following service areas:

- youth foyers
- support for people at risk of eviction
- support for people exiting institutions
- support for women and children experiencing domestic violence
- **long term housing and support.**

1.2 Overview of service model and projects included in this evaluation

ARTD is responsible for the extended evaluation of the long term housing and support service area. This covers four projects selected for individual evaluation: the Rural interagency homelessness project for people with complex needs in Riverina and New England, the North Coast Accommodation Project and South East NSW Community Connections.

The HAP long term supported housing projects are linked to the exemplar model 'supportive housing' from AHURI's 2009 review of the literature, which informed the HAP. But, while each of the four projects under this evaluation delivers supportive housing, they do not represent a single 'model' of service delivery. The projects use of a

mix of housing types (social and community housing and private rental options), some work across prevention and intervention, and some refer using a 'Housing First' approach.

Chapter 3 describes the specific model for the South East NSW Community Connections project, which this report covers.

1.3 Key contextual factors from the literature

The evidence from the literature shows the need to provide both long term housing *and* support to permanently move people on from homelessness. But it is difficult to identify a definitive supportive housing 'model' that is known to be effective and that would provide an appropriate comparator for the diverse long term housing and support projects covered by this evaluation.

It is possible, though, to identify the components that make up long term housing and support and the broad principles for their effective delivery. Our findings about the principles for effective delivery of long term housing and support are consistent with AHURI's 2009 literature synthesis. An effective approach to supportive housing will provide

- **housing** that is accessible in a timely way, appropriate to the person's needs, affordable, of secure tenure and non-contingent on treatment
- **case management** that is persistent, reliable, intimate and respectful and delivers comprehensive practical support of individually determined length
- **linkages** to other services/ supports that the client needs.

To be effective, a long term housing and support model will require some level of **service integration or joint working**. There are different models for joint working that entail different levels of connectedness between services (from ad hoc interaction to collaboration to joint teams); and identifying which is most appropriate for a particular project will depend on the operating context and intended aims. But, as for the other components of long term housing and support, it is possible to outline broad principles of what works. Joint working works best where partners recognise and accept the need for partnership, develop clarity and realism of purpose, ensure commitment and ownership, develop and maintain trust, create clear and robust partnership arrangements, and monitor, measure and learn.

Housing First—which provides rapid access to stable, permanent housing not dependent on a client's commitment to treatment rather than using a continuum approach to housing—is the long term housing and support model with most considerable base in the literature. The term has also become somewhat ubiquitous in practice, though not all services calling themselves Housing First have been completely faithful to the original model. While there is strong evidence for the model with its original target group (homeless people with a mental illness in New York), some

questions remain about appropriate adaptations of the model for other population groups and locations and about the evidence base for these adapted versions.

The literature identifies a range of **challenges** to delivering supportive housing in the ways that have been shown to work.

- **Housing:** The lack of affordable housing options is a key barrier to achieving positive outcomes (Hatvani, 2012). The location of affordable housing, where it is available, can also affect access to jobs, travel time and transport choices (AHURI, 2010). Concentration of social disadvantage in particular areas is also a concern (Vinson in Pawson et al, 2012).
- **Case management:** Lack of capacity to support clients in the medium to longer term is a challenge (Baulderstone and Button, 2012).
- **Linkages:** Lack of service system capacity, particularly within mental health services creates difficulties.
- **Integration** is complex and requires time and effort (Deloitte, 2011). programmatic, organisational, funding and sectoral 'silos' can all be barriers (Flateau et al, 2011).

Consistent with the AHURI findings from 2009, the findings from our literature scan, are that different interventions will be appropriate for different clients. This reflects a need for the flexibility within the broad supportive housing model to meet the needs of particular target groups and individuals.

2. Evaluation scope and methods

2.1 Ethics process

ARTD submitted the evaluation project to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the University of New South Wales for ethics approval on 7 August 2012 and received final approval on 13 September 2012 prior to data collection and analysis. Our processes were in line with ethics requirements.

▪ Client processes

- Services distributed an information package (including a participant information brochure emphasising the voluntary nature of participation, the consent form and a reply-paid envelope) to all clients assisted (past and current) in site visit locations in September 2012. We contacted only clients that returned consent forms for interviews. This process prevented any selection bias or sense of obligation that would come from having case workers identify clients for interview.
- We used only de-identified client data at the aggregate project level; we did not access any individual client files.

▪ Stakeholder processes

- The lead government agency and the contracted NGO in each location identified stakeholders for interview. We only contacted those that agreed to participate.
- The chair of the RHC distributed the online survey to all members of Local Homelessness Forums, so we did not have access to email addresses of third parties.

All existing and newly collected data was maintained securely and confidentiality protected.

2.2 Summary of evaluation approach

2.2.1 Evaluation questions

The initial request for tender for the extended evaluation of the long term housing and support service area identified seven key evaluation questions, which we have regrouped into four main evaluation areas (see Table 1).

Table 1. Key evaluation questions

Evaluation area	Key evaluation questions
Overall HAP targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impact of the project/ approach on reducing homelessness (using proxy indicators) ▪ Potential of the project/ approach to achieve sustainable reductions in homelessness into the future
Service system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impact of the project/ approach on service system change and improvement ▪ Extent to which the project had any influence on service integration and how this was achieved
Client outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impact of the project/ approach on client outcomes (both intended and unintended) ▪ Critical success factors and barriers for the project/approach, taking into account local contextual issues
Cost-effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost effectiveness of the project/ approach, including reduction or avoidance of costs incurred across NSW Government agencies or other organisations

Based on initial consultations with Housing NSW, Regional Homelessness Committees and lead government agencies, ARTD developed a detailed evaluation framework matching data sources to questions across the main focus areas (see Appendix 1):

- **project delivery:** context, governance, model, client reach and referral pathways, housing provision, support service provision
- **service system outcomes:** overall system change, relationships within the housing sector, relationships with support service organisations
- **client outcomes:** client reach, client groups, Aboriginal clients, housing outcomes and non-housing outcomes
- **impact on overall HAP targets:** observed reduction in homelessness, impact of benefits
- **cost-effectiveness** for each project and across projects.

This framework reflects stakeholder expectations that the evaluation

- include a strong focus on service system changes
- take account of local contextual issues, particularly housing availability
- recognise co-occurring consultations on the reform of Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS), intended to make the system less crisis driven and more focused on prevention.

The framework guided the design of evaluation methods and instruments.

2.2.2 Overview of methods and analysis

We used mixed-methods (both quantitative and qualitative) and drew on existing data and collected new data; some data sources were comprehensive and others were in-depth covering a selected sample of stakeholders and/or clients. The main methods were

- literature scan
- analysis of existing clients reporting data
- online survey of all project stakeholders
- in-depth interviews with project stakeholders and clients in Goulburn and Cooma¹
- cost analysis.

Table 2 below provides an overview of all methods and how they were implemented for the evaluation of the South East NSW Community Connections project.

¹ Sites were selected in consultation with members of the Regional Homelessness Committee and these two sites were chosen because they represent very different contexts.

Table 2. Evaluation methods

Method/ source	Study population/ focus	Sample	Timing	Comments
Literature scan	Research literature	N/A	Aug–Sept 2012	This was not a systematic review but a scan or brief evidence assessment. The assessment was limited to research published in the period since 2009 and to papers sourced from the AHURI database and the Australian Homelessness Clearinghouse, as well as articles provided by Housing NSW and identified through snowballing references in bibliographies.
Project documentation review	Project documentation	N/A	Aug–Sept 2012	We reviewed the key project documents to gain an in-depth understanding of the project and inform the evaluation design. See Appendix 2 for the full list of documents reviewed.
HAP data portal	Clients	All clients assisted to end June 2012	Oct 2012	All contracted organisations report quarterly on key performance indicators through the HAP data portal, so the portal provides a source of data collected consistently across projects. Data items include number of clients assisted, average duration of support, number of clients housed in the year to date, number of clients maintaining stable housing, number of clients achieving non-housing outcomes and deliverables and milestones achieved in the reporting period.
Client reporting data from the contracted NGO	Clients	All clients assisted to end June 2012	Oct–Nov 2012	Mission Australia provided additional client data they collect, so ARTD could undertake complementary quantitative analysis, including by location and referral agencies.
Online survey	Project stakeholders	n=350 (46 responded)	Oct–Nov 2012	The chair of the Regional Homelessness Committee emailed all members of Local Homelessness Forums (LHF) a link to the online survey (n=350). Not all of them were involved in the South East NSW Community Connections project—it is estimated that approximately 100 people attend the three LHF's each quarter on a regular basis—which can explain the low response rate (13%) despite the two reminders. However, this broad coverage gave the opportunity to all stakeholders involved in the homelessness sector

Method/ source	Study population/ focus	Sample	Timing	Comments
				<p>in the region to have their say about the project.</p> <p>We analysed the closed questions in Excel through cross-tabs and analysed the 3 open-ended questions for key themes. Specialist Homelessness Services made the largest category of respondents with 27 per cent of respondents, followed by support service providers (24%). Thirty nine per cent of respondents were involved in the project in relation to a few clients (less than 5) and 39 per cent in more than five clients. Full results of the online survey are provided in appendix 6.</p>
Stakeholder interviews	Project stakeholders	Sample not representative n=21	Oct–Nov 2012	<p>We interviewed 21 stakeholders from a broad range of organisations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ government agencies ▪ the contracted NGO ▪ housing providers ▪ specialist homelessness services ▪ mainstream services. <p>See the full list of interviews in Appendix 3.</p> <p>We conducted interviews either face-to-face during site visits in Goulburn and Cooma or over the phone; some interviews were conducted in small groups when appropriate. Interviews were semi-structured using an interview guide structured around key evaluation areas (see Appendix 4). Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to one hour, depending on the interviewee’s involvement in the project.</p> <p>We analysed the data using a coding framework to identify broad and particular themes.</p>
Client interviews	Clients	Sample not representative n=2	Oct–Nov 2012	<p>We interviewed all clients from Goulburn and Cooma who returned a consent form.</p> <p>We arranged face-to-face or phone interviews according to the interviewee’s preference. Interviews used an adapted discovery spine, which puts clients at the centre when talking about their journey through the system (see interview guide in Appendix 5). Each interviewee received a \$30 gift voucher to acknowledge their</p>

Method/ source	Study population/ focus	Sample	Timing	Comments
				time. We analysed the data using a coding framework to identify broad and particular themes.
Cost analysis	Costs	N/A	Nov 2012	We collected actual costs data from the contracted NGO, Mission Australia, in the form of audited financial statements for the two financial years covered by the project. Mission Australia provided additional information on the breakdown of brokerage costs for 2011-12 under each key brokerage outputs: goods, services, payments or other brokerage costs. We analysed the project costs using a cost structure as defined in a cost template designed by Housing NSW.

2.3 Limitations

The evaluation methods were implemented as planned and we were able to triangulate the findings across the data sources. This gives us confidence that the data provide the evidence for a sound assessment of the project. There were, however, some limitations to individual methods due to the availability of existing data and the tight timeframes, and these should be kept in mind when considering the findings of this report.

Comprehensiveness of the data

To ensure we could identify challenges and successes in the full range of project operating sites, our survey was sent to all project stakeholders in all sites, and included options to comment. We received 46 responses. Of these, 18 (39%) were from staff involved in operation of the project in relation to a few or a number of clients. Six respondents (13%) are involved in the overall coordination of the project. Twenty-two respondents (48%) had more limited involvement, and five (11%), no direct involvement. One quarter are from partner agencies, 14 (30%) from the specialist homeless sector, and the remainder (43%) from other housing or support service providers. While not representative, we believe this provides a reasonable spread of participants to broadly inform our analysis.

It was not possible to visit all operating sites, so, in consultation with Regional Homelessness Committee representatives, we purposively selected sites to get a broad coverage of issues faced across each project site. Whilst there may be other contextual considerations in some sites that were not identified by the evaluation, we are confident that our two-pronged approach enabled us to identify the main learnings from the project for future homelessness services.

Client outcomes

The assessment of client outcomes relied mainly on the data collected through the HAP data portal. This reporting tool allowed for consistent reporting of client data across all HAP projects. It has been progressively refined to more clearly distinguish between new and ongoing clients (carried over from the previous reporting period) to avoid double counting.

The HAP data portal allows for the collection of data on outputs and services provided to clients, but not for disaggregation of clients in terms of project component—early intervention and housing intensive support. This reporting system does not allow for the collection of indicators of medium-term impact, for example, whether clients were sustaining their tenancies 6 months after having exited the project. Medium and long-term indicators are difficult to collect in a consistent manner, especially from high-needs clients who are often difficult to track down.

Mission Australia provided additional client data in relation to the location of clients assisted as well as referring agencies. However, data provided did not match data from the HAP data portal in terms of unit or timeframe.

Cost-effectiveness analysis

Housing NSW developed a template for the cost analysis for all of the extended evaluations to unpack the costings of their particular service models. But, because these financial reporting requirements were not specified in the initial service specifications for HAP projects, we had to rely on the actual costs data contracted NGOs could provide from their internal accounting systems.

For South East NSW Community Connections project, Mission Australia provided the breakdown of costs directly in Housing NSW template for financial year 2011/12, including a breakdown of brokerage costs between goods, services and payments based on the analysis of expenses incurred for each individual client case plan. For the previous financial year we attempted to match data from Mission Australia financial statements to the Housing NSW template. It was not possible to reach the level of detail outlined in the Housing NSW template, but we were able to break costs into key types: staff costs, operating costs and brokerage costs.

The cost analysis included in this evaluation is not intended to feed into a cost-benefit analysis. This type of analysis would have required systematic collection of before and after data on clients (e.g. use of acute services) as well as the identification of an appropriate control group.

The cost-effectiveness analysis was limited by the lack of proper client outcomes data, so we focused on the analysis of project costs and the cost structure, especially the cost per client and the breakdown of costs, with a focus on brokerage costs. Qualitative data collected from interviews helped us to understand the contribution of the different cost items, for example, brokerage, to achieving specific client outcomes (in terms of housing and wellbeing).

3. Project description

3.1 Service origins and description

3.1.1 Project development and contract

Housing NSW is the lead government agency for the project. In April 2011, Mission Australia was contracted to deliver the project, which is funded until June 2013.

3.1.2 Project focus

The project is focused on working with a range of homeless people to facilitate their move to long-term accommodation with support and to provide an early intervention response to homelessness. The project is also intended to develop improved linkages and partnerships with mainstream and specialist support services to enhance the provision of outreach services that target the homeless.

Based on the findings from AHURI and other research the project plan identified the following areas of focus:

- the use of multidisciplinary case management teams to increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness
- the importance of post-housing support in maintaining stable accommodation and beginning the process of social reintegration
- the importance of comprehensive support to address the range of issues and challenges faced by clients after exiting health or correctional facilities.

3.1.3 Operating context

The Community Connections project is delivered across seven sites within the following three areas:

- **Far South Coast:** Eurobodalla & Bega Valley Shires
- **Queanbeyan-Monaro:** Queanbeyan City, Cooma-Monaro, Palerang, Snowy River & Bombala Shires
- **Southern Slopes & Tablelands:** Goulburn-Mulwaree, Yass Valley, Boorowa, Upper Lachlan, Harden, Young.

