

SAAP NDCA REPORT SERIES 10

Homeless people in SAAP

**SAAP National Data Collection
Annual Report
2004–05**

Australia

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Canberra

AIHW cat. no. HOU 132

Please note that as with all statistical reports there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report over time. Please refer to the online version at <www.aihw.gov.au>.

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Preface

This is the ninth annual report on the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection. The first report, containing 1996–97 data, was published in December 1997. The reports provide information on people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

A productive and cooperative partnership has continued between the SAAP National Data Collection Agency (managed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare), SAAP agencies and the SAAP Information Subcommittee. Valuable support and encouragement have been provided by the SAAP Coordination and Development Committee, which is responsible for the national direction of SAAP.

This partnership has been built on shared goals and mutual trust. The key has been agencies' willingness to collect and provide data to the National Data Collection Agency, knowing that any personal information provided by clients is protected by the extremely strict confidentiality provisions of the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*.

The fact that 93% of agencies in Australia provided data in 2004–05 is testimony to their collective commitment to, and confidence in, the collection. A 93% participation rate was also recorded in 2003–04. The proportion of SAAP clients who consented to the provision of their personal data to the National Data Collection Agency decreased slightly from 90% in 2003–04 to 89% in 2004–05.

This large and complex project has not only a high level of support but also a high level of accuracy. We are confident that we can further improve the quality of the information provided to help policy makers and the community better understand and provide for the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of being so.

Under the Coordination and Development Committee's direction, a SAAP National Research Program has been established to undertake and fund studies on homeless people, often using data from the National Data Collection. Each year, the National Data Collection Agency receives many requests for data used for research purposes.

Richard Madden

Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

SAAP Coordination and
Development Committee

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The SAAP Information Subcommittee (comprising government, community and expert representatives) and the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services provided valuable support and comments throughout the development and drafting of the report. The authors also acknowledge the assistance provided by Ainsley Morrissey and Cecilia Burke in preparing the report for publication.

Finally, the authors acknowledge the vital role played by data providers. This report draws together a large amount of statistical material and could not have been produced without the efforts and cooperation of SAAP service providers and clients, who provided service and client information, and of the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services and state and territory funding departments, which provided administrative data.

Abbreviations and symbols

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CAP	Crisis Accommodation Program
DV	Domestic violence
NDC	National Data Collection
NDCA	National Data Collection Agency
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

Symbols in tables

..	Not applicable
–	Nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)
n.a.	Not available
n.e.s.	Not elsewhere specified

Glossary

Accommodation period	The period during which a <i>client</i> was in SAAP <i>supported accommodation</i> . A client may have no accommodation periods or one or more accommodation periods within a <i>support period</i> . The dates on which each accommodation period began and ended during the support period are collected for clients but not for accompanying children. However, it can be reasonably assumed that an <i>accompanying child</i> will have the same accommodation period start and end dates as their parent(s) or guardian(s) in the majority of cases.
Accompanying child	A person aged under 18 years who accompanies a <i>client</i> to a SAAP <i>agency</i> during a <i>support period</i> or who requires and/or receives assistance from a SAAP agency as a result of his or her parent or guardian being a client of the same agency. An accompanying child may or may not require or receive assistance.
Accompanying child support period	<p>Each <i>support period</i> in which the child either accompanies a parent or guardian to a SAAP <i>agency</i> or receives assistance as a result of a parent or guardian's support period.</p> <p>Within an accompanying child support period the child may receive one-off assistance and/or support over a period of time. Since the child may not be supported for the entire duration of a parent's or guardian's support period, it is not possible to assess the exact length of support for an <i>accompanying child</i>.</p>
Agency	An organisation or establishment that receives a specified amount of SAAP funds to provide services.
Alpha code	A predetermined combination of letters from a client's name, together with a letter designating the client's sex. A 'valid alpha code' is an alpha code that is given with consent, and contains only letters from the alphabet and ends in either M or F to indicate the client's sex. This is joined to the client's reported year of birth and then encrypted to create a unique <i>client</i> indicator, or <i>statistical linkage key</i> . The statistical linkage key allows data forms about the same client to be combined without the actual name of the client being recorded.

Client	<p>A person aged 18 years or older, or a person of any age not accompanied by a parent or guardian, who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receives <i>support</i> or assistance from a SAAP <i>agency</i> which entails generally 1 hour or more of a worker’s time, either with that <i>client</i> directly or on behalf of that client, on a given day; or • is accommodated by a SAAP agency; or • enters into an <i>ongoing support relationship</i> with a SAAP agency.
Closed accompanying child support period	<p>An <i>accompanying child support period</i> associated with a <i>closed support period</i>.</p>
Closed support period	<p>A <i>support period</i> that had finished on or before the end of the reporting period – 30 June.</p>
English proficiency group 1 countries	<p>Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.</p>
English proficiency group 2–4 countries	<p>Countries, excluding Australia, that are not included in <i>English proficiency group 1</i>.</p>
Homeless person	<p>A person who does not have access to safe, secure and adequate housing. A person is considered not to have access to safe, secure and adequate housing if the only housing to which they have access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • damages, or is likely to damage, their health; or • threatens their safety; or • marginalises them through failing to provide access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – adequate personal amenities, or – the economic and social supports that a home normally affords; or • places them in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing; or • has no security of tenure – that is, they have no legal right to continued occupation of their home. <p>A person is also considered homeless if he or she is living in accommodation provided by a SAAP <i>agency</i> or some other form of emergency accommodation.</p>

