NSW Homelessness Action Plan Extended Evaluation

Hunter HAP Domestic Violence Project Final Report

HAP Project 3.13b

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Introduction

In 2009 the NSW government released the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009-2014* (HAP). This plan set the direction for state-wide reform of the homelessness service system in order to achieve better outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It aimed to realign existing effort towards an increased focus on prevention and early intervention, including long-term accommodation and support. NSW HAP also specifically aimed to change the way that homelessness and its impact on the community is understood; to change the way services are designed and delivered to homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless; and enhance ways of working across government, with the non-government sector and with the broader community in order to improve responses to homelessness. A range of homelessness support services have since been funded through either the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) or NSW State funding.

One of the range of service models that has been implemented under HAP is *Long-Term Accommodation and Support for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic and Family Violence*. The link between domestic violence (DV) and homelessness is indisputable. Research confirms that housing affordability is a major issue for women who separate from violent partners and in 2012 DV was <u>the</u> most common main reason for seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services (SHS) in Australia. The effects of DV include undermining the victim's financial security and thus their capacity to sustain suitable housing, as well as a range of potential psychological and physical difficulties for women and their children that can require long-term support. A specific response to this issue and the demand upon crisis and medium term temporary accommodation was therefore urgently needed.

This document specifically reports on the extended evaluation of the *Long-Term Accommodation and Support for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic and Family Violence Service* in the Hunter region of NSW. The project name for the Hunter region is the Hunter Integrated Response to Homelessness and Domestic Violence for Women (HIR)- hereafter referred to as the 'HIR project' or 'Hunter HAP DV Project'. The evaluation was undertaken by the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies (CGRVS) in partnership with the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) within the University of New South Wales (UNSW).

Overview of service model and project included in this evaluation

The focus of this report is the Hunter HAP DV project, encompassing the local government areas of Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Dungog, Maitland, Cessnock, Muswellbrook, Singleton and Upper Hunter which is auspiced by NOVA Women's Accommodation and Support Inc. The project name is the Hunter Integrated Response to Homelessness and Domestic Violence for Women (HIR). The HIR project is one of three regional HAP DV projects providing women and

children who have experienced or are escaping from domestic and family violence with appropriate, affordable housing, alongside an integrated support package that includes case management and brokerage monies. Funding for the project was awarded to NOVA in October 2010 for an initial three-year period.

The key service delivery component is the development and implementation of an integrated client case plan. The case plan delivers goal-directed, client-focused support and accompanying brokerage funding in order to: provide services and support; facilitate transition to independent living; enable training and education; and assist in building community connections. Specifically the project combines the following program elements:

- Access to social housing, or suitable private rental accommodation through the provision of the Start Safely Private Rental Subsidy[1]

- Integrated case management support services

- Flexible brokerage funding

Community Services and Housing NSW are the lead government agencies for the Hunter HAP DV Program. Each of the three HAP DV Projects is delivered by a non-government auspice agency reporting directly to their regional Community Services office, as contract manager. A reference group consisting of regional project partners provides advice to the auspice agency on management and implementation issues. In addition, the existing Regional Homelessness Committees (RHC) meets regularly to plan and coordinate across a range of issues, including overseeing collaborative responses to HAP initiatives and other housing programs on offer.

In the Hunter, a HAP DV coordinator was employed by the auspice agency to manage project implementation. Housing NSW 'Access and Demand' teams are the gateway for screening clients in relation to eligibility for housing products and a primary source of referrals. The service providers are the direct client support and case management workers from a range of local organisations, who access the HAP DV support packages on their clients' behalf. In addition, the model includes a requirement for the auspice agency to convene local Assessment Groups comprising of members from Specialist Homelessness Services, mainstream services and partner government agencies in the local government area. In the Hunter these Assessment Groups concentrate on decision making concerning case management brokerage packages for clients, reviewing and developing case management plans in partnership with relevant services, and periodically reviewing the progress of case management plans.

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[1] Start Safely is a rental subsidy for women and children escaping domestic violence who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Refer to section 1 of this report for further information.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation is a mixed-method inquiry combining a synthesis of service monitoring data with qualitative interviews. Ethics approval was granted by the UNSW Human research ethics committee (HC12442) and data collection was subsequently conducted over four months, between September and December 2012.

The primary sources of data were project self-evaluation reports, administrative and financial documentation, client monitoring data, interviews with clients and staff of the project and interviews with key stakeholders. A total of 19 in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted.

The project commissioned a research report, *Hunter Integrated Response to Homelessness and Domestic Violence for Women Local Evaluation* (NOVA, 2013), which we draw on in this report.

A systematic review and thematic analysis of this data has been applied, including reference against the current literature.

A limitation of the evaluation is its heavy reliance on self-reported information. In addition, only a small sample of clients (4) was accessible within the available time and it was not possible to contact those who had commenced engagement but then dropped out of the project. Long-term client outcomes were unavailable due to the short time-frame and in the absence of robust outcomes data and comparative measures, a reliable economic evaluation (cost-benefit analysis or cost effectiveness analysis) is not possible.

However, the potential for a biased sample as a result of these limitations is ameliorated by the fact that the evaluation participants have diverse roles and responsibilities in relation to the project and are located in separate parts of the service structure. Each participant was asked to comment on the operations of the other stakeholders and to provide their individual perspective of outcomes and issues. Further, extensive documentation of prior reviews and client feedback broadens the scope of the evidence. In the analysis of this multi-layered data there is strong consistency across all stakeholder comments and the statistical information and this validates the findings.

Outcomes

From the time the project started in October 2010 to June 2012 a total of 120 women and 236 children were assisted by the project[2]. Many of these families were at imminent risk of homelessness and many were living in crisis accommodation. Every one of these clients was housed in long term accommodation and by far the majority had continued to sustain their

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[2] The evaluation report commissioned by NOVA reports 152 clients had been assisted as at December 2012

tenancy on exit. In the 2011/12 financial year over 95% of clients who were assisted through the project had remained stable in their housing[3].

Brokerage funding linked to case management plans, enabled client access to critical resources at specific times of need. The funding was used for any goods and services that could not be accessed through alternative means and were deemed necessary to prevent homelessness. This included equipment, specialist services, support to enable participation (variously in community study or work) and poverty relief. The top five categories of brokerage expenditure were: home establishment packs, safety and security items, removalist services, education/vocational goods and children's items. Average expenditure in 2011/12 for combined case management support and brokerage was $4873.40[4] per client. The Hunter HAP DV project also used a significant amount of brokerage to fund case management time.

In terms of non-housing outcomes, clients reported a significant improvement in their general wellbeing as a result of their engagement with the project and greater confidence in their ability to live independently. Women particularly felt more confident to manage their financial responsibilities and provide for their children. The project enabled their engagement in various formal and informal support networks and systems and this helped to reduce their sense of social isolation and begin to address issues of trauma, mental illness, and low self-esteem. A reignited sense of independence and optimistic outlook on life resulted in many women setting goals and embarking upon steps to achieve short, medium and long term aspirations for their career and overall future.

The homelessness service system has been enhanced by the work of the project in four key aspects: workforce skill development; increase in overall case-load capacity; closer collaboration and integration; and closing gaps in the provision of appropriate, timely support to prevent negative housing outcomes.

Factors for success

The evaluation found ten (10) key success factors for the model

1. A combination of program elements that mutually enhance one another

2. Ongoing, flexible case management with a shared DV/Housing focus

3. Brokerage aligned to the case plan

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[3] The 2011/12 financial year has provided the most complete and reliable data set, gathered when the project was well established and so forms the basis for many of the findings.

[4] The Hunter project has reported an average overall spend of $6,000 per client over the whole time of operation up until June 2012.

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4. A housing focus but not housing constrained

5. Eligibility screening within Housing NSW

6. Inter-agency influence, education and knowledge exchange

7. Local adaptation of the overall program model

8. Strong management, coordination skills and practice expertise in the auspice agency

9. Additional resources for local service providers

10. Case management focused on client empowerment and learning to use the service system

Key challenges

The following challenges were identified as detracting from the potential effectiveness of the HAP DV model overall:

1. Eligibility constraints and inconsistencies

2. The sharp division between 'high' and 'low' needs clients

3. The lack of available affordable private and social housing in the Hunter region was found to be a significant barrier

4. Inflexible support package options with other Housing NSW products i.e. Start Safely

5. Governance and the role of partner agencies

6. Gaps in appropriate services and adequately qualified staff, especially in isolated areas

7. Lack of acknowledgement of children

Lessons learnt

1. Flexible brokerage funding is a critical component of a sufficient and effective service response to meet the needs of women and children who are at risk of homelessness due to domestic or family violence.

2. Local control to enable flexible application of project resources is the most effective means of meeting client needs.

3. Access to the project would be greatly improved by the development of up to date DV screening tools and staff training in Housing NSW, to increase the speed and accuracy of initial approvals.

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4. Meeting children's needs is a significant issue within women's capacity to sustain tenancies

5. Financial and other administrative procedures between the auspice agency and service providers need to be as streamlined as possible to minimise onerous additional work

6. The coordinator role can support a fast, consistent and well managed response to clients if key conditions are met

7. The eligibility criteria for HIR exclude some women who need access to the project and the specific criteria for high and low need packages do not appropriately reflect complexity of need. A review of these at the program level is therefore appropriate

8. Integration and collaborative practice happen most effectively when equally underpinned by two elements:

   a) Shared accountability for outcomes

   b) Financial resources managed at the local level

Research directions

Identification of the long term outcomes of the HAP DV service model is not possible without a longitudinal study that includes wellbeing, self-efficacy and housing measures for women *and* their children. An extensive, comparative study of this nature would be a significant contribution to the literature and support the continuing development of the model.

In addition, case management skills and practices for working specifically within the DV/Housing nexus are not known. Workforce development programs could be developed from an examination of the most appropriate and effective case management skills and knowledge for this work.

Conclusion

The Hunter HAP DV project effectively supports women and children to establish and sustain long-term housing and thereby prevent homelessness as a result of domestic violence. The combination of affordable housing with flexible case management and brokerage support is demonstrably successful. The evaluation has identified vulnerabilities in the model but where these are managed well, the outcomes appear robust.

Women report that the foundation of sustainable housing with intensive client support underpins their capacity to remain separate from the perpetrator and to sufficiently recover from the effects of the abuse in order to gain and begin to implement skills for independence. This finding suggests optimism for the ongoing effects of the project interventions on sustainable housing.

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It has not been possible for the current evaluation to measure long term outcomes for women or their children, but this could be a significant future research inquiry that would add to the evidence base for best practice in the field.

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1   Introduction

1.1   Overview of HAP

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

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

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

- A reduction of 7% in the overall level of homelessness in NSW.

- A reduction of 25% in the number of people sleeping rough in NSW.

- A reduction of one-third in the number of Indigenous people who are homeless.

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

The projects are aligned to one of three strategic directions:

- Preventing homelessness; to ensure that people never become homeless

- Responding effectively to homelessness: to ensure that people who are homeless receive effective responses so that they do not become entrenched in the system

- Breaking the cycle: to ensure that people who have been homeless do not become homeless again

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

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:

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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 extended evaluation undertaken by the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies (CGRVS) and the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) from the University of New South Wales (UNSW) focuses on the Long-Term Accommodation and Support for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic and Family Violence Project providing long-term supportive housing for women and children who have experienced domestic violence and who are required to leave their own home (herein referred to as the HAP project).

The project reports on three similar projects being implemented across the state. Each is delivered by a different non-government auspice agency and is located in one of the following regions:

1. *Greater Western Sydney* - Long term accommodation and support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence in Western Sydney. Encompassing the local government areas of Auburn, Bankstown, Blacktown, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Holroyd, Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith – implemented by <u>Wimlah Women's and Children Refuge.</u>

2. *Hunter Region* - Support services to assist women escaping domestic violence maintain tenancies in the Hunter region. Encompassing the local government areas of Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Dungog, Maitland, Cessnock, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Upper Hunter - implemented by <u>NOVA Women's Accommodation and Support Inc</u>.

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3. *Illawarra Region* - Support services to assist women escaping domestic violence maintain tenancies in the Illawarra region. Encompassing the local government areas of Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Shoalhaven - implemented by <u>Wollongong Women's Refuge.</u>

The focus of this individual project report is the Hunter HAP project offering support services to assist women escaping domestic violence maintain tenancies in the Hunter region encompassing the local government areas of Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Dungog, Maitland, Cessnock, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Upper Hunter - implemented by NOVA Women's Accommodation and Support Service. The project name is the Hunter Integrated Response to Homelessness and Domestic Violence for Women (HIR).

Consistent with the overarching objective of the HAP program the Hunter HAP project provides integrated housing and support for women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Hunter HAP project provides women and children who have experienced or are escaping domestic and family violence with a choice of housing products alongside an integrated model of support.

Specifically the Hunter HAP service combines the following program elements:

- Access to social housing <u>or </u>suitable private rental accommodation, through the provision of the Safe Start Private Rental Subsidy

- Integrated case management support services

- Flexible brokerage packages

NOVA Women's Accommodation and Support Service as the lead agency in the region is responsible for the implementation of three key strategies:

Integration of Service Provision: There are a suite of domestic violence programs operating across NSW and the HAP Coordinator employed by the NOVA Women's Accommodation and Support Service is responsible for linking with and building on the existing local service system. Providing an integrated service may involve the following activities – DV specialist training, forging partnerships with other services to provide assistance with identified client needs including health (including mental health and drug and alcohol); education, training and employment; brokerage; pregnancy and parenting support; financial counselling; child support workers; and legal advice.

Coordination and Case Management: NOVA Women's Accommodation and Support Service is responsible for maintaining the overall budget; for coordinating partner agencies to implement coordinated case management; joint service planning; data collection; and administration. In NOVA, the HAP Coordinator coordinates cross-agency supports to clients, undertakes regular case reviews and allocates funding based on client needs identified in an agreed coordinated case plan.