Homelessness in South East NSW prior to the project

The most recent available data on homelessness in South East NSW prior to the project's establishment shows there were 641 homeless people in South East NSW on census night in 2006. Based on available data, people staying temporarily with other households (32%) made up the highest proportion of the homelessness population in

the region. Compared with the pattern for NSW as a whole, people staying temporarily with other households and people in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out made up a higher proportion of South East's homeless population, while people staying in supported accommodation for the homeless, boarding houses and severely overcrowded dwellings made up a lower proportion (see table 3 below).

Table 3. The homeless population in South East NSW compared with NSW in 2006

Homeless operational group	South East NSW homeless *		NSW homeless	
	n	%	n	%
Persons who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out	94	15%	1,601	7%
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	115	18%	3,831	17%
Persons staying temporarily with other households	198	31%	4,748	21%
Persons staying in boarding houses	119	19%	5,966	27%
Persons in other temporary lodging	12	2%	146	1%
Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	98	15%	5,908	27%
All homeless persons	636	100%	22,200	100%
Persons living in other crowded dwellings	213	33%	14,765	72%
Persons in other improvised dwellings	272	42%	1,829	9%
Persons who are marginally housed in caravan parks	162	25%	3,930	19%
All persons in other marginal housing	647	100%	20,524	100%

Note from ABS: cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. As a result cells may not add to the totals. Categories are mutually exclusive; therefore persons will only appear in one category. For example, persons who are in the category 'improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out' who are in 'living in severely crowded dwellings' will not also appear in 'persons living in severely crowded dwellings'.

* South East NSW ABS subdivision

The 2006 ABS data (as updated in September 2011) did not provide a breakdown of the homeless or at risk population by demographic categories, so it is not possible to accurately indicate the sub-groups of highest need.

3.2 Aims and objectives

3.2.1 Strategic objectives

Within the NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009–2014, Community Connections sits under priority 5, ‘Deliver integrated service responses’, the specific aims of which are to

- establish consistent cross-agency assessment and case management practices
- develop regional homelessness action plans and local plans in priority locations
- build the capacity of the overall service system and workforce to deliver integrated responses
- share relevant data across the overall service system.

The South East Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2010-2014 identified a range of actions under four priority areas. This project is a key action to address priority four: increasing long-term housing with support for homeless people.

3.2.2 Project aims

The project plan and service specification identify a range of aims, which fall into two categories.

- **Client objectives**
 - Provide brokerage services and case management to a range of clients presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness.
 - Identify long term housing options and appropriate and ongoing integrated case management support to address issues that contribute to clients’ homelessness.
 - Broker a range of early intervention supports to address crises and issues that have led to homelessness.
 - Provide outreach support, care planning, service integration, case coordination and/or case management for project clients.
 - Increase access to legal services for Community Connections clients through the legal component to prevent legal issues from compounding.
 - Assist homeless clients to solve their housing needs by providing longer term accommodation options with wraparound intensive support to build clients’ independent living skills and ability to sustain tenancies and lead functional lives.
- **Service system objectives**
 - Increase collaborative service delivery across the homelessness sector and government agencies in responding to homelessness.
 - Provide homelessness outreach services in each of the identified locations with staff with relevant skills to support the key target groups of the project.
 - Establish and maintain partnerships with existing services in the region that could support project clients.

- Formalise bi-lateral arrangements with appropriate stakeholders and services in the region.
- Identify and resolve impediments to the effective provision of support services and make recommendations to reform the existing service system in the long term.

Sitting underneath the client objectives are the following client deliverables as set out in the service specification document:

- intensive case management support for a total of 30 complex needs clients (10 clients per year over 3 years)
- medium level support for a total of 45 clients (15 clients per year over 3 years)
- low level support for a total of 66 clients (22 clients per year over 3 years)
- early intervention support for 150 clients (50 clients per year over 3 years).

3.3 Target group

The project was intended to target both those at risk of homelessness and those already homeless. The service specification for the project outlined the following key target groups for the project:

- rough sleepers and chronically homeless with complex needs
- young people aged 16–18 years with complex issues
- women and children escaping domestic and family violence
- Aboriginal people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- people exiting institutions including correctional, health and crisis
- people at risk of homelessness in social and private rental properties.

3.4 Eligibility criteria, referral and assessment process

Eligibility criteria

The service specification did not specify any more eligibility criteria than those implied by the definition of the overall target group, i.e. people at risk of homelessness, currently experiencing homelessness, or having a history of homelessness. Applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis by Mission Australia to identify whether clients meet one of these three criteria.

Referral and assessment process

Clients can be referred to Mission Australia from a range of local agencies. Initially, self-referrals (clients referring themselves) were accepted, under the condition that the client had to be working with another agency. But there were too many clients coming through the door; and the service felt that agency referrals also provide a more thorough history of the client, enabling the service to offer better support. If a client comes

straight to the service now, they are referred to Housing NSW that would then be able to refer them to Community Connections.

Referring agencies fill in a referral form which is sent to Mission Australia. A stakeholder said referrals go to the Mission Australia office in Goulburn to be assessed; sometimes this process can take time. Once a new client has been referred, a Mission Australia caseworker works with the client to develop a care plan that identifies the supports required to provide the best outcomes for them.

A couple of referrals have entered the service, exited and then returned because the client was not ready to engage at the first contact.

Mission Australia has a waiting list of clients referred to the project, and has monthly contact with clients on the waiting list as a follow-up and to advise them, if appropriate, to contact Housing NSW. There is no number order in the waiting list; clients needs are the first consideration.

3.5 Service model

The model uses a contracted NGO, Mission Australia, to directly provide case management to clients and to purchase additional supports with brokerage funding as needed. The model is based on Mission Australia's National Case Management approach. Client care plans are developed by Mission Australia case workers and brokerage support is reviewed and approved by the Panel.

Legal Aid NSW is also part of the service model. Legal Aid NSW provides services through a network of outreach clinics established in locations frequented by and familiar to homeless persons in South East NSW.

3.5.1 Services offered

Contracted NGO

The service specification lists the following activities to be provided by Mission Australia

- identify referral points and establish referral processes
- establish processes and locations to engage clients
- provide outreach support services
- develop partnerships and interagency collaboration
- identify and map existing resources
- promote the service to stakeholders
- undertake client needs assessments
- develop care plans in collaboration with clients
- provide an integrated service response to clients
- provide services directly and through the use of brokerage funding
- case manage clients to ensure care plan deliverables are met

- deliver a culturally appropriate service for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse clients
- build internal Mission Australia capacity
- develop exit strategies for clients
- build service capacity and promote effective tenancy support approaches
- develop policies to support the project.

Housing

The project plan and service specification did not specify how access to housing would be provided or facilitated by the project. In practice, Mission Australia has worked with a range of agencies to support people into both temporary and long term accommodation as well as to maintain existing tenancies.

Support

Mission Australia directly provides case management support to clients at varying levels of need—intensive, medium level, low level and early intervention—and is able to purchase additional services through brokerage funding where these cannot be secured through negotiations and case coordination with external services. The length of case management is not specified in project documentation.

Based on the assessed needs and in collaboration with the client, a Mission Australia case worker develops an individual care plan for each client, which identifies supports required. The case worker is responsible for the coordination of the plan and helping the client to navigate through multidisciplinary services.

Legal services

The Legal Aid NSW component of project involves assisting clients resolve legal issues that could be contributing to homelessness and providing community legal education to community/ government employees to identify and increase their knowledge of legal issues relevant to homeless clients.

3.5.2 Coordination structures

Local Homelessness Groups were used to good effect in promoting the project and the project operated within local inter-agency networks. These meetings became more client-focused and more frequent after the project commenced—at the moment there are about five to eight interagency meetings a month. MA report these meetings work well because they provide an opportunity to discuss potential referrals from services to MA, to negotiate the support MA and other services can provide to clients, and also an opportunity for MA to provide feedback on client progress.

Requests for brokerage support go before a panel consisting of Housing NSW, Community Services management and a Legal Aid representative for review and approval.

3.5.3 Partnerships

The project plan identified key partner agencies for the project and specified roles for some of them (table 4). In practice, Community Services had a key role as a regular participant – in the project steering committee and as a member of the brokerage approval panel.

Table 4. Partner agency roles

Partner agency	Role
Social Housing Providers	To provide tenancies for clients supported under the project across the South East region, private rental products and services
NSW Health	To provide, in accordance with policy and clinical access, assessment and treatment services within existing resources. Treatment services will be provided to clients who meet clinical service eligibility criteria, subject to clinical triage and service availability.
Ageing, Disability and Home Care	Where possible, to provide timely access to support services within existing resources.
Legal Aid	To provide timely access to legal assistance to address legal issues contributing to homelessness.
Aboriginal Affairs	Policy expertise and advice on project direction.
Other human services agencies (Community Services, Juvenile Justice, Aboriginal Housing Office)	Unspecified
Corrective Services	Unspecified
Department of Education and Training	Unspecified

Source: Project Plan Community Connections – South East Region.

In addition, the service specification identified the need for the project to partner and link with the existing local service sector, including specialist services, mainstream services and specialist homelessness services, to ensure an integrated service response and case coordination approach. It also noted a particular need for the project to engage and develop working partnerships with local Aboriginal organisations and housing providers (including community, public and private housing providers).

3.5.4 Brokerage

Brokerage funding is an important part of the project model. The project plan indicated that appropriate usage of brokerage could include

- mental health services
- drug and alcohol services
- professional counselling (for example, anger management) and referral to other relevant service providers
- parenting skills
- education programs
- living skills assessment and training
- job ready skills
- appropriate links to employment schemes
- financial management skills and how to budget effectively
- access to housing (private rental assistance products).

The service specification notes that brokerage funding was to be made available to secure services that could not be delivered by the project or acquired through negotiation with external services or agencies.

3.6 Management and governance arrangements

The project reports to the South East Regional Homelessness Committee (SERHC), which reports to the NSW Homelessness Interagency Committee. Project staff are members of the SERHC and report at each meeting.

A steering committee, made up of representatives from the SERHC, was responsible for

- governance over the project and Mission Australia
- accountability for monitoring budget adherence and project activity
- monitoring the key performance indicators and outcomes identified in the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
- resolving any issues/ barriers relating to project implementation as identified through member agencies or escalated to SERHC and, where these barriers are not able to be addressed regionally, they escalating them Interagency Committee on Homelessness through the Regional Homelessness Committee
- collating and reporting client data as required by the project.

In practice, there were only a small number of regular participants, mainly from Housing NSW, Community Services and Legal Aid.

Mission Australia was expected to

- provide activity progress reports to the steering committee
- carry out reporting and data collection as required in the service specification

- develop policies and procedures relating to services delivered through brokerage arrangements.

3.7 Resources

3.7.1 Staffing

As of the June 2012 self-evaluation report, the project had nine full-time equivalent (FTE) staff

- 3 FTE managers/ coordinators
- 5 FTE case managers
- 1 FTE administrative staff member.

3.7.2 Budget allocation

The project is funded through Commonwealth funding under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (the NPAH). It was allocated a budget of \$1,525,903 per annum for support services according to the following breakdown

- \$500,000 for intensive case management (complex needs)
- \$525,000 for medium level support
- \$242,000 for low level support
- \$158,700 for early intervention support.

In addition the project was allocated \$100,000 per annum for legal services.

Table 3 below presents the actual project income to end of June 2012. The 2010/2011 year only represents three months as the project started in April 2011.

Table 5. Actual project income per year

	2010/11	2011/12	Total
NSW Community Services	\$342,964	\$1,997,020	\$2,339,984
Capital Expenditure – Purchase of Motor Vehicle	(\$100,504)		(\$100,504)
Total income	\$242,460	\$1,997,020	\$2,239,480

Source: Mission Australia audited financial statements for 2010/11 and 2011/12

4. Client outcomes

4.1 Clients assisted and services delivered

4.1.1 Number of clients assisted

The South East NSW Community Connections project assisted a total of 476 unique clients to the end of June 2012, significantly more than initially intended, indicating there was a clear and strong need for the project.

According to the initial project plan and service specification, the project was to support 97 clients per year (consisting of 10 intensive support clients, 15 medium level support clients, 22 low level support clients and 50 early intervention support clients). In the first three months of the project (i.e. the last quarter of 2010/2011), 133 clients were assisted, 109 more than the targeted 24 for that quarter. In 2011/2012, the project target was increased to 120 by HNSW and the project took on 343 new clients (246 more than the targeted 120) as well as working with all 133 clients from the previous year.

Table 6. Number of clients assisted from April 2011 to June 2012

	2010/11	2011/12	Total
Annual target	24	120	144
New clients	133	343	476
Clients continuing from previous year	-	133	-

Source: HAP data portal

4.1.2 Location of clients assisted

The project assisted clients in three key areas from seven locations across the region. The number of people assisted by location and the key client types in that location are as follows:²

- **Queanbeyan-Monaro**
 - Queanbeyan: 144 people (singles and families)
 - Cooma: 118 people (youth oriented)
- **Southern Slopes & Tablelands**

² The data presented here was collected from referral agencies and unlike all other reporting data it counts all individuals within a household, not just the main applicant. For this reason the number of people listed is higher than 476.

- Goulburn: 285 people (singles and families)
- Harden: 128 people (singles with children)
- Yass: 56 people (singles)
- **Far South Coast**
 - Moruya: 123 people (singles and families)
 - Bega: 86 people (large families).

According to 2006 homelessness statistics in the South East region, the largest numbers of homeless people were recorded in Bega Valley and Goulburn, followed Queanbeyan and Eurobodalla. Overall, the distribution of Community Connections clients is in line with these initial statistics, with the exception of the Far South Coast that seems to be underrepresented. The last months of the project may offer the opportunity to put a greater focus on this region.

4.1.3 Demographics of clients assisted

The project targets all people at risk of homelessness, people who have a history of homelessness or people who are homeless. As described in section 3.3, the service specification identified some specific subgroups as priorities: rough sleepers and chronically homeless with complex needs; young people aged 16–18 years with complex issues; women and children escaping domestic and family violence; Aboriginal people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; people exiting institutions including correctional, health and crisis; and people at risk of homelessness in social and private rental properties.

In practice, the project most commonly assisted females (64%) and people between the ages of 25 and 64 years (74%) (see Table 7). Sixteen per cent of clients were 16–24 years of age. A number of stakeholders noted that there were additional issues and difficulties when working with young people (see section 4.6.2 for further information).

Aboriginal people represented 16 per cent of all clients assisted to end of June 2012. This can be identified as an area for improvement considering that Aboriginal people were identified as a key target group. Further coordination with Aboriginal organisations may help to increase the referrals from Aboriginal people.

In the self evaluation, Mission Australia does not report on any specific strategy developed to engage with other key target groups, for instance people exiting institutions. This could be a specific focus for the last months of the project.

Seventeen per cent of clients were born overseas and MA indicated they have provided significant support to refugees who have come from within as well as outside of the state. Reaching these clients was a success due to MA's collaboration with NGOs that work closely with different cultural groups within local communities.