Ongoing support relationship

An ongoing support relationship exists between a SAAP *agency* and a person if some assistance has been provided to that person, and it is expected that future contact will occur between the person and the agency for the purpose of providing additional assistance. Future contact can be assumed if:

- a definite appointment has been made with the person to work through particular problems/issues; or
- an agreement has been reached with the person to work through particular problems/issues even if a specific appointment has not been made; or
- the agency expects the client to return for more assistance within a month.

However, an invitation to return to the agency in the future if the need arises does not constitute an ongoing support relationship. Rather it should simply be seen as an offer to enter into a new *support period* or to provide assistance at some future time.

Recurrent allocations

Amounts of money specifically allocated during the reporting period by a state or territory department either:

- to SAAP *agencies* to fund salaries and associated on-costs, and ongoing operating costs; or
- for use by each state or territory for such purposes as training, research, evaluation, administration, and asset replacement or purchase.

Referral

For the purposes of the National Data Collection, a referral involves a formal process – not simply the provision of information. A (formal) *referral* occurs when a SAAP *agency* contacts another organisation and that organisation accepts the person concerned for an appointment or interview. A *referral* has not been provided if the person is not accepted for an appointment or interview.

Statistical linkage key (SLK)

A statistical linkage key (SLK) is a derived variable used to link, for statistical purposes, data generated from elements of an individual's personal demographic data. The SAAP SLK comprises the *alpha code* and year of birth.

Support

Assistance, other than *supported accommodation*, provided to a *client* as part of an *ongoing support relationship* between a SAAP *agency* and the *client*. For the purposes of the National Data Collection, support also includes contact with, or work on behalf of, a client for generally more than 1 hour on a given day. Support may be provided to the client individually or in group sessions.

Support period

Commences when a *client* begins to receive *support* and/or *supported accommodation* from a SAAP *agency*. The support period is considered to finish when:

- the client ends the relationship with the agency; or
- the agency ends the relationship with the client.

If it is not clear whether the agency or the client has ended the relationship, the support period is assumed to have ended if no assistance has been provided to the client for a period of 1 month. In such a case, the date the support period ended is one month after the last contact with the client.

Supported accommodation

Accommodation paid for or provided directly by a SAAP *agency*. The accommodation may be provided at the agency or may be purchased using SAAP funds – at a motel, for example.

Unmet need

An unmet need occurs when a *client* expresses a need for a particular support service, or either directly or indirectly acknowledges a need for a particular support service during their *support period*, and that service is not provided or referred.

Young client (or young person)

A *client* aged under 25 years at the commencement of *support*.

Summary

This report provides an overview of assistance given to clients and their children by the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The SAAP National Data Collection Agency at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) prepared the report, using data from the Client Collection and the Administrative Data Collection.

The AIHW has developed a scheme that adjusts for incomplete coverage in the Client Collection. It adjusts estimates to allow for (1) agency non-participation, (2) clients who do not consent to provide complete information for support periods, (3) clients who give valid consent for some support periods but not for others, and (4) clients who do not give consent in any of their periods of support. Note, however, that, although estimates are adjusted for agency non-participation and client non-consent, no allowance has been made for agencies that provide forms for some but not all of their support periods. The AIHW has also developed a scheme that adjusts for incomplete coverage of accompanying children.

This national report is accompanied by state and territory supplements, which contain more detailed tables than those in the national report. A further report, *Demand for SAAP Assistance by Homeless People 2004–05*, includes coverage of the unmet needs of clients, unmet demand for accommodation and, casual client information gathered in the 2004–05 reporting year. It is due to be published in 2006.

Funding (Chapter 2)

Funding for the 1,294 SAAP agencies operating across Australia during 2004–05 was provided jointly by the Australian Government and the state and territory governments (Table 2.1). For the 2004–05 financial year, the total recurrent allocation under SAAP was \$331.8m. Included in this amount are recurrent allocations of \$21.9 m provided by four jurisdictions in addition to the funding agreements between the Australian Government and each state and territory government. Recurrent funding directly to agencies was \$319.8m (Table 9.1); in real terms, this was 26% more than the funding provided in 1996–97.

Level of support (Chapter 3)

When clients and the children accompanying them are considered together, it is estimated that 1 in every 128 Australians received substantial SAAP support at some time during 2004–05 (Chapter 3). More specifically, SAAP agencies supported an estimated 157,200 people during 2004–05. Of these, 100,400 were adults or unaccompanied children (clients) and 56,800 were accompanying children (Tables 3.1 and 3.2).

Clients were provided with 173,100 occasions of support during 2004–05 (Table 3.1). The average number of support periods per client was 1.7. On average there were between 21,900 and 24,900 support periods active on any day during 2004–05 (Table 3.3).