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Brokerage: High and low needs brokerage packages are available to support case plans, managed by partner agencies, for identified clients. The agency applying for brokerage packages is then responsible for client case coordination. Brokerage enables access to services that are otherwise unavailable and supports sustainable long-term outcomes.

It was originally proposed that the average length of support to be provided would be between 6 to 12 months. Case management support is provided for 12 months. The Start Safely Rental Subsidy has been extended from 12 to 24 months.

1.3   Any key contextual factors from the literature re this project

Developing and supporting a greater range of housing options is now accepted as critical to keeping women and children housed and safe (Spinney and Blandy, 2011). The increasing awareness among DV and housing workers that domestic violence can lead to long-term homelessness for some women and their children, combined with the demonstrated lack of affordable medium and long-term housing options, has encouraged policy makers and practitioners to re-consider the range of services which may best reduce the risk of homelessness when women leave their violent partner (Coy and Kelly 2011; (Healey, 2009). The UNSW Project team has identified four key themes and presents select evidence to provide a quick snapshot of relevant contextual issues from the available literature. A more comprehensive review of the literature is available in the Final Evaluation Report.

Theme 1 - In Australia and Internationally a substantial number of women and children report incidents of violence from an intimate partner

- ❖ The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey (2006) found that of the 4.7% of the women who reported physical assault in the 12 months prior to the survey, 31% were assaulted by their current or previous partner (p. 9).

- ❖ The Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) found that over one-third of Australian women experience physical, sexual or psychological violence, or threats from a partner or ex-partner during their lifetime (Mouzos and Makkai, 2004)

- ❖ In Australia, one in four children witness or live with domestic violence (Spinney & Blandy 2011; Desmond 2011).(Spinney and Blandy, 2011)

- ❖ The World Health Organisation's multi-country study of women's experience of domestic violence shows that in most sites between 20 and 33% of women reported having been abused by their partner in the previous twelve months (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005, p. 83).

Theme 2 – Domestic Violence can result in multiple physical and mental health difficulties which may require immediate intervention as well as longer term support

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- ❖ VicHealth (2004) identified violence perpetrated by a partner as the leading contributor to death, disability and physical illness in women aged fifteen to forty-four, constituting a greater risk than other acknowledged risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking and obesity.
- ❖ Domestic violence can also increase women's long-term risks of a number of health and psychological problems including injury, chronic pain, drug and alcohol abuse, disability, and depression (Campbell, 2002; Heise, Ellsberg & Gottmoeller, 2002).
- ❖ An Australian representative study of women who report gender-based violence found that these women are more likely to experience mental illness over the course of their lifetime, with risk of mental illness increasing for women with multiple exposures to gender-based violence (Rees et al. 2011).
- ❖ Children, too, can develop psychological difficulties from living with or from directly experiencing violence in the home (Kennedy et. al. 2010).
- ❖ A recent longitudinal study found that women affected by intimate partner violence faced higher health costs than women with no history of intimate partner violence, not only during the period of abuse but for three years after the violence ended (Fishman et al. 2010, p. 923).
- ❖ Marcus and Braaf (2007) found that many studies report heightened or differential levels of risk and vulnerability for women from different groups such as Indigenous women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women with disabilities.

Theme Three – The link between women's homelessness and DV is undeniable

- ❖ In the three most recent Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) quarterly reports, domestic and family violence was the most common main reason given for seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services in Australia (AIHW 2011a, 2011b and 2012)
- ❖ In the 2010-11 year women with or without children commonly sought assistance from SHS because of domestic violence and to address this they often required personal support services including specialist counselling (AIHW 2012).
- ❖ The SAAP high and complex needs census (Commonwealth of Australia 2010) identified the 13 most common client needs with the top three being housing difficulties, money management/financial difficulties and then exposure to/effects of violence.
- ❖ From the suite of support services offered by refuges it remains the case that most requests from women for accommodation assistance from these services are unable to be met (AIHW 2010a).
- ❖ Research indicates that housing affordability is a major issue for women who separate from violent partners (Chung et al., 2000; Tually et al., 2008).

Theme Four – Domestic violence may dramatically affect women's financial security and their capacity to maintain stable housing

- ❖ Domestic and family violence affects women's ability to work and to look for work because of trauma, fear for their safety at work, and instances of stalking and violence at work by the perpetrator (Braaf & Barrett Meyering 2011).
- ❖ Access Economics (2004, p. vii) propose that victims of DV bear the largest cost burden of this form of violence, estimated at $4.05 billion out of a total $8.1 billion in 2002-03.

- ❖ Women are more likely than men to experience substantial financial hardship after divorce due to a number of factors, including their disadvantaged position in the labour market, the fact that women often retain custody of children (Beer et al., 2006; Smyth and Weston, 2000) and the related lengthy and multiple legal battles. Ongoing health issues, including the need for counselling for both women and children, can all place a drain on finances (Braaf and Barrett Meyering, 2011).

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2   Evaluation Scope and Methods

2.1   Ethics process

The evaluation research has approval from the UNSW Human Research Ethics Committee, HC12442.

2.2   Summary of methods - administrative data accessed, stakeholder interview process, including clients of the service.

The primary sources of data for the evaluation were:

- Formal self-evaluation reports as required by Housing NSW

- Administrative data, including client numbers and outcomes, budgets, process records, promotional materials, client case plans, service provider contracts etc

- Interviews with clients

- Interviews with auspice agency staff

- Interviews with key stakeholders including client support service providers; Community Service lead agency staff; Regional Homelessness Committee members (Appendix B).

The project commissioned a research report, *Hunter Integrated Response to Homelessness and Domestic Violence for Women Local Evaluation* (NOVA, 2013), which we draw on in this report.

Participants who were directly recruited to the Hunter project evaluation included; the managers of the HAP DV regional contract within Community Services; members of the Regional Homelessness Committee; Housing NSW lead agency staff; and the auspice agency staff. These participants provided assistance in identifying and recruiting service providers and individual clients. They were asked their views on the strengths of the project, the experiences of implementation, benefits to clients and recommendations for improvements. The interviews were designed to clarify and extend the information provided in the project self-evaluation reports. Illustrative quotes from interviews are presented throughout this report. The interviews have been de-identified and all names are pseudonyms.

Clients were invited to take part in the evaluation via an email or phone call from participating agencies. The recruitment letter can be found at Appendix D. They could elect to attend a face to face or telephone interview in which they were asked questions about their demographic characteristics, experience of the program, any benefits it has brought them and how it could be improved. Interview schedules are included at Appendix E.

Table 2.1: Sample

	Clients	Participating agencies	Other stakeholders[a]	Total
	4	7	8	19

a. Private Rental Brokerage Specialist staff, contract managers

2.3 Limitations

A number of considerations limit the scope of this evaluation as described below, followed by a discussion of the impact of these concerns.

Firstly, whilst multiple data sources have been drawn upon, these largely rely on self-reported information collected from the project monitoring reports, self-evaluations and interviews with a range of stakeholders who were directly connected to the implementation of the project. This means there were limited opportunities for perhaps more independent, critical views to be heard. Local service providers not involved in project implementation were invited to comment during a meeting of the Regional Homelessness Committee, but none pursued the subsequent offer of a more in-depth, individual interview.

Secondly, only a small number of clients were accessible within the timeframe of the data collection period and they provided information through personal interviews. To extend this client data, two years' worth of collated written client feedback was also taken into account. This provided valuable insight into client experiences and conditions, however it was not possible to contact clients who had dropped out of the project. It is probable, as with all evaluations where the workers are the recruitment gateway, that the auspice agencies may have selected clients with a positive experience of their project.

Thirdly, long-term client outcomes are unavailable due to the constraints of the short evaluation timeframe and the project being in operation for only two and a half years.

Fourthly, while we have provided an analysis of project costs and qualitative descriptions of the use of resources, the absence of robust outcomes data and comparative measures means that an economic evaluation (cost-benefit analysis or cost effectiveness analysis) is not possible. Section five of this report addresses these issues in full.

Discussion

The potential for a biased sample as a result of these limitations is ameliorated by the fact that the evaluation participants have diverse roles and responsibilities in relation to the project and are located in separate parts of the service structure. Each participant was asked to comment on the operations of the other stakeholders and to provide their individual perspective of outcomes and

issues. In the analysis of this multi-layered data there is strong consistency across all stakeholder comments and this validates the findings.

The specific limitations of *client* data collection are best appreciated by a contextual understanding of the inherent difficulties in collecting data from women escaping domestic violence. Client safety and confidentiality are crucial elements of domestic violence service provision and it is therefore essential for evaluation strategies to be tailored to ensure these elements are respected in order to minimize any potential risks to services or clients. A related difficulty which can affect the collection of data from domestic violence victims is that service providers may be legitimately concerned that the process of participating in an evaluative interview can cause unwarranted anxiety or distress to their clients – particularly where there is on-going harassment and client safety remains problematic. Both difficulties may understandably affect the selection of clients for interviews and shape data collection. Further, the clients of this project had provided regular comments through a comprehensive written feedback process integrated into the project model, including face to face interviews with the project coordinator. Staff protecting clients from the fatigue of being 'over evaluated' or the clients themselves opting out of repeated feedback processes must be taken into consideration.

It is also important not to overestimate the power of workers/projects alone to shape client outcomes in any evaluation of DV service provision. In reality, the final outcomes for women and children leaving DV are primarily determined by on-going perpetrator harassment and violence which may also necessitate lengthy and expensive interactions with the criminal justice system. Sullivan (2011) emphasises that evaluations must acknowledge that patterns of re-victimisation which critically affect client outcomes are the fault of perpetrators and not clients, workers, or services.

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3 Project Description

3.1 Service origins and description

The service specifications and self-evaluation report set out the original aims of the project: to provide integrated housing and support for women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- Housing options were to include 10 social housing tenancies; and 20 women per location to receive the Start Safely Subsidy.

- The Start Safely Subsidy Scheme will link with other domestic violence services and build on other assistance currently available, including Rentstart and Tenancy Guarantees.

- The project will provide women and children who have experienced or are escaping domestic and family violence access to suitable private rental accommodation, through the provision of the Start Safely Subsidy and relevant support services. The project will provide an integrated model of support (the provision of support services plus the subsidy) to ensure that clients are able to transition from the subsidy at the end of the subsidy period.

- The project will also provide housing and support to women and children to ensure they can maintain their social housing tenancies.

- A support and transition plan will be agreed with referring agencies and support providers.

The project has evolved since commencement. It provides an integrated model of support—wrap-around services plus Start Safely for eligible clients—but there have been a number of developments, based on the identification of local needs and the experience of implementation:

- Target numbers were exceeded, but the number of social housing tenancies was lower than anticipated due to availability of properties

- The initial budget for support packages was higher than needed, and was revised

- Due to a lack of service capacity and support in one of the areas, two workers were employed by the HIR to do outreach work specifically for the project

The strengths and challenges of the model are described in Section 6. It is important to note in the context of the service origins and description that stakeholders from a number of agencies reported difficulties in the early days of the project, because the service model was prescribed rather than driven by local agencies, and was a new way of working. The rules, guidelines and expectations were initially not clear: for example, agencies did not know that the client had to be confirmed as eligible by HNSW before they could work with them. This seems to have had an impact on the experience of clients: one client reported that her case worker was uncertain about what support she could receive, and a number of applications were rejected.

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However, the working relationship between the lead agency (Community Services), Housing NSW, the community housing provider and the auspice agency (NOVA Women's Accommodation & Supports) is now very good. Coordination and governance are described in Section 3.4.

3.2 Aims and objectives

The self-evaluation report states seven aims and objectives.

1. Improve women and children's safety.

2. Reduce the length of time families who have experienced domestic violence spend in crisis accommodation services.

3. Increase housing options for women and children who have experienced domestic violence by providing integrated support services to women to improve their ability to access the private rental market and maintain their tenancies.

4. Increase social housing options for women and children who have experienced domestic violence by providing integrated support services to women to improve their ability to maintain social housing tenancies.

5. Increase collaborative service delivery across government agencies in responding to homelessness.

6. Identify and resolve impediments to the effective provision of tenancy support services and make recommendations to reform the existing service system in the longer term

7. Reduce turn-away rates from domestic violence crisis accommodation services.

3.3 Target group

The target group is women and children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to domestic or family violence. The program has income and other eligibility tests (Section 3.4).

3.4 Service model

What services offered

The key service delivery component, described in the service specifications, is a coordinated case plan. This plan delivers client focused case work, including brokerage, to provide services and support; facilitate transition to independent living; training and education; and assist in building community connections.

The self-evaluation report states that the Project involves two key strategies:

- Coordination: A principal agency responsible for maintaining the brokerage budget and for coordinating partner agencies to implement: coordinated case management; joint service planning; data collection; and administration.

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- Brokerage: Brokerage packages will be available to support case plans, managed by partner agencies, for identified clients. The agency applying for brokerage packages will be responsible for client case coordination. Brokerage enables access to services that are otherwise unavailable and supports sustainable long-term outcomes.

Key components of the project include:

- Start Safely Subsidy.

- Social Housing tenancies.

- Integrated case management support services, including: specialist DV and homelessness services; case management; health (including mental health and drug and alcohol); education, training and employment; brokerage; pregnancy and parenting support; financial counselling; child support workers; and legal advice.

- Where Housing NSW properties are utilised, support will be provided under an Accord Framework.

- Partnerships with the private housing sector (real estate agents and private landlords) providers to increase pathways into private accommodation.

- Identify and resolve impediments to the effective provision of tenancy support services and make recommendations to reform the existing service system in the longer term.

- An identified Officer in the Lead Agency and each of the Partner Agencies to identify structural barriers to service delivery, develop strategies to overcome these barriers and make recommendations to reform the existing service system in the longer term. Where these barriers are not able to be addressed regionally, they will be escalated to the Interagency Committee on Homelessness.

- Partnerships with the private housing sector (real estate agents and private landlords) providers to increase pathways into private accommodation.

In practice, the HIR project was allocated 10 houses to cover the 3 year project and the whole of the Hunter, rather than the anticipated 10 houses per year. The 10 properties were allocated to clients within the first year of the project.