Table 7. Demographics of clients assisted (April 2011–June 2012)

	2010/11 n=133	2011/12 n=343	Total n=476
Male	26%	40%	36%
Female	74%	60%	64%
Total	100%	100%	100%
16–24 years	38%	7%	16%
25–64 years	60%	80%	74%
>65 years	2%	13%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	30%	11%	16%
Other Australian born people	66%	54%	57%
People born overseas, English speaking	4%	0%	1%
People born overseas, non-English speaking	0%	22%	16%
Not known	0%	13%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: HAP data portal

4.1.4 Status of clients prior to assistance

In 2011/2012, the most common status of clients prior to assistance was sleeping rough (51%), followed by short-term or emergency accommodation due to lack of other options (24%). This represented a shift from the first three months of operation, in which half (51%) of the clients assisted were at risk of homelessness, and only one-quarter (25%) had been rough sleepers (see Table 8). The percentage of clients at risk of homelessness prior to assistance dropped to 17 per cent in the 2011/2012 year, when Mission Australia was properly resourced to deliver the project and target in priority higher need clients (identified as ‘sleeing rough’).

Table 8. Client status prior to assistance (March 2010–June 2012)

	2010/11 n=133	2011/12 n=343	Total n=476
Sleeping rough	25%	51%	43%
Short term or emergency accommodation due to lack of other options	0%	24%	17%
At risk of homelessness	51%	17%	27%
Other	24%	8%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: HAP data portal

Although stakeholders we interviewed felt that in terms of level of needs project clients were quite similar to those they normally work with, they were often clients who have exhausted their options and are coming to the project as a last resort.

*[The project] is helping people who have burnt all their bridges to get back on track.
[Stakeholder]*

4.1.5 Referral and assessment processes

All clients to the project are referred from a government or non-government agency and the majority of referrals are two-way (i.e. MA refers to the agency as well as accepting referrals from them). For a short time at the beginning of the project, MA allowed self-referrals but this did not work well and MA quickly changed to insisting all clients be referred through a referring agency. Now, if a client does self-refer MA refers them to HNSW. This is a preferred approach, avoiding clients reaching MA without sufficient background information to their experience of homelessness and/or underlying issues.

Clients referred to the project include a mix of homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. Over half (57%) of survey respondents indicated they had been involved in making referrals to the project. According to client data provided by Mission Australia, the most common referring agency type was non-SHS NGO's (38%), followed by SHS (35%). Fourteen per cent of clients were referred from a government agency, six per cent from a real-estate agent/ landlord and five per cent from community housing providers.

Satisfaction with the process

In general, stakeholders are happy with the referral, nomination and assessment process, which they see as fairly standard. The majority of survey respondents considered the client nomination, referral process effective (53% agreed and 37%

mostly agreed) and felt the client assessment process was effective (47% agreed and 42% mostly agreed). Although waiting lists are in place across the region and there is no prioritisation of clients, depending on underlying conditions, individual circumstances or services and resources availability (such as appropriate type of housing, or the necessity of administrative work by HNSW) waiting list are regularly revised.

A small number of local service providers, however, noted difficulties in referring to MA due to being unable to get hold of MA or MA taking a long time to get back to them. One indicated they were no longer referring to MA because their referrals would be placed on a waiting list. However this service was not aware of MA's practice to service clients not in the order of the waiting list, but according to availability of housing options meeting the client's needs or the readiness of the client to be referred to the housing provider (e.g. up-to-date proof of identification).

Project staff accepted client referrals from day one of the project, before it had been fully established; basic equipment (for example, printers and scanners) had not been organised and MA had not yet explained and promoted the service to referring agencies. The higher than expected number of referrals in this start-up phase resulted in some initial overlap of service delivery and was a challenging start for the project. This also meant that, for the first few months MA had to make use of temporary accommodation such as placing clients with family or friends.

Filling a gap in available supports

The majority of survey respondents feel that the project has supported clients who were not covered by other existing initiatives (63% agreed, 21% mostly agreed). About two-thirds feel that through this project they have worked with clients they would not normally be able to reach (50% agreed, 17% mostly agreed).

The project is said to complement existing crisis services and it is able to accept almost all clients, whereas many other service providers are restricted to particular target groups, for example, women.

HAP fills a gap in the region, although other services are able to help in case of crisis they are not able to offer ongoing support like HAP does. [Stakeholder]

Referral to CC happens when it doesn't fit with other service providers. [Stakeholder]

4.2 Services delivered

4.2.1 Entering the program

Clients are accepted and referred as quickly as possible. However the project has a waiting list—varying across locations and in time—that had 64 clients at the time of the evaluation.

The project plan and service specification document identified the following annual targets for clients entering the program

- 10 intensive support clients
- 15 medium level support clients,
- 22 low level support clients
- 50 early intervention support.

When designing the care plan for each client, the project staff roughly categorised the level of support required by a client based on the number and combination of issues they presented with. Over time criteria were solidified with caseworkers recording the number of hours they spent with each client on a weekly basis. The data was then rolled up to report monthly, quarterly and annual figures. Clients would be assessed as low support if they required around three hours of support weekly, medium support if they required around six hours of support and high support if they required around ten hours of support. It was however noted by MA that this method of assessment was rather subjective, as it depended on how the caseworker managed the client, and/ or how much attention they were willing and able to give.

The following figures provide a rough estimate of the level of need of clients entering the project to the end of June 2012 (n=476). MA also note that often clients move between these categories (for example, a client that initially presents as low support may become high support due a life event).

- High support – 138 clients (29%)
- Medium support – 272 clients (57%)
- Low support - 66 clients (14%).

MA did not identify clients as early intervention.

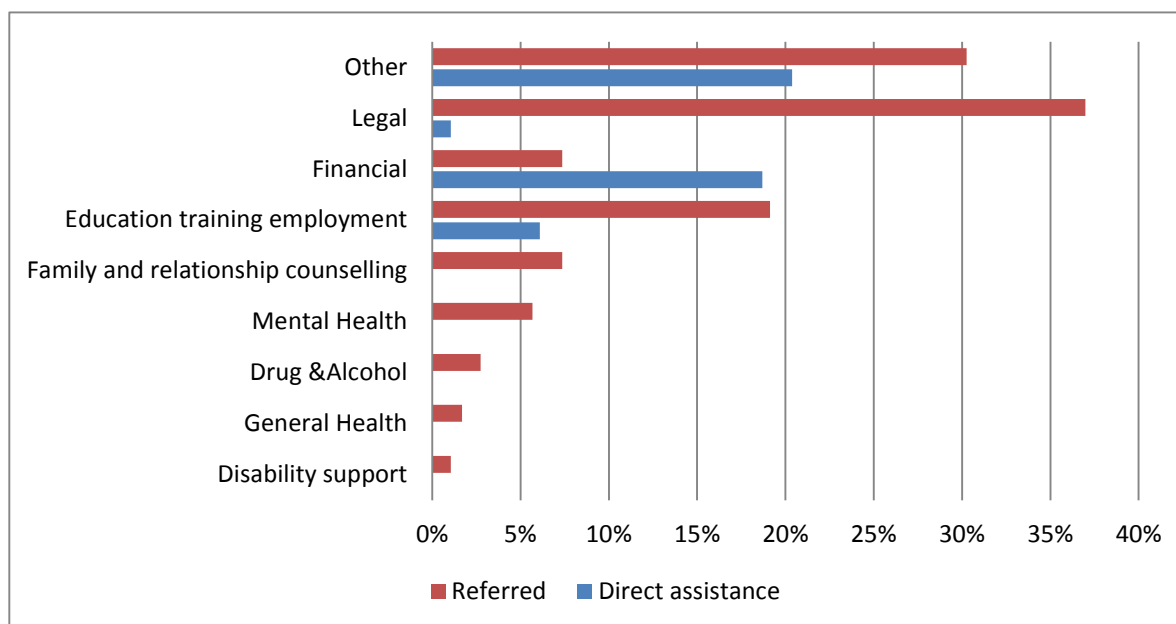
4.2.2 Types of services provided

Project clients were provided with housing and non-housing support. In collaboration with an MA case manager a care plan was developed for each client outlining the housing and non-housing support services they required.

A broad range of non-housing services were provided to clients through local agencies or directly from MA. In 2011/12, MA made 534 referrals to non-housing services and

delivered 220 instances of direct assistance to clients. The most common forms of referrals were legal support (37% of 2011/12 clients) and education/ training/ employment support (19%). The most common forms of direct assistance provided by MA to clients were in the category of 'other' (20% of clients assisted). Included in this category were anger management, trauma counselling and psychology services, followed by financial (19%), and education/ training/ employment (6%).

Figure 2. Non-housing services provided to 2011/12 clients



Source: HAP data portal, July 2011-June 2012.

4.2.3 Length of support

At the time of this evaluation the project had been going for 15 months. According to the data reported in the HAP data portal, the average duration of support was nine weeks for the first three months the project has been in operation in 2010/11 and 27.6 weeks (6.3 months) in 2011/12, which can be considered as a typical year. All clients from the 2010/2011 year continued over into the 2011/2012 year.

Clients that required case management to address ongoing non-housing issues received 'ongoing support packages'. In 2011/12, 82 per cent of clients supported to access housing were provided with ongoing support packages. This differs vastly from clients who were supported to maintain a tenancy, with only 21 per cent requiring an ongoing support.

4.2.4 Appropriateness of services provided

The majority of survey respondents (84%) feel that the project has been particularly effective in linking clients to the support services they need (68% agree, 16% mostly agree), although the data on services provided provided (see Figure 2) indicates a fairly low use of health and related services.

Survey respondents have mixed feelings on whether a lack of service availability locally has limited the project's ability to link clients to the supports they need, with 56 per cent disagreeing (28% disagree, 28% mostly disagree) and 45 per cent agreeing (17% agree, 28% mostly agree).

Stakeholders surveyed generally feel clients have received improved integrated case management through the project (47% agreed, 37% mostly agreed) than would otherwise have been provided.

Brokerage

The brokerage for services and goods was an important part of the support model. But some stakeholders raised issues with the process for obtaining brokerage and some noted the need to ensure brokerage is used in a sustainable way. The effectiveness of the brokerage component is discussed in section 6.4.

4.3 Housing outcomes

4.3.1 Types of housing support provided

The project supported homeless people and those at risk of homelessness to access housing as well as to maintain existing tenancies. Due the long-term nature of support some clients who were initially supported to access housing also received support to maintain their tenancy.

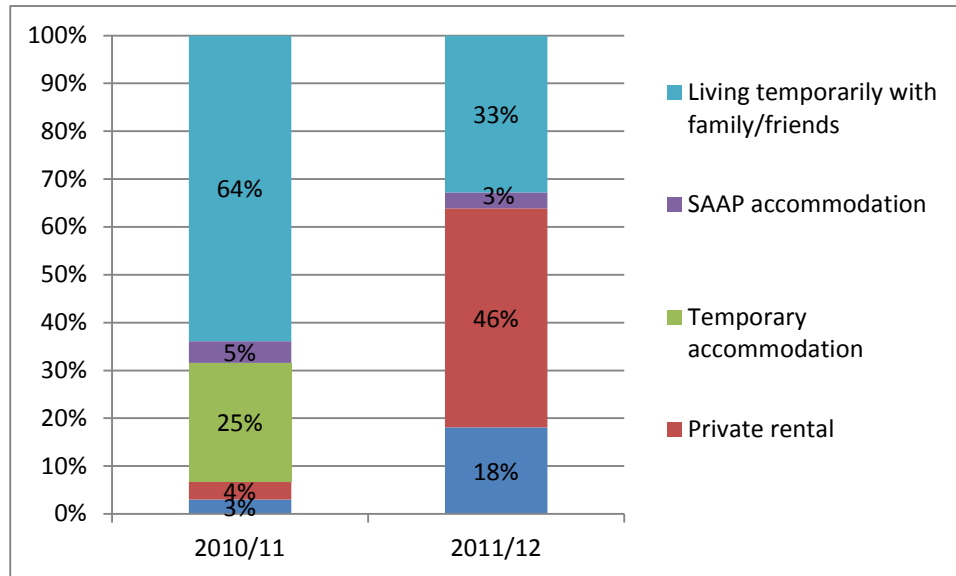
Support to access housing, and to support a tenancy

The project supported 371 people to access housing including a mixture of crisis and long-term accommodation.

In the first few months of the project, living temporarily with family/ friends was the most common type of housing support provided as the project was just establishing and provided this type of accommodation as crisis response. As the project progressed private rentals became the most common form of housing, with almost half of the clients assisted in 2011/12 being supported to access housing in the private market (see Figure 3). However clients living temporarily with family and friends are still representing one third of clients housed to end of June 2012. This still offers some room for improvement

considering the initial objective to promote the shift from crisis intervention to either early intervention or long-term housing.

Figure 3. Housing type for clients housed



Source: Community Connections HAP portal data 2010/11, 2011/12.

Note: the 2010/2011 data draws only on the last three months of the financial year (April-June 2011).

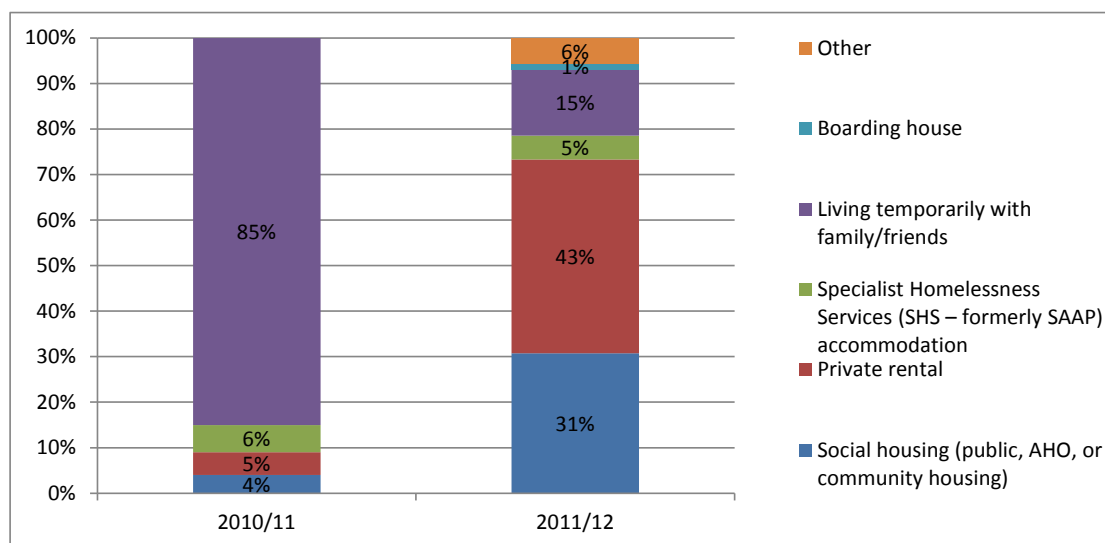
Mission Australia supported clients to access housing, including through

- Conducting property inspections for clients
- Helping clients with furniture removal (assisting clients to relocate).

The project also supported 347 people to maintain tenancies. Similar to people who were supported with housing, in the first few months of the project clients who were supported to maintain a tenancy were for the vast majority (84%) living temporarily with family or friends, however, as the project progressed private rentals became the most common housing type for clients maintaining a tenancy.

