

# Research Synthesis

## **Homelessness Action Plan – summary of evaluation findings**

authored by

**AHURI Research Synthesis Service**

for

**Housing NSW**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

In 2009 the NSW government released the NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009-2014 (HAP), which 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. A range of homelessness support services have since been funded through either the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) or NSW State funding.

Housing NSW has contracted the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) Research Synthesis Service to synthesise overall findings from the NSW Homelessness Action Plan (HAP) project evaluations in order to assess the impact and effectiveness of the HAP, particularly early intervention initiatives. Key findings from the analysis are presented below.

## Service system outcomes

- The HAP projects as a whole were effective in sustaining tenancies over the life of projects, particularly the ability of the projects to create partnerships with real estate agents and opportunities to facilitate access for clients to the private rental market.
- Much of the evidence describing how to assist in sustaining tenancies is focused on housing issues, with solutions delivered by housing agencies. HAP projects have demonstrated that dealing with non-housing issues can also result in positive housing outcomes. For example, resolution of legal issues related to the accumulation of rent arrears or utility bills has facilitated a sustainment of a tenancy through relieving the pressure associated with overwhelming legal issues.
- Brokerage funding has been identified in the evidence base as a financial mechanism to alleviate housing stress. The HAP projects reconfirm the effectiveness of brokerage funding and extend the evidence base by showing that when brokerage funding is flexible and housing focused, but not housing constrained, it constitutes a cost effective mechanism for addressing issues which may place a tenancy at risk.
- Homelessness and housing literature has demonstrated that Aboriginal people who require government support have a range of different service requirements. The HAP projects illustrated the importance of the development of a relationship between case workers and Aboriginal people at risk of homelessness. The evaluations overwhelmingly showed that if a worker was Aboriginal, the relationship was easier to develop and more effective. In addition, partnerships with Aboriginal organisations also facilitated greater awareness and engagement with Aboriginal issues and enabled the provision of an Aboriginal focused service. Notwithstanding this relationship, the projects demonstrated that in some cases Aboriginal clients require a longer engagement with support.
- Coordination groups ensure mainstream and specialist agencies are involved in common intake, assessment and case coordination and support planning processes. Coordination groups also established common processes, templates and guidelines to help bring together different organisations to work towards a common goal. A coordinator role was identified as a critical enabler in managing relationships and communication between partner agencies.

## **Effectiveness of the HAP projects**

- All the HAP projects have demonstrated significant benefits for highly disadvantaged and vulnerable target groups who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- The projects represent a shift from crisis responses to early intervention and prevention in order to mitigate some of the risks that may lead to homelessness.
- All projects reported positive housing outcomes within the project timeframes, particularly in relation to tenancy establishment and sustainment. Projects were successful in enabling clients to access a range of tenures including social housing and the private rental sector, although the lack of affordable housing was a consistent challenge.
- There has been a high success rate in relation to the housing outcomes for clients of the three projects within the preventing evictions service model, with very few cases ending in eviction at the 16 week point. All services reported a 97 per cent or higher success rate in assisting their clients to sustain their tenancy.
- Clients reported increased confidence in maintaining their housing arrangements in the longer term as a result of their participation and support received through the projects.
- A range of non-housing outcomes for clients were reported including improvements in: physical and mental health; family relationships; substance addiction; confidence; and social support.
- Services and clients reported improved levels of engagement with the support service system and identified this as a preventative factor that could reduce the likelihood of reaching the same level of crisis again.
- The client and case worker relationship is crucial. Having case worker support and back up even during episodes of crisis and set back brought an increased sense of confidence in navigating services and systems.
- Resolution of legal issues can lead to other broader outcomes, such as a reduction in a client's level of stress, anxiety and depression caused by preoccupation with unresolved legal problems.

## **Critical success factors for achieving positive client outcomes**

- The combination of HAP service model elements and their relationship to one another was a key success factor for optimising client outcomes. Key program elements include: access to safe and affordable housing; flexible support; case management; and brokerage funding to fund good and services.
- The 12 month support period provided by several projects was found to facilitate a marked difference in client outcomes. Clients were assisted to work through a range of issues that would otherwise impact negatively on their ability to sustain a tenancy.
- Securing appropriate accommodation immediately or as early as possible following institutional exit was identified as a key success factor in facilitating optimum client outcomes. Important elements in planning for and securing accommodation include consideration of varying accommodation needs and identification of potential risks which may jeopardise the tenancy, and implementation of processes to mitigate these risks.
- The common focus on actively supporting clients to sustain tenancies through advocacy, developing an individual's knowledge and skills, and overall capacity

building was an important contributor to positive outcomes across all target groups.

- Support services that had a direct impact on a client's capacity to sustain a tenancy included the development of household management skills, counselling and support to resolve personal financial and behavioural issues, and monitoring and early intervention to identify triggers that could place the tenancy at risk.
- Individual case plans were effective in tailoring supports to best meet the needs of individual clients, which were reviewed and revised as part of the case management process as clients progressed.
- Across all service models, projects had a housing focus but were not housing constrained. There was capacity to address non-housing issues that underpin the client's capacity to sustain a tenancy.
- Culturally specific services offered by some projects and effective linkages with Aboriginal organisations have ensured good access to services for Aboriginal people at risk of homelessness.
- The complexity and nature of client needs across all target groups require highly skilled staff with particular experience in dealing with diverse needs and in building trusting relationships with clients. Ongoing professional development and opportunities to share experience with staff from other organisations were necessary in order to ensure continued capacity building in the workforce.

## **Challenges**

- The most significant challenge faced by projects was locating suitable accommodation for clients. Availability of social housing stock is a systemic issue with no easy solutions. Opportunities for securing accommodation have been assisted through partnerships with community housing providers and real estate agents as a means of accessing private rental properties as well as head leasing schemes.
- Limitations on the use of brokerage such as for payment of rental arrears can constrain the potential for brokerage to reduce the factors contributing to an individual being at risk of homelessness. For example, the Coastal Sydney Aboriginal Tenancy Support Service (CSATSS) project was not permitted through its funding agreement to expend funds on rent arrears. This constraint appeared to place some limitations on the ability of the project to develop relationships with real estate agencies.
- HAP service delivery models have not been immune to the problem of a lack of services in rural or remote areas. However, it has been important for projects to have the ability to purchase services by the hour from small, local providers and create a tailored package for clients.
- An overall observation was made about the inconsistencies in the way in which client data is captured, in the way clients are counted, and lack of consistency in the assessment of levels of client need.

## **Improvements in the service system**

- The HAP DV projects have been a positive experience for partnership agencies involved and have expanded their capacity for integration and co-ordination. Projects enabled stronger, and in some cases new, professional relationships to emerge. One element of these strengthened relationships has been an enhanced workforce capacity within the local service system. Several projects found they had influenced system change through increasing awareness of client needs

within other service organisations. Through the projects, non-housing workers have increased recognition of the importance of tenancy support and have become more attuned to the housing needs of their clients. This has had the effect of re-orientating organisations to homelessness within the context of their core work and has therefore extended the reach of housing support.

- There has been increased collaboration and networking between service providers with new referral pathways and processes adopting a more holistic approach to clients, such as through multi-service case conferencing.
- Improved partnerships between health services and homelessness services enable projects to connect clients to temporary accommodation and address their health care needs via mainstream medical services rather than ad hoc emergency room visits (as reported in the summary of self-evaluation reports Chan et al. 2013).
- The ability to negotiate local adaptations to service models has been a critical success factor in implementation and ensuring projects address local client needs.
- Coordination groups were an effective mechanism that allowed expansion of the relationships between mainstream and specialist services.

## **Cost analysis**

It is widely acknowledged that it is difficult to undertake cost effectiveness studies, particularly in human services. These difficulties are also related to the:

- Quality of the data collected.
- Differences in the methodology used.
- Assumptions regarding how costs are allocated.

Overall the HAP evaluation cost effectiveness analyses were also constrained by:

- The short time frames for collection and analysis of data.
- Inconsistencies across data due to variations across agencies in definitions of variables, project record keeping, and time periods for data collection.

Given this the cost effectiveness analyses found that:

- People with complex needs often require more extensive support. This is often more expensive.
- Early intervention and prevention that assist people in a timely manner provides value for money.
- Early intervention produces significant cost savings.

These findings are replicated in the national and international evidence.

## **Impact of the HAP projects**

The HAP projects represent a significant development in the provision of housing and support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The projects provide examples of innovation and effectiveness and findings resonate with the broader directions of the Going Home Staying Home (GHS) Reform Plan. Specific examples include that the projects were successful in:

- Focusing on individualised and needs based approaches to client service delivery.
- Utilising intensive case management as the core driver of client service provision.



- Using brokerage funding to support individuals through the purchase of goods and services to meet client needs.
- Shifting from a crisis response to early intervention and prevention.
- Providing medium to long-term housing solutions.
- Ensuring support arrangements are portable or applicable to all tenures and move with the client if they change tenures, such as from private rental to social housing.

## **Implications for the future planning of homelessness services**

Findings from the summary of HAP project evaluations have identified the following implications to inform future planning of homelessness services:

- The value of a combination of elements cannot be overstated. In the HAP projects critical enablers of success were based on the combination of: case management; flexible brokerage funding; an individual client focus; and service integration.
- Continuing to ensure brokerage funding is housing focused but not housing constrained.
- Ensuring early referrals and improvements in referral pathways.
- Ensuring the appropriate location of housing and support services.
- Extending the support period for Aboriginal clients.
- Maintaining and strengthening opportunities for service integration.
- Developing effective partnerships with other agencies, real estate agents and local employers.
- Minimising financial and other administrative burdens for projects.
- Harnessing opportunities to increase access to affordable housing.

## **Implications for future implementation**

Findings from the summary of HAP project evaluations have identified the following implications to inform future implementation of homelessness services:

- Recognising the establishment time needed for new projects. The time taken for program start-ups often times results in delays in reaching clients and in recruiting staff.
- Developing of common intake, assessment and support planning processes.
- Ensuring case management is holistic, flexible, strengths based, client focused and reflects client needs. The relationship between the client and the case worker is key.
- Support from legal services can achieve rapid and successful outcomes for clients, for example through assisting clients to address debts and other outstanding issues.
- Creating opportunities for local adaptation of models.

## **Implications for future evaluations**

Findings from the summary of HAP project evaluations have identified the following implications to inform future evaluations of homelessness services:

- Replicating the multi-tiered evaluation strategy.
- Ensuring consistent and reliable data collection and reporting.

- Gathering information about the experiences of individuals not successful in the projects.
- Sharing good practice examples in order to ensure continued sector capacity building.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose of the report

Housing NSW has contracted the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) Research Synthesis Service to synthesise overall findings from the NSW Homelessness Action Plan (HAP) evaluations in order to assess the impact and effectiveness of the HAP, particularly early intervention initiatives.

## 1.2 NSW Homelessness Action Plan

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

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

The HAP includes approximately 100 local, regional and state-wide projects to assist in achieving the homelessness reduction targets. Fifty five of the projects were funded through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). The remaining projects include other programs or services that contribute to addressing homelessness. The projects are aligned to one of the following three strategic directions:

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

## 1.3 The HAP evaluation strategy

The HAP evaluation strategy was designed to capture evidence of the effectiveness and impact of different approaches used by HAP projects across NSW. The strategy was developed in consultation with government agencies and the non-government sector and includes three inter-related components:

1. Self-evaluations –gathered performance information about 40<sup>1</sup> of the HAP projects across key areas in a consistent way and collected the views of practitioners about the effectiveness of their projects.
2. Extended evaluations–enabled in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of 15 selected projects and their service approaches for addressing homelessness. The service approaches covered by the extended evaluations include:
  - Support for women and children escaping domestic violence (n=3).
  - Youth foyers (n=1).
  - Support for people exiting institutions (n=4).
  - Tenancy support to prevent evictions (n=3).

