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**FINAL REPORT**

**Family and Community Services  
Housing NSW**

**NSW Homelessness Action Plan Evaluation**

**Final Evaluation Report for Project 2.8  
Targeted Housing and Support Service**

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## List of Abbreviations

Note: throughout this report THaSS refers to the project titled Transition and Housing and Support Services.

ADHC	Ageing Disability and Home Care
AOD	Alcohol and other drugs
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CSNSW	Corrective Services NSW
COSP	Community Offenders Support Program
CRC	Community Restorative Centre
CRES	Corporate Research Evaluation and Statistics
CSNSW	Corrective Services NSW
HNSW	Housing NSW
ISP	Individual Support Plan
LSI-R	Level of Service Inventory - revised
NPAH	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
SDRO	State Debt Recovery Office
SHS	Specialist homelessness services
TA	Temporary accommodation
THaSS	Targeted Housing and Support Services (Western Sydney)
WDO	Work in Development Order

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“I am liking this new feeling in life – I embrace it to the best of my ability – I am happy for once in my life and not miserable and depending on drugs for my happiness.” (THaSS client #3)*

*“It would be very difficult not having the project as we would be returning to and relying on homelessness accommodation or temporary accommodation on the day of release with no post-release support or planning. This is a real factor in re-offending and returning to custody.” (Senior Probation and Parole Officer)*

The Targeted Housing and Support Services (THaSS) project is a response to Priority 2 of the NSW Homelessness Action Plan (HAP) which is to “transition and maintain people exiting statutory care correctional and health facilities into appropriate long-term accommodation” (NSW Government 2009). Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) is the lead agency for the project, and has a partnership with the Community Restorative Centre (CRC) to deliver the transition service for women leaving custody in Western Sydney. The overall goal of THaSS is to prevent exits into rough sleeping or transient unsuitable accommodation for women prisoners exiting custody with complex needs and at risk of homelessness. The stated objectives of the project are to reduce both homelessness and re-offending in the target group, with a range of other social integration goals linked to these broad objectives.

The THaSS service model provides accommodation and wrap-around support for clients for a period of up to 12 months, commencing ideally three months prior to release. It is informed by the evidence of what works to prevent homelessness and builds on models successfully delivered by CRC over a number of years. The model comprises a caseworker assigned to each client to secure accommodation and provide intensive tailored case management on a “floating” outreach basis, together with coordination of services and support. Caseworkers have a low caseload in recognition of client complexity and the model has a phased approach, allowing for “stepped down” intensity of support as the client becomes progressively more settled in the community. In the first year of the THaSS project 20 housing units were allocated through the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, however in subsequent years CRC has proactively partnered with community housing providers to facilitate access to housing for clients.

### **The evaluation**

The evaluation adopted a strengths-based approach, focussing on what is working well – given the complexity of the area and the interface between the linked factors that contribute to homelessness and incarceration in the target group. It is of necessity largely descriptive, drawing mostly on qualitative data, combined with the available reporting and administrative data which was limited in relation to a range of aspects of client information and services provided. The small sample size and lack of a matched control group of clients limited the extent to which the findings can be extrapolated more generally. There was also a lack of baseline data on homelessness in the client group against which to compare evaluation data, and limited mechanisms for follow-up to determine longer-term outcomes for clients who have either left or been successfully exited from the service.

The methodology involved conducting a brief literature review, a review of available project documentation and an extensive stakeholder consultation process with 29 individuals, including six exited THaSS clients as well as a cross section of service providers and other key informants.

## Findings

The project commenced housing clients in October 2010, and in the period up until end of June 2012, 60 clients had been referred to the service. Of these, 55 new clients were taken into the program (25 in Year 1, 30 in Year 2).<sup>1</sup> This was considerably higher than the target for this period of 40 new clients. The clients ranged in age from 26 to 60 years and more than one-third were Aboriginal women; the majority had complex needs.

In seeking to achieve the goal of reducing recidivism, the intent of the project was to target clients assessed by CSNSW as being at medium to high risk of re-offending. According to the “risk principle”<sup>2</sup> targeted interventions with these clients are likely to yield the greatest benefit, rather than low risk individuals who are less likely to re-offend even in the absence of support (Andrews & Bonta 2010).

Of 45 clients whose risk for re-offending was assessed by Corrective Services NSW LSI-R scale,<sup>3</sup> the majority (36) were assessed as either medium-high or high risk of re-offending with nine being assessed as low or low-medium risk of re-offending; most were medium-high risk.<sup>4</sup> A total of 24 clients were exited from the project during the period, and 13 achieved their goals.

There was a consistent view from all stakeholders involved in the evaluation that the THaSS model works very well for high risk women in the target group and the findings demonstrate a range of positive outcomes. For some women at least, participation in the project appears to have enabled them to break the cycle of re-offending, which is particularly important in those at higher risk of re-offending. Despite the small scale of the study and the limitations of the available data, the project was found to be effective in addressing homelessness for its client group, although the extent of this for all THaSS clients could not be established.

All clients were provided with accommodation and all exited clients were housed at the time of leaving the project. There were reports from both clients and housing providers that housing has been sustained. In the first months of the project, allocated Nation Building properties were not always available on the day of release due to building delays and a number of clients needed to be housed in Temporary accommodation (TA). This proved to be unsatisfactory in a small number of cases for women who were less stable and at higher risk of re-offending and resulted in delays in them settling in the community. The strong partnerships subsequently developed by CRC with a greater number of community housing providers enabled suitable transition accommodation to be accessed for the large majority of clients prior to release.

There was indicative data showing overall reduced re-offending in the client group, however it was not possible to verify the extent of this through Corrective Services NSW data due to the short timeframes of the study. There were positive reports given by both Probation and Parole staff, and clients, of changes to offending behaviour and reduced risks associated with re-offending. Clients expressed their intention to maintain these positive changes.

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<sup>1</sup> This client total only includes those clients worked with in the community, and does not include new clients receiving support but still in custody.

<sup>2</sup> The evidence indicates that the most effective and efficient use of resources for criminogenic programs to address recidivism is to target individuals who are at medium to high risk of re-offending. Interventions with these clients are likely to be of the greatest benefit rather than low risk individuals who are less likely to re-offend even in the absence of support.

<sup>3</sup> Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) uses a validated actuarial risk assessment tool (LSI-R) for inmates serving sentences of six months or more to assess risk of re-offending and key domains for intervention. It comprises a number of static and dynamic factors giving a risk score (LSI-R) that are then used by correctional staff to develop a case plan.

<sup>4</sup> A total sample size of 71 THaSS clients was assessed by CSNSW including up until the end of December 2012.

Important outcomes were reported across a spectrum of social integration factors for clients. These included:

- Developing life skills;
- Family restoration;
- Improved health and wellbeing;
- Reduced substance abuse;
- Accessing education and employment; and
- Having greater confidence and self-efficacy in navigating service systems.

While the contribution of the THaSS project appears to have been significant, not all positive outcomes could be solely attributed to the project, as many clients would have benefited from participation in other services and Probation and Parole programs they accessed. That said, the consistent support and mentoring of clients by THaSS caseworkers, combined with coordination and assistance to attend services, was integral in ensuring that clients benefited from all available services.

A particular success of the project has been the strengthened integration of services, achieved largely through the endeavours of CRC staff to build functional relationships with a range of providers. Close collaboration with community housing providers, for instance, has been very effective in gaining access to scarce accommodation in the second and third years of the project when housing was no longer available through National Building.

There were challenges in the early establishment of the project and some difficulties recruiting and maintaining a full team of staff with the skills and capacity to work with this very complex client group. The low caseload for THaSS workers initially made it difficult to deal with the high volume of referrals that were received, and in early 2011 the caseloads were doubled to increase service capacity. Reducing the intensity of support to avoid the risk of dependence of clients on staff was also a challenge throughout. There was also some confusion in the early stage of the project as it was initially understood that 20 properties would be available for each of the three years; this set up expectations for some stakeholders which could not be readily met when their allocated properties were not available in subsequent years.

### **Success factors**

The evaluation showed a number of clear success factors in the THaSS model:

- The multifaceted design of the service model, with its combination of several important elements (accommodation and tailored case management and support) and phasing of service intensity over an extended period is the major key to success. It is unlikely that any one element alone would have as great an impact on client outcomes.
- The very low caseload for caseworkers enabled intensity of services and support for clients through critical transition points and periods of crisis. Target client numbers were easily achieved and when it became apparent that the service could expand capacity and take on double the caseload in early 2011, this enabled THaSS to exceed the original client targets across both years.
- Having immediate access to properties in the first year was a major contributor to early successes in housing women, however cessation of this created challenges in subsequent years which CRC effectively addressed through establishing partnerships with community housing providers.



- The capacity of CRC to develop productive working partnerships was consistently identified as a key success factor by many stakeholders. Benefits from this have been both increased access to accommodation and many mainstream services for clients on the one hand, and also heightened awareness in other services of the complexity and nature of the support needs of the client group.
- Another critical success factor was the quality and professionalism of the THaSS caseworkers and their capacity to develop trusting relationships with clients and support their re-settlement through crises and setbacks.
- Client focussed advocacy, together with mentoring and education of clients were also reported to be important.
- The extensive CRC organisational experience and knowledge of the client group provided a robust foundation and supported the project's success.

### Conclusion and implications

The THaSS project was funded primarily as a homelessness initiative with a secondary goal of reducing re-offending. It exceeded its client targets across the two years up until June 2012 and the evaluation confirmed the value of the THaSS model in reducing homelessness and achieving other important outcomes for a very disadvantaged, vulnerable target group. There are also indications of its effectiveness in reducing risks associated with re-offending in clients assessed as medium to high risk of re-offending. However the extent of this is less clear and a longer timeframe will be required to gain greater clarity from available data and to determine how effective the service model is in reducing recidivism. Impacts of the project are likely to be sustained for the clients who have been supported to stabilise their lives, build life skills, confidence and self-efficacy in navigating service systems.

It was not possible to undertake detailed costings for this evaluation however based on crude costing estimates, the provision of intensive case management makes the average per client costs of the THaSS model relatively high. This average does not account for varying durations of client support both in the community and in custody nor differing intensities of service provided. That said, crude estimates for year 2011/2012 were around \$28,952 per year or \$79.32 per day; average brokerage costs were \$688.53. This does not take account of the costs of other services accessed, and represents a considerable investment per client. The added service capacity and integration in the area has however enabled efficiencies for other service providers whose time is less consumed by dealing with THaSS clients.

There were no evident cost savings to the prison system, as complex Treasury calculations are required to determine this and entire centres or wings closed to make cost savings. It is, however, worth noting that the daily cost of full time inmate custody is \$174.74 (open custody) or \$211.23 (secure custody) or \$63,780 and \$77,090 per annum respectively (Corrective Services 2012). The daily cost of supervision for a community based offender is \$21.48. More detailed analysis will be needed to determine if the investment in THaSS would over an extended time reap savings for the service system overall in terms of reduced costs to justice and other services, factored against the additional costs related to increased client use of a range of services.

Another consideration in the light of the recent study of the life-course institutional costs of homelessness (Baldry et al 2012) is that there are likely longer-term system savings through intensive investment as early as possible in this vulnerable client group.

Overall it can be said that it was relatively early days in the implementation and development of the THaSS service model at the time of the evaluation. There are promising indications of its effectiveness and there is also scope for future development of the model to increase both its effectiveness and its efficiency. A longer-term perspective is important in addressing both homelessness and recidivism, particularly with this vulnerable target group who are also very costly to the system over longer time-frames. It was suggested that, with further refinement, and for the same investment the project could carry a considerably higher caseload and achieve more significant impacts.

Closer attention to client selection (adopting the “risk principle”) and more targeting of specific criminogenic factors for each client (as assessed by the LSI-R) could bring benefits to a wider number of individuals. Per client cost can also be reduced by allocating less funding to brokerage, which was deemed by CRC to be excessive in the Western Sydney area where there is ready access to a wide range of services and resources.