Initially, support packages were designed around the anticipated needs of clients in social housing having higher support needs than Start Safely clients. Low needs support packages were budgeted at $10,000 per client, and high needs $20,000 per client. These budgets include brokerage and caseworker hours, but not the Start Safely subsidy. The casework agency could allocate hours from its own staff and charge it back to the HIR, or broker external caseworkers (for up to two hours per week).

However, the experience of implementation showed that clients' support needs were not necessarily aligned with their housing status, and the expenditure for each client was much lower

than the initial budget assumed. Subsequently, the budget was revised to $10,000 per package, regardless of the client category. The actual spending over the three year project is $4873.40 per client.

The disparity in the first year between allocated and actual packages created administrative work, in carrying forward unspent funds and reallocating the unspent component of individual client's allocated packages at the completion of their case plan. However, this disparity also allowed for the project to be flexible. For example, the HIR cross agency working group analysed spending on brokerage and support work across LGAs, and identified that gaps in the service network were resulting in a much lower spend in one area. In response, approval was gained to use project funds to employ a worker through an early intervention service to provide support work, and so addressed those service network gaps. This worker was also able to develop relationships with real estate agents to reduce the stigma associated with Start Safely.

Even with the adjustment to support packages and allocation of funds to a position, the project was projected to have unspent funds by the end of 2012. This is attributed to strict eligibility criteria and the absence of affordable housing: see the description of eligibility criteria below. In response, NOVA negotiated to extend the project by six months, and the project is on track to expend the allocated budget by then.

Assessment and referral processes, eligibility criteria

Client eligibility criteria have been pre-determined by the original HAP Program specifications and maintained by the HIR project. A client is eligible for the project if she is homeless (or at risk) and:
   a) Is assessed and approved by Housing NSW for priority social housing or for the Start Safely Private Rental Subsidy[5]; and
   b) Is escaping domestic violence.

If a client meets these first two criteria and wishes to access the HAP DV project she will be referred to the HIR HAP DV coordinator for further assessment. These referrals can come directly from Housing NSW or from alternative sources, but in the latter case the client must still be assessed and approved by Housing NSW.

Following this, the client will then be accepted into the project if she:

- Has a service provider able to develop and manage her case plan over twelve months;
- Cannot be helped through alternative funding;
- Would have difficulty obtaining and sustaining a tenancy without support;

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[5] Social housing and Start Safely have their own eligibility criteria which include income and assets tests.

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- Requires interagency collaboration and intensive support beyond the core business of existing services (for high complex support clients)

Support includes (but is not limited to) home visits, transport to appointments, coordinated case management, advocacy, links to appropriate services (counselling, budgeting, childcare, employment and training etc) assistance to maintain their tenancy and management of the client's allocated brokerage funding.

The eligibility criteria for the project exclude some categories of women experiencing domestic violence, such as those who do not meet Australian residency requirements; those with an income exceeding the Start Safely or social housing eligibility limits and those who have been approved for Start Safely but are unable to secure private rental accommodation due to a lack of affordable housing.

Some specific issues about eligibility appear to have arisen in the project implementation. These centre on the following concerns:

1. *Women who have historically experienced domestic violence but are currently not in immediate danger.* Initially there was concern that Housing NSW eligibility criteria required women to be in current danger or to have documentary evidence of experiencing domestic violence in the recent past (six months). This approach overlooks the long term (and often accumulating) effects of domestic violence on women and children. Specifically the negative consequences for financial independence, psychological stress, continuing disruption to employment and education, child health and a range of other long term effects discussed in the literature.

2. *Women who seek help from Housing NSW but do not disclose their experience of domestic violence.* There were some concerns expressed that the Housing NSW Access and Demand teams may not have sufficient expertise and/or adequate screening procedures to identify domestic violence. In addition they may not recognise the appropriate level of complexity of need.

3. *Women who do not pass the income test for access to Start Safely or social housing.* This can occur as a result of their assets and/or joint income with a violent partner being above the required threshold. Such women may live in a jointly owned property where the violent partner will not leave or sell the property and they themselves cannot leave as they do not have the financial or material resources to live independently. They may also have inherited debt from their partners activities but appear to be asset rich.

The project has begun to address points 1 and 2 through negotiation with Housing NSW and has implemented some agreed changes to practice. Point 3 cannot be locally or regionally addressed without a review of the overall eligibility criteria within Housing NSW.

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The eligibility criteria of social housing eligibility was common across the three HAP DV projects; however it was thought to be a specific restriction on the HIR that only clients who had secured a tenancy could receive the support packages (not those who were looking for housing). This was reported as an important constraint on the project's capacity to assist women who were otherwise eligible.

HIR and the HIR coordinator are well known in the Hunter, and most referrals are made from services to the HIR via the coordinator. Prospective clients are sometimes identified because they are working with a partner agency. Other referrals are made by police, the Family Court or Centrelink. Clients who have been approved by Start Safely are referred to the HIR coordinator by Housing NSW. In some cases clients are identified when they are leaving a relationship or refuge. When referrals are made to the HIR, the HAP coordinator makes an assessment of the client's eligibility, and supports the case manager to apply to Housing NSW if not already approved, and the relevant local Assessment Group (see next section on coordination structures). A referral flowchart is at Appendix A.

If approved, the referring agency is responsible for implementing the case plan. Community Services does not case manage through HIR, and refers eligible clients to NGOs.

The assessment process means that local Assessment Groups consider only eligible clients. There was some feedback from partner agencies that this limits the advocacy and authority of the groups, as described in Section 6.2.

Coordination structures

The funded Service Provider (NOVA) is responsible for maintaining the brokerage budget and for coordinating the engagement of partner agencies to support clients with Case Management Support packages through an Assessment Group. NOVA is also responsible for all reporting and data collection as required.

There are five Assessment Groups across the Hunter. The groups are made up of government and non-government organisations, including Housing NSW, family support services and refuges. Stakeholders from NOVA reported making concerted efforts to ensure that practitioners, not just managers, are well represented in the groups. Services were recruited to the Assessment Groups through local networks, for example DV committee and forums, and so the groups build on established relationships as well as develop new relationships.

The Assessment Groups are responsible for making decisions on the assessment of client referrals and for case management brokerage applications from referring agencies. Assessment Group decisions are made based on client criteria, the current case plan; additional support services required and associated brokerage. When a client referral is accepted, the Assessment Group will develop a coordinated case plan with the involvement of other key agencies, where identified. In

contrast to the Illawarra and GWS HAP projects, where brokerage assessments are made by the HAP coordinator, the Assessment Groups make decisions on brokerage. However, especially complex cases may be decided by coordinator, in consultation with the HIR cross agency working group.

Partnerships, formal and informal

The projects led to new partnerships through regional governance groups and local coordination/Assessment Groups. These informal partnerships include new working relationships between non-government organisations and Housing NSW; and between family support agencies and community housing organisations. Regional specialist homelessness services are members of Assessment Groups, and have built relationships with NGOs providing a range of services for women and their children.

Collaborative case planning and information sharing about good practice in providing support are outcomes of the informal partnerships that have arisen through the coordination/Assessment Groups.

Informal partnerships with real estate agents, where possible, have addressed the stigma associated with Start Safely and the reluctance of real estate agents to take on Start Safely.

The self-evaluation report describes new partnerships:

- Linkages and relationships between NGOs, community housing and human services Centrelink have become stronger, while developing an understanding of what each service can provide and other resources available in the community.

- Lines of communication and access to key people in multiple agencies have been developed through the HIR project and Assessment Group meetings.

- HIR project was able to bridge the communication gap between NGOs and housing providers so clients could access Housing NSW products to enter the private rental market or social housing.

Brokerage – what it was used for and how it was applied

The expenditure can be grouped into three main areas: namely, specialist services; items to enable participation; and equipment.

- Specialist services: There has been considerable need for brokerage to be spent on specialist services outside of the case manager's role for things such as psychiatric and psychological assessments; medical 'gap' fees; legal bills etc. There are limited free or bulk-billed services in each of the regions, and what does exist may often have long waiting lists (such as child and adolescent mental health services). The timeliness of the specialist service is a critical issue in

sustaining the client in long term accommodation and enabling children to settle and cope with the consequences of DV. In the Hunter, expenditure on specialist services was the second highest item (Appendix C).

- Participation: Items that enable the woman to participate fully in life and attend support and education activities also take up a large part of brokerage funding, such as transport, child care, college fees, new clothing for interviews, driving lessons, and extra-curricular sport and recreation activities for children (e.g. Little Athletics).

- Equipment: white goods, furniture, home security, bedding, one-off items that establish a safe and functioning home environment.

Brokerage is a particularly valued component of the project, for a number of reasons:

- It enables the purchase of things that would be otherwise unavailable, because outside the specifications of every other possible source

- It directly addresses the specific needs of women and children who have experienced family violence: for example, paying motor vehicle costs enable women to stop relying on their ex-partner to drive their children to appointments

- It fosters a sense of community engagement and belonging, as illustrated by one interview with a service provider.

> But then when you move them to a new area and children who have been in situations of domestic violence, really need to be supported to feel part of that community. So we've paid for things like dance lessons which some people might say that that isn't really necessary but it certainly makes that child feel part of that community. They may have lost that when they left this home where they had mum and dad and all that relationships. They may have had those things there but mum would never be able to afford that if she just moved out herself without the support of HIR (Nadia HIR service provider).

Representatives of the HIR cross agency working group reported that a current priority is encouraging wrap-around services rather than material goods, and are encouraging service providers to prioritise education and training; counselling; medical fees (including gap payments for off-site counselling), children's sports etc. As part of this, there is a current limit of around $3000 brokerage on essential goods. This was reported by one NGO stakeholder as a constraint on the project's effectiveness, because some women need to entirely furnish their new house, and it is not possible to do that for $3000. There is a cap on each category of brokerage, but agencies providing counselling and support services reported that they had never reached it.

Although it did not emerge as a strong theme in consultation or the self-evaluation reports, there is a possible tension between the priority of some agencies, including the lead agency, on support

packages with a strong service component, and those concerned to prioritise the meeting of practical needs, particularly for furniture and household goods.

Most services charge back hours to HAP rather than broker for hours, in part because of the gaps in the service network in some areas described above. Agencies can broker for up to two hours of worker hours per week. Many places in the Hunter experience the lack of specialist services and service capacity typical of regional and remote areas, and this was a challenge to the project.

Brokerage administration includes an invoice for each item of brokerage, and NOVA administers each agency separately through its small business accounting package (MYOB).

The role of the Assessment Groups in making decisions around brokerage was highly valued, as illustrated by this extract from an interview with an NGO service provider.

> I think that the way that it's actually dispersed and thought about is really discussed well in the assessment group […] It's not like it's haphazardly handed out. It's really well thought out and what's in the best interests of the woman and the project because if there's that little bit of extra money, then certainly there are other things that people might need (Nadia HIR service provider).

3.5   Management and governance arrangements

Community Services and Housing NSW are the lead government agencies for this HAP Project. NOVA Women's Accommodation and Support Service reports directly to Community Services as the HAP contract manager, and to Housing NSW as the primary referrer and housing product provider.

The auspicing agency (NOVA Women's Accommodation & Support) attends the cross agency working group with representatives from Community Services, Housing NSW and Compass Housing, which meets bimonthly. The NOVA manager sits on the Regional Homelessness Committee.

The auspicing agency (NOVA Women's Accommodation & Support) coordinates the five Assessment Groups across the region. The groups provide assistance:

- for case management brokerage applications from referring agencies / services;
- in the development of a coordinated case plan for clients with other key support providers;
- In identifying barriers to sustaining housing in the longer term

The groups also provide direction and advice to the HAP coordinator, and assist with complex client cases.

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3.6 Staffing (numbers and roles)

The self-evaluation report provides the following information on staffing and roles.

Table 3.1: Staffing

	Number at time of report
Full-time equivalent staff (total)	1.8
Designations	
Managers / co-coordinators	1.2
Direct service staff - case managers	0.2
Administrative staff	0.4

3.7 Budget allocation (funding amount, total as well as annual)

The project underspent its budget allocation in each financial year, because of slow start-up and low referral numbers, described in Section 5.2. An extension of time has been negotiated and the project is on track to spend the allocation by June 2013.

Table 3.2: Funding

	2009-10 $	2010-11 $	2011-12 $	TOTAL $
National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness	320,000.00	656,400.00	639,931.82 (to May 2012)	1,616,331.80
Other Government funding (if applicable)				
Internal organisational contribution				
Third Party Donations				
Other(specify source) Interest	2,463.84	22,790.00	24,389.02	49,642.86
TOTAL FUNDING	322,463.84	679,190.00	664,320.84	1,665,974.66

Table 3.3: Expenditure

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	TOTAL
TOTAL EXPENDITURE for this project (including Brokerage Services if applicable)		433,739	539,114	972,854

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4   Analysis of Client and Service System Outcomes

4.1   Client Services and Outcomes

How many clients assisted

The self-evaluation and data portal reports provide the following information on client numbers assisted for the period up until June 30, 2012.

In this section the data record the number of individual clients who were assisted *within* each separate financial year from 2009-10 to 2011-12. In each 12-month reporting period there were new clients as well as clients continuing from the previous year.

As at June 30, the total number of clients assisted to date was 120, plus 236 children. HIR assisted 53 new clients in 2011-12, and continued to support 64 from the previous year. A total of 117 clients were supported at some time in the 2011/12 financial year.

Table 4.1: Clients assisted

	2010-11 [a]	2011-12 [b]
Female	67	117
16-24yrs	14	19
25-64 yrs	53	98
Not known	-	-
ATSI	6	11
Other Australian born people	52	93
People born overseas, English speaking	-	7
People born overseas, non-English speaking	9	6
Not known	-	-

a. Source: self-evaluation report
b. Total clients, not new clients. Includes clients who commenced support in 2010-11. Source: June 2012 data portal report

Table 4.2: Homelessness status of clients prior to assistance[a]

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Sleeping rough		6	21
Short or emergency		39	39
At risk of homelessness		22	54
Other		0	3
Not known		0	

a. Source: self-evaluation report

Numbers receiving different services

Details on the different services received were not reported in the self-evaluation or data portal reports. The support packages received by clients are described in Section 3.4.