The service provided a range of supports to enable clients to maintain their tenancy. These included

- MA paying rent arrears, if appropriate
- Working with the agent/ landlord to help the client remain in their home
- Case management
- Linking clients to other services, e.g. Brighter Futures, EarlyStart, counseling, Legal Aid, literacy worker, etc
- Providing brokerage for household goods
- Transport and practical support, e.g. food and petrol vouchers, taxi vouchers (if a client has an appointment and has no car and the case worker can't assist).

Figure 4. Housing type for clients maintaining their tenancy

Source: Community Connections HAP portal data 2010/11, 2011/12

Note: the 2010/2011 data draws only on the last three months of the financial year (April-June 2011)

4.3.2 Critical factors to accessing and maintaining tenancy

During the project stakeholders identified a range of factors that either helped or hindered clients in accessing and maintaining a tenancy as well as some innovative ways the project secured housing for clients.

Key success factors identified to achieving housing outcomes included:

- the use of brokerage funding to pay rental debts and maintain tenancies
- the use of brokerage funding to obtain basic items to establish a private tenancy, for example, whitegoods
- the use of transitional housing to build client's rental history and give project staff time to link them with long-term housing outcomes
- the ability of the project to work with clients over a long time period.

Often after being housed for six months clients would have problems again, it is necessary to support them throughout the tenancy. [Stakeholder]

Seventy-four per cent of stakeholders feel the project has found new and innovative ways of securing housing for clients. Some examples given include

- the use of Centerlink's rent reduction scheme so that brokerage money can be re-used
- the use of group living arrangements so that individuals who are not able to live on their own but function well as a group can be supported
- purchasing items needed by clients from Big Heart (MA's charity shop) so that MA can get it at a cheaper price
- project staff undertaking training to deliver key support services directly

- the use of different housing arrangements e.g. housing two males with a female to create a household feel and accommodating pets.

Key barriers identified to achieving housing outcomes included

- a shortage of temporary accommodation options in the region
- a shortage of affordable private rentals (including a seasonal aspect in some locations, for example winter in Cooma)
- difficulties in clients being accepted for private rentals due to issues such as discrimination, no rental history or employment.

Over three-quarters of the stakeholder survey respondents felt that a limited availability of affordable housing locally has reduced the project's ability to assist clients in accommodation (65% agree, 25% mostly agree).

4.3.3 Medium to long-term housing outcomes

The majority of stakeholders feel that the project has assisted clients into stable long-term accommodation (65% agreed, 25% mostly agreed) and that clients are better able to sustain a tenancy as a result of the project (87% agree, 7% mostly agree). Most stakeholders surveyed also feel that the project has helped clients to obtain or maintain accommodation appropriate to their needs (75% agreed, 10% mostly agreed).

Of the two clients interviewed one had been in the rental property accessed through the project for 12 months while the other had moved (by choice) out of project accessed housing to be with her new partner.

4.4 Non-housing outcomes

Non-housing outcomes include improved health, employment, safety and reduced offending and hospital emergency presentations.

Almost all (94%) survey respondents agreed that clients' well-being has improved as a result of the project (81% agreed, 13% mostly agreed).

Stakeholder interviews identified other non-housing outcomes for clients including:

- young people learning life-skills
- helping families and communities to understand client problems
- new skills e.g. around employment.

Some of the young people have started studying, working....some have re-established contact with their family as their life is back on track. [Stakeholder]

One client spoke of how much the project had helped her beyond housing saying

I am much more positive about the future – I am studying, doing stuff with my horses, getting there slowly.

4.4.1 Critical factors to supporting clients

Stakeholders also identified a range of factors that either helped or hindered supporting clients with non-housing outcomes including

- location specific differences (for example, support service availability)
- the importance of the willingness of clients to engage.

One client noted the importance of simply having someone to talk to, saying

It was what I needed at the time even if the support only meant sitting down and listening to my situation.

4.5 Other intended or unintended outcomes for clients

No other specific intended or unintended outcomes for clients were identified.

4.6 Impact of the project on homelessness

4.6.1 Impact of the project on reducing/ addressing homelessness

At the state level, we know that between 2006 and 2011, the homelessness population in New South Wales increased by 27 per cent from 22,219 to 28,190 people. The rate is now 40.8 homeless people per 10,000 of the population. The New South Wales rank, though, remained stable—sixth among Australia’s states and territories.

In the same time the homelessness population in the South East region decreased by one per cent which compares well with the increase at State level. People staying temporarily with other households are still the largest group but their number has increased by 4 per cent since 2006 (see section 3.1.3 about the situation in 2006 prior to the project commencement). Other substantial changes have been observed among homeless operational groups (see Table 9):

- a 48 per cent decrease in the number of persons who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out, also described as ‘rough sleepers’ (NSW: +19%)
- a 48 per cent increase in the number of persons in supported accommodation for the homeless (NSW: +28%).

Table 9. The homeless population in South East NSW in 2011 as compared to 2006

Homeless operational group	n	2006-2011 variation	
		South East NSW* homeless	NSW homeless
Persons who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out	49	-48%	+19%
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	170	+48%	+28%
Persons staying temporarily with other households	190	-4%	+4%
Persons staying in boarding houses	129	+8%	+9%
Persons in other temporary lodging	10	-17%	+49%
Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	81	-17%	+63%
All homeless persons	629	-1%	+27%
Persons living in other crowded dwellings	232	+9%	+50%
Persons in other improvised dwellings	192	-29%	-46%
Persons who are marginally housed in caravan parks	199	+23%	-4%
All persons in other marginal housing	623	-4%	+31%

Note from ABS: cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. Categories are mutually exclusive; therefore persons will only appear in one category. For example, persons who are in the category 'improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out' who are in 'living in severely crowded dwellings' will not also appear in 'persons living in severely crowded dwellings'.

* Capital Region ABS statistical area level 4 in 2011 (South Eastern ABS subdivision in 2006)

Attributing any change directly to the Community Connections project is not possible given the wide range of reforms that have been taking place at the state and Commonwealth level on the one hand, and the changes in the private market on the other. It is possible however to say that the project may have *contributed* to some of these changes considering the number of homeless people and people at risk of homelessness the program assisted. However the 2011 ABS data has been collected on census night 9 August 2011 while the project had been fully operational only for a few months. Until July 2011 Community Connections had assisted 133 clients, including 33 that were previously sleeping rough. This is likely to have contributed to the decrease in the number of persons who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out. However, a more robust contribution analysis of the impact of the project on homelessness would

require to look at the homelessness data at a later point in time so that the project would have time to fully produce its effects on the homelessness population.

Most stakeholders agreed that the project has the potential to achieve sustainable reductions in homelessness into the future (63% agree, 16% mostly agree).

Another way to look at the potential impact of the project on homelessness is to examine eviction data over time. An expected positive impact of the project would be a decrease in eviction for non-payment of rent. According to the data on applications lodged to Consumer, Trader & Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) for termination notice on the grounds of non-payment of rent, the number of applications for social housing decreased by 4 per cent between 2010/11 and 2011/12 in South East NSW while it decreased by one per cent across New South Wales (see Table 10). The region compares even better with the state figures for the tenancy division (private rental) with a three per cent decrease in applications compared to 34 per cent increase across New South Wales. Again, there could be a contribution of the project in those changes; however it would require a more robust analysis (e.g. identifying other potential contributing factors) over a longer period of time to be able to observe the full impact of the project.

Table 10. Applications lodged to Consumer, Trader & Tenancy Tribunal for termination notice on the grounds of non-payment of rent, Tenancy and social housing divisions

Hearing venue	2010/11		2011/12		Variation 2009/10 - 2011/12	
	Tenancy division	Social division	Tenancy division	Social division	Tenancy division	Social division
Batemans Bay	73	63	52	38	-29%	-40%
Bega	36	56	25	25	-31%	-55%
Cooma	36	15	57	19	58%	27%
Goulburn	33	58	25	78	-24%	34%
Queanbeyan	114	89	125	118	10%	33%
Tumut	13	13	8	10	-38%	-23%
Yass	6	3	7	0	17%	-100%
Total region	311	297	299	288	-4%	-3%
Total NSW	13,695	6,178	13,586	8,284	-1%	+34%

Notes: Applications for termination of tenancy for non-payment of rent: under s.87 of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 [includes applications seeking a finding under s.89(5)]; or under s.57 of the (former) Residential Tenancies Act 1987. The Residential Tenancies Act 2010 commenced operation on 31 January 2011. Prior to this date, applications for termination of tenancy for non-payment of rent were made under s.57 of the former RTA. The CTTT has always made efforts to separately quantify applications for termination for non-payment of rent from applications for termination for other breaches of the agreement, so that data for 2009-2010, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 is reasonably comparable.

4.6.2 Considerations for specific client groups

Youth and families came up as two groups that face specific issues and/or required additional help.

Only 16 per cent of clients assisted to June 2012 were aged between 16 and 24 years. Youth were identified as facing additional challenges. When accessing housing they often have no rental or job history and when seeking to maintain a tenancy they often lack the skills and experience to do so.

*Although for some there might be some houses available but the clients don't have the rental history, especially young people who have been a bit of an issue.
[Stakeholder]*

Challenges were the characteristics of the target group (young people 16-18 years), the lack of housing and shortage of temporary housing that would support transition to long-term housing. [Stakeholder]

Families were also identified as challenging due to the difficulty in finding accommodation options that can support multiple people together, especially for large families. It was noted that this project is the only one able to offer families long-term support in the region.

No other agency is doing that (long-term support for families) at the moment, so Community Connections is filling a gap in terms of their support. [Stakeholder]

The project does not target Aboriginal clients as a specific demographic target group; the project's client mix was expected to reflect the local population. However a few stakeholders identified specific issues related to the Aboriginal population, in particular instances of discrimination and negativity from real estate agents.

5. Service system and delivery outcomes

5.1 Key impact on the service system

5.1.1 What is working well and what are the gaps and areas for improvement in the South East region?

The service mapping undertaken of specialist homelessness services and other organisations by Robyn Kennedy and Associates in 2012 sets the context for this project's service system objectives: increasing collaboration and partnerships, formalising bi-lateral arrangements, providing homelessness outreach and identifying and resolving impediments to the effective provision of support services, making recommendations to reform the existing service system in the long term.

The service mapping data shows stakeholders consider the following to be working well in South East NSW:

- formal partnerships between SHS and other service providers, which expand the suite of services available to SHS clients e.g. legal advice
- a broad range of networking and coordination mechanisms, which support partnerships for SHS and other organisations
- a high awareness among other organisations of the importance of mainstream services in responding to homelessness
- cross-referral networks within the homelessness service system
- a high use of standard referral forms, guidelines and protocols.

The service mapping also identified a range of gaps in the regional service system, many of which were also mentioned by stakeholders in the current evaluation. These include

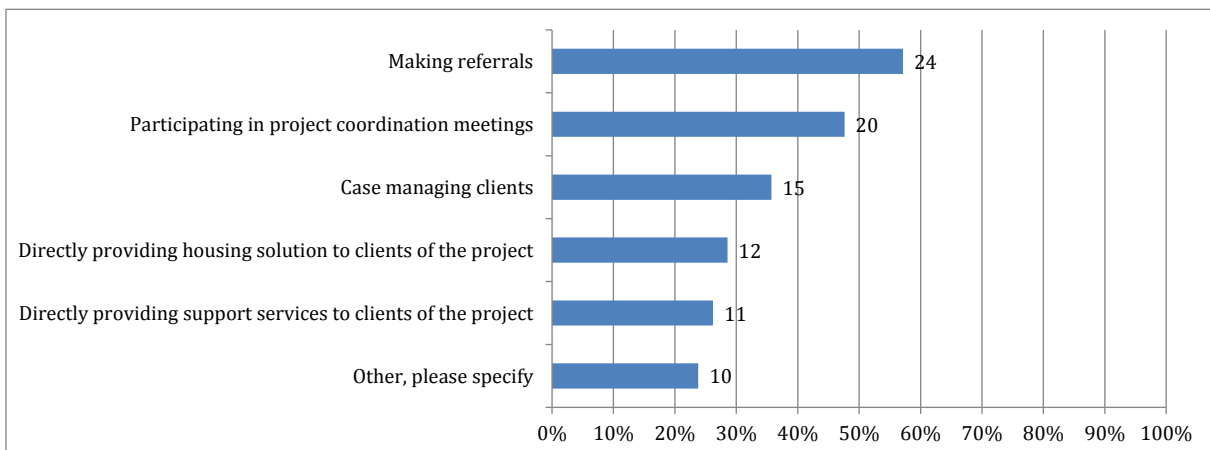
- lack of capacity of service providers to accept referrals and the limited number of services in the region to which clients could be referred were primary referral barriers for SHS and other organisations
- lack of crisis accommodation
- lack of access to available, affordable housing also prevented successful referrals.

Based on this, the service mapping report outlined the following needs for the region, many of which were also identified by stakeholders of this evaluation: more crisis accommodation, mental health services, youth-specific services, ongoing investment in service coordination, more effort on supporting tenants to avoid evictions and improved community awareness of homelessness.

5.1.1 Agency participation in the project

Project stakeholders report that a wide range of agencies and organisations have been involved in the project, though to varying degrees and for varying lengths of time. Figure 5 shows the roles that survey respondents have played—the most common role was making referrals (57%), followed by participating in project coordination meetings (48%), and case managing clients (36%).

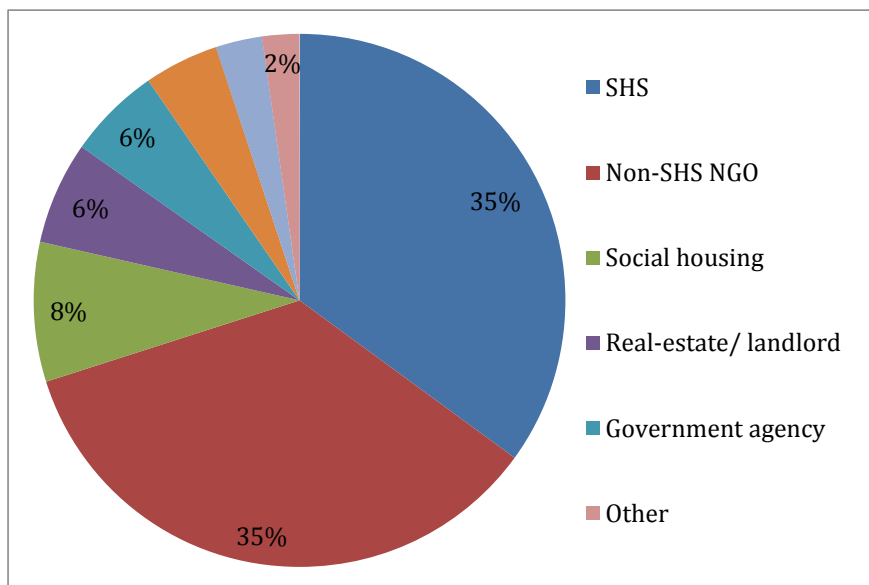
Figure 5. Various types of involvement in the project



Source: Stakeholders online survey, Question 5 'In what ways have you been involved in the North Coast Accommodation Project?', n=42

5.1.2 A range of referring agencies

Figure 6 below shows that a range of agencies referred to the project, mainly through SHS and other NGO, possibly because they have been more engaged in the project but also because they are an important point of contact for clients at risk of homelessness and those who are homeless. The 'other' category, which makes up 2% of referrals, includes lawyers and private organisations working with employers and job seekers.