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<sup>1</sup>Only 36 of the 40 projects provided quantitative data.

- Long term housing and support (n=4).
3. Summary of HAP project evaluation findings—the summary of HAP project evaluation findings, on which this report is based, synthesises and interprets aggregated findings from the self-evaluations, extended evaluations and other evaluations of HAP projects. The HAP Evaluation Strategy summary is based on an approach called meta-analysis.

Housing NSW embarked on a process of evaluating multiple homelessness early intervention and prevention projects. These evaluations adopted similar evaluation criteria that enabled the results across the projects to be collated in this overall summary of evaluation findings.

The process adopted by Housing NSW constitutes an innovative approach, and there is no evidence that this process has been undertaken in Australia previously. The process provides evidence on best practice on evaluations through the development and implementation of a three tier evaluation strategy. The process also provides evidence on the effectiveness of early intervention and prevention initiatives.

The findings in this summary of evaluation findings are a high level interpretation of results, across multiple projects. The innovation in this process is that it has significantly added to the evidence base on homelessness prevention programs both individually and collectively.

## **1.4 Objectives of the summary of HAP project evaluation findings**

The objectives of the summary of HAP project evaluation findings were to:

1. Examine which interventions have been effective across the target groups and determine whether these findings accord with the national and international evidence base.
2. Identify success factors, barriers, enablers and risk factors associated with the interventions.
3. Identify evidence of service system improvements, including what these were and what enabled them to occur.
4. Determine unintended outcomes of the interventions that provide new evidence about target groups and/or the service system, including how these are explained.
5. Identify what lessons can be learnt about planning, implementing and evaluating homelessness programs in the future.
6. Identify the implications of the meta-analysis findings for the future delivery of homelessness services.

## **1.5 Meta-analysis methodology**

The summary of HAP project evaluation findings was carried out using a qualitative approach to managing a large range of literature developed by Noblit and Hare (1988). The approach we are terming meta-analysis provides an alternative to traditional methods of aggregation as it involves induction and interpretation. The result is the analysis of existing reports of individual initiatives beyond simple aggregation of the explicit findings and into a synthesis of new knowledge (Savin-Boden et al. 2008). Interpretations and explanations in the original evaluations were treated as data, and translated across several studies to produce a synthesis. According to Savin-Baden et al. (2008), this technique is useful because it enables researchers to:

- Compare and analyse data and findings for each study.
- Undertake an interpretation of data across the studies.
- Develop a narrative that emerges from the interpretations.
- Provide an overarching interpretation of the central themes that emerge across studies.
- Provide a series of implications for future program design and delivery.

The meta-analysis process involved several key steps (as adapted from Noblit and Hare 1988):

- Reading studies and coding themes
- Determining how evaluations are related
- Synthesising the evidence

### **Reading the studies and coding themes**

This stage involved careful reading of the evaluation reports in order to identify the main concepts. Two matrices were developed:

- Matrix 1 recorded details of each evaluation, including for example: authors; date; program being evaluated; target groups; and methodology. These details provided context for the interpretations and explanations of each study.
- Matrix 2 (see Table 1 below) provided an analytical framework based on the objectives of the project. Key themes and evidence (including quotes, descriptions and commentary) from each evaluation was coded against each objective.

The qualitative analysis software Nvivo10 was used in order to manage this process and to assist with the overall analysis.

**Table 1: Layout for Matrix 2**

<i>Meta-analysis objective</i>	<i>Evidence from report 1</i>	<i>Evidence from report 2</i>	<i>Evidence from report 3</i>
Effectiveness of interventions for target groups			
Success factors / enablers			
Barriers / risk factors			
Cost effectiveness			
Service system improvements and enablers			
Unintended outcomes			
New evidence about target groups			
New evidence about the service system			
Lessons learnt: planning			
Lessons learnt: implementation			
Lessons learnt: future evaluations			

### **Determining how evaluations are related**

The process of analysis was used to identify common and recurring themes, and relations between evaluations. Rather than starting with raw data, pre-determined

(first order) themes and descriptions provided by the original evaluation authors were selected for inclusion.

### Synthesising the evidence

Findings were interpreted and synthesised in relation to the key objectives. Findings related to the effectiveness of interventions for particular target groups were compared with the national and international evidence base. The analysis also considered the implications of these findings for the future delivery of homelessness services.

## 1.6 Documents included in the meta-analysis

The evaluation documents included in the meta-analysis originate from three main sources:

1. **A summary report that synthesised the self-evaluation templates completed by the HAP projects.** The report includes qualitative data from 40 projects and qualitative and quantitative data from 36 of these. Of the 36 projects included in the summary of self-evaluation templates:

- Four target street to home initiatives for chronically homeless people.
- Four are intended to support people sustain their tenancies.
- Twelve provide support for people leaving child protection services, correctional and health facilities to access and maintain stable, affordable housing.
- Five provide support to young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Three provide support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.
- Eight provide assistance for homeless people, including families with children, to stabilise their situation and to achieve sustainable housing.

The 40 projects represent nearly all the client focused projects implemented under the HAP. The majority of the projects were implemented by non-government organisations, sometimes in partnership arrangements with a government agency. The projects were designed to demonstrate innovative approaches to homelessness with a focus on prevention and early intervention. The summary report includes self-evaluations from the fifteen projects that underwent extended evaluations. Appendix 1 provides more information about the projects.

2. **Extended evaluations of five service models** based on early intervention programs, each including several projects with individual evaluation reports as set out in the Table 2.

**Table 2: Extended evaluations: service model and individual projects**

Service model	Individual projects
Long term accommodation and support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence (HAP DV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Illawarra HAP Domestic Violence Support Service (Breckenridge et al. 2013a)</li> <li>→ Domestic Violence Support, Western Sydney Service (Breckenridge et al. 2013b)</li> <li>→ Hunter Integrated Response to Homelessness and Domestic Violence for Women (HIR) (Breckenridge et al.</li> </ul>

	2013c)
Support for people at risk of eviction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Tenancy Support Program Far North Coast(Robyn Kennedy 2013a)</li> <li>→ Tenancy Support Service Mid North Coast(Robyn Kennedy 2013b)</li> <li>→ Coastal Sydney Aboriginal Tenancy Support Service (Robyn Kennedy 2013c)</li> </ul>
Support for people exiting institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Targeted Housing and Support services (Western Sydney) (THaSS)(Westwood Spice 2013a)</li> <li>→ Sustaining Tenancies Following Exits from Correctional Facilities (Broken Hill)(Westwood Spice 2013b)</li> <li>→ Young People Exiting Juvenile Justice Centres (North Coast) (SWITCH JJ)(Westwood Spice 2013c)</li> <li>→ Young People Leaving Care Support Service (North Coast) (SWITCH YPLC)(Westwood Spice 2013d)</li> </ul>
Long term housing and support service model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Riverina Murray HAP project (RMHAP) (ARTD Consultants 2013a)</li> <li>→ Rural Homelessness New England project (RHNE) (ARTD Consultants 2013b)</li> <li>→ North Coast Accommodation project (NCAP) (ARTD Consultants 2013c)</li> <li>→ South East NSW Community Connections(ARTD Consultants 2013d)</li> </ul>
Youth foyers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Youth hub project (EJD Consulting and Associates 2013) incorporating the foyer model which has three streams within it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Campus – provides studio-style, self-contained apartments with supports.</li> <li>▪ Juvenile justice – supports clients to live in the community.</li> <li>▪ Outreach – provides outreach services to enable clients to access services and supports related to their education, training or employment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### 3. Other independent evaluations:

- Evaluation of the legal component of the Riverina Homelessness Interagency Project & Reaching Home Newcastle(Matrix on Board 2012)
- The role of assertive outreach in ending rough sleeping (Phillips & Parsell 2012)
- Outcomes of the Inner City Youth at Risk project (SPRC 2012)

#### **4. Additional self-evaluations (n=6)**

- Implementing squalor guidelines
- Consumer evaluation survey
- Leaving care program
- Service system improvement projects
- Legal services for people at risk of eviction
- Women's DV court advocacy expansion

### **1.7 Limitations of the evaluations and findings**

The evaluations undertaken by independent consultants for Housing NSW provide a range of general and informative findings. There are however limitations due to the following reasons:

- Difficulties drawing conclusions about the sustainability of tenancies given the short time frame of many of the projects at the time of evaluation.
- The point in time nature of the evaluations.
- The lack of longitudinal follow-up to determine the length of tenure beyond the support period provided by the HAP projects.
- Differences in the experiences, situations and demographic characteristics of the target groups involved in the HAP projects.



## 2 EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERVENTIONS FOR TARGET GROUPS



### Purpose

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This chapter examines which interventions have been effective across the target groups. It includes a consideration of both housing and non-housing outcomes for clients as a result of the services.

### Summary

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- All the HAP projects have demonstrated significant benefits for highly disadvantaged and vulnerable target groups who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.
  - The projects represent a shift from crisis responses to early intervention and prevention in order to mitigate risks that may lead to homelessness.
  - All projects reported positive housing outcomes, particularly in relation to tenancy establishment and sustainment. Projects were successful in enabling clients to access a range of tenures including social housing, community housing and the private rental sector, although the lack of affordable housing was a consistent challenge.
  - The HAP DV projects filled gaps in the service system in order to maintain tenancies or rapidly re-house women and children affected by DV.
  - Clients reported increased confidence in maintaining their housing arrangements in the longer term as a result of their participation and support received through the projects.
  - A range of non-housing outcomes for clients were reported including improvements in: physical and mental health; family relationships; substance addiction; confidence; and social support.
  - Services and clients reported improved levels of engagement with the support service system and identified this as a preventative factor that could reduce the likelihood of reaching the same level of crisis again.
  - The client and case worker relationship is crucial. Having case worker support and back up even during episodes of crisis and set back brought an increased sense of confidence in navigating services and systems.
  - Resolution of legal issues can lead to other broader outcomes, such as a reduction in a client's level of stress, anxiety and depression caused by preoccupation with unresolved legal problems.
  - Improvements in behaviours linked to re-offending; including improved anger management and reduced drug use were noted by clients and service providers as important outcomes. The findings indicate there were reductions in re-offending behaviour, although the extent and nature of this outcome was difficult to determine within the time period.
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### 2.1 Introduction

The overall aim of the HAP projects was to achieve stable, sustainable housing for clients and address a range of individual needs that can adversely impact on housing

stability. Preventing homelessness and addressing risks associated with homelessness was the main focus of all projects as part of supporting target groups to sustain their tenancies. This chapter identifies the actual number of clients assisted through the projects and their demographic profiles, compared with the target number of clients and considers housing and non-housing outcomes achieved through the projects. The chapter is structured in relation to the findings from the summary of self-evaluations and five extended evaluation projects. This chapter draws on findings from the analysis of the 36 self-evaluation reports, the five extended evaluations, and other evaluation material relevant to the HAP projects. Key statistics from the aggregation of the 36 self-evaluations provide a broad overview across the breadth of projects, whereas findings from the extended evaluations provide in-depth analysis about a smaller selection of projects.

## **2.2 Number of clients assisted compared with targets**

### *2.2.1 Analysis of 36 self-evaluation reports*

The 36 projects included in the analysis of self-evaluation reports had an overall combined target of 8303 of clients to be assisted by June 2013. All of these projects are on track to meet and in most cases exceed their targets indicating a 100 per cent success rate in terms of numbers of clients assisted. In terms of the profile of clients:

- In 2011-12 equal numbers of men and women were clients and in 2010-11 just over 60 per cent (1520) were female.
- Thirty one per cent of clients in 2010-11 (840) were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This is similar to the representation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian population classified as homeless on Census night 2011 (ABS 2012). Of the 36 projects, five specifically targeted Aboriginal clients.
- People born overseas represented less than 10 per cent of clients, despite this group making up approximately three quarters of the increase in the homelessness estimate in the 2011 Census (ABS 2012).