Describe housing outcomes

The self-evaluation and 2011/12 data portal reports provides the following information on housing outcomes for existing tenancy. Note that Table 4.3 includes data from the self-evaluation report, which provides data for ten months of 2011/12, and the June 2012 data portal report, which provides data for the whole year.

Table 4.3 Housing outcomes

	2010-11	2011-12	TOTAL
Number of people given assistance to maintain existing accommodation	67[a]	53[b]	116
Of them, number who maintained existing accommodation	64 [a]	43a [a]	107
Number of clients who were housed year to date			
Social housing (public, AHO, or community housing	27 [a]	29 [b]	56
Private rental	40 [a]	24 [b]	64

    a.   Self-evaluation report, to May 2012

    b.   June 2012 data portal report

The following elements of the program were critical to ensuring tenancy sustainability.

- Case management and brokerage supported women to make connections with community

Access to brokerage funding was a crucial factor in establishing and maintaining tenancy. A number of women were in rental arrears from a previous property and the HAP project helped to settle this outstanding debt and advocate on behalf of the client. Most women on HAP left their home and their relationship without any belongings and the brokerage funding was largely utilised to fill the client's new home with the necessary furniture and whitegoods so they could settle in and live comfortably. This was described as critical, because prior to HAP women described returning to the violent situations because they couldn't secure housing, or even if they could, were unable to furnish it.

One client, who has since successfully exited from the HAP project and is still maintaining her tenancy and talks about how the project helped her:

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> Well we didn't have anything. Before I went on the program we didn't have anything so getting a house was even harder because we had nothing to put in the house. So just getting everything set up for the house so that we could have our own house and be all set up and get on with our lives (Amber).

A HAP support worker describes how the brokerage assists women to be able to afford to live on their own and meet all the costs associated with moving and starting up a new house, 'financially, it just makes it much easier for women to actually leave that DV and leave it behind and not be at risk of going back to that situation because financially they can't afford a rental property' (Nadia HIR service provider).

- Brokerage assisted in maintaining tenancies

In some instances where clients were approved tenancy prior to commencing start safely, the HAP program covered the bond and the first few payments of rent for the client. In other instances the brokerage funding has enabled women to continue to pay their rent even when they have a competing bill or urgent expense. The flexibility of the brokerage usage criteria, and the approach taken by case workers to empower their clients to make decisions about how to best utilise it, enables women and children to engage in their community through social activities and learning opportunities, and in turn develop a sense of belonging to their local area. Building these community connections enhances the likelihood of women feeling safe and settled in her home, and the motivation to maintain their tenancy.

- Case management provided ongoing support

One of the advantages of adopting this whole of sector approach to the HAP project is that human service workers who do not specialise in homelessness are now being alerted to the housing crisis and the challenges faced by clients to maintain their tenancy. This adds another element to their case management when working with clients to recognise the importance of safe, sustainable housing as well as the importance of addressing issues that may affect their ability to maintain their tenancy.

- Financial counselling and NILS

Women leaving violence often have limited financial management skills, because they have been denied access to money, and may also have debt from previous relationships. HAP facilitated access to financial counselling, and access to No Interest Loan Schemes (NILS). Both were important in enabling women to develop skills in maintaining a tenancy, including budgeting, managing existing debts and avoiding new unsustainable debts.

The self-evaluation report describes housing outcomes:

> The HIR project has provided tenancy support to clients. Often generalist services are not as aware of the homelessness crisis in our region. Clients who have

experienced homelessness often experience major challenges in maintaining a tenancy. Ongoing support for these clients is essential to assist them to sustain tenancies. This ongoing support needs to be longer than the three months often offered to clients by services. The HIR project has been able to extend this support to 12 months and the outcomes of longer term support are clear.

The project has identified a real gap in the provision of flexible brokerage across the early intervention, family support, housing and outreach services to respond to specific DV client needs, and has been able to support women in the crucial early stages of leaving DV through removalist brokerage, support with DV related debts and family law related expenses. Many of the clients have identified that even with service support they felt they would have had to return to their ex as the financial burden of starting out again with children is too much of a barrier.

It has also identified that clients are able to maintain their tenancies if they are able to access emotional, practical and financial support in the initial stages of leaving DV. This early support enabled a number of clients to transition to independence with part time employment and stable tenancies earlier than the estimated 12 months support, and some women exiting the project after 6 months as they required no further support.

The flexibility of the project in terms of intensity of case management has enabled those clients with more complex needs to receive the intensive support they need. One client talks about how the support provided by her caseworker as being so important that without it she thinks her children would have been removed from her care.

> I'm going to be honest with you, if it wasn't for her telling me to do this and to do that and to apply for these things for me, I tell you know, I would not have half my bills paid for, because I still would have been struggling. I would not have - they would have taken the kids off me fully for not being able to afford food for them (Shelley).

In other situations, some clients only needed minimal guidance from their HAP worker to provide them with structure and support them in planning and achieving their goals, as expressed by one client.

> It's made a massive, massive difference in my life. It gave me opportunity, right, but it's probably more the structure, knowing that somebody - it was kind of like the purposeful goal setting in the way that you have to intend certain things for your future...it caused me to really think and plan about what I needed to do (Zara).

Describe non-housing outcomes

The so-called 'non-housing' outcomes reported here are directly related to enabling the sustainability of long term accommodation for women and their children. Whilst the immediate need that is being met can be categorized as 'health' or 'legal' for example, it is the resolution of these needs that supports the financial capacity, self-efficacy and independent living skills to establish and maintain a tenancy.

The self-evaluation report does not include non-housing outcomes. The data portal reports for Hunter include non-housing client support for 2011/12 only.

Table 4.4: Non-housing outcomes

Type of non-housing support	Number of clients directly assisted by this service	Number of clients referred to other services
	2011/12	2011/12
Financial	53	
Drug & alcohol		12
Education, training & employment		24
Legal		24
Mental health		41
General health		21
Other		53

Overall HAP clients are feeling a significant improvement in their general wellbeing. The project empowers clients to make decisions about how they can best improve their mental health for them and their children and this has been achieved through engaging various social groups and formal supports. These have helped to reduce social isolation and address issues of trauma, mental illness, and increase self-esteem. These supports have also helped women to manage the current and upcoming struggles associated with leaving their violent partner, such as attending court for various custody, child protection, and violence-related matters. Attending healthy relationships classes and domestic violence support groups has also helped women to identify signs of potential perpetrators in new partners to break that cycle of choosing the same type of partner, or taking back the previous perpetrator.

Living in safe and stable housing free from violence has eliminated the fear that many women had of losing their children and some women who have had their children removed are in a better position to advocate for restoration for their children. For example, one client reported that:

> I feel a lot safer because we are in housing and my ex doesn't know where we
> are. Better security that I won't lose my children now because we do have

> housing and they're not living in a motel. They have a future now because we do have a home that we can keep for as long as we want (Amber).

Women are also feeling much more confident to manage their financial responsibilities and provide for their children. HAP provided the support and the platform for women to learn financial planning and to utilise their resources so they could feel as though they can support themselves and their children away from the perpetrator. Not having to rely on their partner for financial and practical support has been a significant factor in maximising the likelihood that women will not return to the violent relationship. With this a reignited sense of independence and optimistic outlook on life has resulted in many women setting short, medium and long term goals for their career and living prospects in the future.

Many women have completed or are undertaking some form of education and training to increase their skills and enhance their career opportunities. The project supplied women with the practical resources to pursue their learning goals, however the encouragement and moral support that they had the intelligence to do it was also a key contributor in the success of this outcome.

The impact of support for a range of practical, emotional and financial challenges was described by clients, for example:

> Part of not leaving the relationship was that I was in was about the financial situation and feeling like I couldn't cope with meeting my responsibilities. I couldn't cope financial planning. That was my mentality. I think by having the assistance it showed me how I can use my money more wisely. Now, being on my own, I just manage really well (Zara).

It was also described by staff.

> She's doing a real estate course because she's been told if she could do the training she could get some part-time work with a real estate agent. She's been able to set up a house for her and her five children and it's just changed her life. Her whole outlook on life has changed. Her whole demeanour has changed. She knows there are people out there that are willing to support her (Amy HIR service provider).

> In that 12 months she's just a different woman, like her self-esteem, her confidence, she actually went to family law, sorted out all the custody stuff with the children and the father. She's at TAFE; she's planning to do nursing (Camille HIR service provider).

> It just changes their life to know that there are people that care about them and they've got the support behind them (Amy HIR service provider).

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Any other information on intended or unintended outcomes for clients

The self-evaluation report notes that unintended outcomes relate to building capacity and knowledge within the service system. These include improvements to knowledge and information sharing that extends beyond the project, increased knowledge of effective support for sustaining a tenancy, and increased awareness of the importance of housing.

> The Assessment Group created informal information sharing that could be applied to non HIR clients.

> Identified aspects of sustaining a tenancy that impacted on women economically such as lawn maintenance equipment, inconsistent child support payments and DV related debts from previous relationship or tenancy.

> Increased understanding of the client needs related to housing crisis for generalist services.

> Increased knowledge of housing services and process available to women at risk of homelessness.

4.2   Impact of the project on preventing/reducing/addressing homelessness

Impact of the project on reducing/addressing homelessness

The projects addressed homelessness through offering assistance to women and children who had previously been in housing that was unsafe, insecure and inadequate. The majority of these women established and maintained tenancies, in secure and safe housing. Although there are methodological difficulties with attribution, in that the evaluation took place over a short period of time and the data available was largely self-reported by projects, the service model is supported by a robust theoretical framework, and this supports attribution of client outcomes to the intervention.

Service providers were emphatic that the project helped women sustain their tenancies, and supported them to not return to the violent relationship.

Considerations for specific client groups

Because the Assessment Groups were made up of established agencies across different sectors, they included agencies with established strengths in providing support for women from CALD backgrounds.

> HIR is really good at working with other services so that they know what's happening in the area and being able to utilise services that are appropriate. For

culturally diverse women I think the program's worked really well as well (Karen
HIR service provider).

Specifically with respect to Indigenous communities, the Hunter Independent Evaluation report refers to the NSW Counting the Homeless Report 2006 which states that Indigenous people make up 9.7% (or 192 of 1981) of homeless people in the Hunter region (cited in NOVA, 2013: 9). The June 2012 data portal report indicates that the HIR project engaged a total of 11 Indigenous women (from 117), making up 9.4 per cent of the HIR project client population. This suggests the project is reaching these communities in relatively appropriate numbers. However, efforts to interview local Aboriginal workers were unsuccessful and the absence of more detailed qualitative data invites some caution in the interpretation of these figures.

4.3   Service system and delivery outcomes

There are four identifiable outcomes for the service system:

1. Different workers across the service system report enhanced skills, knowledge and confidence in domestic violence, housing and/or case management practice as a result of their engagement with the project. This supports the development of effective professional responses to the issue of DV and homelessness

2. Existing services increased their client case-load through becoming registered service providers for HAP DV. This re-oriented them to homelessness work within the context of their core work and so expanded the 'reach' of housing support programs

3. Working relationships have been forged and enhanced, thus supporting collaboration and integrated service delivery. It has been especially important for Housing NSW to be part of the structure so that a relationship is required and mutually implemented between the Access and Demand teams and external providers

4. Through increased collaboration and access to brokerage funding, services have been able to deliver support that would otherwise not have been available in a timely manner. This fills gaps caused by such things as lack of services, waiting lists, culturally inappropriate responses etc, thus addressing unmet need.

The projects filled important gaps in the service system through the provision of a flexible model of support, including brokerage, and an emphasis on building relationships. While family support services often work in collaboration, the projects enabled stronger relationships, and new relationships between services.

One element of these strengthened relationships is that family support services have not needed to call on extremely over-stretched services that provide free material goods and services (typically charities) as frequently. This reduces the pressure on these services, and so also the pressure on the relationships between services. It also enables them to provide more services than

they otherwise would.

The Assessment Groups, and the coordinator role, have increased knowledge of the service sector, and the support available for women and children in different areas. An important outcome for the service system is an increased awareness by non-housing generalist support services of the importance of housing, and a focus on supporting tenancies; and, at the same time, an increased awareness by Housing NSW and community housing organisations of the impact of DV and the short- and long-term support needs of women and children who have experienced DV.

The collaborative approach behind case plans and Assessment Groups has improved the responses of the service system, and built capacity of individual services.

The evaluation team is mindful that a shift to 'early intervention' is used as an indicator of success for service systems aiming to address homelessness and this may be sought as a measure of the HAP DV project outcomes. In the context of domestic violence however this can cause some difficulties. A common conceptual framework behind a range of domestic and family violence interventions is an application of the trans-theoretical or 'stages of change' model (Prochaska et al 1992). Current interpretations of this model emphasise a cyclical rather than linear process of behaviour change whereby individuals gradually develop self-efficacy and decision-making capacity to implement preferred life choices through a repeating spiral of interventions. In addition the domestic violence research literature emphasises the variability of a woman's capacity to leave a violent relationship as a result of multiple emotional, practical and physical risk factors that are in constant change, being influenced largely by the perpetrator. The perpetrator is an external factor outside of her control but heavily influencing her options and outcomes. This makes it extremely difficult for women to decide to leave, plan the practicalities and carry this out successfully in a seamless process. In this context, 'early intervention' is not a one-off intervention that defines the nature of longer term outcomes. Rather it is a series of repeated opportunities. Commencing this series of supported opportunities early is indeed an important goal in preventing homelessness from domestic violence. However, service systems must be prepared to repeat their engagement and targeted activities in order to achieve the desired outcomes. This is especially true for children who are adversely affected by their experiences of domestic violence. The HAP DV projects have been able to stay engaged with women over a sustained 12-month period as their circumstances vary, but there may be instances where exiting and then re-engaging with the support of the project is required.