Figure 6. Distribution of referral sources

Source: Mission Australia, 2011/2012

5.1.3 Impact of the project on the service system

Stakeholder feedback suggests that regular meetings have been helpful for building relationships and communication.

This (homelessness forum) is good for collaboration, for other services to understand how Community Connections works and how they can all work together. [Stakeholder]

Besides the formal structures established for the project, a number of stakeholders also indicated they have regular informal contact with MA and other local service providers. Stakeholders valued the bi-monthly Steering Committee meetings the project reported at for assuring transparency of activities.

Most respondents agreed (84%) that communication and information sharing within the project are effective. Importantly, they did not feel the project took up too much time on coordination.

Most agreed that project stakeholders share the project's goals and values (86%) and up to most (73%) agreed the project had resulted in regional system change.

As shown in table 10 below, overall respondents see the project as having resulted in:

- greater knowledge of what other local service organisations can provide for their clients (rating increased on average from 3.1 to 3.6)
- more coordination with other local service organisations to support clients (from 2.9 to 3.5)

- increased trust in the relationships with other local service organisations (from 2.8 to 3.2).

However there is a strong variability in responses and for each of the three indicators, at least half of the respondents did not see any difference.

Table 11. Impact of the project on the relationships with other housing and service organisations

Type of impact	n	Mean score (1=None, 2=Limited, 3=Good, 4=Extensive)		Standard deviation
		Before	After	
Knowledge of what other local service organisations can provide for my clients	20	3.1	3.6	0.61
Coordination with other local service organisations to support clients	20	2.9	3.5	0.75
Trusting relationships with other local service organisations	20	2.8	3.2	1.10

Source: Stakeholder online survey, Question 12 'Please rate the following aspects of relationships with other housing and service organisations before and after your involvement in the South East Homelessness Action Plan project.'

While some stakeholders have experienced an improvement in interaction among providers, around 50 per cent did not report any impact of the project on each of the three criteria (knowledge, coordination and trusting relationship). This reflects the underlying design of the project model where MA is responsible for case coordination and management of all clients, which limits the opportunities for networking across the service system.

Some local providers noted a lack of communication, partnership and collaboration compared to what they expected.

There was none of the partnership we expected. [Stakeholder]

Evidence around this may be contradictory (online survey results are positive but only based on 20 respondents). However it appears that, compared to other HAP projects evaluated as part of this extended evaluation, the Community Connections model had a more limited impact on the service system. This is probably due to the fact that Mission Australia is in charge of case managing clients whereas in other projects the responsibility for client case management is shared across a broad range of organisations. The overarching report provides further information on this finding.

5.1.4 Other service system changes

In interviews, some stakeholders described the project as complementing crisis services, resulting in a more holistic service system that is able to transition clients from short-term to stable long-term accommodation.

HAP fills a gap in the region, although other services are able to help in case of crisis they are not able to offer ongoing support like HAP does. [Stakeholder]

5.1.5 Value of the system changes

The majority of stakeholders agreed that working together in this project generates better outcomes for clients than if each organisation worked with the clients separately (83% agree, 6% mostly agreed). That stakeholders can see the value of joint work provides a solid base on which to further strengthen relationships and achieve further levels of integrated working.

5.2 Staffing issues

5.2.1 What impact did staffing issues have on the project?

The key staffing issue identified by project staff and stakeholders was a need for more staff to manage the large numbers of client referred to the project. From the outset, client numbers were higher than anticipated, meaning project staff struggled to manage the level of demand and some stakeholders' expectations of the project were not met.

The high numbers of client referrals meant project staff had to manage significantly more clients than anticipated. With caseloads of up to 50, the intensity of support available was obviously limited, and some stakeholders at times found it hard to get a response from MA.

Sometimes it is hard to get hold of MA as they are busy...Sometimes the response time is not quick enough. [Stakeholder]

It was hard contacting MA because there were so busy. [Stakeholder]

Project staff from Mission Australia noted workforce issues, including the high workload and questioned the level of clinical supervision and other support being provided to staff. Due to the vast locations some staff operated on their own which was identified as isolating at times.

Overall, most stakeholders agreed that more staff are required to meet the level of demand in the region.

5.2.2 What skills were needed by staff?

Case management skills are a fundamental requirement for staff working with clients and stakeholders overall indicated that MA staff were adequately assisting clients. One stakeholder felt that project staff would benefit from higher levels of skills and training to work with families experiencing domestic violence.

5.2.3 What training was required?

At the beginning of the project, Mission Australia case workers undertook three days of training while they already started to assist clients. While they recognised that this training was useful, the main challenge in the early phase was the lack of staff to deal with the high demand.

During the project, MA identified a need for additional training to support staff and help them assist clients with specific issues and provided the following additional training and resources to their staff in response.

- *Money Minded*: financial management training and resources to enable staff to deliver one-on-one and group client sessions on budgeting, saving money and minimising expenditure and debt, delivered by MA and attended by five staff.
- *Rent It Keep It*: training to help staff assist tenants to develop their knowledge about the rights and responsibilities associated with any tenancy, attended by seven staff.
- *Anger Management*: training to up-skill staff on how to address and manage clients with anger management issues, attended by six staff.
- *Engaging with Adolescents*: training to help staff assist parents to engage with their teenage children, attended by two staff.

Legal Aid NSW also conducted a training on homeless legal issues in Bega and Goulburn attended by MA staff to increase knowledge of common legal issues faced by homeless persons. Topics included credit, debt, tenancy and Centrelink issues.

Overall, staff felt the training helped them better meet the needs of their clients.

6. Cost analysis

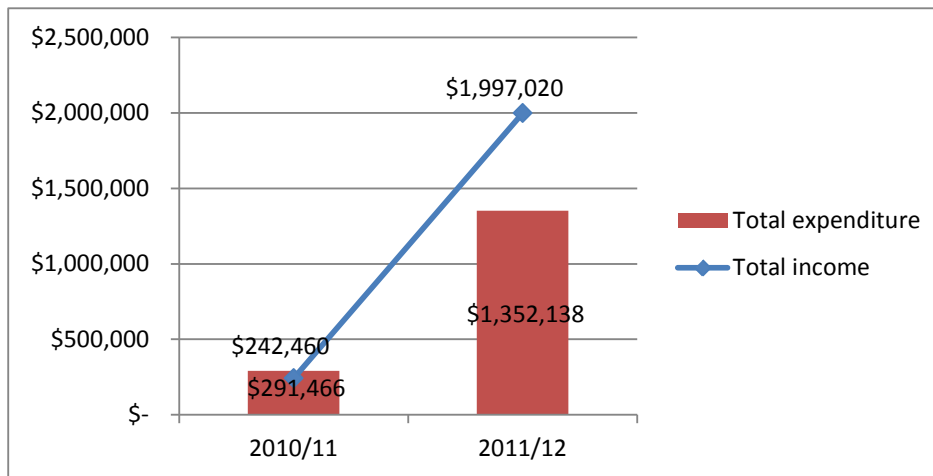
6.1 Total project budget and expenditure

The project was allocated a budget of \$1,525,903 per year over three years and an additional \$100,000 per year for legal services. Available expenditure data covers the project's operation from commencement in April 2010 to the end of June 2012. Thus, when considering the figures for each financial year it is important to note that the 2010/11 data cover only three months (final quarter) and because the project was only just being established in this period, the costs do not reflect business as usual. Annual figures for 2011/12, once the project was established, best represent business as usual, and more detailed analysis of cost data for this year is given.

6.1.1 Income and expenditure to the end of June 2012

The actual expenditure reported by Mission Australia in their audited financial statements indicates that expenditure was \$49,007 over the income for the first three months of operation (April-June 2011 quarter) and \$644,882 below the income in 2011/12 financial year (see Figure 7 below). The income for the first financial year (April-June 2011) consisted of a \$342,964 HAP funding less \$100,504 capital expenditure towards the purchase of motor vehicles, as a one-off initial or establishment cost. Mission Australia reported that part of the \$644,882 surplus was returned to Housing NSW and part was provided to fund inter-agency and community development positions, through which local organisations would improve services and interaction in the area.

The total project expenditure to the end of June 2012 was \$1,643,604, which is \$595,875 under the total project income Mission Australia reported for the period (\$2,339,984).

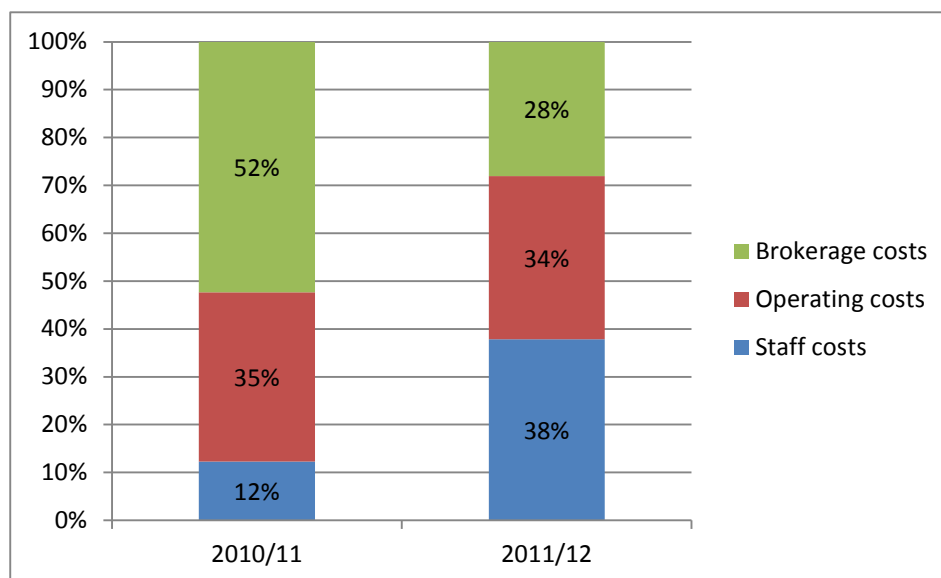
Figure 7. Income and expenditure April 2011 to June 2012

Source: Community Connections audited financial statements for 2010/11, 2011/12.

Note: the 2010/2011 data draws only on the last three months of the financial year (April-June 2011)

6.1.2 Distribution of expenses 2009–2012

Over the whole life of the project to June 2012, operating costs were the largest type of cost (34%) followed by staff costs (33%) and brokerage costs (32%). However, the distribution of expenses was different across the three financial years of operation. During the first three months of project operation brokerage—for goods, services and payments—represented the majority (52%) of project costs. The second major category of costs during this period was operating costs (35%) and staff costs represented only 12 per cent of costs. In the second financial year of project operation staff costs were the major component (38%) of total costs, followed by operating costs (34%) and brokerage costs (28%) (see Figure 8 below).

Figure 8. Distribution of expenses April 2011 to June 2012

Source: Community Connections audited financial statements for 2010/11, 2011/12

Staff costs

Staff costs represented only 12 per cent (\$35,825) of expenditure in 2010/11 (April-June 2011), but were the major category of expenditure in 2011/12 financial year (38%, \$511,499). This is in line with the feedback provided by Mission Australia that they were understaffed during the first months of the project, thus relying more on brokerage funding to assist clients.

Direct work with clients was the main staff cost across both periods, accounting for 74 per cent of all staff costs in 2010/11 and 83 per cent in 2011/12 financial year.

Staff related on-costs represented almost a quarter of staff costs in 2010/11 and decreased to 17 per cent of staff costs in 2011/12. Between April and June 2011 the project also incurred costs with external consultants and professional services, valued at two per cent of all staff costs that financial year.

Operating costs

Operating costs represented just over a third of total costs: 35 per cent during the last quarter of 2010/11 (\$103,036) and 34 per cent in 2011/12 financial year (\$461,461).

Overall, host organisation management fees and administration costs (including rent, IT, purchasing computers, office supplies and other telecommunication) represented 43 per cent of operating costs, while costs with promotion and events represented 28 per cent of operating costs to the end of June 2012. Motor vehicle costs were constant throughout the two financial years at 23 per cent of operating costs. In the last quarter of 2010/11,

staff training and development represented seven per cent of operating costs, and only one per cent of operating costs in 2011/12 financial year.

Brokerage costs (goods, services and payments)

The proportion of costs incurred for brokerage during the last quarter of 2010/11 was 52 per cent (\$152,606) of total program costs, almost double the proportion during the following financial year (28 per cent, \$379,178). Information with respect to the type of brokerage costs incurred during the last quarter of 2010/11 was not available. It was only noted that \$3,770 (3%) was spent on goods bought from Big Heart, the charity shop run by Mission Australia. During 2011/12 financial year 45 per cent of brokerage dollars were spent for other types of brokerage expenses that are mainly related to emergency accommodation, 31 per cent for goods, 16 per cent for payments (mainly arrears) and eight per cent for services. Of the brokerage dollars spent on goods in 2011/12 financial year, 30 per cent (\$36,979) were used to buy goods from Big Heart. This was an innovation to rapidly assist clients with necessary goods at a low cost.

6.2 Issues with expenditure

During the first quarter of operation (April–June 2011) staff costs represented only 12 per cent of total costs, compared to 38 per cent in 2011/12 financial year, indicating that in its initial months of operation the project was understaffed. This was an issue also emerging from interviews with a range of stakeholders.

To the end of June 2012, total project expenses (\$1,643,604) represent 36 per cent of the initial three years budget, with one year of operation remaining. Assuming the same level of expenses and income in 2012/13 as that incurred in 2011/12, by the end of 2012/13 financial year, the project would have only used 65 per cent of the initial budget (\$4,577,709) or 70 per cent of the budget specified in the service specification (\$4,272,450).

6.3 Client costs for this project

6.3.1 Average client cost to the end of June 2012

Over the operating period to the end of June 2012, the project assisted 476 individual clients at an average client cost of \$3,453.

6.3.2 Average client cost for 2011/12 (a typical year)

Because of the progressive implementation of the project, we considered the financial year 2011/12 a typical year of operation, which could be used to look more closely at the structure of costs (see appendix 7 for details using the cost template provided by Housing NSW).

We calculated the average client cost, including 343 new clients in 2011/12 and 133 clients carried over from the previous financial year (i.e. those still receiving services) as \$2,841.

Reflecting the overall breakdown of project costs, staff costs and operating costs account for the highest proportion of client costs.

Table 12. Average client cost in 2011/12

	Total costs	Average cost per client (n=456)	%
Staff costs	\$511,499	\$1,075	38%
Operating costs	\$461,461	\$969	34%
Brokerage costs (goods)	\$117,038	\$246	9%
Brokerage costs (services)	\$31,310	\$66	2%
Brokerage costs (payments)	\$61,704	\$130	5%
Brokerage costs (other)	\$169,126	\$355	13%
Total costs	\$1,352,138	\$2,841	100%

Source: Community Connections audited financial statements, 2011/12

Note: Other brokerage costs include mainly costs incurred for emergency accommodation.