Women who are in remand and who are in custody for a shorter period of time can be at high risk of homelessness and are currently not eligible for the THaSS service. Consideration needs to be given to interventions to support these vulnerable women to address their risk of homelessness on leaving custody.

Many of the target clients of THaSS, who have multiple factors of disadvantage (cognitive impairment, mental illness etc) have long histories of institutional life and were noted to have limited life skills. They face extreme challenges in the transition to independent living in the community. There was broad agreement across a range of stakeholders that there would be considerable benefits and cost savings for these women to have greater access to supported congregate accommodated for a period of 3-6 months, with minimal supervision and intensive development of life skills, to prepare them better for independent living. This would reduce their need for the intensive levels of case management support, be less costly and potentially have greater likelihood of ensuring longer-term success in the community, with reduced risk of homelessness and possibly of re-offending.

Finally, the project was set up within a short timeframe, and was required to be operational very quickly. This did not allow for detailed planning and development of underpinning change theories and clearly defined outcomes and indicators that are necessary to be able to measure the real impact and worth of the model.

The service delivery framework for the recently released NSW Government *Going Home Staying Home Reform Plan* (NSW Government 2013) outlines reforms to specialist homelessness services (SHS). This incorporates elements of prevention and early intervention, crisis and transition responses, intensive responses for complex needs clients and a focus on flexibility. The Reform Plan also recognises the importance of close collaboration between government and non-government services and the need for general services to work together with specialist services. The THaSS service model is closely aligned with the essential features of this new direction in government approaches to addressing homelessness.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Overview of HAP

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

The HAP also aims to:

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

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

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

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

The projects are aligned to one of three strategic directions:

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

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

### HAP Evaluation Strategy

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

- I. **Self evaluations** – The purpose of self evaluation is to gather performance information about each of the HAP projects across key areas in a consistent way, and to collect the views of practitioners about the effectiveness of their projects.

II. **Extended evaluations** – The purpose of the extended evaluations is to analyse and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of 15 selected projects and the service approaches to addressing homelessness that those projects represent. The service approaches covered by the extended evaluations are:

- Support for women and children escaping domestic violence;
- Youth foyers;
- Support for people exiting institutions;
- Tenancy support to prevent evictions; and
- Long-term housing and support.

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

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

### ***1.2. Overview of service model and projects included in this evaluation***

The first strategic direction of the NPAH is preventing homelessness. One of the priorities is to provide support for people exiting institutions (people leaving the prison system, people exiting the juvenile justice system, and young people leaving care). The focus of this evaluation is on the projects categorised as people exiting institutions, and the sub-group is people exiting correctional facilities.

Two projects are included in this group:

Project 2.8: Targeted Housing and Support Services (Western Sydney)

Project 2.10: Sustaining Tenancies Following Exits from Correctional Facilities (Broken Hill)

The service model for these projects is based on “housing first” principles, with the provision of accommodation and wrap-around “floating” support tailored to the individual needs of the client and provided either in homes on an outreach basis or in service settings. The individualised support is for 12 months, commencing ideally three months prior to release and reducing in intensity as the client becomes more settled in the community.

Project 2.8: Targeted Housing and Support Services (THaSS) is the subject of this evaluation report.

### ***1.3. Key contextual factors from the literature***

The two projects (2.8, 2.10) that aim to reduce homelessness in people exiting correctional centres also have a secondary goal of reducing re-offending. The THaSS project is focussed on women exiting custody and approximately one third of the clients are Aboriginal women. The target group for the other project is parolees released from custody in Broken Hill Correctional Centre, the majority of whom are Aboriginal men.

The key contextual factors in the literature related to these projects are summarised below (see Appendix 5: References):

- Homelessness is a risk for incarceration and also believed to be a risk for re-offending and re-imprisonment following release; there are many identified barriers to finding accommodation post-release (NSW Homelessness Alliance 2011, Meehan 2002, Fontaine and Biess 2012);
- The multiple factors of disadvantage which prisoners face and the fact that many have lived on the margins and never been well integrated into the community poses challenges to effective settlement following release from custody (MCREU 2005);
- Women are particularly vulnerable to homelessness following release and have multiple additional needs which need to be addressed; housing alone is insufficient and a key factor in sustaining accommodation can be safety (Baldry et al 2003, Baldry and McCausland 2007);
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately represented in the prison population and are at far greater risk of incarceration due to multiple factors of disadvantage including higher rates of homelessness, problems with substance abuse, intergenerational trauma and mental health issues (Australian Human Rights Commission 2005);
- Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal women in particular, have some very specific needs that need to be addressed in the transition from custody back to the community; there is a dearth of literature about what works for Aboriginal people in successful transition from custody to the community (AHURI 2004, Baldry and McCausland 2007);
- Stable, secure accommodation is integral to re-integration and settlement in the community following release from custody and thought to be linked to reduced re-offending; links between housing and re-offending are complex and not well understood and research is limited on the specific characteristics of alternative housing models which lead to better outcomes for ex-prisoners (Meehan 2002, Fontaine and Biess 2012);
- Stable housing is not necessarily a predictor of reduced offending and alone is insufficient; access to suitable accommodation needs to be linked with support services tailored according to individual needs and also linked to criminogenic factors (Fontaine and Biess 2012);
- Support for ex-prisoners to facilitate settlement in the community should ideally commence prior to release (AHURI 2004);
- The “What works” to prevent re-offending literature demonstrates that adhering to the principles of *Risk, Needs and Responsivity* (RNR) will impact on reducing further offending. The risk principle means prioritising medium, medium-high and high risk offenders using an actuarial risk assessment tool with interventions. The offence related *Needs* are specific, dynamic (changeable) needs/ factors related to offending with the most important ones being pro-criminal attitudes (thoughts/ values), antisocial personality/ low self control, and pro-criminal associations. *Responsivity* relates to those factors that impede or enhance an offender’s learning or response to interventions (e.g. gender, culture, disability and others) (Andrews and Bonta 2010); and
- Integrated models of service delivery with collaboration and effective working processes are most likely to be effective in addressing the specific needs of people leaving custody, and collaboration between different government and non-government services is a key factor (NSW Homelessness Alliance 2011).



Although projects 2.8 and 2.10 are not primarily criminal justice interventions, they do have a focus on reducing re-offending as well as reducing homelessness. Caution has been urged regarding use of re-offending rates as a sole measure of effectiveness of programs aiming to address the complex factors linked with homelessness and recidivism (Cunneen and Luke 2007). Rather, it is important to also capture the impacts of the intervention on other factors related to offending such as pro-social behaviours and evidence of social integration.

## 2. EVALUATION SCOPE AND METHODS

This section describes the scope of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, the ethics process that was undertaken, the evaluation methods employed to address the evaluation questions and the limitations of the evaluation.

The key evaluation questions for the extended evaluations were the following:

1. What is the impact of the project on a reduction in homelessness?
2. What is the project potential to achieve sustainable reductions in homelessness into the future?
3. What is the impact of the project on service system change and improvement?
4. What is the extent of influence on service integration and how was this achieved?
5. What is the impact on client outcomes (intended and unintended)?
6. What are the critical success factors and barriers? and
7. What is the cost effectiveness of each project?

### 2.1. Ethics process

The projects required Corrective Services NSW ethics approval which was sought from the Corrective Services NSW Ethics Committee. A formal ethics application was submitted followed by a hearing with the Committee on 14 September; duly amended documents were subsequently submitted to the Committee and formal ethics approval was granted on 9 October (Appendix 1).

A plain English information sheet and informed consent form were developed for client consultations (Appendix 2). Clients were offered a \$30 supermarket voucher as an incentive for participation in interviews.

### 2.2. Summary of methods

The evaluation project involved the following processes:

1. A brief literature review focused on what is known about what works in supporting people who are exiting institutions.
2. Review of available documentation from Community Restorative Centre (CRC) and Corrective Services NSW.
3. Initial briefing meetings with key informants including CRC and Corrective Services NSW staff (project partners), Regional Homelessness Committee.
4. Development of data collection instruments, stakeholder interview schedules (for CSNSW staff, clients and other service providers) based on the evaluation questions (Appendices 3, 4 and 5).
5. Review of relevant administrative data:
  - a. Portal data submitted quarterly to Housing NSW by Corrective Services NSW based on data provided by CRC;
  - b. Self-evaluation data in self-valuation reports completed at June 2012;
  - c. Client case notes (for interviewed clients only).

6. Stakeholder interviews:
  - a. Corrective Services NSW Head Office key informants (Partnerships and Community Engagement Unit and Research and Evaluation and Statistics Branch);
  - b. Community Restorative Centre staff:
    - i. CRC – Director and Program Manager;
    - ii. CRC Western Sydney managers.
  - c. Client interviews:
    - i. CRC provided a list of 20 exited clients from whom 10 were selected by WestWood Spice to be invited to participate. Sampling was over a cross-section of characteristics: age, cultural/ ethnic background, number of children, number of offenses, drug and alcohol history, and mental health issues;
    - ii. CRC invited clients and arranged transport for interviews in a neutral location. Interviews were held over two days with a total of 12 clients initially scheduled for interview. Ultimately only six clients were available for interview over those days.
  - d. Service providers:
    - i. Community housing providers (St George Community Housing, Hume Community Housing, Link Housing, Wentworth Community Housing);
    - ii. Fairfield/ Liverpool Community Mental Health;
    - iii. Drug rehabilitation service providers (Jacaranda House);
    - iv. Correctional Services NSW (eight):
      1. Probation and Parole Officers;
      2. Offender Services and Program staff.

### 2.3. Limitations

The findings of the evaluation, while indicating a range of positive outcomes in relation to factors associated with reducing both homelessness and re-offending in the target group, have a number of limitations including the following:

- The evaluation was of necessity largely descriptive in nature and the data was mostly qualitative and based on consultations with a cross section of key stakeholder groups including THaSS clients. While the feedback from clients and others was strongly indicative of positive outcomes from the service, the small scale limits the extent to which the findings can be extrapolated to a larger group;
- The evaluation study did not have a matched sample comparison group of clients;
- For a range of reasons, some of the recorded data is inconsistent and incomplete. There have been changes of data definitions over the course of the project and in reporting requirements;
- The broad objectives of the project (to reduce both homelessness and re-offending) were not underpinned by a clear change theory or logic model with detailed outcomes and indicators which could be measured in the evaluation;
- While the target group of the project is women leaving custody who are assessed to be at risk of homelessness there is no good data on rates of homelessness in this group from which baseline rates and comparisons can be drawn;





- Other than the six exited THaSS clients who agreed to be interviewed, it was not possible to look at longer-term outcomes (in relation to homelessness and re-offending) for the complete sample of THaSS clients once they have been exited from the project at 12 months. There are no routine mechanisms for follow-up of client outcomes other than data from Corrective Services NSW on those who have re-offended 24 months post-release; and
- There is also potential selection bias in client feedback as it may be that those who have done well with the service have been willing to be interviewed, rather than others.

### 3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section provides a description and background of the service, the aims and objectives and target group and the service model employed as well as the project management and governance arrangements, staffing and budget allocation for the delivery of the service.

#### 3.1. Service origins and description

Corrective Services NSW is the lead government agency for the Targeted Housing and Support Service (THaSS) project and contracted the Community Restorative Centre (CRC) as the non-government agency to deliver the service in Western Sydney over three years from July 2010 to June 2013. The service model builds on previous successes of CRC in providing transition and accommodation support for prisoners who are at high risk of returning to custody.

The Community Restorative Centre ([www.crcnsw.org.au](http://www.crcnsw.org.au)) is a specialist service, with a mission of changing lives and reducing crime through delivering post-release services for people leaving prison to support their resettlement back into the community. CRC aims to reduce re-offending and consequent imprisonment, and to prevent homelessness in this difficult transition period. CRC has locations in Central Sydney, Western Sydney, Newcastle/ Hunter region and more recently Broken Hill. The range of support services provided by CRC to prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families and friends include:

- Transport to prison;
- Drug and alcohol dependence;
- Homelessness, and emergency accommodation;
- Unemployment;
- Skills development;
- Training;
- Information, advocacy and referral service for people in crisis via telephone;
- Mediation; and
- Family support services.