### *2.2.2 Extended evaluations*

Table 3 below sets out information about the target and actual number of clients assisted by each project in the extended evaluations.

An important finding from the data is the number of children who have been assisted through the HAP DV projects that did not form part of the initial target numbers. All other projects within the extended evaluations met or exceeded their targets, the only exception being Broken Hill which missed its target by three clients (Westwood Spice 2013b).

In the majority of cases, projects assisted substantially more clients than initially planned. This was particularly evident in the long term housing and support model where the NCAP project assisted 4.6 times more clients and the Community Connections project assisted 3.3 times more clients than planned. In both cases, demand was strong from the inception of the projects and continued.

**Table 3: Target and actual numbers of clients assisted by the projects**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Target number of clients to be assisted (2011/12)</b>	<b>Actual number of clients assisted (2011/12)</b>	<b>Target met or exceeded?</b>
Support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence (HAP DV)	Illawara HAP(Breckenridge et al. 2013a)	30	81 women plus children	✓
	Greater Western Sydney Service(Breckenridge et al. 2013b)	30	218 women plus children	✓
	Hunter Integrated Response(Breckenridge et al. 2013c)	30	117 women plus children	✓
Support for people at risk of eviction	Tenancy Support Program Far North Coast (Robyn Kennedy 2013a)	350	1207	✓
	Tenancy Support Service Mid North Coast(Robyn Kennedy 2013b)	350	828	✓
	Coastal Sydney Aboriginal tenancy Support Service (Robyn Kennedy 2013c)	150	174	✓
Support for people exiting institutions (figures as at 30 June 2012)	Targeted Housing and Support services (Western Sydney) (THaSS)(Westwood Spice 2013a)	40	55* (24 exited)	✓
	Sustaining Tenancies Following Exits from Correctional Facilities (Broken Hill)(Westwood Spice 2013b)	37	34	✗
	Young People Exiting Juvenile Justice Centres (North Coast) (SWITCH JJ)(Westwood Spice 2013c)	16	27	✓
	Young People Leaving Care Support Service (North Coast) (SWITCH YPLC)(Westwood Spice 2013d)	56	59	✓
Long term housing and support model (figures as at 30 June 2012)	Riverina Murray HAP project (ARTD Consultants 2013a) (RMHAP)	180	203	✓
	Rural Homelessness New England project (RHNE) (ARTD Consultants 2013b)	200	190	✗
	North Coast Accommodation project (NCAP) (ARTD Consultants 2013c)	325	1,500	✓
	South East NSW Community	144	476	✓

	Connections(ARTD Consultants 2013d)			
Youth Foyers	Youth Hub(EJD Consulting and Associates 2013)	45	85	✓

\*Numbers reflect number of clients accepted into the service

## 2.3 Housing outcomes

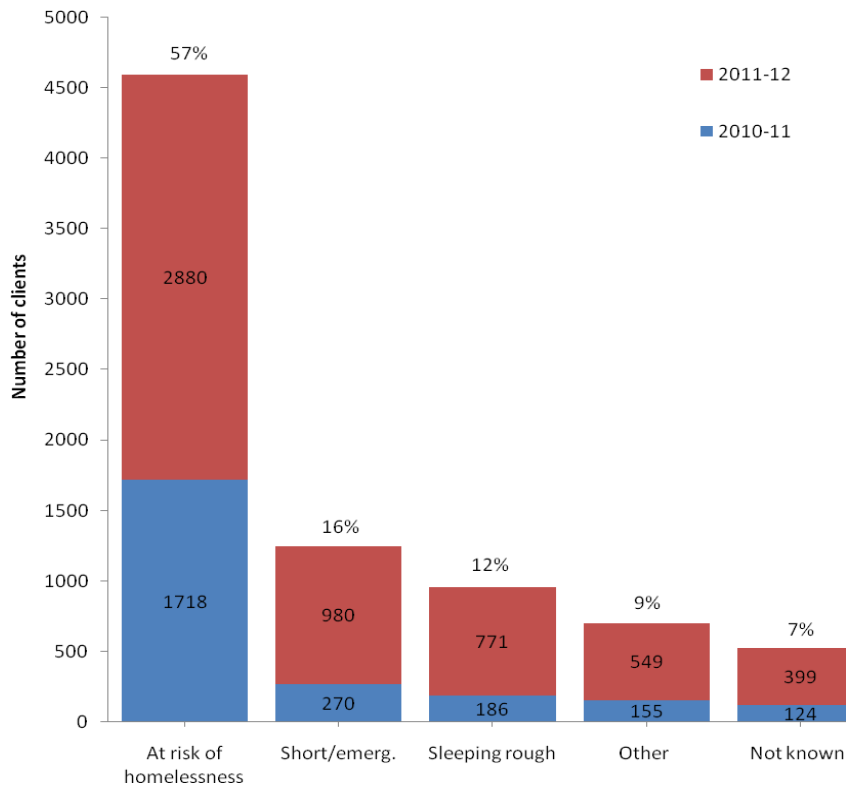
The extent to which clients were successfully housed or existing accommodation arrangements stabilised, would suggest that all projects had an impact on reducing homelessness.

### 2.3.1 Analysis of 36 self-evaluation reports\*

#### Homelessness status prior to assistance

→ More than half of all clients were at risk of homelessness which reflects the focus of HAP projects on early intervention.

**Figure 1: Homelessness status prior to assistance**



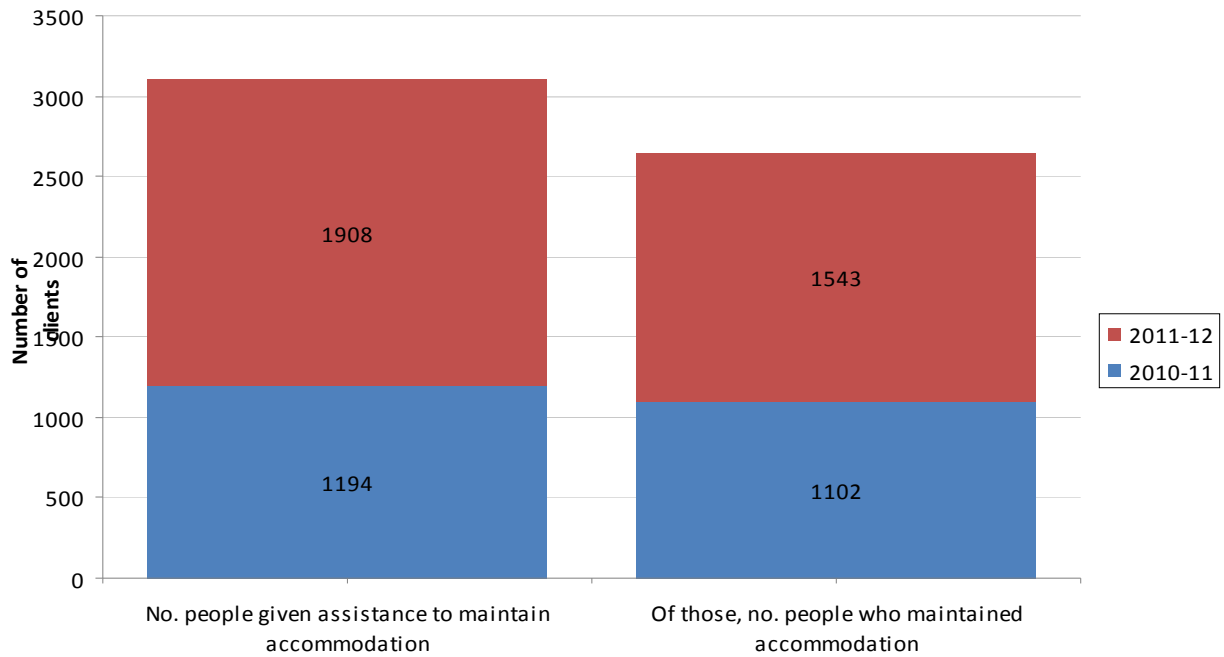
Source: HAP projects: analysis of self-evaluation reports

\*Note that 11/12 data is until end of March 2012 (ie 9 months)

### Maintaining tenancies

In 2010-11, 1194 clients were reported as having been supported to maintain their existing accommodation. Of these, 92 per cent were reported to be successfully maintaining that tenancy. For the period 2011-12, 1908 clients were reported as having been supported to maintain their existing tenancy and 81 per cent of these were reported to have sustained that tenancy (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Number of clients supported to maintain their existing tenancy 2010-12**

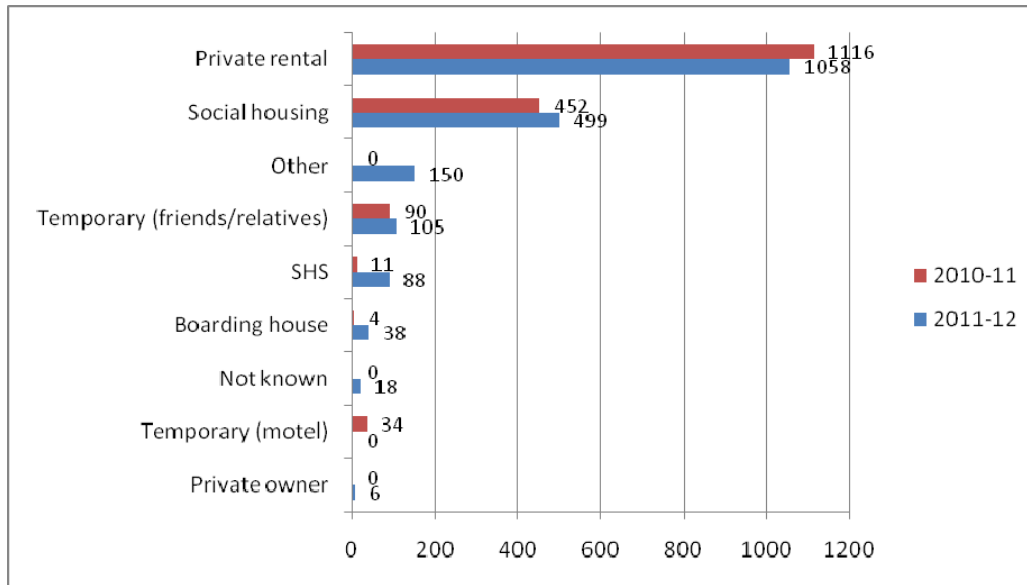


Source: HAP projects: analysis of self-evaluation reports

### Type of housing maintained by those supported to stay in their existing accommodation

Figure 3 below shows the type of housing maintained by those supported to stay in their existing accommodation. More than half of housing was private rental and over a quarter was social housing. The remainder was short-term accommodation.