There is a particularly acute shortage of affordable housing in the Hunter, which has had an impact on family support and early intervention services not typically experienced in assisting with housing. The HIR has enabled more efficient provision of services through increased collaboration with housing providers.

> A lot of these services are now facing the housing crisis and a lot of their time is spent around the housing crisis. But they, because they weren't in a special homelessness service, they found dealing with housing and the pathways

> application and all those aspects just too overwhelming. Well now because we can streamline it a little and have that information, I guess they're finding it easier to deal with (auspicing agency representative).

A potential deleterious impact on the service system is overlap and 'churning' of clients because of the presence of multiple initiatives with overlapping aims and target groups. There are other HAP projects in the Hunter; however stakeholders reported that this was not creating problems of duplication. There have been cases where clients have been involved with one more than one project, but not at the same time.

The coordination and governance structures of the project have enabled direct reporting on barriers to service delivery to Housing NSW, the community housing organisation and Community Services. The Assessment Groups are also described as effective in developing case plans and providing support to clients, because the experience and knowledge of the whole group informs planning for clients. Because agencies involved in the Assessment Groups represent different sectors and services, case plans are developed and approved from this diversity.

This was described as critical in assisting women who have left family violence:

> The group look outside the box. There are a few services around that do provide brokerage for different things […] But the HIR project actually looks at the person and says, okay, what does this person need to actually leave this DV behind? It's not just looking at the very practical things as well (Nadia HIR service provider).

The effectiveness of client-centred collaboration was also emphasised, and described in contrast to other interagency or information sharing forums:

> It's just a different relationship with the services because we're all focused on a particular outcome for a particular client and they're sharing lots of different things about the service that you wouldn't get in any other agency. […] I guess that's what the difference is. We're not just sitting there and listening, we're gradually working towards something together (Nadia HIR service provider).

4.4   Staffing issues

What impact did staffing issues have on the project?

The domestic violence NGO sector in general is often a low paid, highly stressful work environment relying on the personal commitment of workers who have specifically chosen this field of practice (perhaps not unlike specialist homelessness services overall). It is therefore characterized by high staff turnover and service gaps due to waiting lists. However, the HAP DV model ameliorates this effect by sharing the work across a range of service providers from different organisations, providing a central coordinating role and structurally supporting

collaborative practice. The coordinator position has fortunately been fairly stable throughout the pilot, with only one change of personnel. The first coordinator was responsible for project set up, and the formation and promotion of the Assessment Groups. The current coordinator has been employed since March 2010 and has continued to promote, facilitate and coordinate the project. This has been significant for the ability of the project to monitor and support ongoing case management and to underpin individual support if the case manager has changed or left and created a gap in service. The domestic violence expertise of staff in generalist family support positions is not certain in all cases, as discussed below.

A high proportion of respondents to the evaluation (including clients, the coordinating agency and service providers) maintained that the capacity for the project to provide intensive, consistent, long term (12 month) support has been a major factor in achieving sustainable housing outcomes. In addition to this intensity and consistency of client support, identified gaps in mainstream services could be met by using brokerage to purchase timely private assistance, such as mental health assessments, counselling and children's educational support. This also means that specific expertise tailored to the individual client can be accessed, rather than having to rely on only one provider.

Thus, 'best practice' staffing has been achieved through diverse providers, consistent coordination and the capacity to buy-in essential expertise and this has underpinned positive outcomes for clients. However, the skill shortages and gaps in the Hunter region acted as a constraint on the project, although these gaps are entirely characteristic of areas with small populations over large distances. Although brokerage for case management could enable specialist services to support more clients, in practice there were limits on how much this could be done, especially in regional areas where small services and relatively low numbers meant there were no 'economies of scale' regarding caseworker hours. If an agency took on a single HAP client this translated to an extra two hours a week for a worker, and this was not a practical option in many cases.

What skills were needed by staff?

The coordinator role is critical to the success of the HAP service model. In the Hunter the coordinator has the challenging role of coordinating Assessment Groups which make decisions around brokerage and case planning. This decentralised decision making allows the expertise of a large number of partner agencies to contribute to the project, but also demands intensive, ongoing coordination of groups across a large geographic area.

Other skills were needed by the coordinator and partner agencies.

- Case management and budgeting skills and domestic violence knowledge

The service provider role as described by stakeholders included the provision of extensive time with clients to assess need, determine goals and strategies and respond to fluctuating demands, including crisis intervention. This is not basic support, but professional case management practice

enabling the navigation of multiple service systems and agencies to progress towards independence. Issues to be addressed included potential engagement with Centrelink, Family Court, citizenship and passport agencies, police, mental health, drug and alcohol, family support, child protection and welfare services in addition to Housing. It is the responsibility of the service providers' employing organisation to adequately supervise and support this work. Knowledge of domestic violence is essential to ensure effective case plans in the context of the ongoing effects and risks associated with DV.

- Domestic violence identification, screening and front line response skills

Housing NSW offices are the gateway to the project. Eligibility is defined by housing product criteria and all women must be accepted through this entry point. It is therefore essential that Housing NSW Access and Demand teams have good screening and assessment skills and helpful tools to enable appropriate identification of eligible clients. A number of stakeholders (including Housing NSW themselves) acknowledged that awareness of domestic violence and knowledge in how to enable disclosure was not adequate in some offices. This does not require expert, highly specialist knowledge but rather, an appropriate level of sensitivity and knowledge of housing-related needs and risks. It is strongly recommended that training and the design and implementation of appropriate screening tools occurs in order to support good practice.

What training was required?

The section above indicates the skills required for support workers to effectively provide intensive case management to clients, however the evaluation found little specific evidence of specialist DV expertise for support workers and, given that support workers in many cases work in generalist family support agencies, this may indicate a gap in skills.

Further, the evaluation team found that a number of service providers require ongoing mentoring and supervision on case management practice.

Staff in the Housing NSW regional office may also require specific domestic violence screening and response training. More importantly, an appropriate DV screening tool for the Access and Demand teams is urgently needed. There has been an enormous amount of formal research and development work conducted in recent years on DV screening and this could be drawn upon.

5   Cost Analysis

This section describes a broad review of costs and outputs as presented in project self-evaluation information. We have focused on three aspects of this data:

1. Approximate balance of auspice agency operating costs as against total cost of direct client support packages.

2. Average amount spent on direct support packages per client

3. Types and amount of brokerage spending

It should be noted that the findings presented here are estimates only, to be taken as indicators for further investigation. This information cannot be used as a reliable measure of cost benefit or cost effectiveness, which would require a closer audit of precise costs, outputs, off-sets and outcomes.

As more fully described in the literature review that accompanies this report, there are significant issues to be considered in any cost analysis of community service projects, including the challenges of accounting for multiple, often hidden variables and indirect costs and lack of agreement on how to define costs (Baldry et.al. 2012; Ling Chan and Yin-Nei Cho 2010). In addition, domestic violence services may encounter a range of particular concerns associated with the unpredictability of service activity over long periods of time due to varying injury/lethality risks and the need to repeatedly respond to the effects of ongoing cycles of chronic abuse (including specifically financial abuse) even after separation and relocation. In integrated programs there are also particular difficulties with measuring cost efficiency when so many factors are outside the control of the project or its workers.

Using the NSW Community Services reference paper for deriving indicative unit costs (NSW Government 2010) we have examined the possibility of conducting activity based costing from a top-down approach. However, this method runs into some difficulties with the available data and cannot be adequately implemented[6]. The limitations of this specific evaluation significantly constrain the possibilities for effective cost analysis. These limitations include the short time frame

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[6] Adopting the unit costing approach in the document, the *service* is the GWS HAP DV project. The core service *activities* we have identified for the financial year 2011-2012 are:
1. case management: $270, 875
2. brokerage: $209,884
3. project coordination (staffing, including administration): $267,672
4. auspice agency operational activities: $110,717

The NSW Homelessness Policy and Programs Unit has requested an average costing per client. Taking the individual registered client as the appropriate unit to measure against the above costs does not take into account the variable of the numbers of children who are also supported through the service. The size of the family significantly affects the brokerage and case management expenditure and so would need to be factored in. In addition, the data provided does not sufficiently differentiate high need and low need packages of support, nor length, intensity or quality of support provided. This would require more detailed collection of data from a representative sample of client case plans and reports of actual service ultimately provided. This necessitates a longer, more intensive process than is possible within the time frame and resources of the evaluation.

for collection and analysis of data, inconsistencies across various data reports including variable data definitions and differences in project record-keeping.

In the light of these constraints and in order to provide some useful, broad information on costings, the evaluation team has assumed the self evaluation report completed by the HIR project in the first half of 2012, the June 2012 quarter portal report and the completed 2011-12 cost analysis template provide the most accurate up-to-date data. As retrospective reports they can account for adjustments to final client numbers following the end of reporting periods, translations from calendar to financial year and any late expenses that may have occurred. The following information is provided based on these assumptions and limitations.

5.1   Total project budget and expenditure

The HAP DV project service specification in the Hunter indicates a fixed-term funding amount of $640, 000 per annum over three years. Therefore the accumulative, total planned budget was almost two million dollars.

This annual funding was provided in order to cover operating costs and staff salary for the auspice agency, plus case management and brokerage costs for a target of 20 low need and 10 high need packages of direct client assistance. High needs clients were to receive packages of $20,000 and low needs clients $10,000.

The requirement to deliver 30 packages in total costing $400,000 per year means we can broadly estimate the *expected* expenditure for 12 months, full implementation of the project was approximately one third auspice agency operating costs and two thirds direct client service packages.

The actual annual breakdown of expenditure as reported by the auspice agency in the self evaluation report and in the 2011-12 cost analysis template is represented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Hunter HAP DV (HIR) annual funding and expenditure

2009-10 (6months only)	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Funding: $320,000	Funding: $656,400	Funding: $671,482	No data available
Plus interest: $ 2,463.84	Plus interest: $22,790	Plus interest: $28,644	
Total funding: $322,463.84	Total funding: $679,190	Total income: $700,126	
Total actual expenditure: Not available	Total actual expenditure: $433,739.43	Total actual expenditure: $570,187	

Auspice agency operating costs (including core staff)

Not available	$166, 033.26[#] [#]Due to incomplete data in the self evaluation this figure has been arrived at by simply subtracting the reported brokerage costs from the total expenditure to reach this figure.	Staff costs: $124, 178 Other operating costs: $82,121 Total: $206,299

Break down of client support package expenditure

Not available	Services (including case mgnt): $65,695.21 Goods: $196,848.05 Crisis payments: $5162.92 Total $267,706.18	Case mgnt hrs: $69,245 Goods: $195,401 Services: $69,982 Payments: $29,261 Total: $363,889

Percentages of annual expenditure (Figures rounded down or up to the nearest whole number).

NA	Client package costs: 62% Auspice agency costs: 38%	Client package costs: 64% Auspice agency costs: 36% When adjusted to include direct client work conducted by the project coordinator and outreach worker: 70%:30%

This evaluation did not have access to detailed annual, audited finance reports. However, as table 2 demonstrates, the project reported an approximately 36:64% ratio of operating costs to direct client service packages in the 2011-12 financial year. This is likely to be an underestimate of direct

client costs overall since the auspice agency staff and operating costs include the salary of a 'project officer' and 'outreach case worker' who engaged directly with clients. If an estimation of costs for a portion of these salaries is included in direct client work the ratio is likely to more accurately approach at least a 70:30 split[7].

The information provided above, along with reported client numbers, suggests the project required a 6-month establishment phase before full client operations appear to be under way (suggesting time and expenditure on setting up systems, working relationships and equipment) and this is supported by qualitative data discussed in other sections of this report. In addition client numbers have been low and this has led to an overall under spend, discussed below.

5.2   Issues with expenditure

Unspent funds

There have been unspent funds in every year of the project and these are due to the following issues:

1. **Slow start up:** The initial set up period for the project was slow. Reasons for this included that funding did not commence until the second quarter of the first year; recruitment of staff and other establishment activities for governance and operation of the project then had to be put into place; and referral pathways/awareness of the project took time to evolve.

2. **Low referral rates:** Referrals from Housing NSW were lower than expected as a result of inconsistencies and overly restricted application of eligibility criteria. This included for example women who had not yet left a violent situation not being permitted access to support to plan the move; women without existing tenancies due to a lack of available housing; women being required to provide documentation to 'prove' domestic violence; and women being deemed not suitable for social housing because of the outcomes of previous tenancies, which may have been brought about by the actions of their ex-partner.

3. **Careful financial management:** The auspice agency has been thorough in requiring close monitoring and management of client service packages. Expenditure is approved according to the goals of the case plan such that every client does not automatically receive the maximum amount available. In addition, monies are returned where the assessed needs are met without recourse to the full budget. Thus money comes back into the project.

4. **Lack of affordable housing in the Hunter region:** Clients eligibility for the HAP DV support packages was related to securing a tenancy. When properties are not available, clients cannot access a HAP DV support package in order to sustain a non-existing tenancy.

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[7] The precise FTE and salaries spent on direct client work by auspice agency staff has not been determined by the evaluation team. However a conservative estimate of $50,000 to cover some of the reported project officer and outreach case worker time would support this 70:30 ratio.

5. **Gaps in the service network.** The Hunter is a large, diverse area and while specialist services are available in large centres such as Newcastle, there is a lack of these services in smaller towns.

The project's response to unspent funds

Increased client numbers: Four key actions appear to have helped the project to exceed its set targets after the first year and so 'catch up' with regards to client numbers and make progress in expending funds.

1. Considerable, targeted local training and promotion of the project by the coordinator and coordinating groups.

2. The project seconded a worker from a family support agency to work specifically in one of their service sites, thus enabling more clients to be seen in their local area

3. Advocacy and enhanced communication with Housing NSW to increase referrals

4. Good will and collaborative practice across the region leading to increased knowledge of the project and improved referral pathways

Use of carry forward funds: The auspice agency negotiated to carry forward unspent funds so they could be allocated to additional clients (above the target numbers) in subsequent years. This was at all times monitored as part of a case management plan to contribute directly to sustainable housing outcomes. They believe they are now on target to expend their funding allocation by 2013.