The project has already over-delivered in terms of clients assisted and assuming the same number of clients assisted in 2012/13 as in 2011/12, the project would have assisted a number of clients well above the initial target. At only 65 per cent of budgeted costs the project would assist three times the targeted number of clients.

6.3.3 Cost benchmarking

We used three methods to explore whether the project represents good value for money.

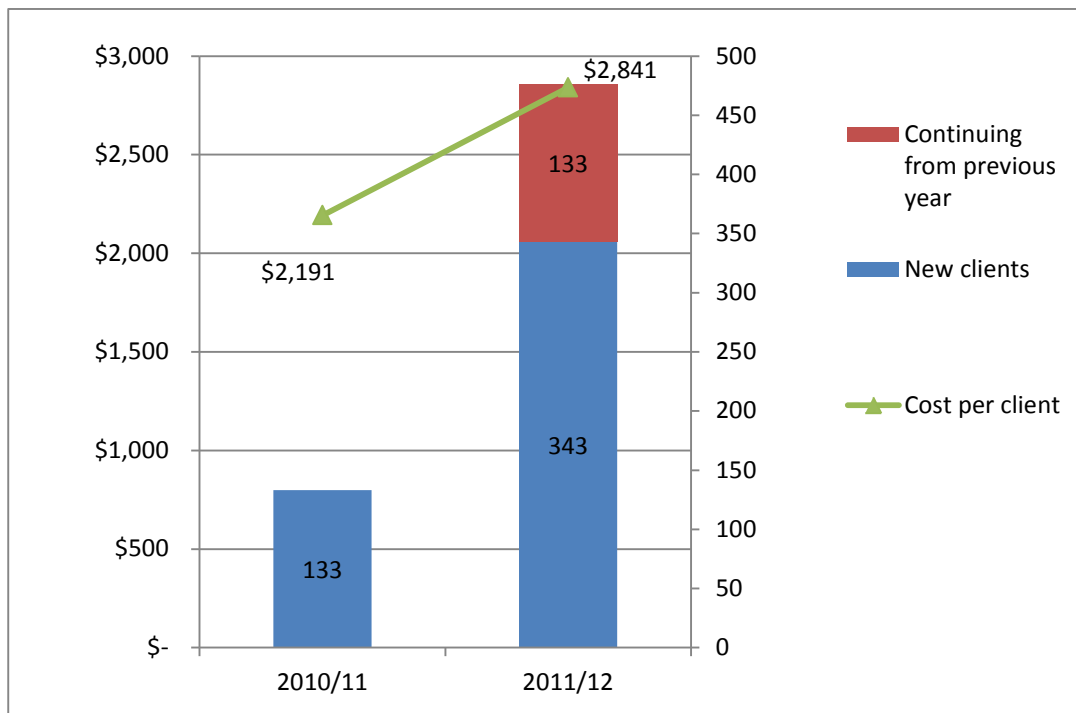
1. We looked at the evolution of the average client cost across the three financial years.
2. We compared the average client cost for 2011/12 with the budgeted client cost as per the initial project plan.
3. We compared the average client cost for 2011/12 with relevant external benchmarks identified in the research literature.

Average client cost over time

Because the project only started in April 2011 it is difficult to assess whether it has become more or less efficient over time. During initial months of operation, the average

client cost was lower (\$2,191) than in 2010/11 financial year (\$2,841) (see Figure 9). This is related to the fact that Mission Australia had not recruited all project staff yet (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Number of clients assisted and average client cost April 2011 to June 2012



Sources: Clients: HAP data portal; Costs: Community Connections audited financial statements for 2010/11, 2011/12

Average client cost compared to the budgeted client cost

The project was funded to assist 97 clients per year over three years (291 clients targeted in total) distributed as following in terms of type of support provided:

- 10 clients under intensive case management support budgeted at \$50,000 unit cost
- 15 clients with medium level support at a unit cost of \$35,000
- 22 clients with low level support at a unit cost of \$11,000
- 50 early intervention packages budgeted at \$3,174 per package.

In 2011/12, the project reported 138 clients assisted who received high need support, 272 medium need support and 66 low need support.

The difference between planned and actual numbers of clients is shown by category in Table 13 below. Note that MA records only the level of service intensity and not whether services are being delivered in an early intervention context.

Table 13. Budgeted and actual numbers of client by service intensity 2011/12

Support type	Budgeted cost per client	Planned number of clients per year	Actual number 2011/12
Intensive case management	\$50,000	10	138
Medium support	\$35,000	15	272
Low level support	\$11,000	22	66
Early intervention	\$3,174	50	
Total		97	467

However as pointed out by Mission Australia staff, defining client need is difficult and may also fluctuate during the duration of assistance. It seems also likely that the initial budget overestimated client unit costs. Given the staff client ratio, it is unlikely that as much as \$50,000 per client was spent for clients with high needs.

The actual cost data provided could not be used to calculate the average client cost for each component—low, medium or high support--so we have calculated the budgeted client cost across the three packages (\$14,698) to enable a comparison. The average cost per client was well below the budgeted client cost both in the initial months of operation (\$2,191) and in 2011/12 (\$2,841). However this has to be balanced by the distribution of clients in terms of level of needs and the fact that the initial budget overestimated the average client cost.

Comparison with available external benchmarks

While it is difficult to identify relevant and appropriate external benchmarks against which to compare costs, it is an important step to put project costs into perspective. In the research literature we identified a 2008 AHURI study on the cost-effectiveness of homeless programs in Western Australia, which might be considered an appropriate benchmark, as it is from the Australian context and quite recent compared to other available studies.

This research looked at the cost-effectiveness of five programs

- SAAP
- Four Western Australia Homelessness Prevention Programs
 - The Community Transitional Accommodation and Support Service (TASS) and the Re-entry Link program, designed to assist prisoners re-enter into the community on release
 - The Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP) and Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program (PRSAP), designed to assist public and private tenants maintain their tenancies.

A summary of the average client cost in these programs, adjusted for inflation to 2012AUD, as compared to the average client cost in the Community Connections project is provided in the Table 14.

Table 14. Average client cost for comparable homelessness programs

	SAAP	TASS	Re-entry link - no accommodation	Re-entry link - with accommodation	SHAP	PRSAP	Community Connections
Average client cost	\$ 4,190	\$ 12,991	\$ 1,654	\$ 5,673	\$ 3,474	\$ 2,575	\$ 2,841

Source: Flateau et al. (2008)

The average client cost for the Community Connections project compares well with other homelessness programs that include a housing component like TASS and Re-entry link with accommodation.

6.3.4 Contextual issues affecting value for money

Are the resources for the project reasonable?

Eighty-nine per cent of respondents to the online survey do not feel (61% disagreed, 28% mostly disagreed) that they spend too much time on coordination activities as part of their involvement in the project.

Are the resources justified by the benefits for clients?

Most survey respondents agreed (53% agree, 32% mostly agree) that the resources required for this project are justified by the benefits for clients.

Cost savings

According to 86 per cent of respondents to the online survey (43% agreed, 43% mostly agreed), clients have reduced their use of acute services (e.g. hospital and emergency services) as a result of the project. There is no systematic service use data to support this but, when costed, such impacts represent whole-of-government savings or cost offsets to the provision of homelessness programs (Flateau et al., 2008).

Mission Australia used a number of innovative approaches to support client that contributed to increased value for money for the project including:

- promoting reimbursement plan for clients, when appropriate
- using Centrelink's rent reduction scheme so that brokerage money can be re-used

- purchasing items needed by clients from Big Hearts (MA's op-shop) so that MA could obtain a cheaper price
- providing training to key support services directly (i.e. at a lower cost than if outsourced).

6.4 How effective was the use of brokerage funding

Brokerage funds were used to help clients to establish a tenancy (for example, paying for a bond and purchasing whitegoods and furniture) and to maintain tenancies (by paying rent arrears). Where possible, MA purchased goods from its own charity shop, Big Hearts, to save on brokerage costs.

Most stakeholders surveyed feel the project has provided easy access to brokerage funding (50% agreed, 39% mostly agreed). But some stakeholders voiced their frustration at the process to obtain brokerage funding, in particular the requirement that every amount go through the Panel and be signed by at least two members, which could take a long time.

Most stakeholders surveyed feel that brokerage funding was a major factor in providing appropriate support to clients (56% agreed, 28% mostly agreed). Stakeholders interviewed indicated that the use of brokerage funding to pay rent arrears has been a key factor in maintaining tenancies.

Some stakeholders also noted the need for caution around the use of brokerage funding, particularly ensuring it is used in a sustainable way that improves clients' capacity to support themselves and not just as a one-off support.

We steer away from brokerage handouts. We feel that people don't take responsibility for themselves if they get handouts. [Stakeholder]

There is a perception that MA has money and some go to MA just for immediate benefits without committing. [Stakeholder]

One client we interviewed received brokerage funding to help pay the bond and purchase whitegoods and furniture and paid the bond back noting 'MA was surprised I paid it back'. Having clients repaying part of the value of the goods has been identified by some stakeholders as a good practice that engages clients in identifying the merchandise that would best suit their needs and pockets. This would often result into the purchase of 'best-buys' on the market, saving both the client and MA valuable brokerage funds. The approach also added to the cost-effectiveness of the project in that it limited the allocation of brokerage dollars to clients who were willing to take responsibility towards a stable housing situation as opposed to clients who would only contact MA to receive goods.

7. Assessment of the effectiveness of the model

The previous chapters show stakeholders consider the project model to be effective in achieving outcomes for clients and the service system. This chapter summarises the key factors to achieving successful outcomes, the challenges encountered and those that remain.

7.1 Success factors for the service delivery model

The key success factors to achieving outcomes for clients and the service system were the flexible and long-term nature of the project and the development of stakeholder relationships.

7.1.1 The flexible and long-term nature of the project

The flexible and long-term nature of the project was identified by a number of stakeholders as a key success factor.

Contrary to other service providers, in particular specialist homelessness services, who work with specific groups, Community Connections project targets more broadly people who are homeless, at-risk of homelessness, or have a history of homelessness. This was seen as an advantage as it allowed the project to work in an overarching way, often filling gaps in the region's service provision. For instance, the project has been particularly successful in engaging with clients with CALD background.

In addition, the project was able to provide a flexible response to clients' needs through: the provision of housing; the delivery of and access to a range of support services; and the use of brokerage funds to establish and/ or maintain a tenancy. As an example, Mission Australia developed an innovative approach to tackle the lack of rental history: the project provided short-term (usually 3 months) rental accommodation to build a rental history followed by support in finding long-term rental accommodation through real estate agents.

The project also provided long-term support to clients while other service providers are only able to work with clients for a short time. Given the complex and often long-term nature of the issues that contribute to homelessness this was an important element of the project's success.

7.1.2 Coordination with other organisations around client assistance

At the most basic level, developing an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of agencies was important as it helped stakeholders identify how best to support clients and reduced overlaps in service delivery. Seventy-nine per cent of survey respondents

agreed (42% agreed, 37% mostly agreed) that the roles, responsibilities and expectations of organisations involved in the project are clearly defined and understood by all.

Working together, partnering and collaborating was seen as a vital way to work efficiently and improve client outcomes. It also contributed to a sense of shared responsibility and accountability among stakeholders for client outcomes.

*Collaborative practice works best and saves time and energy for agencies.
[Stakeholder survey respondent]*

7.2 Challenges for the service delivery model

The key challenges identified in achieving client and service system outcomes were a lack of housing and project resourcing.

Access to housing

Access to housing was identified as a key challenge facing the model, in particular for families. Seventy per cent of survey respondents felt that the limited availability of affordable housing locally had reduced the project's ability to assist clients into accommodation (55% agree, 15% mostly agree).

Some stakeholders identified barriers to accessing private housing, in particular the lack of affordable options as well as clients not being accepted due to a lack of rental and/or employment history and discrimination. Some stakeholders noted difficulties in working with real estate agents and felt that better promotion and communication of the project would be useful.

In addition, seasonal fluctuations in the rental market made it difficult to access housing in some locations in the summer months, while in other locations access was limited in the winter months.

*At the end of the day there are still an extremely limited number of available houses.
[Stakeholder Survey respondent]*

Project resourcing

Project resourcing was also identified as a key challenge facing the project in particular in the establishment phase where Mission Australia had to face rapidly increasing demand with limited staff. The number of clients referred to the project vastly outnumbered the project targets and as such project resourcing was considered insufficient to manage the large number of clients. In some cases, this meant MA took a long-time to deal with requests.

[The project] could benefit from more workers as the current response time is sometimes slow. [Stakeholder]

It was hard contacting MA because they were so busy. [Stakeholder]

Other project issues

Survey respondents also identified issues associated with the extended geographic area covered by the project.

Coordinating the project over a large geographical area with a large number of stakeholders has been difficult.

Many of the service system issues and gaps identified by stakeholders reflect those identified in the service mapping undertaken by Robyn Kennedy and Associates, for example

- lack of availability of mental health services across the region
- lack of flexibility in ADHC policies making it difficult to manage specific issues, for example, hoarding
- need for more support for people with drug and alcohol problems
- lack of family and community awareness and understanding of homelessness.

Sustaining the project

Although most stakeholders want the project to continue beyond its planned termination date (74% agreed, 11% mostly agreed), only 28 per cent indicated that their organisation had secured some resources for the project beyond June 2013 (14% agreed, 14% mostly agreed).

8. Conclusion

Overall stakeholders feel the project has been a success and would like it to continue. Eighty eight per cent of respondents to the online survey feel the project has the potential to be replicated in other areas of the state.

8.1 Summary of key lessons learnt

Stakeholders see the success factors for the project as its ability to provide flexible and long-term support that fills a gap in the region's service delivery system.

The project should be continued because it fills a gap in the region. [Stakeholder]

I don't want to think of HAP not being around. HAP does provide a service that was not available before. [Stakeholder]

Interviews with stakeholders identified learnings from the project that could be applied to other long-term housing and support initiatives including that

- collaborative practice is beneficial for clients and for the system
- brokerage funding can be valuable to support clients establish and maintain a tenancy; involving clients in buying brokerage goods can be empowering to the client and dollar saving for both the client and the broker
- it is important to leverage local knowledge and skills

Looking back at the broad principles for an effective approach to supportive housing identified in the literature (see section 1.3), key learnings from the Community Connections project are

- **Housing:** the project has been able to assist a high number of clients in the South East region of New South Wales in accessing housing or maintaining their tenancy. While a high proportion of clients assisted in the first year of operation were recorded as living temporarily with family/ friends, 2011/12 client data shows a move to more private rental and social housing options that should be continued to ensure clients access to a secure tenure. The waiting list the project has to face as a consequence of the project should also be considered as a priority issue to ensure timely access to housing for high needs clients.
- **Case management:** Mission Australia coordinates case management provided to all Community Connections clients in line with the organisation internal case management principles. This may include provision of services by other organisations.
- **Linkages:** the project had limited impact on linkages between services as it relied on a traditional service delivery model where a single organisation has

responsibility of case managing all clients. As a consequence linkages between services mainly happen through individual case plan and not on a systematic basis.