**Figure 3: Type of housing maintained by those supported to stay in their existing accommodation**

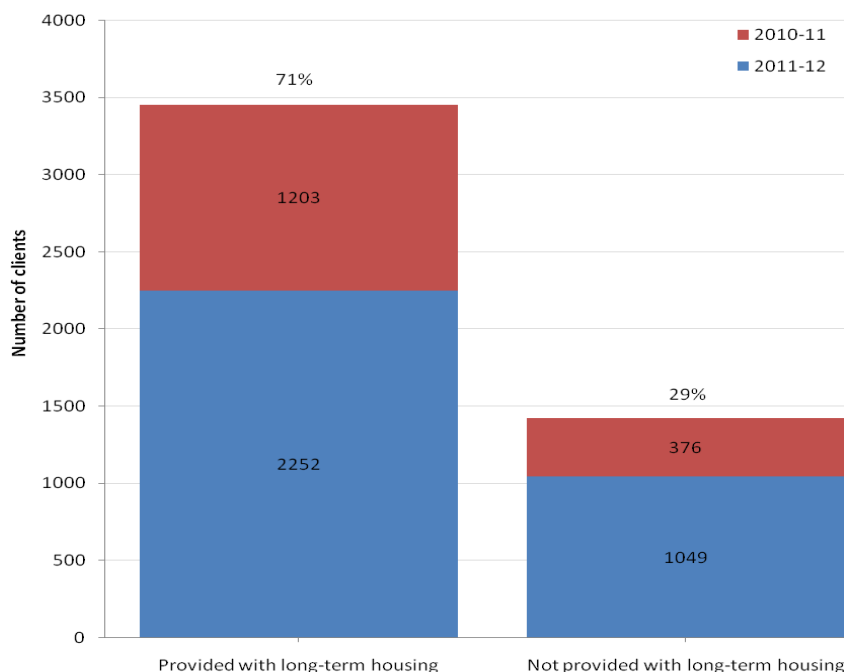


Source: HAP projects: analysis of self-evaluation reports

### Securing a new tenancy

Many of the HAP projects aimed to assist clients to secure a new tenancy in long-term accommodation (in social housing or private rental). As shown in Figure 4, in 2010-11, 1579 clients were assisted to look for new long term accommodation and of these, 76 per cent were able to secure a new tenancy. In 2011-12, 3301 clients were assisted to look for a new long-term tenancy. Of these, around 68 per cent successfully found new housing.

**Figure 4: Number of clients supported to find a new tenancy**



Source: HAP projects: analysis of self-evaluation reports

### 2.3.2 *Extended evaluations*

#### **Support for people at risk of eviction**

Target groups: tenants in private rental or social housing at risk of eviction - families, Aboriginal families and Aboriginal singles

There has been a high success rate in relation to the housing outcomes for clients of the three projects within the preventing evictions service model, with very few cases ending in eviction at the 16 week point. All services reported a 97 per cent or higher success rate in assisting their clients to sustain their tenancy.

#### **Long term housing and support service model**

Target groups: people with complex needs

All four projects within this service model targeted people at risk of homelessness as well as those experiencing primary and marginal homelessness. All projects were successful in reaching people at risk of homelessness, thereby contributing to a shift from crisis intervention to early intervention and prevention.

The projects differed in the types of housing clients were assisted with. The Riverina Murray HAP project (RMHAP) and Rural Homelessness New England project (RHNE) projects mostly assisted clients into social housing (60% of RMHAP clients, 56% of RHNE clients). Just over one-third (37%) of clients in both projects were assisted into private rental housing. The North Coast Accommodation project (NCAP) clients were usually assisted into private rental housing (76%). A small proportion (11%) of clients was assisted into social housing.

The most common housing outcome in the Community Connections project was living temporarily with family/friends (44%). The main reason for this was initial high demand and the lack of affordable housing in the area. Other Community Connections clients were most commonly assisted into private rental housing (31%) or social housing (13%).

There is limited data available on whether clients are continuing to sustain their tenancies after leaving the project, however preliminary findings are positive. Only the Riverina Murray HAP project (RMHAP) collected follow up data for all clients assisted to the end of June 2012. This data showed that 80 per cent of clients were maintaining their tenancy until July or August 2012 when follow up occurred (ARTD Consultants 2013e).

#### **Women and children with experience of domestic violence**

Target group: women and children experiencing and escaping domestic and family violence.

The three HAP DV projects addressed homelessness by offering assistance to women and children who had previously occupied housing that was unsafe, insecure and inadequate. Through the projects, the majority of clients successfully established and maintained safe and ongoing tenancies. For the year 2011/12 the Illawarra and GWS projects demonstrated that they had either successfully housed or maintained the existing 'at risk' tenancies of 100 per cent of their clients. The Hunter project also established sustainable tenancies for many clients, but faced greater difficulties with a lack of affordable housing in the region.

## Support for people exiting institutions

Target groups: young people exiting juvenile justice centres, young people leaving care support service, and adults at risk of homelessness and to prevent reoffending.

Client self-reports about their confidence in maintaining their housing arrangements into the future and their improved ratings of their quality of life, compared to before the intervention suggest that the projects have been a factor in avoiding homelessness (Westwood Spice 2013e p.28).

## Youth hub project incorporating the foyer model

Target group: young people aged 16-21.5 years of age needing assistance to transition to independent living.

The youth hub project reported positive housing outcomes based on combined numbers. According to the evaluation, numbers reported between 2009 and 2012 indicate that the project<sup>2</sup>:

- Assisted all 145 clients to look for long-term accommodation.
- Assisted all 2009 and 2010 clients (60 clients in total) to obtain long-term accommodation.
- Provided 82 per cent of clients in long-term accommodation with ongoing support packages.

As a result of how data was collected and reported over time, the evaluation was unable to determine the Project's performance in relation to providing juvenile justice clients with a transition path to independence through provision of stable housing, appropriate support and opportunities to achieve their goal of education and employment (EJD Consulting and Associates 2013).

While the above figures suggest positive housing outcomes, according to the evaluation, the figures mask a number of features of the youth hub project, including:

- The different proportions and client outcomes across the three streams.
- That many clients in the campus stream have been sustained on the campus for more than a year and therefore appear to be included across more than one year of the project statistics.
- The relatively small number of campus stream clients that have fully exited the model.

In respect to those clients with poor tenancy outcomes, three key factors were identified by the evaluators including:

- Challenges of securing accommodation for young people within the NSW housing market
- Absence of dedicated housing included in the outreach stream
- Difficulties faced by young project clients attempting to live independently, especially those outside of the campus stream (EJD Consulting and Associates 2013 p.33).

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<sup>2</sup>Note: these figures include some double counting as a significant proportion of clients received services during both years (Source: Youth hub project evaluation report).



## **2.4 Non-housing client outcomes**

Across all service delivery models, projects had a housing focus, but were not housing constrained. There was capacity to address non-housing issues that underpin the client's capacity to sustain a tenancy. Services from outside of the housing sector (for example education, health, legal or counselling) could be accessed using brokerage funding for specialist services or by placing case management / client support hours within non-housing agencies such as mental health or community centres.

By linking clients to a range of non-housing services agencies, the projects were able to achieve more sustainable client outcomes than through any stand-alone intervention could achieve.

### *2.4.1 Analysis of 36 self-evaluation reports*

The number of people receiving non-housing support increased between 2010-11 (2514) and 2011-12 (10,832). The increase can probably be attributed to the length of time taken for some projects to get up and running. The numbers of people referred to other services for non-housing support also increased from 1890 in 2010-11 to 8169 in 2011-12.

In the period 2011/12, HAP projects provided legal support to 554 clients and referred a further 354 clients to other legal services. Services included providing assistance and support with legal aid appointments, court support and advocacy in the courtroom. Outstanding debt was commonly reported as a risk factor in client homelessness. For those living in temporary accommodation, outstanding fines presented a barrier to accessing longer term rental accommodation. Fear of dealing with debt recovery services or lack of resources to pay off fines meant that some clients accrue large debts. HAP case workers were able to help clients contact the State Debt Recovery Office and arrange repayment plans, work and development plans.

In the period 2011/12 the HAP projects provided 2865 clients with financial services and referred 675 clients to other services providing financial support. Examples of support included advice and counselling to help clients budget and resolve unpaid debts.

### *2.4.2 Extended evaluations*

#### **Support for people at risk of eviction**

A range of beneficial non-housing outcomes for clients were reported by projects within the support for people at risk of eviction service model including a reduction in stress and improvements in physical and mental health, family relationships, confidence and social support. Some clients had gone on to employment or study.

Tenancy support services were identified as a mechanism that enabled women and children to move away from a violent partner into a safe home that they could afford. This stability and security was seen as important for the family relationship and the health of the mother and children.

Services and clients reported improved levels of engagement with the support service system and identified this as a preventative factor that would reduce the likelihood that they would reach the same level of crisis again.

Some services (for example the North Coast project) focussed specifically on families with the intention of preventing the impacts of homelessness on children. There are some examples of the services providing a means to assist clients achieve restoration

of children who had been removed from custody through demonstrating successful maintenance of a tenancy (Robyn Kennedy Consultants 2013d).

### **Long term housing and support**

The summary of evaluation findings indicated that clients appeared to be better off as a result of their participation in the project. Clients were found to be better able to sustain a tenancy and their well-being had improved as a result of each of the projects.

### **Women and children with experience of domestic violence**

According to the HAP DV extended evaluation, the foundation of sustainable housing with intensive client support underpinned their capacity to remain separate from the perpetrator and to sufficiently recover from the effects of the abuse in order to gain independence. The findings suggest optimism for the interventions to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty as a result of DV.

### **Support for people exiting institutions**

Across several projects clients reported feeling more positive and optimistic about their life and future prospects. Service providers commented on greater engagement with services by clients, together with increased capacity and confidence of some clients to navigate service systems.

In the Targeted Housing and Support Services (Western Sydney) (THaSS) (Westwood Spice 2013a) project and clients were supported with court appearances, meetings with Community Services, applications, contact visits and securing housing to accommodate their children.

Both the Targeted Housing and Support Services (THaSS) and the Sustaining Tenancies projects targeted a majority of clients who were assessed as either medium to high or high risk of re-offending, and it appears that the service delivery was well matched to this target group. Reports of reduced re-offending by clients and improvements in behaviours linked to re-offending, including improved anger management and reduced drug use, were noted by clients and service providers as important outcomes.

It was noted by Probation and Parole interviewees that some adult clients completed Probation and Parole orders for the first time and this was enabling the client to break to cycle of re-offending. Changes in offending behavior may have been assisted by a range of factors such as participation in other schemes (Probation and Parole, Drug and Alcohol) and not solely due to participation in the HAP projects. However, according to the summary evaluation report the projects all had a strong focus on supporting clients to access services and programs in a sustained way.

Positive outcomes were achieved in education, training, employment and job-readiness, and participation in employment initiatives. In one project this was facilitated through a social enterprise, ChoppaWeed.

#### **ChoppaWeed, Broken Hill**

In Broken Hill, where employment options are limited for people with low skills and exiting institutions, the CRC established 'ChoppaWeed', an innovative social enterprise that has given men work experience in gardening and maintenance. Actively supporting client attendance at the local Jobs Network agency and collaboration with the local 'Strive to Drive' learn to drive programs has seen several men in Broken Hill gain driving licenses for the first time (Sustaining Tenancies

### **Youth hub project incorporating the foyer model**

The largest proportion of non-housing related services delivered by Hub staff include providing assistance for clients in the following areas: education, training and employment; living skills; personal development; recreational activities; general counselling; and community participation. Other examples included:

- Obtaining driving licences.
- Participation in community activities through volunteer work programs.
- Police contact.

### 3 SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES



#### **Purpose**

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This chapter identifies success factors, barriers, enablers and risk factors associated with the interventions.

#### **Summary**

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##### *Success factors*

- The combination of HAP service model elements and their relationship to one another was a key success factor for optimising client outcomes. Key program elements include: access to safe and affordable housing; flexible support; case management; and brokerage funding to fund goods and services.
- The 12 month support period provided by several projects was found to facilitate a marked difference in client outcomes relevant to these projects, for example experience of domestic violence. Clients were assisted to work through a range of issues that would otherwise impact negatively on their ability to sustain a tenancy.
- Securing appropriate accommodation immediately or as early as possible following institutional exit was identified as a key success factor in facilitating optimum client outcomes. Important elements in planning for and securing accommodation include consideration of varying accommodation needs and identification of potential risks which may jeopardise the tenancy, and implementation of processes to mitigate these risks.
- The common focus on actively supporting clients to sustain tenancies through advocacy, developing an individual's knowledge and skills, and overall capacity building was an important contributor to positive outcomes across all target groups.
- Support services that had a direct impact on a client's capacity to sustain a tenancy included the development of household and financial management skills, counselling and support to resolve personal and behavioural issues, and monitoring and early intervention to identify triggers that could place the tenancy at risk.
- Individual case plans were effective in tailoring supports to best meet the needs of individual clients, which were reviewed and revised as part of the case management process as clients progressed.
- Across all service models, projects had a housing focus but were not housing constrained. There was capacity to address non-housing issues that underpin the client's capacity to sustain a tenancy.
- Culturally specific services offered by some projects and effective linkages with Aboriginal organisations have ensured good access to services for Aboriginal people at risk of homelessness.
- The complexity and nature of client needs across all target groups require highly skilled staff with particular experience in dealing with diverse needs and in building trusting relationships with clients. Ongoing professional development and opportunities to share experience with staff from other organisations are necessary in order to ensure continued capacity building in the workforce.