With permission from the lead agency (Community Services), the HIR also used some of the interest accrued from project funds to support a woman who did not meet the citizenship/residency eligibility criteria for HAP but was otherwise eligible.

5.3   Client costs for this project

A completed costing template for 2011/2012 financial year can be found at Appendix C. This data, plus the self evaluation report and the final quarter portal report for 2011-12 form the basis for the findings in this section.

In the financial year 2011-12, a total of 117 clients received a service. A total of $570,187 was expended for the whole project during that year including $363,889 for case management and brokerage costs combined. Taking all 117 clients into account the average expenditure per client in this year can be calculated as indicated in table 3.

Table 5.2: Average client expenditure

	Client support packages 2011/12	*Whole project 2011/12*[8]
Total expenditure	$363,889	$570,187
Average expenditure per client	$3,110.16	$4,873.40

It was discovered very early in the life of the project that the financial allocations for high and low need packages were inappropriate. Aligning complexity of need to social housing or private rental did not in fact match the reality of client circumstances and therefore the support packages were tailored individually and amounts were expended according to client need. Therefore analysis of the split between high and low need packages becomes irrelevant.

5.4 Value for money

There is very limited information on cost analysis in the domestic violence, homelessness or case management formal literature that helps to inform a reliable assessment of value for money in the HAP DV programme. Relevant benchmarks are not available since there are significant variables between models of service delivery, even within specifically DV housing support programmes. For example Coy and Kelly's (2011) financial analysis of per-client expenditure in the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Scheme (IDVA) in London, found an average cost per client of 501 British pounds (approximately $771). However, these programmes offered 'support' which did not appear to include the kind of comprehensive case management or brokerage funding provided by HAP DV programmes.

Closer to home, the New South Wales Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) programme does provide case management and brokerage services. This support is specifically to enable women and children who experience domestic violence to safely stay in their own home. There are no published cost analyses of SHLV projects to draw upon, however a crude calculation of fixed annual project funding divided by the minimum annual target for client numbers (not actual numbers of clients supported) indicates an annual *budgeted* cost of a maximum $5,000 per client, including all support, brokerage and operational costs[9].

An evaluation of the *Brighter Futures* child abuse prevention programme in NSW has estimated that for families managed by a non-government provider (including case management and

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[8] The Hunter project has reported an average overall spend of $6,000 per client taking account of all expenditure and activity to June 2012. However there is no equivalent data to indicate average per client spend for all regions for the same time period and so this figure has not been used.

[9] SHLV figures indicate $150,000 total annual budget per project and a *minimum* of 30 packages of client support per year, depending on complexity and necessary length of engagement. In reality, far greater numbers of clients receive support.

brokerage) there is an average total cost to the programme of $22,785 and for a support period of only 6 to12 months, an average cost of $10,991 (Hilferty et al., 2010).

An AHURI report of the cost-effectiveness of homelessness services (Flatau et al., 2008) found the total costs per client across a range of housing support programmes varied from $1,912 (Re-entry Link - support for people exiting prison, without accommodation) to $3,483 (Supported Housing Assistance Program, to sustain existing social housing tenancies). This was set against a cost of $25,923 for medium/long-term SAAP clients, such as women staying in refuges. Offset costs were then calculated to give a measure of value/cost-effectiveness, finding that significant net savings occurred.

The difficulty here is that whilst these costings are relevant in that the programmes variously address the intersections of homelessness, domestic violence and child protection, there can be no meaningful comparison between the different types of services and cost calculations in relation to client outcomes, complexity of need, length of support and offset costs. The Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services (SCRGSP, 2012) also notes that lower costs per unit may in some cases indicate efficiency but can also indicate lower quality of service provision, thus undermining the project's aims. These issues have been discussed in other parts of this report.

Along with its 'sister' HAP DV projects in other regions, the project appears to be generously funded compared to some and less costly compared to others, but there is a strong argument for retaining its current level of funding to enable flexible, intensive, timely and uniquely tailored support in order to achieve the project's aims to address both housing and non-housing needs to respond to the risk of homelessness.

It is the opinion of the evaluation team that the current funding is appropriate to support the critical targeting, intensity and flexibility of support necessary for optimum outcomes. Based on a sample of client experiences and the agency reports in this evaluation, we hypothesise that the use of tailored case management in conjunction with generous and flexible brokerage funds, maximises the effectiveness of a range of support services. This not only prevents homelessness but also supports early intervention especially in the lives of children adversely affected by domestic violence. Baldry et al (2012) point to the lack of intensive support early in the lives of vulnerable individuals that would prevent significant costs to multiple service systems as they age and become increasingly in need of higher and more complex layers of support and this is a key point for consideration.

As Baldry et al also suggest, homelessness services may carry an inequitable cost burden from failures within health, corrective, community services and justice system responses. The HAP DV programme model supports integrated service delivery and critically, the individual's capacity to seek help and engage optimally with these services. As an effective service model that directs resources in a timely and adequately supported manner, it can be said to be value for money.

5.5   Contextual issues

There has been considerable need for negotiation and clarification of both eligibility criteria and structural governance issues in the HIR. These relationships, different understandings of the model and confusions about the possibilities for flexible use of the resources have required careful attention. Combined with extremely limited affordable housing in the region these issues have slowed down the project and limited its reach. At the end of 2012 it is meeting its client target numbers and beginning to expend funds fully – allocating appropriately to a broader range of women in need.

Positive, existing working relationships, combined with the reference committee and coordinating group structure of the project have created productive collaborations that enhance the efficiency of the project. These relationships and structures enable joint problem-solving and systems improvements to be enacted. As within any regional working environment, we can assume the interagency or interdisciplinary engagements are not always simple or without conflict. However on balance, from the evaluation data provided it can be said that the HIR both benefits from and contributes to efficient and effective regional collaboration, thus keeping client costs down through enhancing integrated practice.

5.6   How effective was the use of brokerage funding

Brokerage funding (not including case management hours) is a significant factor in the success of this project because it enables client access to critical resources and services at specific times of need and it has been used to great effect. The 2012 process evaluation for the HAP DV project in Greater Western Sydney, notes that brokerage has 'a profound effect on case management' (Cohen, 2012: 51) and this finding is echoed here. It appears that the level of brokerage available is greater than in other programmes such as the NSW government Staying Home Leaving Violence programme, but it must be noted that the total brokerage available is not always expended on an individual client as this is determined by need and subsequent detailed case plan. We find this capacity and level of flexibility to be of great benefit.

There are five key findings in relation to brokerage use:

1. That flexible brokerage is effectively used to cover one-off costs for household items or daily living materials to establish adequate living conditions

2. That flexible brokerage is effectively used to increase the capacity for clients to access critical services to identify and prevent escalation of health and wellbeing problems

3. That flexible brokerage is effectively used to enable clients to access training and employment to develop financial independence, thus contributing to a long term capacity to remain safe and stable

4. That flexible brokerage is effectively used as a mechanism and resource to increase self-efficacy.

5. That a high degree of control over the use of brokerage funds is located at the level of client case managers and this increases its positive effect

The top five categories for brokerage expenditure in 2011-2012 were: home establishment packs, household items, motor vehicle expenses, removalists and education and training.

Table 5.3: Hunter HAP DV (HIR), top five categories of brokerage expenditure

Category	Expenditure
Home establishment (beds, mattresses, white goods etc.)	$96,190
Household items (linen, crockery, cleaning equipment etc.)	$31,302
Motor vehicle expenses (repairs, green slip, petrol)	$24,832
Removalists and storage	$18,754
Education/Training	$15,279

It is clear the majority of brokerage funds have been directed towards moving into and setting up a new home. However, supporting ongoing stability and planning for future independence is also an important aspect of the expenditure which includes education and training as well as maintaining private transport. The Hunter project spent a relatively small proportion of client support package funding on case management.

Brokerage expenditure overall can be grouped into four main areas: namely, equipment; specialist services; goods and services to enable participation; and poverty relief.

- **Equipment:** one-off items to establish a safe and functioning home environment; enable children's appropriate engagement in education; and support their mother to maintain study or employment.

- **Specialist services:** There has been a need for brokerage to be spent on specialist services outside of the case managers' role for things such as psychological support, legal advice, life skills courses, formal education fees etc… The timeliness of the specialist service is a critical issue in sustaining the client in long term accommodation and enabling children to settle and cope with the consequences of domestic violence.

- **Participation:** Goods *and* services that enable clients to participate fully in life and attend support and education activities also draw on brokerage funding. This includes things such as meeting the costs of transport, motor vehicles, child care, new clothing for interviews, and driving lessons.

CGRVS and SPRC

- **Poverty relief:** A significant contribution has been made towards poverty relief through meeting the cost of utilities, rent arrears, removalist and storage fees and groceries to prevent debt as a foundation of spiralling poverty.

As indicated above, not only is brokerage being used to cover one-off material costs, access to critical services, training and employment but also to increase self-efficacy. By this we mean that workers have mentored clients in the development of confidence for financial decision-making, budgeting and resource management. Having a small amount of brokerage money to use at critical times has provided an opportunity for clients to consider priorities and 'practice' how to optimise expenditure. This has been strongly evident in the qualitative interviews conducted for this evaluation as an important aspect of sustainable outcomes from the overall HAP DV intervention.

Of note is the balance of expenditure on specific brokerage items compared to case management hours even when including the auspice agency staff in case management/client support hours. This raises a question as to whether women are choosing not to accept close support/case management at all; are already involved in a professional support relationship funded from an existing service; or there are inadequate numbers of available workers in the region. The data collected for this evaluation, and the self-evaluation report, suggests the latter point is probable as there are systemic challenges with workforce and specialist service availability in smaller towns. Further discussion of this would be fruitful for evaluating what is the best adaptation of the HAP model for the Hunter.

6 Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Model

6.1 Success factors for the model

The critical success factors for the model are summarised below.

1. *A combination of program elements that mutually enhance one another*

The data collected in this evaluation identify a number of key individual factors contributing to the success of the HAP DV model, but it is also apparent that the particular *combination* of program elements directly supported its' overall effectiveness. Specifically, the combination and inter-relationships of the following four elements optimised housing outcomes:

1. access to safe and affordable housing (through Start Safely or social housing)
2. flexible support underpinned by an individually tailored and coordinated case plan
3. the possibility of intensive assistance for up to 12 months
4. brokerage dollars to fund further goods and services not constrained to a narrow definition of housing purposes

The reliability and possibility of intensive support over a 12 month period enabled good case planning; subsequently, the individually tailored case plan that was focussed on housing outcomes, ensured timely and appropriate brokerage expenditure; and all of these things were underpinned by the availability of a 'bricks and mortar' safe place from which to rebuild a life, following (and often within a continuation of) domestic violence. It is the combined presence and relationship of these elements to one another that significantly strengthened the service model.

2. *Ongoing, flexible case management with a shared DV/housing focus*

The capacity to provide intensive, extensive support through a coordinated case plan was extremely effective in supporting women to maintain their tenancies. The model allowed for intensive support when it was needed, typically dropping back to less intensive support over time. The complex support needs of many women who have experienced domestic and family violence could be met with this flexible approach.

A significant contribution to effective support was the assistance the projects could provide in managing debt. Women leaving violent relationships often have debt from that relationship, and a bad or zero credit rating. Through providing access, via referrals, to NILS, financial counselling, and support in managing budgets, the projects enabled women to deal with their previous debts and manage their finances. This was critical in ensuring the housing and non-housing outcomes described in Section 4.1.

3. Brokerage aligned to the case plan

Each of the projects emphasised the importance of individualised case plans and support. Brokerage was a critical part of this, because it enabled services to meet the needs that were identified through the design and implementation of the case plans. As the internal evaluation report from one of the projects noted, brokerage was in general not used because women were asking for things, but because support workers identified goods and services that would help to meet their needs. Many of the agencies involved in the partnerships have long experience of supporting women and children who have experienced violence, and described brokerage as transformative in enabling extra support.

4. A housing focus but not housing constrained

The HAP project model has proven beneficial at the sector level for various reasons. The capacity building of different organisations within the sector is one such strength of the model as workers are recognising the importance of working with clients around tenancy and are becoming much more attuned to respond to the needs of clients regarding the housing crisis. Prior to HAP and the collaboration between SHS and non-SHS services, non SHS services were not equipped to assist their client with housing needs or managing the appropriate paperwork, however this has since improved through interagency support and skill building.

Similarly, services that may not have focused on domestic violence before are gaining insight into the specific needs and challenges faced by this group of clients. This specific target criteria of HAP clients has enabled a broader outlook requiring workers to adopt a holistic approach beyond their service specifications.

5. Eligibility screening within Housing NSW

The location of initial screening and eligibility assessment within Housing NSW has been significant for collaboration and integration. In spite of an acknowledged need for improvement in some areas of DV knowledge in the Access and Demand teams, it has been important to continue this role within Housing since it then requires ongoing engagement and joint problem-solving. A short term solution to the issue would be to move responsibility for initial screening to the auspice agency. However, a developmental approach will have longer term benefits for integrated practice and these gains are already being seen in the project.

6. Inter-agency influence, education and knowledge exchange

Services supporting women and children are often small and poorly resourced. Initiatives to increase integration and collaboration have achieved less than anticipated because of agencies do not have the resources required to change practice and connect with other services in new ways. In contrast, the HAP projects were a positive experience for the partnership agencies involved, because they provided new opportunities to learn about other services, were local and so relevant

to local agencies. They enabled client-centred engagement around case planning and, uniquely to the Hunter, assessing brokerage applications which allowed for genuinely collaborative case planning.

7. *Local adaptation of the overall program model*

The Hunter project retained a stronger fidelity to the original service specifications than the other HAP DV projects, and it was constrained at times by stricter adherence to eligibility guidelines than the other sites. Nonetheless, the project was able to make local adaptations, most notably in response to a critical lack of case workers in the region to whom clients could be referred. The project employed two case workers to fill this gap.