8.2 Areas for improvement for the future of the project

The following table presents a summary of areas for improvement identified by the evaluation based on feedback provided by stakeholders, triangulated with other sources and translated into suggested actions.

Table 15. Suggested areas for improvement to inform the design of the next generation of the project

Area	Suggestions
Client referral	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase number of project staff to ensure client referrals are addressed in a timely manner. 2. Promote the project among Aboriginal organisations to increase the number of referrals for Aboriginal people 3. Develop specific strategies for key target groups, in particular young people, women and children escaping domestic violence or people exiting institutions
Housing provision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Improve access to the private rental market by promoting the project to real estate agents and landlords.
Support services provision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Work with stakeholders to identify ways to continue to improve access to key support services, in particular mental health.
Agency involvement and coordination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Identify ways to ensure all local providers are engaged in the project.
Brokerage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Review Panel process to ensure it is as efficient and timely as possible.

If they could change just one thing most stakeholders would increase the funding and in turn availability of the project.

I can't think of anything to change, if I had one wish it is for HAP (the project) to continue. [Stakeholder]

Other areas for improvement identified by stakeholders were: increased staff resources and training, but also more local consultations around the project delivery.

8.3 Implications for the future response to homelessness for the client group/s in this project

This project, unlike other projects subject to extended evaluations under the HAP, did not have a specific demographic target group within the homeless or at risk populations for which we can draw key learnings.

Using a multidisciplinary case management approach tailored services to individual client need, which appears to have achieved positive outcomes for most clients, though, suggests further evidence for this approach with homeless clients with complex needs.

As in the research, the clients of these projects had a range of other compounding issues contributing to their homelessness or risk of homelessness—including mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues and financial issues. This requires a coordinated approach and ability to connect clients with the supports they need through direct provision and brokerage or negotiated agreements. This was a challenge in an already over-stretched support system.

8.4 Implications for the homelessness system in this region

While the project has helped to develop relationships and improve collaboration among stakeholders, it has done so through a model in which MA is responsible for most aspects of implementation, and through ad hoc rather than through formal partnerships or shared operational responsibility.

Some stakeholders noted that there is a risk that if the project ceases to operate it could negatively impact on relationships and collaboration across the system.

Relationships, support (friendships) with other services will all collapse if funding stops. [Stakeholder]

Given the evidence that some stakeholders have not experienced changes in working relationships it is important for the project to continue to work closely with all local service providers so that they do not disengage resulting in a fractured service system.

8.5 Future research that could strengthen the evidence in this area

On the available evidence it is difficult to assess whether the project has led to sustained housing and broader client outcomes or had an impact on homelessness. It can be difficult to collect data on sustainment of tenancies post support periods, particularly where support is short-term, but this should be attempted to provide better evidence for the model. This could be done through ongoing data collection; more robust monitoring systems should play a key role in this.

To judge whether the project is the most efficient model for achieving the intended outcomes, there is a need for better costs data and cost reporting requirements to be outlined from the start. If cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is to be attempted, there is a need for standardised outcomes measures and data on costs avoided. Collecting data on service use pre- and post-involvement in the project would help to assess costs avoided.

Appendix 1. Evaluation framework

Scope	Evaluation questions	Factors	Data sources
Project delivery			
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent do local contextual issues influence the implementation of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distances Availability of transport Availability of housing stock influenced by external factors (e.g. tourism, mining) Capacity of local services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How long did it take to establish the project? To what extent do the governance arrangements support the successful implementation of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Homelessness Committee (RHC) Local coordination groups Reporting avenues Communication & information processes (formal and informal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey of project staff Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Service delivery model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the overall service delivery model influence the implementation of the project across the region? How does the model compare to other long-term housing models? What arrangements were in place for service delivery; how effective were they and why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation of the lead NGO(s) to cover the region Brokered service model Type of staff involved from the lead NGO(s) Other resources mobilised that contribute to the successful delivery of the project (e.g. NGO's pre-existing systems, tools or resources) Service partnerships/ changes established as part of the model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Client reach and referral pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the referral pathways; how effective have they been, and why? Did the project reach its intended group? What are the key characteristics of clients? How do these compare or contrast to clients in other housing and support programs, including clients in specialist housing services? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local service capacity and demand Socio-economic and market factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral data Online survey of project staff Site visits: interviews with local project staff

Scope	Evaluation questions	Factors	Data sources
Housing provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project able to house/ maintain clients in appropriate long-term stable accommodation? What were the key success factors and barriers to effective housing provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of housing stock Use of subsidy schemes in tenant support packages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey to project staff Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Support service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How were service needs assessed and what role did client play? What were services were delivered most through the project? How important was the provision of legal services in delivering project outcomes? What assessment and case management processes are in place for delivering support services? What were the key success factors and barriers to effective support provision? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tools and processes used to identify and asseslevel of need Involvement of clients in case planning and decision-making Wraparound approach Access to local services Administration of brokerage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey of project staff Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Effectiveness: service system outcomes			
Overall system change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the impacts of the project/approach on service system change and improvement? To what extent has the project contributed to improved coordination between housing and other human services providers? What were the key success factors and barriers to successful delivery? What are the key success factors/ barriers to successful collaboration/ partnerships? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-existing service networks and structures Motivation, incentives and barriers to joint working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey of project staff Site visits: interviews with local project staff

Scope	Evaluation questions	Factors	Data sources
Relationships within the housing sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project contributed to improved coordination between housing services (specialist homelessness, social housing, and private market)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative strategies to extend the range of housing solutions Involvement of real estate agents and private landlords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAP data portal: type of housing Online survey of project staff Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Relationships with support service organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project contributed to improved coordination between housing services and support services? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative strategies to extend the range of support services offered Demand and capacity for specialist support in local areas Demand and capacity for case management in local areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAP data portal: range of services provided Online survey of project staff Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Effectiveness: client outcomes			
Client reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project reached its target in terms of the number of clients assisted? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit used to measure client outputs (households or individual) Measure for sustained tenancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAP data portal
Client groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project targeted different target groups from other initiatives in the area, especially transitional housing services? Does the project have different approaches for different target groups? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Filling gaps in coverage (geographic, target groups) Remaining gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAP data portal Online survey of project staff Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Aboriginal clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How successful has the project been in reaching Aboriginal clients through Aboriginal services? What changes have been made to systems and processes to address cultural barriers for Aboriginal people in accessing services? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility issues Employment of Aboriginal case workers Connection with Aboriginal communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAP data portal Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Housing outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project delivered appropriate housing solutions for referred clients? To what extent have these resulted in sustained tenancies for clients? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness prevented Sustained tenancies Develop rental histories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey of project staff Site visits: interviews with local project staff Site visits: interviews with

Scope	Evaluation questions	Factors	Data sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do outcomes from the model compare to outcomes achieved in other long-term housing and support projects? 		clients
Non-housing outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What broader (non-housing) outcomes have been achieved for clients? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of children Improvements in mental and physical health Debt waived, fines paid, mortgage default settled Remaining gaps in services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey to project staff Site visits: interviews with local project staff Site visits: interviews with clients
Impact on overall HAP targets			
Observed reduction in homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the impact of the project/approach on reducing homelessness? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering all other influencing factors (e.g. economic downturn, increased scrutiny) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABS census SHS (SAAP) data
Impact of benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is impact has the project had in addressing homelessness over the longer-term? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained tenancies in the longer term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAP data portal Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Cost-effectiveness			
Project specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there a significant gap between funding provided through the HAP and the actual cost of service delivery? Can some of the project costs be reduced or avoided? What level of funding would be required to continue the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual costs if available from lead NGO accounting systems Service provider outcomes data if/ where available from NGO case management systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead NGO costing data HAP data portal Lead NGO pre-post client surveys (if any) Site visits: interviews with local project staff
Across projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do client outputs and impacts compare against costs across the various projects and service delivery models? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison may be difficult considering variations in terms of the range and duration of support provided to clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead NGO costing data HAP data portal Lead NGO pre-post client surveys (if any) Site visits: interviews with local project staff

Appendix 2. Key documents reviewed

Document	Date
South East Community Connections Project plan	
Service specifications	Nov 2010
South East NSW Homelessness Service System Mapping	Aug 2012
Self-evaluation report	Jul 2012
HAP data portal reports	Jan 2010 – Jun 2012
Mission Australia client referrals data per location	Nov 2012
Mission Australia audited financial statements	FY 2010/11 FY 2011/12
Direct training provision for CC clients	

Appendix 3. List of interviews

Table 16. List of interviews with project stakeholders

Location	Organisation	Number of interviewees	Date
Goulburn	Mission Australia	7	23/11/2012
Goulburn	St. Anthony's Women's Accommodation	2	23/11/2012
Goulburn	Housing NSW	1	23/11/2012
Goulburn	Argyle Community Housing	1	29/10/2012
Goulburn	Kennedy House	1	31/10/2012
Goulburn	Legal Aid	1	13/11/2012
Cooma	Southern Cross Community Housing	1	24/11/2012
Cooma	Mission Australia	3	24/11/2012
Cooma	YMCA Cooma Hub	1	24/11/2012
Cooma	Community Services	1	5/11/2012
Cooma	Fisk and Nagle	1	29/10/2012
Cooma	Housing NSW - Family Case Management	1	1/11/2012
Total	10	21	

Table 17. List of client interviews per location

Location	Face-to-face/ Phone	Date
1. Goulburn	Phone	14/11/2012
2. Goulburn	Phone	29/10/2012
Total	2	

Appendix 4. Stakeholder interview guide

Introduction

My name is [consultant name] from ARTD. Housing NSW has contracted ARTD to evaluate the [name of HAP project] as part of the broader evaluation of long term housing and support projects funded under the Homelessness Action Plan. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out how the project is working, and its impact on the service system and clients.

These interviews, along with the other evaluation data, will inform ARTD's report to Housing NSW. The report will not identify any individuals.

Your participation in the evaluation is voluntary and you can choose to terminate the interview whenever you want to.

[For group interviews] Please respect others' opinions and give everyone a chance to speak. Also, confidentiality is important so please don't discuss what is said in the group with others outside of the group.

Your role in the project

1. **Can you briefly describe your/ your organisation's roles and responsibilities in the HAP project?**
 - Key requirements to fulfil this role
 - Main difficulties
2. How long did it take for the project to start meeting client needs (start-up phase)?

Client referral/ nomination and assessment

3. **How were clients referred to the project?**
4. What, if any issues were there with obtaining appropriate referrals, and how were these issues resolved?
5. **What types of clients does the project deal with?**
 - Homelessness
 - At risk of homelessness
6. How were client needs assessed?
 - How do you rate the level of needs (High/ Medium/ Low)?
7. What happens with clients who are not accepted into the project [e.g. referrals to other services]?
8. **How different are the clients for this project to those you normally work with?**

Housing/ tenancy support provision

9. Did the project support clients to maintain an existing tenancy?

- Under which circumstances/ conditions?
 - What types of support were provided?
10. What housing options did this project make use of?
- public housing
 - community housing
 - assisted private rental
 - other subsidies
11. **What have been the success factors in negotiating client access to long term accommodation options?**
- Have you had to use temporary or short term accommodation as a bridging mechanism?
12. **What have been the challenges in negotiating client access to long term accommodation options?**
- Availability
 - Timeliness of access
 - Barriers to establishing private rental tenancies

Support provision

13. How has support been provided in this project?
- case management
 - linking clients to other support services
 - providing direct support services
14. **How effective were these processes to provide clients with appropriate support meeting their needs?**
15. **Are support processes provided to HAP clients different to your normal support arrangements?**

Service system change

16. What structures/ processes were in place to support partnership and coordination between services? How effective were these structures/ processes?
17. **Were there any service system issues? How did you address these?**
- Have you been able to effectively address issues locally or have you had to escalate issues to Regional Homeless Committees for resolution?
 - What kind of resolution? Change in the overall service response, one-off adjustment or better coordination?
18. **Has the project supported increased integration between housing and support services? If yes, how?**
19. Has the project supported increased integration **between support services?** If yes, how?
- Mainstream services
 - Specialist Homelessness Services (previously SAAP)
20. **Did the project achieve an improved service system?**
- Key success factors
 - Key barriers
21. **What are the remaining integration and linkage issues for this HAP project?**

Client outcomes

22. **What do you see as the benefits of the project for clients?** What evidence is available to demonstrate/ measure these outcomes?
 - ability to live independently
 - ability to maintain a tenancy
 - increased wellbeing
23. **Have you been more successful for some types of clients than others?** Which one/s? What made it successful?
 - What about Aboriginal clients?
24. **How sustainable are these benefits?**
 - What ongoing support do clients need?
 - Do you have **follow-up mechanisms** after the end of the assistance provided to clients?
25. What aspects of the project have been **key to supporting successful client outcomes?**
26. What have been the **barriers to supporting successful client outcomes?**

Costs and workload

27. How do you assess the balance between coordination/ administrative/ reporting time and the time spent on supporting clients for this project?
28. What, if any, have been the workforce issues for this project?
 - workload
 - occupational health and safety
 - staff retention
 - staff supervision, etc
29. What, if any, have been the funding issues for this project?

Sustainability

30. **Have you changed the way you deliver services for this project?**
 - If yes, do you expect these changes to be sustained beyond the life of the project?
31. **What will happen if the funding ceases at the end of the project?**
 - What are the risks?
 - What would be the implications on your organisation's resources (HR and \$)
 - Is your organisation willing to commit to ensure continuation of the project?
32. **Do you think the project should be continued?**
 - Why do you think that?
 - What would be needed?
 - **What would be your organisation's commitment?**
33. To what extent do you think this model can be replicated/ implemented more widely:
 - in the local area
 - in other areas across the State

Explore:

- *Enablers*
- *Constraints*

Overall

34. **What innovative approaches have been developed as part of this project?**
 - to access appropriate housing options
 - in terms of support arrangements
35. What do you think are the main learnings from this project that can be applied to other long term housing and support initiatives?
36. **If you could change just one thing in the design of this HAP project, what would it be?**

Thank you for your time and contribution to this evaluation.

Appendix 5. Client interview guide

Interview

Hi. It's [name] from ARTD consultants. Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed as part of our evaluation of the [name of HAP project]. Is this still a good time to speak with you?

[If yes, proceed, if no, reschedule].

I want to remind you that information you provide us, along with the information from other clients and project workers we speak to, will be used in the report we write for Housing NSW. But this report will in no way identify you individually.

Before we start I also want to let you know that you can change your mind about talking to me at any time during the interview and stop the interview at any time. If there are questions you don't want to answer, you don't have to answer them.

The interview will take about half an hour. We will be giving you a \$30 Coles/ Myer or Woolworths gift voucher as a thank you for your time at the end of the interview.

Before entering the project

1. How were things for you before you became involved in this project?
 - [areas to cover]
 - Health
 - Stress/ anxiety
 - Living situation
 - Employment
 - Connection to community
 - Feelings about the future
2. How did you initially enter the project?
 - Do you remember when it was?
 - How did you feel when you first heard about the [specific name of project]?
 - Initially, did you want to be part of the project? Why/ why not?