CRC has been a leader over the past decade in delivering best practice post-release and transitional support programs for people exiting custody through adopting a holistic approach which is reflective of the complex needs and levels of disadvantage of the target client group. CRC targets in particular those who are at highest risk of returning to custody, and has had positive outcomes among clients through providing intensive intervention and support. CRC receives funding for a range of programs, chiefly from Ageing Disability and Home Care, Corrective Services NSW, and Ministry of Health.

Women prisoners in particular have some different and very particular needs on leaving custody and are at higher risk of homelessness than men. The THaSS project is a response to this identified need and has been funded through HAP. The project constitutes an interagency partnership between Corrections, Housing NSW, NSW Ministry of Health, Community Services and CRC.

The project was originally funded to accept up to 20 clients at any one time, selected initially from referrals from three correctional centres: Dilwynia, Emu Plains and Berrima Correctional Centres, with the option to accept referrals from other centres if there were insufficient from the nominated centres. Clients have subsequently been referred from Silverwater Correctional Centre, Transitional

Centres at Parramatta and Bolwara. In the first year, 20 properties were made available for THaSS clients through the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, however these were not available in subsequent years.

### 3.2. Aims and objectives

The overall goal of the THaSS project is to prevent exits into rough sleeping or transient unsuitable accommodation for women prisoners exiting custody with complex needs and at risk of homelessness.

#### Objectives

The stated objectives of the project are:

- Reduction in rates of homelessness in the target group; and
- Reduction in rates of re-offending in the target group.<sup>5</sup>

Specific goals of the project stated in the contract are to:

- Sustain tenancy;
- Reduce re-offending;
- Maintain independent living; increase living skills;
- Improve health outcomes; increase access to physical health treatment;
- Utilise mainstream services to meet needs;
- Decrease social isolation;
- Increase compliance with parole conditions;
- Maintain or create positive family/ friendship roles and relationships;
- Increase access to community based support services;
- Increase access to psychiatric/ psychological treatment;
- Increase engagement with drug and alcohol treatment;
- Increase access to family reconciliation, mediation and counselling;
- Increase engagement in vocational, educational, training and employment; and
- Engagement in meaningful and goal directed leisure and recreational activity.

A key feature of the project is building more effective coordination of services through strong interagency partnerships to enable access to a spectrum of generalist and specialist services tailored to the needs of each individual client.

### 3.3. Target group

The target group is sentenced women leaving custody in the Greater Western Sydney Region who:

- Have children and/or;
- Are seeking restoration with their children;
- Have complex needs (intellectual disabilities, low cognitive functioning, substance abuse and/or mental health issues);
- Are at high risk of homelessness;
- Intend to reside in the greater Western Sydney region;

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<sup>5</sup> Corrective Services NSW recognizes the difficulties in analyzing re-offending rates due to the small numbers of participants and lack of a control group of matched participants. (Source: extract from contract between Corrective Services NSW and Community Restorative Centre, 2010).

- Are at medium-high risk of re-offending (according to LSI-R scores); and
- Are women who have the capacity to live independently.

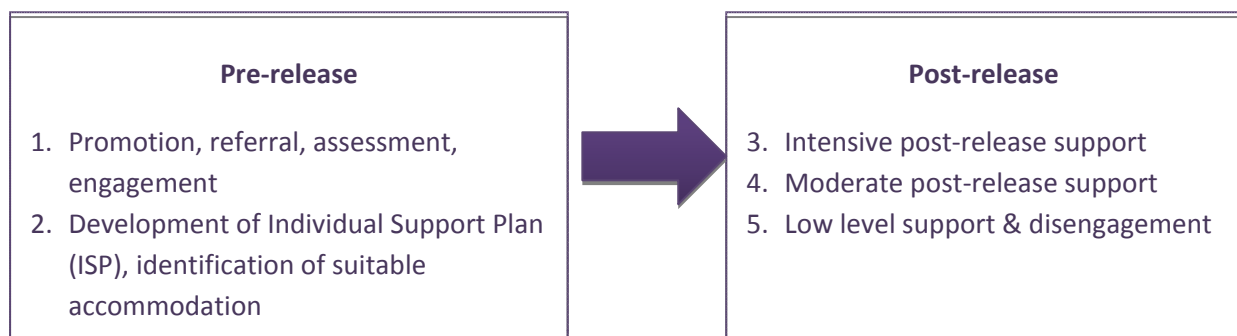
Women on remand are excluded. Given the relatively higher rates of incarceration of Aboriginal women (30% of female inmate population in NSW) (Corben & Eyland 2011) a high proportion of Aboriginal women are in the target group.

### 3.4. Service model

The THaSS service model is informed by the literature and based on a “housing first” model, that recognizes the centrality of housing in post-release success for clients, and the importance of the provision of floating support on an outreach basis in clients’ homes when appropriate. It is based on similar transition support models delivered by CRC.

The service model seeks to assist clients to integrate back into the community by organizing stable, comfortable and secure housing with sustained support services that specifically addresses their social and criminogenic needs. The holistic case management support is provided over a period of 12 months for eligible women leaving custody, commencing three months prior to release. The five stage THaSS service model is illustrated in Fig 1 below and is implemented with a great deal of flexibility in order to respond to the complexity of individual client needs.

Figure 1: THaSS service model



CRC coordinates access to accommodation and provides client case management with an Individual Support Plan (ISP). CRC works through strong partnerships with other service providers, including community housing providers, mental health, alcohol and drug services and other welfare services. The model initially allowed for up to 20 clients to be supported at anytime, however this was increased to reflect the available service capacity and to better meet the volume of need.

#### Case management and wrap around support

Caseworkers provide varying levels of intensity of support according to client need with a step-down model to allow for reduced intensity of support and contact as the client stabilises and develops greater self-reliance and engagement with mainstream services. The three main levels are:

- High level (8-16 hours per day, 5-7 days per week with 24 hour on call) - first three months;
- Medium level (2-5 visits per week) - for the following months; and
- Low level maintenance (1 visit per week) - towards the end of the 12 month period to exit the client.

THaSS funding allows for relatively low caseloads to enable caseworkers to provide intensive client-centred case management support in recognition of the higher levels of complexity of the client group. The initial caseload of three clients was subsequently increased in early 2011 up to a maximum of 7-8 clients as it became clear that the service could manage higher caseloads; this also assisted in better meeting the demand for the service. When the caseloads for caseworkers were doubled the availability of 24 hour on call service had to be reduced.

Brokerage funds of \$2,000 per client were allocated initially to support establishment of client households and for emergencies such as food vouchers, moving fees and medical fees.

### **3.4.1. Services provided**

The THaSS services are very carefully tailored to the specific needs of each client, through individualised assessment and design of an Individual Support Plan (ISP). Client needs vary over the 12 month case management period and are adjusted accordingly.

#### **Housing**

All clients are provided with accommodation on release in the Western Sydney region and careful consideration is given, to the extent possible, of offering appropriate accommodation in a suitable location for the client away from violent partners, high risk peers or negative social environments. It was initially understood that 20 properties would be made available each year for the target 20 clients, however it was only for the first year of the project (2010/2011) that properties were made available through the Nation Building scheme. Thereafter CRC proactively expanded partnerships with additional community housing providers to increase access to accommodation options for clients, also advocating with various providers to make THaSS clients a priority for housing.

THaSS staff work closely with partner housing services from the outset when a client is accepted into the project to initially assess their housing needs while they are still in custody and undertake application processes for priority housing. There is on-going collaboration with the housing providers once clients move in to their accommodation to address needs as they arise, with regular review meetings, as well as communication via phone and email. This enables early identification of issues such as rent arrears, unauthorised residents, noise or nuisance to neighbours. CRC works closely with housing staff to deal with problems and address issues with clients to prevent escalation and potential risk of eviction wherever possible.

#### **Support services**

Pre-release meetings with clients within the custodial centre focus on developing a strong worker-client relationship to ensure trust and confidence in the worker and determine appropriate housing and support. Weekly visits are made in prison depending on how early the clients are referred to the project. An ISP is developed to address priority issues including areas of client needs and criminogenic risks, which may jeopardise their resettlement such as drug and alcohol issues and negative social networks. Caseworkers discuss tenancy issues with clients, pro-social networks and start making linkages with post-release services for accessing health and community services, job seeking, financial skills, vocational training and so on as appropriate.

Caseworkers meet clients on the day of release and transport them from prison to their accommodation as well as assisting them to sign leases, do banking, shopping, and attend Centrelink.

Post-release services are provided through outreach either in the client's home or at service providers with transport assistance provided by the caseworker. There is a strong focus from the outset on advocacy and encouraging independence and self-agency.

Intensive post-release support works holistically on:

- Continuing a strong worker-client relationships including with other CRC workers;
- Establishing and sustaining tenancies;
- Ensuring the home is adequately set up;
- Assisting in the development of living skills;
- Assisting in financial management and addressing legal issues;
- Assisting in child restoration, family reconciliation and mediation;
- Referring to programs for drug and alcohol treatment and assisting in dependency issues as well as general health issues;
- Referring to mental health and psychological services;
- Referring and assisting with impulsivity and anger management issues;
- Establishing links with community based services and contacts;
- Linking clients into vocational training and education courses and opportunities to increase employment skills;
- Supporting building of parenting skills, particularly for clients who are single to minimise the cycle of offending across generations; and
- Facilitating engagement in meaningful activity.

### **3.4.2. Assessment and referral processes**

#### **Eligibility criteria**

Eligible clients are female prisoners exiting Berrima (initially), Emu Plains, Dilwynia, Silverwater Correctional Centres and Parramatta and Bolwara Transition Centres who:

- Are sentenced (not on remand);
- Are voluntarily seeking support;
- Are willing to live in greater Western Sydney metro area;
- Have at least three months before earliest release date;
- Fall outside ADHC eligibility;
- Are at high or medium risk of re-offending (LSI-R);
- Have complex needs and/or dependent children;
- Are seeking restoration with children;
- Are at risk of homelessness and eligible for priority housing; and
- Have capacity to live independently.

#### **Assessment and referral processes**

Women are referred, usually by Corrective Services NSW staff, using the designated THaSS Referral form developed for the project (Appendix 6), if they are assessed as being at risk of homelessness or risk of re-offending and otherwise meet the eligibility criteria. Ideally referrals are made three months prior to release, however in some cases referrals are made much closer to the time of release. The referred woman is then assessed by the designated THaSS caseworker, to assess levels

of support needed, criminogenic risk and willingness to participate in the project. There has been a focus on addressing women assessed as being at medium-high risk of re-offending as the evidence indicates that intensive interventions are most likely to have greater impact for this target group.

Several clients reported self-referral to the project through word of mouth from other prisoners or through written information about THaSS found in the custodial setting.

### **3.4.3. Coordination structures**

The THaSS caseworkers have a central coordination role for ensuring accommodation is available on release as well as ongoing service coordination according to client needs. This includes support for maintaining tenancies. Staff liaise with specialist services to facilitate client access at an intensity appropriate for the stage of the client and are also responsible for coordinating case conferencing as needed with the client.

### **3.4.4. Partnerships**

Corrective Services NSW has a formal contractual agreement and partnership with CRC to deliver the THaSS project. CRC has also established partnerships and operating agreements with seven Community Housing providers (Mission Australia, Ecclesia, St George Community Housing, Wentworth Community Housing, Womens' Housing, Hume Housing, Link Housing) to facilitate access to accommodation. This became particularly important following the first year of the project when assured housing was no longer available through Nation Building properties. A shared operating agreement is also in place with Parramatta and Fairfield/ Liverpool Community Mental Health Services along with cooperative working arrangements with a range of other services. CRC also works in close collaboration with a wide range of Aboriginal services.