## *Challenges*

- The most significant challenge faced by projects was locating suitable accommodation for clients. Availability of social housing stock is a systemic issue with no easy solutions. Opportunities for securing accommodation have been assisted through partnerships with community housing providers and real estate agents as a means of accessing private rental properties and head leasing schemes.
  - Limitations on the use of brokerage such as for payment of rental arrears can constrain the potential for brokerage to reduce the factors contributing to an individual being at risk of homelessness. For example, the Coastal Sydney Aboriginal Tenancy Support Service (CSATSS) project was not permitted through its funding agreement to expend funds on rent arrears. This constraint appeared to place some limitations on the ability of the project to develop relationships with real estate agencies.
  - HAP service delivery models have not been immune to the problem of a lack of services in rural or remote areas. However, it has been important for projects to have the ability to purchase services by the hour from small, local providers and create a tailored package for clients.
  - An overall observation was made about the inconsistencies in the way in which client data is captured, in the way clients are counted, and lack of consistency in the assessment of levels of client need.
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## **3.1 Success factors and enablers**

### *3.1.1 Combination of program elements*

Several HAP project evaluations concluded that whilst the data identified a number of key individual factors contributing to the success of the service models, it is the combination of program elements and their relationship to one another that has optimised housing outcomes. For example, the combination of: access to safe and affordable housing; flexible support; and brokerage funding to fund goods and services.

### *3.1.2 Case management focused on client outcomes*

Given the high support needs of clients, case management has been found to be an effective service response. This involves coordinating support from different agencies, in order to meet clients' different needs. In contrast to service delivery, case management is about identifying what a client needs and ensuring access to that service. Case management support is tailored to meet the individual client needs as identified through the assessment. However, case management without access to brokerage funds can be ineffective given that brokerage funds can provide the necessary resources to attend to client's pressing needs, such as paying an electricity bill, buying food or medicine, or entering a rehabilitation program.

Agencies reported that developing a longer term relationship with a client through case management and the ability to provide holistic support through 'wrap around' services is effective in addressing the underlying causes which contribute to homelessness.

### 3.1.3 Flexible brokerage funds

Brokerage funding has been a major factor in providing clients with appropriate support. The use of flexible funding was seen as a key aspect of case management, as it allows for more flexible case plans targeted to individual clients. Across all projects, service providers were creative in using brokerage funding to support clients to maintain their tenancies. Brokerage funding was commonly used to purchase household goods, pay debts, attend budgeting courses and access financial counselling. Brokerage funding allowed for responsive support to meet client needs and complemented other sources of financial support available to clients.

According to the analysis of self-evaluation reports, each of the 36 projects used brokerage funding to assist clients with crisis or emergency payments, to buy household items such as washing machines and to engage other services such as general health care and mental health services. The largest proportion of brokerage funding overall was spent on purchasing household goods.

#### **Use of brokerage funds for women and children with experience of domestic violence**

Most women left their home and relationship without any belongings and brokerage funding was used to purchase essential furniture and white goods. This was critical, since prior to HAP DV support, women described returning to violent situations because they could not secure housing, or if they could, were unable to furnish the property and provide a safe place for their children. Brokerage funding was also used to settle rent arrears from a previous property and outstanding debt. In other instances, brokerage funding was used to pay a bond on a new property or to enable women to continue paying their rent even when they have a competing bill or urgent expense.

The flexible use of brokerage funding responded to the understanding that women and children can leave a violent relationship traumatised, with limited assets and few resources, having experienced years of financial abuse and control.

Source: Breckenridge et al. 2103d

### 3.1.4 Exit planning to secure housing before release when exiting institutions

Securing appropriate accommodation immediately or as early as possible following institutional exit, was identified as a key success factor. In the exiting institutions support model, this was addressed in the development of individual care plans for each client. In each of the projects, it was intended that there be a period of 'pre-institutional exit planning to allow for accommodation arrangements to be put in place. However in reality some clients were referred very close to the date of exiting the institution, or had been released and were already experiencing homelessness or impending homelessness. Important elements in planning for and securing accommodation included a discussion of varying accommodation needs and, in the case of adults being released from custody, identification of potential risks which may jeopardize the tenancy and the implementation of processes to mitigate these. The appropriateness of housing was also important in relation to factors such as location and the need to accommodate children.

### 3.1.5 Focus on support for sustaining tenancies

The common focus on actively supporting clients to sustain tenancies through advocacy, developing individual's knowledge and skills, and overall capacity building was an important contributor to positive outcomes across all client groups. Examples

of support services offered by the projects that had a direct impact on clients' ability to sustain a tenancy included:

### **Household management**

- Assistance with household set up through access to financial support and the sourcing of furniture and white goods.
- Assistance with financial management and budgeting skills.
- Assistance with literacy and numeracy.
- Assistance with grocery shopping and meal planning.
- Assistance with cooking and housekeeping skills.
- Setting up Centrelink deductions for bills.
- Developing repayment plans.

### **Personal / behavioural issues**

- Anger management and trauma counselling.
- Relationship counselling.
- Family mediation.
- Mental health support and referrals.

### **Monitoring and early intervention**

- Monitoring and flagging concerns and issues which without intervention escalation of the issues could risk the tenancy.

Findings indicate that short term investment up front when a tenancy is at risk of eviction or tenancy failure helped sustain the tenancy. Accumulation of rent arrears was identified as the key reason for eviction and access to brokerage funding was found to be helpful in sustaining a tenancy.

#### ***3.1.6 Individualised client focus***

Individual case plans were developed to tailor supports to best meet the needs of each client and these were reviewed and revised as part of the case management as clients progressed. In the case of the youth hub project action planning as a tool for achieving young people's aspirations through case management was effective, as well as identifying and responding to the barriers experienced by young people seeking to access educational or employment opportunities on a case by case basis.

In other projects, case planning that considered the needs and circumstances of the whole household achieved more sustainable housing outcomes. The needs of children were also identified as being important in this process.

#### ***3.1.7 Ability to alter intensity of support***

Caseworker support even during episodes of crisis and set-backs brought an increased sense of confidence for clients in navigating services and systems and achieving goals. The capacity to provide support that could be increased when needed then dropping back to less concentrated support over time was also valuable.

Dealing with multiple and entrenched histories of disadvantage and trauma requires sustained support. It can take time to stabilise complex issues and to secure sustainable alternatives. In projects providing a 12 month period of support, this was perceived as sufficient time to allow for setback or failure to be dealt with and

resolved. However, it was acknowledged that some clients, particularly Aboriginal clients, may benefit from extended periods of support.

Whereas some clients have complex needs and require support over a long period of time, other target groups required shorter period of support. According to the evaluators of the services to support tenants at risk of eviction, the ability to case manage over an extended period of up to 16 weeks enables the services to put in place sustainable strategies to avoid rental arrears in the future, as well as addressing underlying issues contributing to placing the tenancy at risk including domestic violence, mental health and drug and alcohol issues.

According to the summary report of self-evaluations, in the period 2010-11 services categorised the largest proportion of clients as receiving medium and high intensity support. In the period 2011-12, the largest numbers of clients were categorised as receiving low intensity support.

### *3.1.8 Housing focused but not housing constrained*

Across all service delivery models, projects had a housing focus, but were not housing constrained. There was capacity to address non-housing issues that underpin the client's ability to sustain a tenancy. Services from outside of the housing sector (for example education, health, legal or counselling) could be accessed using brokerage funding for specialist services or by placing case management / client support hours within non-housing agencies such as mental health or community centres.

The projects had a strong focus on supporting clients to access services and programs in a sustained way to ensure clients gained the benefits of all available general and specialist services. For example: doctors; dentists; specialist counselors; drug and alcohol rehabilitation services; employment services; TAFE courses and other skills development and training; and legal services.

Many supports were also provided directly by some services (such as in the exiting institutions service model). For example: counselling; independent living skills training, including shopping and meal preparation; family mediation and relationship skills; and resume preparation.

By linking clients to a range of non-housing services agencies, the projects were able to achieve more sustainable client outcomes than through any stand-alone intervention could achieve.

### *3.1.9 Partnerships with real estate agents*

The development of partnerships with real estate agents were positive, with agents now referring private rental tenants to the projects as well as cooperating with rent arrears payment plans. Real estate agents interviewed as part of the evaluations expressed a greater awareness of the difficulties tenants could face and were willing to work with services in most situations to save the tenancy. As stated in the evaluations of the long term housing and support service, where relationships were well-established real estate agents could advise the project when tenants were in arrears or if there were complaints, and the project could support clients to maintain their tenancy. Projects built relationships with real estate agents using promotional strategies, for example events such as breakfasts or lunches. The North Coast Accommodation Project (NCAP) developed a comprehensive marketing strategy and recruited staff with both case management and marketing skills who could gain the confidence of real estate agents.



### *3.1.10 Advocacy and supporting clients to access mainstream services*

Program staff advocated for individuals with other parts of the service system. This was particularly important for young people and adults who have long histories of complex service needs and who have limited capacity to navigate the service system themselves.

Projects worked to ensure optimum access of clients to mainstream services by assisting with making appointments, providing transport (particularly in rural areas) and accompanying clients to appointments. This provided the opportunity for advocacy with service providers and support to enhance understanding of individual client needs. Supporting access to mainstream services was also facilitated through case workers having increased awareness of available services.

### *3.1.11 Case worker and client relationship*

The importance of the case worker and client relationship was acknowledged in several projects. For many clients involved in the projects, this was their first experience of receiving intensive personal support in a period of transition and/or vulnerability to homelessness. This was positively experienced through having a reliable, non-judgmental support worker available. According to clients, having caseworker support and back up, even during episodes of crisis and setbacks, brought an increased sense of confidence in navigating services and systems.

Moreover, in projects focused on exiting institutions, clients with histories of offending valued having workers from a service which was not linked with the justice system. For adults leaving custody, this was a strong factor in developing trust and a feeling of safety with caseworkers.

Research on the role of assertive outreach (Phillips & Parsell 2012) with a case study in Sydney found that service users' engagement with assertive outreach services appears to be most productive in the presence of a trusting professional relationship; when the relationship is purposeful and goal-orientated; when service users feel that they are being listened to, and when workers are able to provide practical assistance and resources.

### *3.1.12 Involvement of culturally specific services*

In relation to Aboriginal clients, the culturally specific services offered by some projects (e.g. Coastal Sydney Aboriginal Tenancy Support Service (Robyn Kennedy 2013c) and effective linkages with Aboriginal organisations have ensured good access to services for Aboriginal people at risk of homelessness.

#### **Aboriginal workers**

The SWITCH projects specifically included Aboriginal youth worker trainee positions in each location. These worked well, with the Aboriginal workers employed graduating into junior casework roles with their own caseloads in the final year of the projects. Feedback suggested that a major strength of this approach was that Aboriginal young people felt both supported and at the same time not singled out from other young people, as the SWITCH service was a general youth service.

Source: Young People Exiting Juvenile Justice Centres (North Coast) (SWITCH JJ) (Westwood Spice 2013c); Young People Leaving Care Support Service (North Coast) (SWITCH YPLC) (Westwood Spice 2013d).