When accessing housing and receiving support through the project

3. Did the project help you with staying in the place you were in before the project or did it help you to find new housing?
4. [If support to existing tenancy] What was it like to be able to stay in your place?
 - How did you feel about being able to stay in your place?
 - Who supported you with what you needed when you moved in?
5. [If new housing] What was it like when you first moved into the property?
 - How did you feel about having your own place?
 - Who supported you with what you needed when you moved in?

6. [If new housing] How are you finding your housing?
 - Is your house a public or social housing property or private rental?
 - Do you like your place? (enough privacy, good condition)
 - Do you feel comfortable where you're living? (neighbourhood, safety)
7. Do you feel like you're receiving the support you need?
 - What kind of support services do you receive? (health, financial e.g. budgeting, accessing government services, etc)
 - If no, what else do you think you need in order to live in your property?

Impact of the project

8. Since living in your property and receiving support from [service provider/s name] how have things changed for you?
 - [areas to cover]
 - Health
 - Stress/ anxiety
 - Living situation
 - Employment situation
 - Started/ continuing education
 - Connection to community
 - Feelings about the future

Feedback on the project

9. What, if anything, about the project has been **the most** helpful thing for you?
10. What, if anything, about the project has been **the least** helpful thing for you?

Sustainability

11. How do you think things will be for you when/ if your case worker isn't helping you anymore?
 - Will you feel able to manage living in your property?
 - Is there anything you think you might still need help with?

Thank you

[Hand over the selected voucher to the client and ask her/ him to sign the record sheet]

Appendix 6. Results from the online stakeholder survey

Table 18. Response rate to HAP long term housing and support projects online survey

Emails sent	350
Emails bounced	0
Population surveyed	350
Complete responses	30
Partial responses	15
Disqualified	1
Total responses	46
Response rate	13%

Involvement with the South East NSW Community Connections project

Table 19. Q1. What type of organisation do you work for?

Organisation	n	%	Missing
Commonwealth Government agency	4	9%	
NSW Government agency	11	24%	
Local government	0	0%	
Non-government organisation	29	63%	
Private sector company (e.g. real estate agency)	0	0%	
Other, please specify*	2	4%	
Total	46	100%	0

*When specified, 'Other' responses were Community Housing

Table 20. Q3. How would you rate your level of involvement in the South East NSW Community Connections project?

Level of involvement	n	%	Missing
No awareness, no involvement	1	2%	
Limited awareness, no direct involvement	4	9%	
Limited/ occasional involvement	17	37%	
Involved in the operation of the project in relation to a few clients (less than 5)	5	11%	
Involved in the operation of the project in relation to a number of clients (more than 5)	13	28%	
Involved in the overall coordination of the project	6	13%	
Total	46	100%	0

Table 21. Q4. What is the main role of your organisation in the South East NSW Community Connections project?

Organisation's main role	n	%	Missing
Contracting government agency, e.g. Housing NSW, Community Services	5	11%	
Partner government agency, e.g. Legal Aid, NSW Health, ADHC	5	11%	
Coordinating NGO	2	4%	
Specialist Homelessness Service	14	30%	
Support service provider, e.g. mental health, family support, drug and alcohol, etc.	6	13%	
Housing provider	6	13%	
Other, please specify*	8	17%	
Total	46	100%	0

*When specified, 'Other' responses were referral and advocacy, welfare/ food vouchers, employment services, N/A, specialist domestic violence service, Centrelink services, sector support project.

Table 22. Q4a. What type of housing provider is your organisation?

Housing provider type	n*	%	Missing
Public social housing	1	17%	
Community housing	5	83%	
Real estate agency	0	0%	
Landlord	0	0%	
Other, please specify	0	0%	
Total	6	100%	0

*Question for housing providers only

Table 23. Q5. In what ways have you been involved in the South East NSW Community Connections project?

Ways involved	n	% of cases *
Participating in project coordination meetings	20	48%
Making referrals	24	57%
Case managing clients	15	36%
Directly providing housing solution to clients of the project	12	29%
Directly providing support services to clients of the project	11	26%
Other, please specify**	10	24%
Total	92	219%

*Percent of cases is calculated as the frequency of a given response over the number of valid cases (complete responses to the question).

**When specified, 'Other' responses were Brokerage Panel member, joint case management and assisting with immediate brokerage for assistance, participating in meetings, attending homelessness forums, liaising with Community Connections and Housing NSW workers and managers, development of South East Plan, NGO rep on South East Regional Homelessness Committee but not overseeing the operation of Community Connections, no involvement as yet, n/a.

Table 24. Q6. How long have you been involved with the South East NSW Community Connections project?

Length of involvement	n	%	Missing
Less than six months	6	14%	
Between six months and one year	10	23%	
Between one and two years	24	55%	
More than two years	4	9%	
Total	44	100%	2

Table 25. Q7. How committed to this project is the leadership of your organisation?

Level of commitment	n	%	Missing
Not at all	2	5%	
Somewhat committed	15	36%	
Quite strongly	12	29%	
Strongly	13	31%	
Total	42	100%	4

Client referral/ nomination and assessment**Table 26. Q8. Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

	n	Disagree		Mostly disagree		Mostly agree		Agree		DK/ N/A	Missing
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Overall, the client nomination/ referral processes for the South East NSW Community Connections project are effective	19	1	5%	1	5%	7	37%	10	53%	1	20
Organisations involved in the project agreed on eligibility criteria	15	1	7%	1	7%	7	47%	6	40%	5	20
Overall, the client assessment process for this project is effective	19	1	5%	1	5%	8	42%	9	47%	1	20
Through this project we have worked with clients we would not normally be able to reach	18	5	28%	1	6%	3	17%	9	50%	2	20
This project has supported clients who were not covered by other existing initiatives (e.g. gaps in geographic coverage or target groups)	19	3	16%	0	0%	4	21%	12	63%	1	20

Housing/ tenancy support provision**Table 27. Q9. Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

	n	Disagree		Mostly disagree		Mostly agree		Agree		DK/ N/A	Missing
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
The South East NSW Community Connections project has assisted clients to obtain or maintain accommodation appropriate to their needs	20	1	5%	2	10%	2	10%	15	75%	0	20
This project has assisted clients into stable long-term accommodation	20	1	5%	1	5%	5	25%	13	65%	0	20
Limited availability of affordable housing locally has reduced the project's ability to assist clients in accommodation	20	1	5%	5	25%	3	15%	11	55%	0	20
This project has found new and innovative ways of securing housing for clients	19	4	21%	1	5%	7	37%	7	37%	1	20

Support provision**Table 28. Q10. Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

	Disagree		Mostly disagree		Mostly agree		Agree		DK/ N/A	Missing	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	n	
The South East NSW Community Connections project has been particularly effective in linking clients to the support services they need	19	16%	3	0%	0	3	16%	13	68%	1	20
Lack of service availability locally has limited the project's ability to link clients to the supports they need	18	28%	5	28%	5	5	28%	3	17%	2	20
This project provides clients with access to a broader range of support services than other projects in this area	19	26%	5	5%	1	6	32%	7	37%	1	20
The South East NSW Community Connections project has provided an easy access to brokerage funding	18	6%	1	6%	1	7	39%	9	50%	2	20
Brokerage funding has been a major factor to support clients with appropriate support	18	11%	2	6%	1	5	28%	10	56%	2	20
Clients received improved integrated management through this project than usual	19	16%	3	0%	0	7	37%	9	47%	1	20

Service system

Table 29. Q11. Thinking about the organisations involved in the South East NSW Community Connections project, what has been the frequency of your interactions with each one?

	n	Never		Just once		For a few clients (<5)		For a number of clients (>5)		For some project coordination issues		For all project coordination issues		DK/ N/A	Missing
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Lead government agency, e.g. Housing NSW, Community Services	17	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%	7	41%	6	35%	3	18%	1	22
Partner government agency	14	0	0%	0	0%	2	14%	7	50%	5	36%	0	0%	4	22
Lead NGO	13	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	8	62%	2	15%	3	23%	4	23
Specialist Homelessness Services	17	0	0%	0	0%	2	12%	11	65%	4	24%	0	0%	3	20
Support service providers, e.g. mental health, family support, drug and alcohol, etc.	18	0	0%	1	6%	1	6%	11	61%	5	28%	0	0%	1	21
Housing organisations	17	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%	11	65%	4	24%	1	6%	1	22
Real estate agents/ landlords	17	2	12%	0	0%	1	6%	8	47%	6	35%	0	0%	1	22

Table 30. Q12. Please rate the following aspects of relationships with other housing and service organisations before and after your involvement in the South East NSW Community Connections project.

	n	1=None		2=Limited		3=Good		4=Extensive		Missing n
		n	%	n	%	n	n	n	%	
Pre: Knowledge of what other local service organisations can provide for my clients	20	1	5%	5	25%	5	25%	9	45%	20
Post: Knowledge of what other local service organisations can provide for my clients	20	0	0%	0	0%	8	40%	12	60%	20
Pre: Coordination with other local service organisations to support clients	20	1	5%	7	35%	6	30%	6	30%	20
Post: Coordination with other local service organisations to support clients	20	0	0%	0	0%	10	50%	10	50%	20
Pre: Trusting relationships with other local service organisations	20	3	15%	3	15%	9	45%	5	25%	20
Post: Trusting relationships with other local service organisations	20	0	0%	3	15%	10	50%	7	35%	20

Table 31. Q13–15. Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	n	Disagree		Mostly disagree		Mostly agree		Agree		DK/ N/A	Missing
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Q13. Governance											
The organisations involved in the South East NSW Community Connections project share the project's goals and values	19	1	5%	2	11%	3	16%	13	68%	1	20
The organisations involved in this project agreed on the project governance structure (e.g. establishment of local coordination groups)	17	1	6%	1	6%	6	35%	9	53%	3	20
The governance structure of this project has been effective in supporting implementation of the project	19	2	11%	1	5%	3	16%	13	68%	1	20
Q14. Communication and information sharing											
There are formal structures/ processes for communication and information sharing between organisations involved in the South East NSW Community Connections project	19	0	0%	1	5%	7	37%	11	58%	1	20
There are informal processes for communication and information sharing	19	0	0%	3	16%	4	21%	12	63%	1	20
Communication and information sharing is effective	19	2	11%	1	5%	1	5%	15	79%	1	20

	n	Disagree		Mostly disagree		Mostly agree		Agree		DK/ N/A n	Missing n
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Q15. Working together											
The roles, responsibilities and expectations of organisations involved in the South East NSW Community Connections project are clearly defined and understood by all	19	2	11%	2	11%	7	37%	8	42%	1	20
Responsibilities for implementing this project are shared appropriately	18	2	11%	2	11%	7	39%	7	39%	2	20
Through this project I have worked with organisations I would not have worked with previously	19	7	37%	3	16%	4	21%	5	26%	1	20
Working together has changed the way our organisation delivers services	19	6	32%	1	5%	7	37%	5	26%	1	20
This project has been able to identify and resolve impediments to effective service provision (either at the project level or through the Regional Homelessness Committee)	17	3	18%	2	12%	7	41%	5	29%	3	20
Working together in this project generates better outcomes for clients than if each organisation worked with the clients separately	18	1	6%	1	6%	1	6%	15	83%	2	20
Working together in this project has achieved regional system changes (e.g. in identification, assessment and referral, discharge planning, capacity building, policy development, case coordination)	17	2	12%	1	6%	4	24%	10	59%	3	20

Client outcomes**Table 32. Q16. Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

	Disagree		Mostly disagree		Mostly agree		Agree		DK/N/A	Missing		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
The South East NSW Community Connections project has effective measures for assessing outcomes for clients	13	0%	0	0%	2	15%	0	0%	11	85%	7	20
Clients are better able to sustain a tenancy as a result of the project	15	0%	0	0%	1	7%	1	7%	13	87%	5	20
Clients' well-being has improved as a result of the project	16	0%	0	0%	1	6%	2	13%	13	81%	4	20
Clients have reduced use of acute services (e.g. hospital and emergency services) as a result of the project	14	0%	0	0%	2	14%	6	43%	6	43%	6	20

Costs/ workload**Table 33. Q17. Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

	n	Disagree		Mostly disagree		Mostly agree		Agree		DK/ N/A	Missing
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	n
I spend too much time on coordination activities as part of my involvement in South East NSW Community Connections project	18	11	61%	5	28%	1	6%	1	6%	2	20
Through this project I am able to spend more time in supporting clients than in other projects	13	4	31%	1	8%	3	23%	5	38%	7	20
The resources required for this project are justified by the benefits for clients	19	3	16%	0	0%	6	32%	10	53%	1	20

Sustainability of the project**Table 34. Q18. Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

	Disagree		Mostly disagree		Mostly agree		Agree		DK/ N/A	Missing
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	n
The South East NSW Community Connections project has the potential to achieve sustainable reductions in homelessness into the future	19	11%	2	11%	3	16%	12	63%	1	20
I would like this project to continue beyond its planned termination date	19	11%	2	5%	2	11%	14	74%	1	20
My organisation would not be able to maintain its participation in this project without government funding	13	8%	1	0%	0	0%	12	92%	7	20
My organisation has secured some resources for the project beyond its planned termination date	7	57%	4	14%	1	14%	1	14%	13	20
We could expand the number of HAP clients we assist in this area with only a small increase in resources	12	8%	1	8%	2	17%	8	67%	8	20
This project has the potential to be replicated in other areas of the state	17	12%	2	0%	0	0%	15	88%	2	21

Appendix 7. Breakdown of project costs for 2011/12

HAP Project ID: 5.10 Community Connections		2011/12 \$ Value	Percentage
Project income - Inputs			
Income	HAP funding	\$ 1,997,020	100%
Income	Other Government funding	\$ -	0%
Income	In-kind	\$ -	0%
Income	Third party donations	\$ -	0%
Income	Other	\$ -	0%
Total Project income		\$ 1,997,020	100%
Expenditure			
Staff costs	Direct Client Services	\$ 424,942	31%
Staff costs	Admin and support	\$ -	
Staff costs	Staff related on-costs	\$ 85,817	6%
Staff costs	External consultants / professional services	\$ 740	0%
Staff costs	Other	\$ -	0%
Total Staff costs		\$ 511,499	38%
Operating costs	Meetings, workshop, catering	\$ -	0%
Operating costs	Staff training and development	\$ 2,873	0%
Operating costs	Motor vehicle expenses	\$ 106,392	8%
Operating costs	Other travel	\$ 18,237	1%
Operating costs	Host Organisation Management Fee and Administration costs	\$ 204,187	15%
Operating costs	Other: Other operating costs	\$ 129,772	10%
	Other	\$ -	0%
	Other	\$ -	0%

HAP Project ID: 5.10 Community Connections		2011/12 \$ Value	Percentage
Total Operating costs		\$ 461,461	34%
Total Goods	Total Goods	\$ 117,038	9%
Total Services	Total Services	\$ 31,310	2%
Total Payments	Total Payments	\$ 61,704	5%
Total Other	Total Other	\$ 169,126	13%
Total Brokerage costs		\$ 379,178	28%
Total Expenditure		\$ 1,352,138	100%

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