### **3.4.5. Brokerage**

An initial allocation of \$2,000 brokerage per client was made for the purposes of establishing households and for emergencies such as food or medicine. The brokerage funds for THaSS have mostly been applied to assisting clients establish their home with the purchase of household goods, white-goods, furniture, emergency needs such as food and medical supplies, moving costs, payment for identification documents, etc.

## **3.5. Management and governance arrangements**

The project is managed and delivered by CRC under the auspices of a Steering Committee and reporting to the Western Sydney Regional Homelessness Committee. The Steering Committee is convened and chaired by the Partnerships and Community Engagement Unit of Corrective Services NSW which meets twice yearly and comprises key stakeholders from the Community Housing providers and other service providers.

Corrective Services NSW is the lead government agency for the project and is a member of the NSW Homelessness Interagency Committee providing high level governance and feeding into the Justice and Human Services CEO's Forum.



### 3.6. Staffing

The THaSS funding is for a team of eight staff, including seven transitional THaSS workers and one manager position Senior Transitional THaSS worker.

### 3.7. Budget allocation

The THaSS budget allocated in the contract over the 3 years from 2009/2010 – 2012/2013 was for a total of \$2,656,653 excl GST with the expectation of providing services to 22 clients per year for, being a total project target of 66 women. CRC was appointed as the contractor in July 2010 and the first quarter of Year 1 was spent establishing the project and recruiting staff, with released clients first being housed commencing in October 2010.

Table 1: THaSS budget allocation<sup>6</sup>

Funding source	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
NPAH	\$801,393	\$924,157	\$930,503

As discussed in Section 5 below, additional funding was provided utilising underspends in 2011/2012 and budgets pooled between THaSS and the Sustaining Tenancies project.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Contract between Corrective Services NSW and Community Restorative Centre. 2010



## 4. ANALYSIS OF CLIENT AND SERVICE SYSTEM OUTCOMES

The following section details the findings in relation to client services provided, client housing and non-housing outcomes and the impacts on addressing homelessness. The outcomes for service systems and staffing issues are then described. Specific details of numbers of services accessed by clients and occasions of service were not available.

### 4.1. Client services and outcomes

#### 4.1.1. Clients assisted

The project had an overall target of assisting 66 clients by June 13 and commenced client services in October 2010. The following table (Table 2) details the number of new clients registered to the service following release in each of the years. THaSS exceeded its targets in the first two years of operating with 55 new clients taken into the service. It should be noted that the definition of clients was clarified early in the project to only include clients who have been released from custody.

These figures do not however necessarily represent the total numbers assisted during each year, as there was a considerable number of clients being assisted in the community on an on-going basis but registered to a previous year. Also clients who were being supported (following referral) but who were still in custody are not reflected in these figures as new clients according to the agreed definition.

Table 2: THaSS client numbers

Year	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	Overall target to June 13
Target	17	23	23	66
Actual	25	30	N/A	45 assisted to date
Exited	24		N/A	

Of the 60 clients referred into the program over the first two years, from the date of referral (not all were released in this period), 55 new clients in total participated in the THaSS service.

During year one the project worked with a total of 25 clients, during year two, 51 clients including some carried over from year one. The clients aged in range from 26 to 60 years and as shown in Table 3 below included a high proportion of Aboriginal women.

Table 3: THaSS client profiles

Aboriginal background	21
CALD background	6
Prior adult incarcerations	38 (some data missing)
Diagnosed mental health condition	46
Assessed as having problematic drug and alcohol history	54

Over the two year period 24 of the 55 new clients of the service exited the program:

- 13 clients completed the program and were exited having achieved their goals successfully.

Of the remainder:

- Four withdrew from the program;
- Four returned to custody (two for breach of parole);
- Two lost contact; and
- One had service withdrawn.

*Assessed Risk of Re-offending (Data provided by Corrective Services NSW)<sup>7</sup>*

For the *Targeted Housing and Support* project, of the 71 clients in the sample,<sup>8</sup> 26 did not have a current assessment of risk of re-offending.<sup>9</sup> Of the 45 that were assessed using the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R), the majority were medium-high or high risk of re-offending (36) with nine being assessed as low or medium-low risk of re-offending. Of those who were assessed, most were medium-high risk of re-offending.

#### **4.1.2. Services provided**

All clients were provided with accommodation and support to maintain tenancies together with ongoing case management tailored to their individual needs (their ISP). THaSS caseworkers endeavoured to incorporate strategies within the ISP to address recognised criminogenic factors and reduce the risks of re-offending, such as AOD use, attitudes, employment/ education levels as disclosed by clients.

Post-release outreach visits to clients' homes and community settings were intensive initially in recognition of the greater risk of re-offending in the initial three months post-release and subsequently scaled down and tapered off according to the step-down model. Referrals were made to a wide range of services and programs according to need as described below. An unknown proportion of clients would also have been accessing programs and services as part of the Probation and Parole orders.

Services provided included support for the following:

- Linking and referrals to local services for health, substance dependence and psychosocial needs including General Practitioner, methadone clinics, counsellors, support programs (alcohol and drugs, mental health, gambling, domestic violence, anger management, parenting, family relationships);
- Transport or assistance to attend appointments;
- Linking/ re-connecting with family and:
  - support with child access and restoration;
  - assistance with family mediation;

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<sup>7</sup> Source: CSNW Corporate Research Evaluation and Statistics Branch. January 2013.

<sup>8</sup> The sample analysed by CSNSW included clients up until end of December 2012 – i.e. beyond the end of June period of the evaluation.

<sup>9</sup> An LSI-R is administered for offenders serving sentences of six months or more. Therefore if CRC serviced a client serving less than six months or a client serving more than six months but with a "back-dated" sentence, the LSI-R would not have been administered.

- Assistance with administrative matters:
  - getting identity documentation (birth certificates, Medicare, bank accounts);
  - establishing Centrelink payments, capacity assessments;
  - tenancy agreements.
- Assistance with financial and legal matters:
  - financial literacy, budgeting;
  - debt management – arrangements with SDRO;
  - legal aid and assistance with court matters and appearances.
- Linking with relevant government agencies and attending appointments:
  - parole services;
  - Community Services.
- Linking with education and employment services and programs:
  - TAFE/ community courses, programs;
  - Job Network agencies.
- Assistance with establishing household and maintaining tenancies:
  - supporting tenancy – rental payments, addressing property damage etc;
  - purchase of household items;
  - shopping;
  - daily routine, household maintenance.
- Linking and referrals to appropriate cultural and language services for Aboriginal and CALD clients:
  - medical, legal, counselling and therapeutic;
  - social and support programs.

Clients have mostly been supported on average for 12 months with an average support hours per week of 5-6 hours.

#### **4.1.3. Housing outcomes**

All THaSS clients were supported to access housing and to secure tenancy agreements; all received ongoing assistance in a number of ways to maintain tenancies. There were occasions when accommodation was sourced outside of Western Sydney according to availability and where this suited client needs.

Accessing suitable housing in the second and third years of the project has been very challenging; there is a limited housing supply in the Western Sydney area and a lengthy priority waiting list. Accommodation has been secured largely through the advocacy efforts of CRC and the strong partnerships that have been developed with housing providers.

The majority of clients have been housed in social housing (public, Aboriginal Housing Office or community housing). A smaller number have been in temporary accommodation (TA) (e.g. transition motel) or living temporarily with family or friends, and/or in private accommodation. Linkages have also been made with boarding houses and hostels.

Table 4: THaSS clients housing types<sup>10</sup>

Type of housing assistance provided	2010/2011	2011/2012
Social housing	25	34
Private rental	0	2
Temporary accommodation (motel etc) (TA)	1	0
Living temporarily with family/ friends	1	2
Boarding house	0	0
Assistance to maintain tenancies	44	38

The annual figures above reflect numbers at the time of reporting but do not fully represent the numbers of women (estimated to be 5-6) who were initially accommodated in TA for various lengths of time. In the first year of the project there were some delays in allocated Nation Building housing being completed and accommodation was not available on the day of release for a number of clients, particularly in the period up until February 2011. The strong partnerships developed by CRC with a number of community housing providers subsequently meant that they were able to successfully source suitable transitional accommodation for the larger majority of clients prior to release.

TA has been used as a last resort as it has proven to be a risky and unsuitable environment for some clients who were reported to need a longer time to settle post-release. THaSS workers observed that where the TA environment was, in extreme cases, also associated with drug use and prostitution this created increased vulnerability for less stable clients who were at high risk of reverting to risky and offending behaviours. In a small number of cases this resulted in evictions and this subsequently made it more difficult to secure alternative temporary accommodation.

Transitioning to permanent housing was difficult, however it was noted by community housing providers interviewed that several clients had successfully progressed to permanent housing arrangements.

Even though suitable housing was not always available initially, CRC support to move towards appropriate housing was critical. Interviews with exited THaSS clients confirmed the critical importance for them of being supported to access and sustain housing; in their view this played a vital role in their successful settlement post-release. Almost all clients commented that without CRC support to access housing, they would have been homeless or in some cases most likely to be back in custody.

Having secure housing post-release has been a very dramatic change for some clients:

*“This has been my first proper accommodation since getting off heroin and cocaine ... first really stable home since getting on the right track. Previously I was sleeping rough – on the streets in Kings Cross, St Canister’s church – doing drugs, living like that ... tough on the streets.” (THaSS client #3)*

*“If CRC did not help ... I do not know where I could have lived with my kids. I say thank you CRC very much.” (THaSS client #2 - now living again with her 2 children)*

<sup>10</sup> Source. THaSS Self-evaluation Report June 2012.

## Sustaining tenancies

THaSS clients have been supported to sustain tenancies through advice and information, assistance with developing skills in managing financial matters (budgeting, financial literacy, dealing with debt issues etc.). There has also been assistance to deal with client behavioural and other problems with tenancies. Advocacy with housing providers on behalf of clients also intervening directly with clients has been integral to sustaining tenancies in many instances.

*“CRC is careful about placements to ensure success and sustaining tenancy – they avoid Housing NSW properties in bad areas, bad streets, bad blocks which are risky for these clients.”  
(Corrective Services NSW – Probation and Parole)*

Data was not available regarding the numbers of THaSS clients who have sustained tenancies, as clients have either left or exited the program and are lost to follow up. However stakeholder interviews indicated that there has been success in this regard. All six clients interviewed for the evaluation have successfully sustained their housing and also expressed confidence in being able to continue to do so.

*“Confident that I will die there – nothing will put this at risk, housing has been paramount to me.” (THaSS client #1)*

Housing providers interviewed also commented on the high levels of success of THaSS clients in sustaining tenancies. One Supported Housing Manager partner reported that of ten THaSS clients, eight were confirmed to have maintained tenancies and only one is known to have returned to custody. Generally, housing providers also commented that THaSS clients had been able to maintain properties in a good condition.

*“It (the THaSS service) has been really good – all CRC clients have done really well for themselves – many have moved on, no-one has gone back to prison, they are sustaining their tenancies. We have about 4-5 at the moment and one about to move to private rental with her partner.” (Community Housing provider)*

An important outcome noted for THaSS clients has been the establishment of a rental history and also getting a tenancy reference in several cases, which will be important in facilitating future access to housing.

## Issues with sustaining tenancies

Community housing providers interviewed recognise the challenges and complexities of the THaSS target client group and generally reported very positively on client housing and maintenance outcomes; emerging issues were generally detected early and addressed in a timely manner through the close working relationship with CRC.

*“CRC are very responsive to any hiccup – we work together to provide the best outcomes for the client – as a team you can sort it out – incredibly responsive.” (Community Housing provider)*

However, it was also said by several housing providers that in a few instances there have been problems with clients, in particular in relation to noise and disturbance or damage to property. It was suggested by housing providers and Probation and Parole interviewees that some of these clients lack adequate basic living skills and would benefit from an initial period post-release in a more structured transitional accommodation environment before moving to the responsibilities of

independent living in their own accommodation. The transition from correctional institutions is seen as too challenging for some clients who need intensive support to build skills and understanding of the responsibilities of sustaining an individual tenancy, as well as getting settled out of custody in the initial three months post-release period in particular.