### *3.1.13 Harnessing opportunities to increase access to affordable housing*

A variety of different types of accommodation and housing was arranged or stabilised for all clients through their engagement with the project. Accommodation was secured through various mechanisms including:

- Specific allocation of community housing properties through the Australian Government Economic Stimulus package for clients of the service (during year 1 of the projects).
- Developing operational partnerships with community housing providers (essential after the first year when Nation Building Economic Stimulus properties were no longer available).
- Developing partnerships with real estate agents to increase access to private rental properties.
- Securing accommodation on a temporary basis until permanent social housing was available.

## **3.2 Challenges for the service system**

### *3.2.1 Lack of supply of suitable housing*

The most significant challenge faced by the majority of projects was locating suitable affordable accommodation options for clients when projects were located in areas with limited supplies of social housing and high demand for affordable properties. This was particularly difficult where more affordable housing was located on the fringes of towns and/or in regional areas, which presented additional challenges in accessing public transport.

The housing challenge was addressed by service providers through the proactive development and maintenance of partnerships. For example, in the case of Targeted Housing and Support services (Western Sydney) (THaSS), partnerships were developed with a wide range of community housing providers; in the case of the North Coast projects, relationships were developed not only with what limited community housing organisations existed, but also with the private rental market (Westwood Spice 2013a).

Challenges also existed in securing appropriate housing for women with children, in safe locations away from negative social networks and violent partners. A majority of available social housing stock is in low socio-economic areas where there are relatively higher levels of risk and negative peer networks. At times it was also difficult to secure housing with adequate rooms to accommodate children.

Several projects included in the analysis of self-evaluation reports noted that a small number of social housing properties were made available for HAP projects, but as because tenancies were successful, properties were no longer available after the first year.

### *3.2.2 Issues faced by clients in securing accommodation*

Limited supply was not the only housing challenge encountered by projects; the projects managed a range of issues faced by clients in securing accommodation. These included:

- Age barriers to signing lease agreements (for young people under 18 years of age).
- Lack of experience of processes for securing accommodation.

- Clients in custody being unable to negotiate and sign tenancy agreements.
- No rental history (especially for young people) or poor rental history, particularly through rent arrears.
- Affordability issues.

### *3.2.3 Limitations placed on the use of brokerage funding*

Limitations placed on the use of brokerage funding such as payment of rental arrears can constrain the potential for brokerage to reduce the factors contributing to a person being at risk of homelessness. One project (Coastal Sydney Aboriginal Tenancy Support Service (Robyn Kennedy 2013c) in the supporting people at risk of eviction service model was not permitted through its funding agreement to use funds to cover rent arrears. This constraint appeared to place limitations on the ability of the project to develop relationships with real estate agents. Evidence from two other projects suggests that contributions to rent arrears are an important component of securing 'buy in' from real estate agents, who will then be willing to work with clients and service providers to save the tenancy.

### *3.2.4 Recruiting and maintaining suitable staff*

The complexity and nature of client needs across the target groups of all projects require highly skilled staff with particular experience in dealing with diverse needs, and in building trusting relationships with clients. Projects met the challenges of attracting and supporting staff by the provision of regular staff training and supervision sessions, team meetings and easy access to senior staff expertise for advice and mentoring from within the services. However, several projects had experienced challenges in recruiting and maintaining adequate staffing levels for project needs.

Several projects reported attempts to make services more accessible and responsive to Aboriginal people by strengthening partnerships between mainstream and Aboriginal services. For example, project 2.22 Young People Leaving Care Support Service reported that the engagement of Aboriginal staff and trainees improved Aboriginal client perceptions of Switch being a safe service. However, there remained ongoing challenges in recruiting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander case workers.

### *3.2.5 Accessing services in rural and remote areas*

The service delivery models have not been immune to the problem of a lack of services in more rural or remote areas. However it has been important for projects to have the ability to purchase services by the hour from small, local providers and therefore create a tailored package for clients in isolated locations (such as a client in a HAP DV project who could engage with a local private psychologist rather than having to travel to a regional centre to meet up with a service provider).

Several projects, for example the Riverina Murray (RMHAP) and Rural Homelessness New England (RHNE) projects aimed to address key issues in service delivery in rural areas by developing a regional service system with enhanced capacity for outreach to people in smaller towns and isolated settlements. Brokerage funding provided these projects with some flexibility to purchase services where other options were not available locally. However, the lack of capacity for some services to provide outreach, in particular mental health services remained a barrier. Lack of transport or lack of access to public transport can also be a barrier to service access for clients in regional locations.

### *3.2.6 Late referrals*

Some projects experienced challenges in preventing eviction, as clients were not referred until they were in crisis or the tenancy was about to be terminated. This made early intervention and long-term planning difficult. This was particularly challenging in the support for people exiting institutions service model.

### *3.2.7 Challenges in creating a culture of collaboration*

Despite the benefits of service integration recorded in the literature, at various times projects reported difficulties within their network which posed a challenge to integrated service delivery. A number of projects reported that it took time to build relationships, and create a culture of collaboration—especially for services that are used to competing for funding.

### *3.2.8 Data collection systems*

An overall observation was made about the inconsistencies in the way in which client data is captured, in the way clients are counted, and lack of consistency in the assessment of levels of client need. These inconsistencies constrain comparability of the data. In some cases, services had multiple data collection systems in place but these were not always compatible or complete.

### *3.2.9 Issues related to the location of housing and support*

The Youth Hub project experienced challenges associated with the location of the campus in a low socio-economic area, including poor personal safety, limited access to public transport, and distance from major job markets and educational opportunities. Consideration should be given to the location of housing and support services to ensure their appropriateness and accessibility for clients.

## 4 SERVICE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AND ENABLERS



### **Purpose**

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This chapter presents evidence of service system improvements, including an analysis of the enabling factors.

### **Summary**

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- The HAP projects have been a positive experience for partnership agencies involved and have expanded their capacity for integration and co-ordination. Projects enabled stronger, and in some cases new, professional relationships to emerge. One element of these strengthened relationships has been an enhanced workforce capacity within the local service system. Several projects found they had influenced system change through increasing awareness of client needs within other service organisations.
- Through the projects, non-housing workers have increased recognition of the importance of tenancy support and have become more attuned to the housing needs of their clients. This has had the effect of re-orientating organisations to homelessness within the context of their core work and has therefore extended the reach of housing support.
- There has been increased collaboration and networking between service providers with new referral pathways and processes adopting a more holistic approach to clients, such as through multi-service case conferencing.
- Improved partnerships between health services and homelessness service enable projects to connect clients to temporary accommodation and address their health care needs via mainstream medical services rather than ad hoc emergency room visits (Chan et al. 2013).
- Coordination groups ensure mainstream and specialist agencies are involved in common intake, assessment and case coordination and support planning processes. Coordination groups also established common processes, templates and guidelines to help bring together different organisations to work towards a common goal.
- A coordinator role was identified as a critical enabler in managing relationships and communication between partner agencies.
- Partnerships between organisations with different remits have provided the necessary integration of key skills to affect positive change for clients. This in turn has led to greater inter-agency and cross-sector professional development.
- The ability to negotiate local adaptations to service models has been a critical success factor in implementation and ensuring projects address local client needs.

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### 4.1 Introduction

The HAP projects were intended to have a positive impact on client outcomes, but were also focused on creating improvements in the service system, particularly through greater integration, development of partnerships and sector capacity building.

The limited period of time of project implementation has restricted the extent to which impacts on the broader service system can be identified and measured. Nonetheless, there was positive initial feedback from a range of stakeholders.

## **4.2 Improvements and enablers**

### *4.2.1 Service integration*

Projects prompted service integration across government and non-government agencies. By drawing together lead agencies, specialist homelessness services and other services into coordination groups, the HAP projects were able to facilitate a level of service integration required to respond effectively to homelessness.

#### Inner City Youth at Risk (ICYAR) project

Agency staff at the ICYAR project emphasised that young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Kings Cross and surrounding areas often have very high and complex needs, which are unable to be met by a single agency or once-off service response. Prior to the ICYAR, clients would cycle between agencies and each agency could deliver only the services for which they were funded. ICYAR has enabled a more responsive and streamlined assessment process and the governance and brokerage of the program results in specific client-centred information sharing between agencies.

### *4.2.2 Sector capacity building*

Service models facilitated greater interagency awareness of roles and cooperation in order to achieve positive client outcomes. Interagency working enhanced the skills and knowledge of local partner agencies and increased the capacity of related agencies to respond to and improve client outcomes. The HAP DV projects enabled stronger, and in some cases new, professional relationships to emerge. One element of these strengthened relationships has been an enhanced workforce capacity within the local service system. Several projects found they had influenced system change through increasing awareness of client needs within other service organisations. This was achieved through proactive client advocacy. For example, service provider organisations felt that HAP DV had increased their workers' professional skills and confidence in dealing with domestic violence and homelessness. Through these enhanced relationships and effects on the workforce there has been a meaningful exchange of professional knowledge.

### *4.2.3 Strong partnerships, networking and collaboration*

Partnerships, networking and collaboration are essential in order to access suitable housing and other services in order to meet the individual needs of clients. There has been increased collaboration and networking between service providers with new referral pathways and processes adopting a more holistic approach to clients, such as through multi-service case conferencing. The HAP projects brought additional staff hours so that the development of partnerships and integration was enabled.

A key element of the HAP projects was improved referrals and better networks between services. The service model prompted partnerships between all levels of government and the not-for-profit sector, and most of the projects included in the summary of self-evaluation reports reported new partnerships and/or the strengthening of existing partnerships. These partnerships were fostered through greater contact between staff, sharing of resources, and collaborative working relationships.

Practical examples of partnerships include through the use of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).

Improved partnerships between health services and homelessness service enable projects to connect clients to temporary accommodation and address their health care needs via mainstream medical services rather than ad hoc emergency room visits (Chan et al. 2013).

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. In contrast, the HAP DV projects provided training, coordination and leadership of multiagency meetings, specialised professional support and the option of funding for support hours, goods and services. The HAP DV projects provided a positive experience for the partnership agencies involved and expanded their capacity for integration and coordination.

Some workers involved in the HAP DV extended evaluation expressed the view that without the resources of the HAP DV support model, their organisation would not have been able to work effectively with a client with complex needs. The resources have enabled existing services to increase their case loads or work more intensively with known clients through becoming registered service providers for HAP DV. This has provided preventative intervention for vulnerable individuals who would not have otherwise received an appropriate service.

#### *4.2.4 Role of coordination groups*

Projects focused on providing support for people at risk of eviction involved multi-agency coordination groups. Coordination groups typically ensure that all agencies – mainstream and specialist – are involved in common intake, assessment and case coordination and support planning processes. In projects using a model of joint working, coordination groups were set up to share the responsibility for approving and case managing clients.

Coordination groups were also able to establish processes, templates and guidelines and help bring together very different organisations to work towards a common goal.

Critical success features of coordination groups include:

- Good continuity in the membership.
- Processes in place to guide decision making and allocation of resources.
- Ownership of resource allocation decisions at a local level.
- Support of a coordinator to drive the process.
- Clear communication processes.
- Respect for the input of all group members.
- Inclusion of Aboriginal services and key workers.

### **Coordination groups – long term housing and support service model**

The Rural Interagency Homelessness Projects (long term housing and support) established coordination groups at the local level where participating organisations, which included new actors interested in the approach as well as stakeholders from the homelessness service system, shared the responsibility for approving and case managing clients. The approach proved effective in providing a coordinated response to clients with multiple issues, and generated new solutions for supporting clients. It improved the service system by enabling the sharing of information, increasing knowledge about effective ways to meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, providing a platform for training and building trusting relationships, and improving accountability for service delivery.