The fairly large geographic area of the Hunter was described as significant to the implementation of new initiatives, and the local Assessment Groups were key in ensuring the success of the HIR. Also important was the involvement of larger and smaller agencies. However, the capacity of smaller agencies in managing services and administering brokerage is still developing in some instances. This is particularly pressing in smaller centres and regional areas.

The Assessment Groups were specific to a geographic area, which meant that they built on existing service networks and relationships, and exploited local knowledge. The groups were functional and engaged because they were supported by the HAP coordinator role, who was able to build and maintain engagement, provide secretariat support, and ensure compliance with guidelines and service specifications.

The self-evaluation report describes the strengths of the model in terms of building sector capacity and service integration; communication between service sectors, especially housing, women's refuges and family support; communication between smaller service organisations and government agencies; and providing critically important long-term support in a context where previously only short-term support had been possible.

Stakeholders from government and non-government agencies in the Hunter were extremely supportive of the model, describing it as a real reframing of support for women leaving violence, and a genuinely client-centred approach. The flexibility of the model, its responsiveness to changing client needs over time, and the case collaboration embedded in the structure of the Assessment Groups, are all highly valued. New relationships between agencies are also regarded as beneficial: before HIR, counselling services were largely unaware of private rental assistance offered by Housing NSW, but now refer clients to Housing for Start Safely.

8. *Strong management, coordination skills and practice expertise in the auspice agency*

The Assessment Groups were specific to a geographic area, which meant that they built on existing service networks and relationships, and exploited local knowledge. The groups were functional and engaged because they were supported by the HAP coordinator role, who was able

to build and maintain engagement, provide secretariat support, and ensure compliance with guidelines and service specifications.

9. *Additional resources for local service providers*

Initiatives to increase integration and collaboration in the homelessness and DV sectors have frequently achieved less than anticipated because organisations often do not have the resources required to connect with other services in new ways and change or extend client interventions. In contrast, the HAP DV project provided training, coordination and leadership of multi-agency meetings, specialised professional support and the option of funding for support hours, goods and services.

Existing services have been able to increase their client numbers through becoming registered service providers for HAP DV. This has re-oriented them to homelessness work within the context of their core work and so expanded the 'reach' of housing support.

10. *Case management focused on client empowerment and learning to use the service system*

Evidence demonstrates that a substantial number of women who leave a violent relationship struggle to counter the effects of having lived in a situation of on-going coercive control with the accompanying traumatic stress of chronic, intermittent violence. Women have usually been isolated by the perpetrator and may have become effectively 'de-skilled' by perpetrator tactics such as denigration and psychological abuse. Enforced isolation may result in women not being aware of services available to them, particularly if they have been compelled to move locations a number of times by the perpetrator or have chosen to move to escape the violence.

The approach in the HAP DV project involved shared planning and decision-making with the client. This can be an important means of empowering women who have been living in situations of coercive control. They were given the option to plan and allocate brokerage money themselves before final approval and they also received intense support to gradually re-gain skills in how to effectively utilise help services.

A particularly valuable service is financial counselling: although these services are overstretched and often have waiting lists, they provide practical assistance in freezing and consolidating debts, and teach new knowledge and skills. This is especially critical for women who have experienced family violence, who may not have had access to money or experience in budgeting, and who often have bad credit ratings and debt from the violent relationship.

6.2 Challenges for the model

1. *Eligibility constraints and inconsistencies*

The eligibility rules for the projects were described by service providers as too strict to enable support for all the women who could have otherwise been assisted. Specifically:

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- Women who were not willing or able to leave the violent environment could not be assisted

- Women categorised as unsuitable for social housing (because of the outcomes of previous tenancies, which may have been brought about by the actions of her ex-partner) were ineligible

In addition, it appears as though ambiguities and lack of clarity in the guidelines—especially around whether only people with established tenancies were eligible—were not always resolved consistently.

The requirement that women be in social housing or receiving Start Safely to be eligible for the HAP program was also described as too restrictive. It was restrictive because it could not be paid retrospectively; it excluded women who were not ready to leave their current residence from receiving brokerage services; and it prevented HAP assisting people to find a private rental property. One stakeholder noted that women who have experienced violence may be ineligible for social housing because classified as 'unsuitable tenants':

> A lot of women who utilise the service are ineligible for social housing want to be on the register for social housing because they've had to flee a home and that home. There's been damage done to the home because of the domestic violence experience. They're actually listed as "unsuitable tenants" so then we can't get them on the list (Karen HIR service provider).

The RHC noted that, unlike other areas, the HIR could not assist clients with Start Safely until a tenancy was established. This precluded the development of strong relationships with real estate agents. The view of the RHC was that the reason for this was a literal interpretation of the service specifications in the Hunter, whereas other regions had more flexible interpretations.

Start Safely was regarded as beneficial because (noted repeatedly) private rental is expensive and in very short supply in the Hunter. One client reported applying for 26 private rental properties and not getting one. The self-evaluation report notes that open houses for rental properties often have 50 people attending. However, the administration and waiting time (up to 6 months) was reported as difficult. Clients needed to have documentation including AVOs and police and hospital reports, which rendered some women who were experiencing family violence ineligible. One interview participant said that after having an application for Start Safely refused because of this absence of documentation, she no longer supports women without documentation in applying. In addition, Start Safely can be stigmatising and there was little capacity in the HIR for services to work with real estate agencies to address their concerns. These points are illustrated by the following extracts from interviews and the self-evaluation report:

> So I guess with the HIR clients, to actually be part of the HIR project, they need to have accommodation for us to be able to sustain that accommodation. (Nadia HIR service provider)

> We'll still work with them under Family Support's model but without being able to provide any intensive work around housing or brokerage. In those cases I've seen the women go back to the violent relationship and as a result of that have their children removed or they've gone back and they've left again and come back to our service – doing that the whole time; going back and there'll be another incident, come back to the service (Karen HIR service provider)

> If a client has been approved for Start Safely subsidy but unable to secure private rental the HIR project is unable to assist. Homelessness also is not part of Family Supports service specs so caseworkers are not able to work with the client until tenancy is secured. (Hunter Self-Evaluation Report)

2. The sharp division between 'high' and 'low' needs clients

The original model for the projects was designed around two types of support package. In practice, the assumptions as to who would benefit from which package, and the budget needed for each type of package, turned out to be inaccurate and were revised. It was assumed that women who received Start Safely would have fewer or less complex needs than women eligible for priority social housing. However, many women who received Start Safely have complex or ongoing support needs, and moreover have higher expenses for housing as they need to pay for private rental. The initial allocation of $20,000 for high needs was unrealistic, as none of the sites came close to allocating that amount of money for individual cases.

3. The lack of available affordable private and social housing

Although many areas experience shortages in affordable private rental and social housing, this is particularly acute in the Hunter, in part because of the population growth associated with the mining workforce. The private rental market is extremely tight, hotels and caravan parks are often full, and people with complex needs are often disadvantaged when applying for properties because of the high number of others applying. As with the Greater Western Sydney HAP project, the initial expectation that 10 properties per year would be available was disappointed; but unlike Greater Western Sydney it was not possible to secure additional social housing properties from other community housing providers. Although Compass Housing is an effective member of the governance group, the lack of available properties is a significant constraint on the project's capacity to support women into new tenancies.

4. Inflexible support package options with other Housing NSW products i.e. Start Safely

Another inflexible element of the model, also thought to be particular to the Hunter, was that the extension of Start Safely is only available to women with a package that includes hours with a support worker. The view of NGO service providers is that this is unnecessary for at least some

clients. It may even preclude women from receiving Start Safely for longer than 12 months, because most agencies can only work with women for a maximum of 12 months.

5. Governance and the role of partner agencies

The model required a single NGO, in this case NOVA, to take on significant additional responsibilities, including financial management and leadership. Although each of these agencies demonstrated their competence in taking on these roles, a number of participants expressed disquiet about the expectations inherent in this role, and about the relationships between the auspicing agency and other organisations, especially other refuges in the region.

The governance structure of the model was identified by one stakeholder as a possible risk. NOVA has taken on a mentoring role within the sector, which is beyond the role described in the service specifications. The formal responsibilities of the auspicing agency are administrative rather than mentoring, but in practice this has happened, especially around financial management and record keeping. This is particularly striking in the Hunter. The other HAP project in the area is led by Housing NSW, so NOVA's role as an NGO leading the project is distinct.

In contrast with Illawarra, where the coordinator has a strong role and decision making is centralised, the Assessment Groups take an active role in decisions around brokerage and case planning. In some respects the role of the auspicing agency in monitoring client outcomes is also still being worked out. NOVA doesn't take a direct role in case work with the clients of other services, but this also means that it doesn't take a role when case plans aren't being followed or the service is unable to engage the client. It is possible that an extension of the project would result in a more involved role for NOVA in this, and it is not clear if this would be welcomed by other services.

Similarly, the role of NOVA as auspicing agency was also questioned in one interview. As noted earlier, the Assessment Groups in the HIR have a more active role in assessing brokerage than in Western Sydney or Illawarra, but it was noted that the assessment of the client as eligible or not is done by NOVA, and the Assessment Groups do not see the applications of ineligible clients. It can be assumed that many ineligible clients come close to meeting the eligibility criteria. Given the expertise of small agencies in the sector in working within guidelines and responding creatively to meet client needs, one participant noted that Assessment Groups could have a more active role in advocating for ineligible clients.

6. Gaps in appropriate services and adequately qualified staff, especially in isolated areas

The lack of housing support services in some areas, and the capacity of services in small towns and regions with low populations, is a constraint. The self-evaluation report notes that:

> Intensive housing support/positions dedicated to addressing homelessness are lacking in regional areas

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> There is a lack in the sector for specialist housing support for people currently seeking housing, similar to what Private Rental Brokerage Service do but for non complex needs clients and with transport to attend open houses, support to get off TICA listings and to help fill out Pathways forms and rental applications. Generalist services are not resourced to provide housing support but are often required to do so as they are the only service available in remote areas

7. *Lack of acknowledgement of children*

The service monitoring requirements explicitly exclude numbers of children being assisted by the project, which may demonstrate a lack of relevance or priority for children's needs for the HAP DV strategy. However, the auspice agency nevertheless collected numbers of children and over the duration of the project there were 120 adult clients with 236 accompanying children. It can reasonably be assumed that a significant proportion of the service providers' time will be spent on considering these children and supporting women to respond effectively to their needs. The number of children in a family is also likely to directly affect brokerage expenditure. This has been demonstrated in the variety of activities and necessities project funds have spent on children including paying for ballet classes, art classes, little athletics, childcare and health related needs such as specialist appointments and counselling. The project is also helping to improve the safety and wellbeing of children by referring parents to parenting programs such as Triple P to improve their parenting skills and knowledge.

Children's stability, education, health and wellbeing are often major factors in a woman's capacity to sustain her separation from the perpetrator. These issues are also highly significant in her willingness to seek and engage well with support services and strongly influential for her own mental health and personal capacity. The flexible, tailored use of case management hours and brokerage resources in fact appears to have responded well to children's needs and this is a strength of the model. The challenge however, is to retain this flexibility and to recognise the work involved for the auspice agency and service providers so that it continues to be adequately reflected in any future budgets and performance measures.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary of key lessons learnt

The HAP projects represented a significant shift in the provision of support for women leaving violence and their children. Some elements of the project were extensions or enhancements of existing practices: for example, the projects were effective partly because services had a history of collaboration prior to HAP, so the Assessment Groups built on existing networks. However, other elements were new: in particular, the administration of brokerage funds required new systems of invoicing and acquittal, which were challenging for smaller agencies.

It should also be noted that the service model involved quite specific prescriptions, which were therefore subject to questions of interpretation and judgement. Not surprisingly, each of the sites took time to establish groups and get up and running, a process which was further complicated by the need for new relationships between the NGOs, Housing NSW and Community Services.

The key lessons learnt are a reflection of these characteristics of the service model and the way it was introduced.

1. Although both case planning and brokerage are well established means of supporting women leaving violence, there was little specific evidence guiding the allocations for initial packages, and the amounts turned out to be unrealistic. This led to significant administrative challenges in managing and carrying forward unspent funds. The subsequent adjustment to the packages was effective, and the fact that these adjustments were made speaks to productive relationships and competence in implementing the service model. However, future projects with similar models would benefit from a more comprehensive planning process around likely expenditures.

2. A key strength of the model is its flexibility, especially in responding to women's changing needs over time. Although the sites anticipated that needs would become less intense over time, there was also capacity to increase intensity where needed. However, the time limits on support mean that women with ongoing needs, which last longer than two years, could be denied support essential to enable them to maintain their tenancy and stay safe. Equally, the interpretation of the service model in one site ties brokerage or Start Safely support to a case plan, whether it is needed or not. Future projects with similar models would benefit from allowing even greater flexibility: to extend the time support is provided to women who need it, and to end support early when it's no longer needed.

3. New service models, which require the implementation of specific support services and include specific eligibility criteria, generate questions of interpretation and adaptation. Projects with these characteristics would be strengthened if these questions were resolved consistently.

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

The service model is aligned with the research evidence on women leaving violence—as the *Homelessness Action Plan* notes, family violence affects women's capacity for financial independence by harming their sense of self-worth and value. Case plans are responsive to these harms because they are designed to enable individualised responses to these complex effects of family violence on women's sense of self, as well as the practical needs that women and their children have when setting up a new life. Future responses for women and children experiencing family violence will benefit from replicating these core elements of the projects.

7.3 Implications for the homelessness system in this region

Lack of affordable housing continues to be a constraint on the effectiveness of responses.

A number of stakeholders reported that other vulnerable groups would also be assisted by case plans and brokerage, and recommended that the service model be extended.

7.4 Other insights gained that can enrich the evidence base

A strength of the service model is the role and expectations of the Assessment Groups. Agencies had incentives to become involved and remain involved, and there are clear aims and purposes of meetings. This has resulted in improved relationships and knowledge, and should result in better service provision and more coordinated responses, beyond the specific projects. Given many initiatives to improve collaboration between agencies flounder, this can be regarded as a significant achievement.