One housing provider said that there were several cases where clients have not sustained tenancies and left without notice, providers have been left with the costs of property damage or substantial rent arrears debt, which potentially threatens the good will of the partnership arrangements. However, providers expressed confidence that due to the strength of the current partnerships with CRC, the issues could be raised and strategies developed to resolve such problems in the future.

#### **4.1.4. Non-housing outcomes**

##### **Impacts on re-offending**

Once clients are exited from THaSS there is no follow-up on longer-term outcomes and no routine data collection systems to track them other than Corrective Services NSW re-offending data, which is only captured at 24 months following release. Although the evaluation could not determine with any precision the extent to which the objective of reducing recidivism has been achieved, there is indicative data from several sources that point to positive outcomes in reducing re-offending in some THaSS clients. This is likely to have been attributable, at least in part, to the project. It may also be that some clients who were at lower risk of re-offending were in less need of the intensive support provided by the THaSS model.

It was also noted that in the first year of the project, when housing was assured for all clients, a higher re-offending rate was observed. By way of explanation it was suggested that subsequently clients had to strive harder to get access to, and sustain, appropriate accommodation.

A number of service providers (mental health and corrections) commented very positively on THaSS clients completing parole supervision orders successfully, some for the first time, and surviving out of custody longer than had been expected given their previous histories. This was directly attributed to the quality of CRC support. In the view of an experienced Probation and Parole officer who has supervised THaSS clients:

*“It seems that having a place to go to upon release gives them more confidence and in turn would assist them in minimising the risk of re-offending and returning to custody.” (Probation and Parole)*

Additionally, of the six clients interviewed for the evaluation, five specifically commented that without the support of the THaSS project they would probably be both homeless and likely to have re-offended and be back in custody. The combination of housing, support to access various services and in particular having a constant, reliable caseworker as back up were identified as key factors.

*“I feel I will be able to keep out of prison now – nothing but the highest regard for CRC – they are perfect.” (THaSS client #4)*

THaSS staff commented on working closely with clients to support them through particular periods of stress where there were early signs of reverting to risk taking behaviour. They reported success in supporting clients to more positive behaviours, thus potentially averting re-offending. It was also noted by caseworkers that there would be benefit in having access to details of clients' criminogenic risk factors identified in the LSI-R assessment so that they are more able to focus case management in the ISP on specific risks that may not have been revealed by clients.

### **Return to custody and/or CSNSW (analysis and commentary provided by CSNSW)<sup>11</sup>**

Re-offending is defined as a person being **charged and convicted** of another offence. For the purposes of CSNSW reporting, re-offending is measured at **24 months following** release from custody or the end of a community based order. Therefore, for the purposes of this evaluation, re-offending **cannot** be analysed because the “time to re-offend” is insufficient for most of the sample. Notwithstanding, CSNSW is able to report on how many of the sample has returned:

- To custody; and
- To CSNSW.

For the Targeted Housing and Support Project out of a sample size of 71,<sup>12</sup> provided by Community Restorative Centre (CRC), a total of 16 clients returned to CSNSW, with 12 of these returning to custody. It should be noted that a number of clients had not been on the project for the full exposure time (in the community) of 12 months. This project exposure time also (in many cases) includes up to three months in custody, meaning the “time to re-offend” in many cases is further reduced.

The return to custody/ CSNSW data does not account for offences committed where the person was not imprisoned or placed under a CSNSW supervised order. Examples of such penalties include fines and unsupervised bonds.

“Return to gaol” means the person returned to custody and can include breach of parole or new offences. The data provided do not include the delineation of justice process returns (e.g. revocation of parole/ breach of parole order) and/or new offences.

“Return to CSNSW” includes those who have returned to custody **OR** a community based order (i.e. returned to the supervision/ management of CSNSW).

While the results above indicate relatively low return to custody rates (especially for THaSS), there was no way to identify the time of offense, therefore it is unclear (without much detailed manual analysis) if participants’ re-offending occurred while on the project or after the period of support ended.

The figures/ rates should be interpreted with caution for the following reasons:

- The figures represent a “snapshot” on a given day and are not indicative of published re-offending rates which are examined after a two year period and include robust analysis of NSW court data (analysed and provided by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research);
- There is no control group;
- There is no way to attribute re-offending rates to exposure to the project; and
- There was significant manipulation of the data, especially the exit dates from custody and exit from the project by CSNSW and CRC, due to issues with the CRC database.

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<sup>11</sup> Source: CSNSW Corporate Research Evaluation and Statistics (CRES) Branch. January 2013.

<sup>12</sup> CRES has recommended that the analysis use raw numbers and not percentages due to the small sample size.

## Other client outcomes

*"I am liking this new feeling in life – I embrace it to the best of my ability – I am happy for once in my life and not miserable and depending on drugs for my happiness." (THaSS client #3, Aboriginal woman 26 years)*

All stakeholders and THaSS clients interviewed for the evaluation reported a range of significant outcomes, which they specifically attributed to involvement with CRC, including improved physical and emotional health and an increased sense of confidence and self-efficacy. A common theme was reduced stress and anxiety felt by the women generally, in facing the challenges and complexities of settling back into the community after being in custody. Positive outcomes reported by clients included:

- Being healthier, linked into medical care;
- Feeling more in control of life and increased self-esteem;
- Improved social connections;
- Accessing education and training and part time employment;
- Re-uniting with children and family;
- Reducing substance abuse and maintaining methadone;
- Having greater financial stability and being better able to manage money and reduce debt; and
- Actively accessing more services and being aware of what services and support are available.

Through engagement with the project, clients reported that they have developed skills and confidence to navigate systems and self-advocate in a way they would not have previously.

Clients spoke consistently of the particular importance and value to them of having a strong relationship with a caseworker and not being judged, particularly considering the stigma associated with incarceration. Having access to a constant, knowledgeable and reliable support person was a key success factor in their re-settlement identified by all the women interviewed. Each also expressed confidence that they can maintain the gains they have made so far.

Comments on non-housing outcomes from THaSS clients included for instance:

*"Advocated for me in all ways – come with me and introduced themselves – I also feel a lot more confident in self advocating and have a good pulse of what is available now." (THaSS client #2)*

*"Cannot speak highly enough of them – they have done everything for me. It feels like I have a safety net to fall into." (THaSS client #4)*

*"It has made a real difference to my wellbeing. Probably would have been on the slippery road back into drugs connected back with family and friends – would have probably been back on the drugs ... it has given me stability and a direction in my life." (THaSS client #1)*

CRC staff and other service providers also commented on the levels of engagement of THaSS clients in mainstream community services; and attendance at appointments has been actively supported by the caseworkers.



## Client case study

Andrea<sup>13</sup> is an Aboriginal woman of 27 years who was in state care until she was 18 years of age and in and out of foster care. She has a history of heroin and cocaine addiction, suicide attempts and had lived rough on the streets in inner city Sydney for five years. Andrea has had multiple incarcerations and been cycling in and out of prison all her adult life. She has a 10-15 year old daughter who is in foster care and with whom she is trying to reunite. She was at medium-high risk of re-offending as per the LSI-R assessment.

Andrea heard about THaSS through information in prison and requested a referral. Through THaSS she was provided with housing (a two bedroom unit in small complex), which she has sustained despite finding the rental payments difficult at times.

*“Last time I was released I got straight back onto drugs – last time they housed me in a shared situation – and I just lost it.”*

Andrea received intensive case management and was supported to access a wide range of services through THaSS referrals along with personal support and encouragement; she also had access to Probation and Parole services.

The support provided by THaSS included facilitating use of community services (making appointments, keeping appointments), counselling, mentoring, advocacy, helping organise access visits and court appearances to regain custody of her daughter, obtaining a WDO to reduce her SDRO debt, banking, and budgeting skills. Andrea was also linked into Aboriginal community medical and other services as she felt appropriate.

At the time of interview, Andrea had been off methadone for eight months, had not re-offended, her physical health had improved significantly and she reported having energy and feeling good. In her words:

*“I take pride in myself in being normal – off drugs. I stuck to them – the services they provided – they stuck with me – did not leave me to deal with it on my own ... made sure I got to the appointments – never left me once – I could always rely on them – a guiding figure. I do not have the mother role model ... never had anybody to show me – guide me (before).”*

*“and yeah ... family – I earned all family respect back – showed them I am doing the right thing.”*

*“Could not have done this without CRC – every other time I was just put straight back onto the street – all I knew was the street life – that was my lifestyle for 5 years – this is the longest I have been out in my life.”*

## 4.2. Impact of the project on reducing/ addressing homelessness

### 4.2.1. Impact of the project on addressing homelessness

The evaluation findings confirm that the project has had an impact on reducing homelessness in this client group, but it was not possible to determine the precise extent of this.

All 55 clients were assessed as being at risk of homelessness; at successful exit from the project, 13 clients were still housed. Some clients left the service for a variety of reasons, some of which were re-imprisonment. As noted above, of the six clients interviewed, five stated that they would have

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<sup>13</sup> Not the real client name.

otherwise been either homeless or back in being in custody if they had not had the service from CRC. THaSS workers commented that without the project many clients would have been likely to exit custody to live with family or friends or use Housing NSW temporary accommodation, which may subsequently have resulted in homelessness.

Community housing providers reported that THaSS clients had maintained their tenancies well and some have transitioned to permanent accommodation.

#### **4.2.2. Specific client groups**

Women with complex issues are the target group for the project and the service model has been specifically designed with the needs of these women in mind. Apart from dealing with issues of homelessness and criminogenic needs, THaSS support has been designed specifically to assist with parenting, custody of and access to children, assistance with dealing with the aftermath of sexual violence (whether as children or adults), leaving violent family situations, and dealing with problematic drug and alcohol issues.

The client caseload was initially three clients, to allow for service intensity to support these clients. It was found, however, that with the phased intensity of case management, workers could manage double the caseload.

Housing assessment takes into account the need to accommodate children as well as being in a safe area away from violent partners or negative social networks. The THaSS project has been able to draw on the wider resources and experience and expertise of CRC staff for additional support in dealing with these matters.

Aboriginal women constitute a significant proportion of the THaSS clients, with 21 of the total identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Despite ongoing efforts, CRC was unable to recruit an Aboriginal caseworker. Aboriginal clients are linked into Aboriginal community services and programs as appropriate and as wished by the client. They are recognised as having particular housing needs regarding kin, family and community relationships and avoidance of family violence situations.

Clients of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds (CALD) are referred to language speaking professionals (for counselling, legal advice, other professional services) and provided with opportunities to link into social groups. It was reported that, while these clients access professional services, they are less likely to participate in social groups and programs from their ethnic/ cultural groups.

#### **4.3. Service system and delivery outcomes**

Without exception, service providers consulted for the evaluation reported very positive benefits from the THaSS project, with added service capacity and support for a very vulnerable and complex client group. The role that THaSS workers play in coordination and on-going networking and liaison with other service providers, together with proactive advocacy on behalf of clients, adds significant strength to local service delivery. One service provider commented: *"I found CRC to be brilliant"*. A consistent theme from service providers was the excellent capacity of CRC for working in effective collaborative partnerships (*"they understand working partnerships"*).

An important outcome identified by several interviewees was an increased awareness gained by other services and agencies in the area about the priority needs of CRC clients and the complexities of their circumstances.

*“Attitudes towards providing housing has changed due to the CRC projects – helps others see these as priority clients.” (Health service manager)*

Comments by a range of service providers confirm the contribution CRC in general makes to strengthened service delivery in the Western Sydney region:

*“The personal and professional relationships developed by CRC with other agencies increases the effectiveness of their advocacy.”*

*“The project motivates other (agencies) and pulls the right strings to get people housed - to get the allocations somehow. Ability to develop relationships with many different services.”*

*“Team approach, approachable, easy to work with.”*

The THaSS case management was viewed as valuable in enhancing capacity of other services to effectively support clients.