Source: ARTD Consulting (2013e)

### **Coordination groups – support for people at risk of eviction service model**

The coordination groups that were initiated as part of the service delivery model on the Mid and Far North Coast were clearly identified as mechanisms that directly influenced service system integration and the expansion of relationships between specialist and mainstream services. Service providers noted that as a result of the coordination group they had gained:

- Greater awareness of the need for early intervention when a family was experiencing financial difficulties which put their tenancy at risk
- Increased knowledge of services offered by other organisations and the skills of members of the group
- Skill development and a shared understanding of client centred service delivery and homelessness prevention
- Knowledge on tenancy and housing issues
- Improvements in case coordination

Source: Robyn Kennedy Consultants (2013d)

#### **4.2.5 Coordinator roles**

A coordinator role is a critical enabler in managing relationships and communication between the partner agencies. Although there is a trend to increase collaboration and integration between human services agencies, it can be difficult to achieve this. Disciplinary and professional boundaries, agency funding agreements and privacy guidelines can all impose barriers to collaboration.

This was the experience of the Inner City Youth at Risk (ICYAR) project in its early stages, and it has required significant effort to overcome these barriers and move towards greater collaborative endeavors. The role of the coordinator has been vital in this process and is still important in terms of identifying challenges early on, especially given high staff turnover in the sector and where a single practitioner would be sufficient to disrupt the partnership's functions.

#### **4.2.6 Knowledge exchange**

Knowledge exchange across a range of organisations has been driven by the projects. Research found that non housing workers have increased recognition of the importance of tenancy support and have become more attuned to the housing needs



of their clients. This has had the effect of re-orientating organisations to homelessness within the context of their core work and therefore expanded the 'reach' of housing support.

Similarly, in the case of the HAP DV projects, services that may previously not have focused on domestic violence have gained insight into the specific needs and challenges faced by this group. The combination of a service provider selected for their particular knowledge relevant to the client (such as an Aboriginal worker, worker from a mental health organisation, someone with specific language skills, or a worker with drug and alcohol experience) and the auspicing agency's domestic violence knowledge provides an integration of key skills that increases the service's ability to create change. This then drives inter-agency and cross-sector professional skill development.

Educational initiatives such as the squalor guidelines training highlighted the complexity of client group needs and promoted a shared understanding of effective intervention strategies. For example, the project showed that staff need an appreciation of the complexity of squalor and that the required response does not start with cleaning. The messages included the need for a long term response including the time to build a relationship of trust, permission to make changes including cleaning and an on-going interagency support to prevent a relapse.

#### *4.2.7 Local adaptation of service models*

The ability to negotiate local adaptations to service models has been a critical success factor for implementation. In the case of HAP DV projects, examples include: changes to coordination groups; enhanced centralisation of case plan and brokerage approval and temporary variations to eligibility criteria.

#### *4.2.8 Flexibility of non-government organisations*

Some project stakeholders interviewed as part of the long term housing and support service model felt that funded organisations had more flexibility than government agencies, which can often be restricted by policy guidelines, for example in determining client eligibility and managing brokerage funds.

### **4.3 Cost analysis**

It is widely acknowledged that it is difficult to undertake cost effectiveness studies, particularly in human services (Berry et al. 2003, Pinkney & Ewing 2006; Culhane 2008; Culhane, Metraux and Hadley 2002; Flatau et al. 2008; Baldry et al. 2012; Zaretzky and Flatau 2013). As described by SPRC (2013) there are significant issues to be considered in attempting a cost analysis of community service projects, including challenges of accounting for multiple, often hidden variables and indirect costs and a lack of agreement on how to define costs. These difficulties are also related to the:

- Quality of the data collected.
- Differences in the methodology used.
- Assumptions regarding how costs are allocated.

For example the HAP DV projects demonstrated that the ratio of expenditure costs to operational costs was different across the three projects. These differences were attributable to:

- Local characteristics.
- Strength of service networks.

- Local implementation decisions.
- Demographic characteristics.
- Affordable housing options.

While each service implemented the DV program model in different ways, taking into account the local differences listed above, these had implications for costs generated per client. On the one hand, the HAP DV programs illustrated innovation and client focus by adapting to local conditions, whereas on the other hand these variations make it difficult to analyse and benchmark costs.

Overall the cost effectiveness analyses undertaken as part of each extended evaluation were also constrained by:

- The short time frames for collection and analysis of data.
- Inconsistencies across data due to variations across agencies in definitions of variables, project record keeping, and time periods for data collection.

Given this the cost effectiveness analyses found that:

- People with complex needs often require more extensive support. This is often more expensive.
- Early intervention and prevention that assist people in a timely manner provides value for money.
- Early intervention produces significant cost savings.

These findings are replicated in the national and international evidence. In addition in relation to specific programs the cost effectiveness analyses found that:

- Intervening early to prevent evictions is more cost effective, than costs associated with evictions.
- Services for young people which provide integrated services and accommodation were found to be a cheaper option than detention in a juvenile justice facility. This produces longer term cost savings.
- HAP DV projects had low-mid range expenditure per client in relation to other support service costs identified in the Australian literature.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, findings from across the summary of HAP project evaluations are considered in order to present discussion and conclusions in relation to key themes.

### 5.1 Evidence about target groups

This section compares evidence about target groups gathered through the HAP project evaluations with common themes from the national and international evidence base. The section provides evidence in relation to five target groups:

- Young people
- Women and children experiencing domestic violence
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Families
- People exiting institutions.

#### 5.1.1 *Young people*

As identified in the literature, it is unrealistic to expect that young people can make a speedy transition to independent living, especially young people leaving institutional care (child protection, state care or the justice system). These young people may have underdeveloped life skills, inadequate education and lack the supports or resources (including income) that most young people rely on for the transition into adulthood. This suggests that a significant period of support, including the possibility of extended periods of support can increase the chances of success for these vulnerable groups of young people. For example, within the youth projects as part of the exiting institutions service model, the staged approach to the provision of support allowed for short and medium term goals to be developed and achieved or repeated as necessary.

The HAP projects that involved young people as target groups show significant overlaps between young people in the juvenile justice system and those leaving care. The youth projects also confirmed findings in the literature that young people who are involved with the juvenile justice system are also highly likely to have experienced one or more out-of-home care placements. As demonstrated in the literature, there are valuable opportunities for intervening early to break the cycle of young offenders and prevent a lifelong trajectory of repeat episodes of offending, imprisonment and homelessness.

Young people may have inadequate rental histories in order to secure private rented accommodation. Several HAP projects had set up effective partnerships with providers of private rental and long-term holiday rental properties so that young people could obtain three month leases in order to establish a rental history.

The evaluation of the youth hub project found that higher risk and complex clients were reported to have a detrimental effect on other campus clients. This matches the evidence about Foyers and people (youth) with complex needs in congregate care. While this may be an issue common to all residential settings, careful consideration needs to be given to client suitability based on an intake and risk-assessment model.

According to the evaluator's report (EJD Consulting and Associates 2013), the Hub's Miller campus reflects many aspects of the foyer model, however, when compared against descriptors of foyers in the UK and Australia the following observations can be made:

The Hub is consistent with the foyer model in:

- Its focus on assisting young people in housing need to transition to independence.
- Its holistic approach to clients and using tailored case management.
- Facilitating access to: affordable accommodation; education, training and employment opportunities; support services; personal development and life-skills training; and professional guidance support.
- Differentiating between tenancy management and client support.

Areas in which the Hub's association with the foyer model was not deemed fully effective by the evaluators included:

- Only providing business hours on site security instead of 'around the clock' staff access.
- The site not being centrally located. The Miller campus is not perceived to meet a number of core criteria promoted by the Foyer Foundation, including proximity to:
  - Public transport
  - Education and training institutions
  - Work opportunities.
- The relatively low design value of the building and its general unattractive status.

### *5.1.2 Women and children experiencing domestic violence*

Domestic violence has been identified as a key risk of homelessness for women and children. The literature explains the risk factors for domestic violence, which have found to increase due to recent economic circumstances that have placed households in financial hardship. The vast majority of women and children experiencing domestic violence become instantly homeless when they leave the family home and face problems in accessing support in a timely manner (Netto et al. 2009). Women from low socio-economic circumstances are more likely to use government services, such as refuges and crisis accommodation; and children who experience domestic violence and who have periods of homelessness are at greater risk of homelessness later in life.

The HAP DV projects filled important gaps in the service system in order to maintain tenancies or rapidly re-house women and children affected by DV. Through the provision of flexible support with brokerage funding and an emphasis on interagency shared planning and review, HAP DV was able to link women to suitable housing and successfully establish the foundations of stable, long term tenancies.

Findings from the HAP projects suggest projects targeted at women leaving DV can play a role in reducing the likelihood of women and children escaping domestic violence being forced into refuge accommodation. Women involved in the HAP DV service model reported that the foundation of sustainable housing with intensive client support underpinned their capacity to remain separate from the perpetrator and to sufficiently recover from the effects of abuse in order to gain and begin to implement skills for independence.

### *5.1.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*

Aboriginal people continue to experience higher rates of homelessness than other client groups and may often have compounding issues such as substance abuse, mental health issues and other family issues. These issues are complex and require

appropriate case management and specialised assistance, including strong referral pathways and support between Aboriginal and mainstream services.

The evaluations found that Aboriginal clients felt both supported and not stigmatised where Aboriginal staff were employed in a service. Aboriginal staff improved understanding of client needs, community issues and sensitivities. Together with ensuring that non-Aboriginal staff were competent in providing culturally safe services, projects were able to meet the needs of their Aboriginal clients as well as report good levels of satisfaction. Attention to the provision of culturally safe services and appropriate staff recruitment should be central to all services which are likely to receive Aboriginal clients. In addition, working closely with local Aboriginal organisations can be effective in promoting services and increasing the number of referrals.

#### *5.1.4 Families*

Early intervention is a key element in preventing evictions. The earlier the intervention, the less stress endured by a client and their family, and the greater likelihood that a tenancy will be sustained. As indicated in the literature, many tenants abandon their tenancies on receipt of a rent arrears or termination notice without seeking help. The evaluation findings revealed that many tenants, particularly private renters, are not aware of services that could assist them. This suggests the need to improve strategies to connect with tenants who may currently fall outside of the service system or who may not frequent service providers such as Centrelink. The evaluations also found that many families seeking tenancy support have poor financial literacy skills. This suggests that the delivery of skills in budgeting and financial management through specific programs could be an important factor in reducing the risk of tenancies falling into rent arrears.

Some HAP projects (for example the North Coast project) focussed specifically on families with the intention of preventing the impacts of homelessness on children. Clients interviewed as part of the evaluation reported significant improvements in relation to family relationships and wellbeing. Having the needs of their children considered in the tenancy supports provided was important.

#### *5.1.5 People exiting prisons*

Literature on the relationships between ex-prisoners and homelessness is not extensive, however, the majority focuses on recidivism and the role insecure housing plays in former prisoners being re-incarcerated post release (Gojkovic et al. 2012). The link between ex-prisoners and homelessness emphasises the need for effective exit planning processes to be developed and implemented for people at risk when leaving custodial facilities. The literature demonstrates that discharge planning, when developed as collaboration between the prisoners and other professionals, ensures access to appropriate support and services on release.

For those in institutional settings, the optimum time for commencement of support was found to be prior to exit. This has been found to assist with establishing housing stability during the immediate post exit time, which can often be one of stress and uncertainty.

## **5.2 Lessons learnt from the HAP projects**

The HAP projects represent a significant development in the provision of housing and support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The projects provide examples of innovation and effectiveness and the evaluation findings resonate with the broader directions of the National Homelessness strategy and the Going Home

Staying Home (GSH) Reform Plan. Specific examples include that the projects were successful in:

- Focusing on individualised and needs based approaches to client service delivery.
- Utilising intensive case management as the core driver of client service provision.
- Using brokerage funding to support individuals through the purchase of goods and services to meet client needs.
- Shifting from crisis to early intervention and prevention.
- Providing medium to long-term housing solutions.
- Ensuring support arrangements are portable or applicable to all tenures and move with the client if they change tenures, such as from private rental to social housing.