Although the projects were required to report on activities, outputs and outcomes of the projects, and invested considerable effort in complying with these requirements, there are problems with data quality and some inconsistencies with the way that data was collected. The process of recording monitoring and evaluation data can be challenging for small agencies, and it is not clear if these agencies gained any benefits from this process, or from the invoicing and accounts management associated with brokerage.

7.5 Future research that could strengthen the evidence in this area.

Future research could productively focus on:

- Workforce: Much of the evidence on case management comes from the health sector, with clients who have psychiatric illness. There is little research on whether specific skills are needed for effective support work with women and children who have experienced family violence.

- Outcomes: In the absence of long-term outcomes data, economic evaluations that monetise the benefits of the projects, and allow comparison of the cost: benefit ratio with other service models, are not possible. There are well-known difficulties with evaluating interventions that

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target women and children who have experienced family violence, however if economic evaluations are a priority, rigorous research into outcomes is needed.

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Appendix A   Referral and assessment process

FLOWCHART FOR HUNTER INTEGRATED RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │     Referral to HIR     │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                                 │
                                 ▼
┌──────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Housing NSW     │◄──│              HIR                    │
│ assess eligibility│   │ Assess that applicants meets project │
│ for Start Safely or│──►│  guidelines and submit to           │
│  Social Housing  │   │ - Housing NSW (if required) or       │
└──────────────────┘   │ - Assessment Group                   │
                       └─────────────────────────────────────┘
                                 │
                                 ▼
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │ Applicants Case Plan     │
                    │ submitted to             │
                    │ Assessment Group         │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                                 │
                                 ▼
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │   Assessment Group       │
                    │ approves brokerage funds │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                                 │
                                 ▼
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  Referral Agencies       │
                    │  Implements Case Plan    │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                                 │
                                 ▼
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │ Assessment Group quarterly│
                    │  reviews case plan       │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                                 │
                                 ▼
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │ HIR report to cross agency│
                    │  partnership             │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
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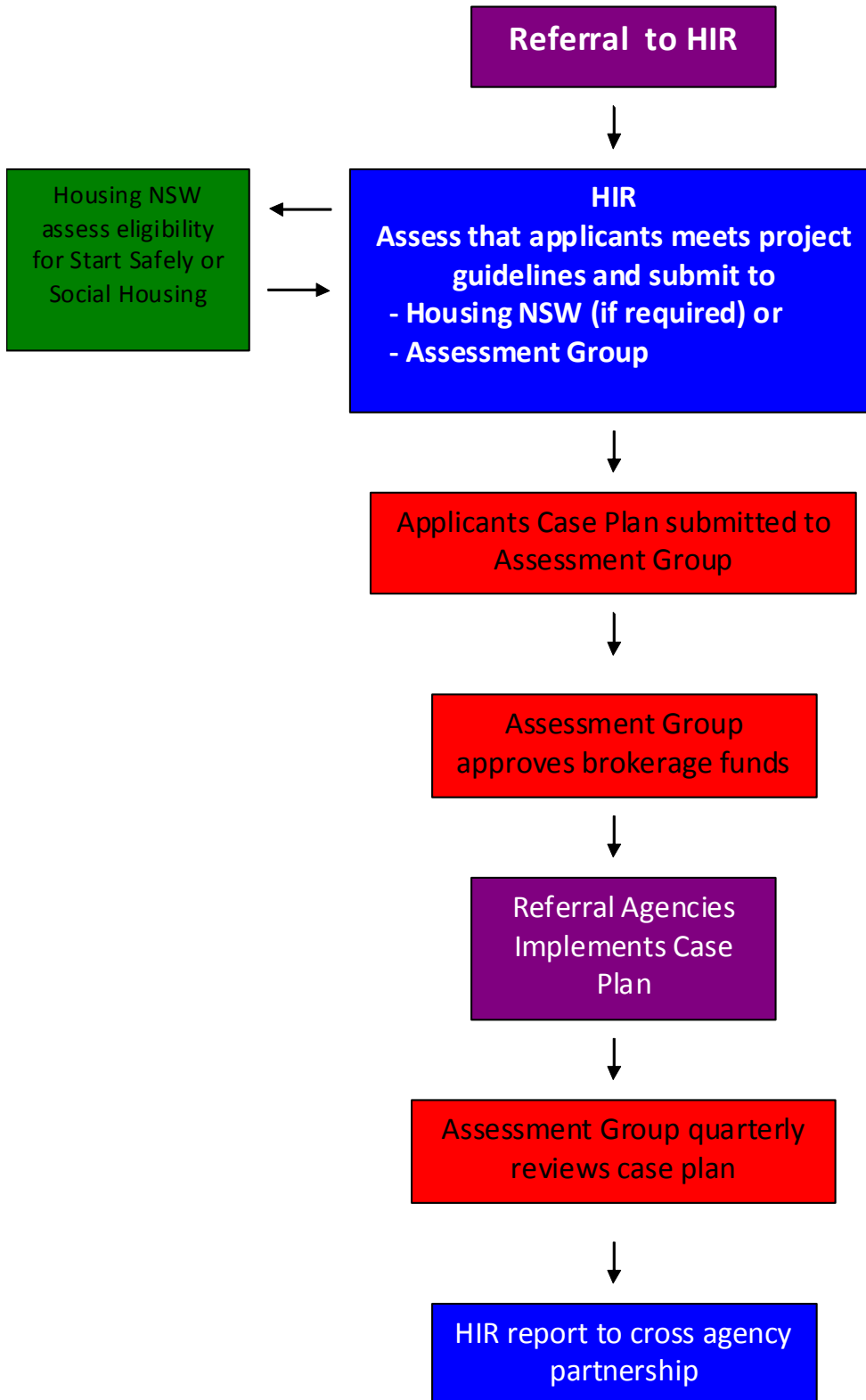
Appendix B List of agencies participating in the evaluation

Organisation	Number of workers interviewed
Jenny's Place	1
Yacaaba Information Centre & Counselling	1
Singleton Family Support	1
East Lakes Family Support	1
NOVA	3
Housing NSW	1
Community Services	1
Regional Homelessness Committee (focus group)	6

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Appendix C   Cost analysis

		2011/12 Units	2011/12 Quantity	2011/12 $ Net Value	Percentage
Project income - Inputs					
Income	HAP funding			$ 671,482	95.9087478
Income	Other Government funding				0
Income	In-kind				0
Income	Third party donations				0
Income	Interest on funding			$ 28,644	4.09125221
Total Project income				**$ 700,126**	**100**
Expenditure					
Staff costs	Direct Client Services	Staff			0
Staff costs	Moving costs, stationery, advertising etc	Staff		$ 14,009	2.45689867
Staff costs	Staff related on-costs, wages, super etc	1 Project Officer, 1 Manager, 1 Admin & finance, 1 outreach case worker		$ 110,169	19.3215077
Staff costs	External consultants / professional services				0
Staff costs					0
Total Staff costs	Total Staff costs			$ 124,178	21.7784063

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Operating costs	Meetings, workshop, catering		$ 73	0.01273968
Operating costs	Staff training and development/conferences		$ 10,188	1.78675552
Operating costs	Motor vehicle expenses		$ 2,212	0.38795509
Operating costs	Other travel			0
Operating costs	Host Organisation Management Fee and contribution to rent		$ 69,548	12.197443
Operating costs	Bank charges		$ 100	0.0175381
Operating costs				0
Operating costs	Other			0
Total Operating costs	Total Operating costs		$ 82,121	14.4024314
Brokerage Outputs				
Goods	Home establishment packs (e.g. beds, mattresses, whitegoods, furniture,)	Clients assisted	$ 96,190	16.8699493
Goods	Household items (linen, crockery/cutlery, curtains, cleaning equipment, lawn mower, line trimmer, tools)	Clients assisted	$ 31,302	5.48974509
Goods	One off start up (groceries, crisis payment)	Clients assisted	$ 3,500	0.61383357
Goods	Medical items (eg essential medication, dental, spectacles)	Clients assisted	$ 3,285	0.57618803

Goods	Employment Assistance (eg interview clothes etc)	Clients assisted	$ 3,964	0.69519984
Goods	Safety & security (security upgrades, repairs)	Clients assisted	$ 6,441	1.12954145
Goods	Computers/laptops		$ 10,704	
Goods/Other	Children's items (eg school uniforms/textbooks. Social integration/ Community engagement/cultural and sports activities for children (eg swimming lessons, dance lessons, parenting groups)	Clients assisted	$ 15,183	2.66279774
Goods	Motor vehicle expenses (Petrol, green slip, repairs)	Clients assisted	$ 24,832	4.35499307
Total Goods	Total Goods		$ 195,401	34.2695652
Services	Psychological services (eg.drug & alcohol/ trauma counselling, gap payments)	Sessions delivered	$ 4,916	0.86217309
Services	Case management (external) workers hours	Sessions delivered	$ 69,245	12.1442271
Services	Child care	Hours	$ 12,017	2.10757475
Services	Case management (external) travel		$ 9,751	1.71009647

Services	Education/training (eg specialist educations services, school/TAFE fees, employment assistance, driving lessons)	Courses	$ 15,279	2.67965361
Services	Furniture storage/Removal costs	Clients assisted	$ 18,754	3.28902373
Services	Legal services/ miscellaneous/	Sessions delivered	$ 5,542	0.97191426
Services	Health/ well being services (eg physio, gym membership, nutritionist, rehabilitation, dental/medical)	Sessions delivered	$ 2,734	0.47943909
Services	Groups/Life skills (financial counselling, Rent It Keep It, tenancy management skills, DV education, self esteem groups)	Sessions delivered	$ 991	0.1737377
Services		Clients assisted		0
Services				0
Total Services	Total Services		$ 139,227	24.4178398
Payments	Transport fees for clients, not staff (eg. bus/rail)	Clients assisted	$ 1,341	0.23518595
Payments	Rent arrears/ bond debts	Clients assisted	$ 13,684	2.3999542
Payments	General/Utilities bills and DV related debt	Clients assisted	$ 14,235	2.49661721

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Payments	Other	Clients assisted		0
Payments	Other			0
Total Payments	Total Payments		$ 29,261	5.13175736
Other	Other			0
Total Brokerage costs	Total clients assisted	Households	$ 363,889	63.8191623
Total Expenditure			$ 570,187	100

Appendix D   Recruitment flyer

We are researchers from the University of New South Wales, evaluating projects funded by the NSW government to help reduce homelessness. [your organisation] has been involved in these projects, and we are speaking with clients of the service to find out what worked well, how the service has made a difference (if any) to your life and what can be improved.

We would like to speak with you, in person or on the phone, about your experiences with Jenny's Place and how helpful the support you received was to you. The interview will take around an hour. This is a completely voluntary process. You can choose not to be interviewed and it will have no effect on your relationship with [the organisation] or the support they provide.

If you choose to go ahead, we will give everyone who completes an interview a $30 voucher to thank them for their time and participation.

For further information please let [your support worker] know and we can call you, or you can contact us directly:

BJ Newton, b.newton@unsw.edu.au, 9385 4013 (Mon-Wed), or kylie valentine, k.valentine@unsw.edu.au, 9385 7825

Appendix E   Interview schedules

Extended evaluation of Long-Term Accommodation and Support for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic Violence provided under the NSW Homelessness Action Plan

Discussion guide for interviews with service providers

1. Can you tell me a little about the work that you do, and your role in the HAP DV project?

2. How were you introduced to the project?

3. How would you describe your experience of working in the project? (*prompts*: meetings, governance, guidelines)

4. In your experience, what are the benefits of the HAP project model? What outcomes has it produced for clients?

5. Has involvement in the HAP DV project changed your relationship with other services in the area? (*prompts*: improved communication, greater understanding, more streamlined referral)

6. In your experience, are there any elements of the project model that could be improved?

7. Brokerage uses? (What have you used it for, with how many clients, does the org record uses with individual clients, what is the process for applying for and providing brokerage?)

8. In your experience, what are the benefits of access to brokerage funding? Are there any ways that the program could be improved? (*prompts*: eligibility criteria, wait for approvals, availability of resources)

9. In your experience, what are the benefits of the Start Safely scheme? Are there any ways it can be improved? (*prompts*: amount, duration, eligibility criteria, wait for approvals)

10. Can you describe a case where all aspects of the service worked extremely well? What made this possible?

11. Can you describe a case where you were not able to provide an effective service for a client? What would have made a difference?

12. What advice would you give service providers in another area who were considering implementing a similar project?

13. Is there anything you would like to add?

14. Clients to interview?

SHLV specific considerations:

15. How does the agency present the two programs – what is written about the 2 programs? Are they separately promoted? What do they say is available to clients from each project?

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16. How do they make decisions about clients going into each program? Ie eligibility / screening criteria?

17. What brokerage money is available in each program and how is it used?

18. Do any of your SHLV clients access start safely or HAP brokerage money – explore any overlaps.

Extended evaluation of Long-Term Accommodation and Support for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic Violence provided under the NSW Homelessness Action Plan

Discussion guide for interviews with clients

1.   Can you tell me a little about where you're living now, and who you're living with?

2.   How long have you been living here? (if less than 12 months) How did you find your home? What was important to you when you were looking for somewhere to live?

3.   I'm going to ask a few questions about your experiences of receiving services from (agency/service). Can you tell me how you first found out about this service?

4.   What's been your experience with (agency/service)? What services have they provided, or helped you find?

5.   How useful has that support been?

6.   Could you tell me the areas in your life that the (agency/service) has made the most difference? (*prompts*: feelings of safety/security, plans for the future, overall well-being, better physical/mental health)

7.   (explain what Start Safely is). Have you ever applied for or received Start Safely?

8.   How did you find out about Start Safely, and what was your experience of applying for it?

9.   (for those who applied but didn't receive it) Why didn't you end up receiving Start Safely?

10.   (for those who have received it) Are you still receiving Start Safely? How important has it been to you?

11.   Thinking about the last few years, what person or service has been most helpful for you?

12.   If you could change anything about the services available to people who have had similar experiences to you, what would it be?

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