*“We as a ... service would be stuck without CRC support – CRC keeps up the non-clinical support ... it would be a disaster to lose the support/ funding. CRC is willing to get around the table and share ideas of what works.” (Mental health service provider)*

Housing providers also commented on the staff time saved by their services where staff have high caseloads and limited capacity to take on case management for very complex clients; it was viewed that tenancy would otherwise be jeopardised without the intensive THaSS support.

The detailed knowledge CRC workers have of the clients and their role in liaison with CSNSW was an asset to other service providers, especially those for whom client information may not be possible to access from CSNSW. This provided a more rounded background and history of the referred client and enabled a more effective response to the complexity of their needs.

An area for improving service integration was identified by Corrective Services NSW staff who commented on confusion about the different housing and support options available through CRC and other initiatives. They suggested that there should be more active promotion and information about the various services and clarity about the correct eligibility criteria for each.

#### **4.4. Staffing issues**

##### **4.4.1. Impact of staffing issues on the project**

The quality of caseworkers and their capacity to develop strong, trusting relationships with the THaSS clients is a core element of the service model, ensuring ongoing engagement of clients and effective support for them to access required services. In the initial start-up phase of the project, there were delays in recruiting appropriately qualified staff to the full team of seven caseworkers and one manager. Recruitment and retention of a full team complement has been difficult through several phases of the project largely due to the demanding nature of the work and relatively small pool of applicants for the positions.

With the relatively large proportion of Aboriginal clients, efforts were made over an extended period to recruit an Aboriginal caseworker, without success due to lack of suitable applicants.

The high quality of the staff and the relationships they were able to build with clients, was reported as a primary strength of the CRC service by all clients interviewed. The capacity of CRC caseworkers to effectively liaise and work closely with other service providers was another very clear success factor of the project.



#### **4.4.2. Skills needed by staff**

The work with THaSS clients requires a combination of formal qualifications in welfare, counselling and advocacy combined with practical skills to support day to day living and strong service networking and coordination capacity. The client group is complex and can be very challenging to work with; they commonly have histories of difficulties establishing effective relationships and frequently have a lack of trust in service providers in general. The nature of client backgrounds often means that THaSS staff are frequently required to be “accidental counsellors”.

Staff are required to have tertiary qualifications or equivalent experience in relevant areas. Criminal Record checks are conducted prior to employment.

#### **4.4.3. Staff training required**

New THaSS staff were required to undergo core training in Child Protection, First Aid, Understanding Mental Illness and Safety Awareness in Prison, as well as CRC education seminars: Families of Prisoners Training and From Prison to Community Training.

Staff also had access to Mental Health First Aid training, and subsequent training according to their specific needs as identified in supervision. Each CRC staff member has an annual allocation of \$1,000 for training and conference attendance and is also able to access a wide range of free training available in the sector. Advice, mentoring and informal training is also available through CRC in-house staff expertise.

Supervision is provided for all THaSS staff by internal senior staff and there is ongoing collegial support across the CRC teams.

## 5. COST ANALYSIS

The following section provides the details of the project budget with a crude estimate of average client services costs and brokerage. The information presented is based on financial data provided by CRC.

### 5.1. Total project budget and expenditure

The audited statements for the total THaSS budget expenditure are captured in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Total project budget and expenditure<sup>14</sup>

CRC-Targeted Housing & Support Services	2009-10 Budget	2009-10 Expenditure	2010-11 Budget	2010-11 Expenditure	2011-12 Budget	2011-12 Expenditure	Total Budget	Total Expenditure	2012-13 Budget estimates
Client service staff	0	2953	467953	424960	604921	597567	1072874	1025480	615,494
Admin and management staff	0		38000	42639	40000	62635	78000	341800	64,514
Other admin expenses (non staff)	0	109	230700	279165	151000	187702	381700	466976	190,495
Brokerage - goods	0	0	46000	52142	60000	20656	106000	72798	60,000
Brokerage - services	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
<b>Financial Year Totals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3062</b>	<b>782653</b>	<b>798906</b>	<b>855921</b>	<b>868560</b>	<b>1638574</b>	<b>1907054</b>	<b>930,503</b>
			Incl start up costs	Incl start up costs					
<b>Expenditure on grants received</b>									
Grant received	399,000		404,653		928,182				
Less expenditure	3,062		798,906		868,560				
Carried forward	395,938		1,685		59,622				

Underspends in the previous year which were carried forward gave a total \$1.021m for the 2011/2012 budget. Given the disparity with the Sustaining Tenancies budget, approval was given for pooling of budgets so that underspends from THaSS could be used to support the Broken Hill project.

### 5.2. Issues with expenditure

There were under spends across each year and some issues with budgetary allocations largely due to problems recruiting suitable staff to fill positions, particularly in the early stages of the project.

### 5.3. Client costs for this project

For comparability across the HAP evaluations, Housing NSW requested that detailed project costings be considered for the financial year 2011/2012. The costings for the THaSS project for 2011/2012 can be found at Appendix 4.

The total expenditure for 2011/2012 was \$868,560 with a brokerage component of \$20,656. During that year 30 new released clients were recorded to have been supported by the project,<sup>15</sup> with clients being serviced for varying lengths of time over the 12 months. In effect, the actual numbers of clients being assisted on a daily basis would have been greater, taking into account clients from previous years still with the service and clients still in custody who were receiving support.

<sup>14</sup> Source CRC audited financial data.

<sup>15</sup> Due to administrative data errors it is not clear how many additional clients who had entered the service previously were still being assisted.

Crude analysis indicates that there was an average cost per client of \$28,952 a year (\$2,412.66 per month or \$79.32 per day), which includes three months pre-release and nine months post-release. The average brokerage costs for each client were \$688.53. This annual average is broadly indicative only and does not take into account a number of other pertinent factors:

- Not all women receive that length of support due to exits from the project, including return to custody;
- The costs of other services and programs accessed by the clients which all add value and complement the role of the THaSS service (including Probation and Parole programs, health, housing, medical and other mainstream services);
- The cost of re-incarceration for those who return to custody;
- Savings to other services due to staff time not used for dealing with complex THaSS clients; and
- The additional benefits leveraged for THaSS clients from Centrelink, Rent Assistance, Job Seekers for example.

To demonstrate cost savings to the justice system, complex calculations are required by Treasury and entire centres or wings need to be closed down in order for those costs savings to be made. While there are no evident savings to this system, it is worth noting that by comparison the daily cost of full-time inmate custody is \$174.74 (open custody) or \$211.23 (secure custody) or \$63,780 and \$77,090 per annum respectively (Corrective Services 2012). The daily cost of supervision for a community based offender is \$21.48.

Some additional observations can be made, particularly in the light of a recent study by Baldry et al (Baldry et al 2012). The study analysed the life-course institutional costs of homelessness for a range of vulnerable groups with a particular focus on those with mental health disorders and cognitive impairment and histories of multiple disadvantage and interaction with the criminal justice systems. Using a case study approach, pathway costings were developed for a sample of 11 people with histories of homelessness and criminal justice system involvement, a significant proportion of whom were noted to be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Many of the clients of the THaSS project reflect a similar profile to the women who were the study subjects and these costings could potentially provide an indicative benchmark for the THaSS project over a longer period. As an example, the life-course costings for two of the female subjects of the study were \$1,118,126 and \$976,106. Based on these figures and with a longer-term view of potentially significantly reducing future interactions of clients with criminal justice systems, intensive intervention early in the cycle of offending is likely to amplify the benefits of targeted investments such as THaSS.

#### **5.4. Use of brokerage funding**

Brokerage funding was mostly used to purchase household goods and was not used to access services due to the availability of a wide range of mainstream services in the metropolitan area of Western Sydney. It was viewed by CRC that the notional allocation of \$2,000 for each client (reduced in 2011 with the increased client caseload), was excessive and that the funds could be better applied elsewhere. An important focus of CRC is building client's life skills, including learning how to be resourceful and to manage with limited financial means. For instance this may mean buying furniture and household goods at a charity store rather than purchasing new items.

## 6. ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE THaSS MODEL

This section provides an analysis of the effectiveness of the THaSS service model, based on the findings and identifies the key success factors and challenges faced in the implementation of the project.

*“The attention shown by staff – you are not just a case – you are treated as a person, they do everything in their power to assist you.” (THaSS client # 5)*

*“It has made a huge difference, [I was] involved from the outset. Support is vital ... a few girls have been very successful now and without CRC they would not have made it.” (Senior Probation and Parole Officer)*

*“Sustainability – the staff on the ground actively advocating is what makes the difference.” (Community Housing provider)*

The evaluation findings confirm that, despite the small scale of the study and the relatively limited data, the available evidence is strongly indicative that the THaSS model has been effective in addressing homelessness for the client group, although the extent of this across all THaSS clients is not clear. There was a consistent view from all stakeholders involved in the evaluation that the model works very well for women in the target group leaving correctional centres.

The extent of reducing re-offending is not definitive, however there are promising indicators of positive impacts from client and other service provider feedback and longer-term data will be needed from Corrective Services NSW to assess this more fully.

Although broad goals were set for the project initially, due to the short timeframes for the scoping and planning stage of the project, no performance indicators or measures were defined for these. However based on the stakeholder feedback there appears to have been positive outcomes for clients in most of the THaSS goals as indicated in Table 6 below, although it was not possible to determine the extent of this for each client. There is incomplete data for many areas, no mechanisms for specifically measuring changes and no follow-up or monitoring mechanisms to track progress in each of these for each client.

**Table 6: Achievements against goals**

Project goal	Comment
Sustain tenancy	Numbers uncertain, client and housing provider reports
Reduce re-offending	Reports from Probation and Parole, other service providers, clients. Analysis of rates not able to be confirmed by CSNSW due to short timeframes.
Maintain independent living and improve living skills	Reports from service providers and clients
Improve health outcomes	Client self reports, service provider observation
Utilise mainstream services to meet needs	Service provider and client reports Assistance with transport and encouragement to attend was important
Decrease social isolation	Client and service provider reports. Increased

Project goal	Comment
	engagement with family social activities
Increase compliance with parole conditions	Positive reports from Probation and Parole
Maintain existing positive family/ friendship roles and relationships	Anecdotal reports – clients and service providers
Increase access to community based support service	Client and service provider reports
Increase access to psychiatric/ psychological treatment	Service provider and client feedback
Increase engagement with drug and alcohol treatment	Support and encouragement by caseworkers to attend programs important; completion of methadone and AOD programs cited by clients
Increase access to family reconciliation, mediation and counselling	Client and service provider reports
Increase engagement in vocational, educational, training and employment	Client and service provider reports of increased literacy and numeracy skills, English language competency, job readiness and employment
Engagement in meaningful activity	Client reports and feedback

### 6.1. Success factors for the THaSS model

The THaSS service model is multifaceted, aiming to address multiple complex issues with a severely disadvantaged target group, and it is not possible to specifically isolate individual success factors that contribute to positive outcomes. The **combination of elements** of the THaSS service model (housing, intensive floating tailored support over an extended time frame) is the underpinning success of the model.

Additional key contributors to success were the following:

- **Access to appropriate housing** in suitable locations providing a stable base for clients to re-establish lives and to access services to build skills, improve health, reunite with children, and address AOD and other risk factors;
- The **quality of client support** provided by caseworkers was critical to client success – both in terms of effectively tailoring support for individual needs as well as the nature of the trusting, reliable, supportive caseworker - client relationships;
- **Support to sustain tenancies** over an extended period and in a range of ways including financial management and advocacy with service providers, which assisted clients to maintain stable housing and build a rental history;
- **Effective partnerships** and strong collaborative working relationships with other agencies and services was important and has strengthened the overall service capacity in the area, the sum of the whole is greater than the sum of individual parts; and
- **Proactive outreach support** in the early post-release period in particular sustained support to prevent relapse and reversion to risk behaviours;



- **Strong client focussed advocacy** with other service providers together with active management of client expectations;
- **Flexibility and adaptability of CRC** in implementing the model. For instance when the supply of guaranteed housing ended after Year 1, CRC proactively sought to build relationships with a broader range of housing providers to increase opportunities to access housing; and
- The **long experience of CRC** in the field and extensive knowledge and expertise in dealing with the complex issues faced by women in this target group; also the capacity to provide a supportive work environment for staff doing demanding work.