The summary of evaluation findings has implications for the future planning of homelessness services, implementation of services and evaluations in the following ways:

### **5.3 Implications for the future planning of homelessness services**

Findings from the summary of HAP project evaluations have identified the following implications to inform future planning of homelessness services:

#### **Ensuring a combination of effective elements**

- The value of a combination of elements cannot be overstated. In the HAP projects critical enablers of success were based on the combination of: case management; flexible brokerage funding; an individual client focus; and service integration.

#### **Continuing to ensure brokerage funding is housing focused but not housing constrained**

- Flexible brokerage funding has been found to be a critical component of an effective service response to meet the needs of people at risk of homelessness. In order to ensure the optimum impact, brokerage funding should remain housing focused but not housing constrained.

#### **Ensuring early referrals and improvements in referral pathways**

- Early intervention and service planning tasks could be strengthened by earlier referrals to the services, particularly in the case of institutional exits. Literature has demonstrated that early referrals are an important component of effective exit planning and allow time to secure accommodation and referrals to necessary services. This will help ensure clients are supported through the risky transition periods after leaving custody and help facilitate their settlement into the community. For some, this can be successful in breaking the long term cycles of homelessness and offending.
- Partnerships between mainstream services could be strengthened in order to specifically identify at risk individuals, for example partnerships with education and training institutions to identify at risk individuals in their early years of study.

#### **Ensuring the appropriate location of housing and support services**

- The Youth Hub project experienced challenges associated with the location of the campus in a low socio-economic area, including poor personal safety, limited access to public transport, and distance from major job markets and educational

opportunities. Consideration should be given to the location of housing and support services to ensure their appropriateness and accessibility for clients.

### **Extending the support period for Aboriginal clients**

- A key strength of the models is their flexibility, particularly in responding to client's changing needs over time. Although it is anticipated that client needs will become less intense over time as case plans progressed, there was also capacity to increase intensity when needed. The time limits on support, however, meant that clients with ongoing needs which last longer than a 12 month period could be denied essential support. Research has demonstrated that some clients, particularly Aboriginal clients, require longer engagement timeframes and have ongoing support needs that would benefit from support beyond a 12 month period in order to maintain their tenancy and stay safe.

### **Maintaining and strengthen opportunities for service integration**

- Service integration and collaboration can have significant benefits for clients. These include increasing organisations' knowledge about issues affecting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through information sharing, generating new ideas through collaborative problem solving, ensuring a consistent response, and increasing accountability through regular meetings. Such benefits have positive outcomes for clients and are likely to lead to more effective service provision. Coordination groups and a coordinator position can play a vital role in driving the project and facilitating relationships between a broad range of organisations. Time is needed to build trust, particularly where agencies have not worked well together or have had issues in the past and this is reflected in the literature on effective integration.

### **Minimising financial and other administrative burdens**

- Financial and other administrative burdens between the auspice agency and service providers would benefit from streamlining in order to minimise onerous paperwork and improved planning.

### **Harnessing opportunities to increase access to affordable housing**

- A significant challenge encountered by the majority of projects was accessing housing in a context where there is insufficient appropriate and affordable housing stock. Access to affordable, safe and well-located housing is a critical enabler of success. Future projects would benefit from robust mechanisms to access suitable housing, including for example:
  - Use of head lease arrangements whereby providers manage the initial tenancy obligations associated with a property until a tenant has demonstrated the necessary skills to sustain a tenancy themselves, when the tenancy obligations could be handed over for the longer term.
  - Relationship building with real estate agents to enable clients to access private rental accommodation, including accessing vacant holiday home properties for short and medium term lets.

### **Linking people exiting correction services to workers not linked to the justice system**

- In projects focused on exiting institutions, clients with histories of offending valued having workers from a service which was not linked with the justice system. For adults leaving custody, this was a strong factor in developing trust and a feeling of safety with caseworkers. In NSW there has been a high level of Government investment in the establishment of Community Offender Support Programs, which were funded under the Homelessness Action Plan. The importance of linking

people exiting correctional services to workers who are not linked with the justice system is an important implication for future planning.

## **5.4 Implications for future implementation**

Findings from the summary of HAP project evaluations have identified the following implications to inform future implementation of homelessness services:

### **Ensuring projects start on time and at full staffing capacity**

- Projects with delayed start times experienced increased pressures to deliver outcomes in shorter time frames, meaning intake processes were curtailed. Some projects experienced difficulties in recruiting the full complement of appropriately qualified and skilled staff.

### **Developing of common intake, assessment and support planning processes**

- Decisions regarding support for clients can be made in a more considered and holistic way if done collectively, using multi-disciplinary teams. For this to effectively occur requires agreed common intake, assessment and support planning processes. Coordination groups bring together all mainstream, specialist and generalist services to provide an integrated response to homelessness.

### **Integrated case management is effective**

- Case management should be holistic, flexible, strengths based, client focused and reflect client needs. The relationship between the client and the case worker is key.

### **Support from legal services**

- Support from legal services can achieve rapid and successful outcomes for clients, for example through assisting clients to address debts and other outstanding issues.

### **Creating opportunities for local adaptation of models**

- Local control to enable flexible application of project resources is a highly effective means of meeting client needs. Sustainable housing for the target group is supported by addressing a holistic range of client needs and homeless programs must therefore be able to select the best match of service provider to the client, and spend resources on non-housing items or support services.

## **5.5 Implications for future evaluations**

Findings from the summary of HAP project evaluations have identified the following implications to inform future evaluations of homelessness services:

### **Replicating the multi-tiered evaluation strategy ensures breadth and depth of evidence**

- The three tier evaluation strategy based on extended evaluations, self-evaluation templates and meta-analysis of evaluation material represents an innovative approach. The consistent findings across the multiple evaluation approaches indicate that the HAP Evaluation Strategy has produced a solid and consistent evidence base, notwithstanding some of the limitations in the data.

### **Ensuring consistent and reliable data collection and reporting**

- The evaluation materials highlighted a number of challenges related to HAP data collection and reporting. There are clear opportunities to reform these processes in future projects, particularly in terms of gathering client demographic profile data



and information about client input, output and outcome reporting over different time intervals.

- Future evaluations need to monitor client and service outcomes. This would involve defining outcomes and indicators to enable tracking of client outcomes and service utilisation over time. This could enable closer scrutiny of costings and potential cost effectiveness and the potential contribution of the service investment in overall system savings. This could include the establishment of quality benchmarks and indicators which will allow for small positive changes to be captured (e.g. increased employment rates, self-reported increases in capacity and self-esteem), and will enable providers and funders to measure performance.
- The collection of good baseline data cannot be underestimated in order to measure distance travelled for individual clients and to develop an understanding of the life histories and therefore pathways and risk factors associated with those at risk of homelessness. Examples include the age of first experience of homelessness, parental responsibilities etc.
- A longer duration of projects would allow for the capture of longer term outcomes over time in order to determine distance travelled, whether benefits are sustained and to assess overall cost savings to the system. For example, evaluations of the exiting institutions projects were indicative of reduced re-offending and possibly reduced re-incarceration, which can only be confirmed through longer term analysis of data. Alternatively the sustaining tenancies service model provides 16 weeks of support, whereas it would be beneficial to determine whether tenancies are sustained in the longer term. With the existing evidence, it is difficult to assess whether each project has led to sustainable housing and broader outcomes for clients outside of the project timeframe. Whilst specific strategies would need to be implemented to increase the likelihood of relevant data being collected, particularly given the difficulties in contacting clients when they cease involvement with a project, this type of information would provide strong evidence.
- Any future data collection should include the development of clear understanding and agreement with service providers about the specific qualitative and quantitative data to be collected and take into account the feasibility of data collection, the systems for collecting and reporting the data to ensure its integrity, and overlap with any other internal and external reporting requirements, for example SHIP for specialist homelessness services.
- Explicit financial reporting requirements should be agreed upon in order to ensure that appropriate cost data are collected.
- Notwithstanding the challenges associated with analysis cost effectiveness, inclusion of effective cost analysis in future evaluations requires a clear process for data collection related to costs, consistency in data recording across projects, and identification of outcomes to be measured.

#### **Gathering information about the experiences of individuals not successful in the projects**

- It was beyond the scope of the evaluations to seek the views of clients who had not been successful in the various projects or who had chosen not to take up the offer of referral to a project. Further research with these individuals may provide additional evidence about the changes which would be required to improve their chances of successful transition to stable accommodation.

**Sharing good practice examples in order to ensure continued sector capacity building**

- Information sharing forums, the development of toolkits, and showcasing of good practice principles and examples can assist in ensuring continued development and capacity building in the sector.

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## APPENDIX 1

The 40 projects included in the summary of self-evaluation reports include six categories of projects:

Projects marked \* are not included in quantitative analysis

### **1. Street to home initiatives for chronically homeless people (rough sleepers):**

- Way2Home: Coordination of Assertive Outreach and Supportive Housing, (6.4b)\*
- Newcastle Assertive Outreach Service - Reaching Home - including legal support, (6.5)
- Inner City Integrated Services Project - Housing First, (5.8a & 5.8b)
- Aboriginal Assertive Outreach Service (6.7)

### **2. Support for people to sustain their tenancies:**

- Tenancy Support - Mid North Coast and Richmond/ Tweed (1.5a & 1.5b)
- Aboriginal Advocacy and Tenancy Support Service (1.7)
- Early intervention support for people at risk of homelessness (1.8)
- Early intervention in Sustaining Tenancies (1.9)

### **3. Assistance for people leaving child protection services, correctional and health facilities to access and maintain stable, affordable housing:**

- Young people leaving care support service (2.22)
- Assisting Aboriginal Young People Leaving Care, (2.11)
- Coordinated exit planning from emergency departments (2.7)\*
- Targeted Housing and Support for women exiting prisons (2.8)
- People refused bail on basis of homelessness (2.9)
- Sustaining tenancies following exits from correctional facilities, (2.10)
- Juniperina Shared Access Project (2.14)
- Support for people at risk of, or who are, homeless, with mental health issues (2.2)\*
- Young People exiting Juvenile Justice Centres at risk of entering/ re - entering custody in the North Coast (2.21)
- Young people in contact with the Juvenile Justice system who are homeless - South Western Sydney (2.19)
- Young People Exiting Juvenile Justice Centres - Riverina Murray (2.24)
- Linkages for people with mental illness - New England and North West (2.23)

### **4. Support to assist young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness:**

- Youth hub project incorporating Foyer model and outreach support, (3.15a)
- Inner City Youth at Risk (ICYAR), (8.6)\*
- Foyer Model – Young People in Illawarra (3.15b)
- Sydney Inner City Drift (6.8)

- Rural interagency homelessness project for people with complex needs - Riverina Murray and New England (including Legal Support) (5.6a&c and 5.6b);
- 5. Support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence to stay in their present housing where it is safe to do so:**
- Long - term accommodation and support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence (Western Sydney, 3.12 and Illawarra 3.13a and Hunter, 3.13b).
- 6. Assistance for homeless people, including families with children, to stabilise their situation and to achieve sustainable housing:**
- Central Coast Homeless Family Brokerage Project (1.6)
- NCAP - North Coast Accommodation Project (including legal support) (5.9b)
- Boarding House Outreach Project (8.9)
- North West Aboriginal Specialist Homelessness Services Project (7.8)
- Community Connections – South East NSW (including Legal Aid Component) (5.10)
- Intensive case management support for single men with complex needs, Western NSW (8.7)
- Project 40 (3.16)
- Young Aboriginal Parents Project (8.8)

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute  
Research Synthesis Service

Level 1 114 Flinders Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000

Phone +61 3 9660 2300 Fax +61 3 9663 5488

Email [information@ahuri.edu.au](mailto:information@ahuri.edu.au) Web [www.ahuri.edu.au](http://www.ahuri.edu.au)