It should also be noted that some clients would have concurrently benefited from other services and support available through for instance supervised parole and other mainstream services. With the available data it was not possible to determine the exact nature, type and extent of additional services used by clients.

## **6.2. Challenges for the THaSS model**

Some of the challenges identified for the THaSS project relate to the structure of the model itself, while others relate to the pilot project implementation processes.

- As a new pilot project there were some initial challenges in getting the project up and running to full capacity quickly, particularly in recruiting a large number of staff to build the full team in a short time;
- There were also initial problems reported in promoting the project with staff in Corrective Services NSW and establishing the limitations of client eligibility;
- There was considerable confusion and changes in HAP reporting requirements and data definitions that resulted in inconsistencies in some data capture; and
- More recently it was noted that there have been reduced referrals to the project from Corrective Services NSW due to understanding that the project will cease in June 2013 which may impact CRC capacity to meet its targets to June 2013.

### **Inadequate accommodation availability**

- The major challenge for the THaSS model has been accessing adequate accommodation for clients, particularly following the cessation of access to the Nation Building properties after Year 1. Initially there was a wider understanding, including within prisons that there would be 20 properties available for each year of the project. This created expectations and a build up of referrals to THaSS that the service was unable to quickly take on; this was reported to result in misunderstandings and some tension with Correctional staff. The challenge in subsequent years of accessing suitable accommodation has been vigorously addressed by CRC expanding its partnerships with a wider range of housing providers; and
- Lack of permanent housing and needing to rely on temporary accommodation, which can be unsuitable and in inappropriate locations, is an on-going challenge in supporting clients in the initial transition post-release period.



### Staffing issues

- Recruiting and retaining a full complement of staff who are highly skilled in dealing with this difficult client group has been an on-going challenge. Despite numerous efforts it was not possible to recruit Aboriginal staff members; and
- Maintaining staff performance consistency has been difficult, particularly with respect to managing the phased and step-down process in the THaSS model and exiting clients effectively. Managing the risk of client dependence on staff was an issue at times for some staff.

### Other challenges

- Meeting referral demand was challenging particularly in the early stages when caseloads for workers was low (at three clients). Doubling the caseload to seven or eight clients in February 2011 was a response to this demand and it was suggested that the caseload could have been further increased to enable access for more clients and more ambitious targets set for each year;
- While commencing the client contact three month prior to release is considered to be an important aspect of the project, there are challenges in doing this consistently as there are no flags in the system (although it was reported that a system for this is in development). At times CRC was given shorter notice of release; and
- There have been some on-going challenges related to poor linkages and communication barriers between services inside and outside of prison and some difficulties accessing client information and adequately promoting THaSS services in prison.

## 7. CONCLUSION

### 7.1. Summary of key lessons learnt

There are some important lessons that emerged from the THaSS project evaluation findings:

- A key lesson for implementing pilot projects seeking to address complex “wicked problems” is the importance of ensuring a longer initial period of comprehensive project design and planning. Articulation of an underpinning theory of change and detailed outcomes and indicators of success together with data collection systems to measure these over the course of the project need to be developed. A robust project plan provides a logical framework to guide project development and implementation and enables more effective evaluation processes that in turn can yield more accurate data for assessing outcomes and impacts of the pilot intervention. The THaSS project had very broad overarching goals, no success indicators and measures and very limited baseline data for this target group against which to assess change and the effectiveness of the model;
- As indicated by the available literature the THaSS model, which combines providing access to accommodation, extended client support to sustain tenancies and linking services, appears to be particularly effective in reducing homelessness in this very vulnerable target group. The combined elements of the model are important and it is difficult to separate out the impact of individual elements. Individual elements are likely to have differential importance for different clients;
- For THaSS clients who have successfully exited the service, the sustainability of changes should to an extent be enabled through their linkages into mainstream services and having increased capacity to navigate service systems. The extent to which this occurs is likely to vary across clients. Mechanisms for longer-term follow up of clients are needed to determine overall impacts and robust longitudinal studies should be designed;
- Without ongoing resources the THaSS project will struggle to be sustained. The model is dependent on the staff on the ground who coordinate services, provide case management and advocate on behalf of clients. Other services have very limited capacity to deal effectively with the complexity of this client group;
- While recognising the complexity of the needs and risks of this client group, there would be benefit in closer attention to assessing client characteristics (including criminogenic risk), needs and capacities, and in particular reviewing the assessment criteria. Access to more detailed information from CSNSW regarding criminogenic risk factors, (notwithstanding privacy issues for clients), would enable CRC to develop Individual Support Plans more specifically focussed on reducing re-offending, in line with the “risk principle”;
- Delivery of the service over an extended period is also very important to more effectively support client integration into the community and build confidence and efficacy in self-management;
- A more refined process for identifying the clients who are most likely to benefit from a service such as THaSS would mean that the resources were applied in the most efficient way only to clients assessed to be at medium – high and high risk of re-offending;
- Having access to suitable, secure housing for clients at the time of being released from custody is important, however for some clients in this target group, being provided with a period within a supported transitional accommodation setting may be of more benefit and

ultimately more cost effective and successful in sustaining longer-term tenancies. For instance accessing one of the six residential transitional supported accommodation community based services funded by CSNSW for women, including diversionary, AOD, mental illness, combination, pre release transitional facilities;

- There are considerable risks for less stable clients being placed in TA where permanent housing is not available on release which may jeopardise post –release settlement;
- The costs of the THaSS service per client are relatively high and it is suggested that cost effectiveness could be increased. Targets could be increased and the caseloads lifted to 12-15 clients per worker, particularly as there are clients with a range of levels of need at any one time from high to minimal;
- Overall THaSS service targets could have been set higher over the three years, and higher levels of caseworker caseloads could have been possible with workers managing a spectrum of levels of intensity of client support;
- Projects such as THaSS are able to impact positively on enhanced integration of services and increased overall service capacity for dealing with very complex, high risk members of the community. Client focussed advocacy can influence the understanding of other services about client contexts and needs. Partnerships and good collaborative working relationships with a range of agencies, both government and non-government services, and working through agreed processes provides multiple benefits for clients and service providers;
- There appears to be limited information about THaSS services available in prisons and far greater promotion is needed to increase staff and prisoner awareness and establish greater clarity about the eligibility criteria across various available services (PSI compared with THaSS for instance); and
- The THaSS model misses an important and large group of women who are on remand, incarcerated for a shorter period of time but at high risk of homelessness and re-offending. They are not currently eligible for this type of support to address their risks.

## ***7.2. Implications for the future response to homelessness for the client group in this project***

The THaSS model appears to work very well for women in the target group who have complex needs and are at high risk of re-offending.

### **Additional transitional accommodation options needed**

- There was a strong view among stakeholders that for women in this target group who have low independent living skills and a long history of institutionalisation, the transition from institution to independent living is very difficult to manage successfully. It was suggested that there would be considerable benefit in these women being accommodated initially post-release for a period of 3-4 months in a dedicated transition accommodation environment. This would incorporate supported accommodation in a congregate setting with some level of supervision and intensive support to build basic life skills, confidence and self-efficacy; and
- There are currently six such residential transitional supported accommodation community-based services funded by CSNSW for women, including diversionary, AOD, mental illness, combination, pre release transitional, including one COSP. This type of accommodation for these clients could have longer-term positive outcomes in their being better able to cope

independently and less likely to be at risk of re-offending and homelessness. This would enable more efficient allocation of the intensity of case management provided in the THaSS model to more carefully targeted clients who are at high risk of homelessness and re-offending.

#### Alternative options

- There could be benefit in exploring and developing variations of the THaSS model with differing levels of intensity of support, varying lengths of time for support to be available (six months, 12 months, 18 months, two years with tapering) and consequently different resourcing implications. Caseworkers could thus be allocated varying levels of caseloads to enable an overall greater service capacity for clients; and
- Given the complexity of needs of this group of women prisoners, it was suggested that there needs to be far closer working with welfare services in prisons, which are currently reported to be overstretched.

#### Women on remand and short sentences

- Another key factor for consideration is that there are high proportions of women who are on remand or only serving short sentences and who are at high risk of both homelessness and re-offending, but not currently eligible for the THaSS project. These can involve “immediate” release and if they were homeless prior to entering custody, they require immediate referral and response by a contracted service provider (without any pre release engagement) and/or existing services in the community; and
- Given the recognised importance of this group consideration of supportive transitional services for this particular group is warranted.

### 7.3. Implications for the homelessness system in this region

*“It would be very difficult not having the project as we would be returning to and relying on homelessness accommodation or temporary accommodation on the day of release with no post-release support or planning. This is a real factor in re-offending and returning to custody.”  
(Senior Probation and Parole Officer)*

- The THaSS model has addressed an important gap in services and support for the target group of women in the region. Service providers emphasised that it is very important that the service be continued, potentially in a more cost-effective model;
- There is an urgent need for more accommodation to be available in the region for women being released from custody;
- As noted above, the needs of women on remand who are cycling through prison on short cycles are not currently being addressed although many are at high risk of both homelessness and re-offending. This indicates a need for focussed attention to interventions to support this group in the Western Sydney region who currently impose significant costs on the system; and
- There is a need to explore opportunities for additional specific, supported transition accommodation for women with low skills in independent living to supplement existing CSNSW services.



#### **7.4. Other insights gained that can enrich the evidence base**

- As the first three months period post-release is considered to be a very high risk period for re-offending, and has been supported/ addressed by intensive support in this period, it would be useful to monitor the re-offending behaviours of clients in the first three months;
- Addressing the needs of women on remand and exploring interventions to address risks of homelessness and re-offending is an important priority; and
- There is a need for closer exploration of risks for re-offending in this client group, with larger scale carefully structured studies, and closer attention to client variables and the elements of interventions. Studies with matched controls will be important.

## APPENDIX 1: CORRECTIVE SERVICES NSW ETHICS APPROVAL



### Corrective Services NSW

D12/514042

Ms Margaret Scott  
Senior Consultant  
Westwood Spice  
21A Elliott Street  
Balmain NSW 2041

Dear Ms Scott,

I refer to the research application entitled "*Family and Community Services. Housing NSW, NSW Homelessness Action Plan (HAP) Evaluation Strategy. An extended evaluation of support for people exiting institutions.*"

The aim of the study is to undertake an external evaluation of two Homelessness Action Plan (HAP) funded projects in which Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) is the lead agency. The data will be collated and analysed to evaluate evidence of what works in reducing homelessness for offenders.

I am pleased to inform you that conditional approval has been given for your research project. The conditions of approval are that you comply with the "*Terms and Conditions of Research Approval*" [Attachment 1].

I wish you every success in your endeavours.

Yours sincerely

  
Commissioner  
9.10.12

## APPENDIX 2: CLIENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM



### NSW Homelessness Action Plan Evaluation Consent Form

#### **Project 2.8: Targetted housing support for ex-prisoners**

Project Evaluators:

- Margaret Scott, Senior Consultant, WestWood Spice
- Susan Warth, Senior Consultant, WestWood Spice

Name of project participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_



**I have been told about the evaluation project and why it is important.**

I understand that taking part in the evaluation is voluntary and I can withdraw my consent at any stage and drop out if I want.



**I understood the explanation.**

The information will only be used to see how the program works and to find ways to improve the program for others in the future.

I understand that any information used for the evaluation will not use my name and that I will not be able to be identified in final reports in any way.

I understand that taking part in the evaluation will not effect me or access to services or programs in any way.



I have been given a copy of the Information sheet.



I have been able to ask questions and get answers.





I agree to take part in this project. I agree that information I provide or that is provided by CRC from other sources with my consent can be used to evaluate this project

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Participant)*

*(Witness)*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 3: THASS CLIENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Key HAP project extended evaluation questions:

1. What is the impact of the project on a reduction in homelessness?
2. What is the project potential to achieve sustainable reductions in homelessness into the future?
3. What is the impact of the project on service system change and improvement?
4. What is the extent of influence on service integration and how this was achieved?
5. What is the impact on client outcomes (intended and unintended)?
6. What are the critical success factors and barriers? and
7. What is the cost-effectiveness of each project (including systemic savings)?

### Client questions<sup>16</sup>

- Could you please describe your experience of the THaSS/ ST project?
  - How long?
  - Nature of involvement?
  - Assistance provided, services, housing, case management, referrals?
- What is your current housing situation?

e.g. Do you have a lease; are you living with family/ friends; are you expecting to have to move in the near future and if so why (e.g. are they in transitional housing; are family relationships breaking down; are they in crisis accommodation)?

  - Permanent/ transitional – please describe?
  - How long has this been for? How long have you been able to sustain your current tenancy?
  - How well is your current housing situation working?
  - What things have been particularly helpful in assisting you to sustain your tenancy?
  - Is there anything that is not working for you regarding your housing?
- How has your housing situation changed compared with before your period of detention?
  - Why type of housing situation were you in when you came into custody the last time?
  - Where were you planning ongoing to (live) if this project was not available?
  - What was your previous experience of homelessness? (# of times homeless/ duration of homelessness?)
  - What has made the biggest difference in helping you to change your housing situation?
  - Do you now expect to be able to avoid homelessness for the foreseeable future?
- Do you expect to be able to continue with your current housing situation?
  - What could be barriers to this? Or put this at risk for you?
  - What support do you currently still have and how often is the support available to you (organised by THaSS/ ST organised by self/others?)
- In what other ways have you benefited from involvement with the THaSS/ ST project?
  - Health improvements – mental health, physical health?
  - Family connections/ child restoration?

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<sup>16</sup>Key: THaSS (Transitional Housing and Support Service), ST (Sustaining Tenancies Following Exits from Correctional Facilities)



- Social/ community engagement?
- Income/ financial situation?
- Drug dependence reduction?
- Sense of well-being?
- Support in completing or meeting requirements of a supervision order e.g. parole and if so, how/ what way – as returning to custody is major issues in terms of not maintaining a tenancy?
- Reduction in incidence of re-offending?
- Other?
- What factors have made these changes possible for you at this time? What if they are back in custody/ you will need to ask different questions and this questionnaire seems to rely on talking with people still on or successfully exited rather than those who may not have been 'successful'.
- How confident do you feel that you can maintain the gains that you have made?
- What is your overall rating of satisfaction with the service provided by THaSS/ ST? (very satisfied/ satisfied/ neutral/ unsatisfied/ very unsatisfied)
- What suggestions do you have for how the services could be improved?

## APPENDIX 4: CORRECTIVE SERVICES NSW INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Key HAP project extended evaluation questions:

1. What is the impact of the project on a reduction in homelessness?
2. What is the project potential to achieve sustainable reductions in homelessness into the future?
3. What is the impact of the project on service system change and improvement?
4. What is the extent of influence on service integration and how this was achieved?
5. What is the impact on client outcomes (intended and unintended)?
6. What are the critical success factors and barriers? and
7. What is the cost-effectiveness of each project (including systemic savings)?

### Corrective Services staff questions

- What has been your role in the HAP (THaSS/ ST) project? Could you please describe the nature and extent of your involvement?
  - How long involved?
  - How many THaSS/ ST clients have you dealt with?
  - What processes were involved for you in dealing with THaSS/ ST clients?
- What selection criteria were used to identify appropriate individuals? (OSP/ P&P staff)
  - How appropriate were these?
- What is your understanding of the key features of the HAP (THaSS/ ST) model? How does this differ from other models or ways of working to house inmates on release who are at risk of homelessness?
- What have been the service arrangements/ referral pathways with CRC for the project? – (gaol staff primarily/ P&P Broken Hill may play a role)
  - How well have these worked?
  - What would have improved the arrangements?
- What services has CSNW delivered to assist the THaSS/ ST clients?
- What do you know of the impact the THaSS/ ST project has had in reduction of homelessness for this target group?
  - What have been the success factors for this?
  - What has not worked well?
- How the project has impacted on the management of the order?
- What in your knowledge have been the other benefits and outcomes for the THaSS/ ST clients?
  - Health improvements– physical and mental health?
  - Connection with family?
  - Substance abuse reduction?
  - Social integration?
  - Other?
- What impact has this had in reduction of recidivism (for individual clients)?
- What are the implications of the project outcomes for future service delivery?



- Have there been any disadvantages of the THaSS/ ST model from the perspective of Corrective Services? If so, what is the nature of these?
  - What have been the challenges?
- To what extent have there been improvements in service systems for the target group? What are these improvements?
  - How sustainable is this model as an approach to reducing homelessness in this group?
  - What aspects can be integrated into ongoing service delivery?

## APPENDIX 5: OTHER SERVICE PROVIDER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Key HAP extended evaluation questions:

1. What is the impact of the project on a reduction in homelessness?
2. What is the project potential to achieve sustainable reductions in homelessness into the future?
3. What is the impact of the project on service system change and improvement?
4. What is the extent of influence on service integration and how this was achieved?
5. What is the impact on client outcomes (intended and unintended)?
6. What are the critical success factors and barriers? and
7. What is the cost-effectiveness of each project (including systemic savings)?

### Service provider questions

- What has been your role in/ relationship to the HAP project?
- What is your opinion about this HAP model? How does this differ from other models or ways of working?
  - Would you have been involved without THaSS/ ST support?
- What have you provided? How much and how often? For how many clients?
  - What have been the service arrangements/ referral pathways?
- How well has this worked for this particular HAP client group?
  - What have been the benefits and outcomes for HAP clients referred to you/ more generally?
  - Have there been any disadvantages for clients? If so what have these been?
- What factors in your view have contributed to success in:
  - Reducing the risk of homelessness?
  - Client engagement in the service?
  - What are the challenges and barriers to success?
- What impact has this project had in reduction of homelessness for the project participants?
  - How has this made a difference?
  - What is the potential of the project for providing future sustainable reductions in homelessness? (if it continues/ if it winds up?)
- How could the benefits of the HAP project be sustained beyond June 2013?
  - What role could your service have on an ongoing basis?
  - What would the barriers be to your service's' continues involvement beyond June 2013?
  - What would assist your service to be involved on an ongoing basis?
- What changes have there been in service integration?
  - What are the implications of this for service delivery for you?
  - How sustainable are the changes?
- To what extent have there been improvements in service systems? Describe
- What suggestions do you have for improvements in the future?

## APPENDIX 6: THASS CLIENT REFERRAL FORM

### Referral Checklist

Please ensure that each of the documents listed below (if relevant), or equivalent, is attached along with the completed Referral Form. Failure to provide all relevant information will slow down assessment for the project.

- Referral Form
- Most Recent Mental Health or Justice Health Summary
- Psychological / Psychiatric Report / Assessment
- Occupational Therapy Report
- Pre-Sentence Parole / Mental Health Tribunal Report
- Formal Case Management Plan (Parole / Health / DSU etc.)
- Behaviour Assessment / Intervention Plan
- Intellectual Disability Assessment Information
- LSIR
- Copy of Guardianship Order
- Please provide any additional information you believe is pertinent to this referral.

## APPENDIX 7: FINANCIALS FOR 2011/2012

NSW Homelessness Action Plan Evaluation - Cost Analysis					
CRC-Targetted Housing & Support Services		2011/12 Units	2011/12 Quantity	2011/12 \$ Value	Percentage
<b>Project income - Inputs</b>					
Income	HAP funding			\$ 868,560	100
Income	Other Government funding				0
Income	In-kind				0
Income	Third party donations				0
Income	Other				0
<b>Total Project income</b>				<b>\$ 868,560</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Staff costs	Direct Client Services	Staff		\$ 522,094	60.1102975
Staff costs	Admin and support	Staff		\$ 13,043	1.50168094
Staff costs	Staff related on-costs			\$ 68,430	7.87855761
Staff costs	External consultants / professional services			\$ 47,635	5.48436493
Staff costs					0
<b>Total Staff costs</b>	<b>Total Staff costs</b>			<b>\$ 651,202</b>	<b>74.974901</b>
Operating costs	Meetings, workshop, catering			\$ 3,961	0.45604218
Operating costs	Staff training and development			\$ 10,659	1.22720365
Operating costs	Motor vehicle expenses			\$ 60,672	6.98535507
Operating costs	Other travel			\$ 2,540	0.29243806
Operating costs	Host Organisation Management Fee and Administration costs			\$ 33,008	3.80031316
Operating costs	Property Related Expenses			\$ 51,338	5.91070277
Operating costs	Equipment Purchases			\$ 24,524	2.82352399
Operating costs	Insurance			\$ 10,000	1.15133094
<b>Total Operating costs</b>	<b>Total Operating costs</b>			<b>\$ 196,702</b>	<b>22.6469098</b>
<b>Brokerage Outputs</b>					
Goods	Groceries	Clients assisted			0
Goods	Home establishment packs (eg linen, beds, mattresses, whitegoods, furniture, crockery/cutlery, cleaning equipment, lawn mower, tools)	Clients assisted		\$ 19,440	2.23818734
Goods	Educational/vocational items (eg computers, protective equipment)	Clients assisted			0
Goods	Children's items (eg school uniforms/textbooks, pushbikes)	Clients assisted			0
Goods	Safety & security	Clients assisted			0
Goods	Health items (eg essential medication, spectacles)	Clients assisted			0



CRC-Targetted Housing & Support Services		2011/12 Units	2011/12 Quantity	2011/12 \$ Value	Percentage
Goods	Petrol	Clients assisted			0
Goods	Other				0
Goods	Other				0
<b>Total Goods</b>	<b>Total Goods</b>			<b>\$ 19,440</b>	<b>2.23818734</b>
Services	Psychological services (eg. drug & alcohol/ trauma counselling)	Sessions delivered			0
Services	Life skills (financial counselling, Rent It Keep It, tenancy management skills, property maintenance and care services, property care mentors)	Sessions delivered			0
Services	Specialist health services (eg rehabilitation, dental/medical)	Sessions delivered			0
Services	Legal services	Sessions delivered			0
Services	Education/training (eg specialist educations services, school/TAFE fees, employment assistance, driving lessons)	Courses			0
Services	Case management (external)	Sessions delivered			0
Services	Urgent home repairs	Clients assisted			0
Services	Child care	Hours			0
Services	Removalists (eg furniture, rubbish)	Clients assisted			0
Services	Initial housing hygiene clean	Clients assisted			0
Services	Furniture storage	Length of time			0
Services	Brighter Futures	Referrals			0
Services	Disability Support				0
Services	Other				0
Services	Other				0
<b>Total Services</b>	<b>Total Services</b>			<b>\$ -</b>	<b>0</b>
Payments	Rent arrears	Clients assisted			0
Payments	Utilities bills	Clients assisted			0
Payments	Bond assistance	Clients assisted			0
Payments	Motor vehicle expenses (eg registration, maintenance)	Clients assisted			0

CRC-Targetted Housing & Support Services		2011/12 Units	2011/12 Quantity	2011/12 \$ Value	Percentage
Payments	Other				0
Payments	Other				0
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>Total Payments</b>			\$ -	0
Other	Transport fees for clients, not staff (eg. bus/rail)	Clients assisted		\$ 1,216	0.14000184
Other	Accommodation (eg emergency, temporary)	Clients assisted			0
Other	Identification documents	Clients assisted			0
Other	Socail integration/ Community engagement/cultural and sports activities for children (eg swimming lessons, dance lessons, parenting groups)	Clients assisted			0
Other	Other				0
Other	Other				0
<b>Total Other</b>	<b>Total Other</b>			\$ 1,216	0.14000184
<b>Total Brokerage costs</b>	<b>Total clients assisted</b>	<b>Households</b>		\$ 20,656	2.37818919
<b>Total Expenditure</b>				\$ 868,560	\$ 100.00
EXCEL File:CRCHAPEvalF12THaS				\$ -	

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