There were 78,500 accompanying child support periods in 2004–05, with accompanying children averaging 1.4 support periods each (Table 3.2). On average, there were approximately 13,900 accompanying child support periods active each day (Table 9.3).

Age, gender, and cultural and linguistic diversity (Chapter 4)

There were more female clients (59,400) than male clients (40,400) (Table 4.1). The average age of female clients was 31 years and the average for male clients was 34 years. Most SAAP clients (86%) were born in Australia (Table 4.5). However, Indigenous clients were over-represented as SAAP clients relative to their population size: 2% of Australians aged 10 years or over were estimated to be Indigenous Australians in June 2003, but Indigenous Australians made up 16% of SAAP clients in 2004–05 (Table 4.7).

Repeat use of SAAP services was slightly less likely among female clients than male clients: males averaged 1.8 support periods each whereas females averaged 1.7 (Table 4.3). There were also some differences in repeat usage within age groups: males aged 45–64 years had the highest average number of support periods (1.9), and females aged under 15 years and those aged over 65 years had the lowest average of 1.4 support periods per client. On average, other Australian-born clients had more support periods each (1.8) than other clients (Table 4.7).

The rates of people accessing SAAP services also varied by gender and age (Table 4.3). Overall, females were more likely to use SAAP services than males: there were 67 female clients for every 10,000 females aged 10 years and over in the general population and 47 male clients per 10,000 males. Females were also more likely to use SAAP services across all the younger age groups, with 18–19-year-old females having the highest rate of all (179 female clients per 10,000 females aged 10 years and over). However, this changed between the ages of 45–64 years where the rates became equal and from the age of 65 years onwards males were more likely to become SAAP clients than females.

Of accompanying children, 87% were 12 years of age or under and just under 10% were aged 13–15 years (Table 4.2). Accompanying children were divided evenly between girls and boys. Most accompanying children (95%) were born in Australia (Table 4.6). For every 10,000 children aged 0–17 years in the general population, 118 children accompanied their parent(s) or guardian(s) to a SAAP agency. The highest rate of use was for 0–4-year-olds, with 198 children per 10,000 children in this age group accompanying a SAAP client. This equates to around 1 in every 51 children aged 0–4 years in the general population. The next highest rate of SAAP use by accompanying children was by 5–12-year-olds (111 per 10,000).

Client groups and reasons for seeking assistance (Chapter 5)

Nationally, males aged 25 years and over presenting alone at SAAP agencies accounted for the largest proportion of all support periods (27%), followed by 24% for female clients with children (Table 5.1). Overall, 7% of support periods were for couples with or without children, and males with children accounted for 2% of all support periods.

The most common main reasons clients gave for seeking assistance were domestic violence (in 21% of support periods), financial difficulty (12%), usual accommodation unavailable (11%), eviction or the ending of previous accommodation (10%), and relationship or family breakdown (9%) (Figure 5.2). Reasons varied considerably according to the composition of the assisted client group: for example, unaccompanied males aged 25 years and over most commonly cited financial difficulty (17%), drug, alcohol or substance abuse (14%) or that their usual accommodation was unavailable (14%) as their main reason for seeking assistance. For females with children and unaccompanied females aged 25 years and over, the most common main reason was domestic violence (49% and 40% respectively).

Length of support and accommodation (Chapter 6)

Of the 173,100 support periods in 2004–05, around 153,900 finished before 30 June 2004 (Table 6.1). Of these closed support periods, 31% lasted for 1 day or less, and a further 17% lasted from 2 to 7 days (Table 6.1). A significant proportion (19%) of closed support periods lasted from 1 to 3 months. This pattern was not consistent across the states and territories. For example, 35% of closed support periods in Victoria lasted less than 1 day and 16% were for more than 3 months. In contrast, in the Australian Capital Territory only 3% of closed support periods were less than 1 day, and 24% lasted longer than 3 months. Tasmania had the longest median length of support, at 38 days, and Western Australia the shortest, at 6 days.

Of the 153,900 closed support periods, around 76,000 involved a period of accommodation at a SAAP agency (Chapter 6). Around 6,100 of these involved total accommodation of less than 1 day and 65,800 involved accommodation of 1 day or longer. In 17% of these latter closed support periods, the accommodation was for 1 day only, in 30% it was for 2–7 days, and in 25% clients were accommodated for 1–4 weeks. Just under 17% of closed support periods during which accommodation lasted for 1 day or more were 1–3 months in duration and 12% lasted for longer than 3 months. Couples with children and males with children were accommodated for longer than other clients (median length of accommodation of 69 days and 48 days, respectively, compared with a median of 9 days for all client groups).

Support provided to clients and accompanying children (Chapters 6 and 7)

The services commonly provided to clients varied markedly according to the person or group being assisted, because of their varying needs. However, the three broad types of support services most often provided during 2004–05 were general support and advocacy (in 75% of all support periods), housing and accommodation services (64%), and basic support services (56%) (Table 6.4). SAAP or CAP (Crisis Accommodation Program) accommodation was the main form of housing or accommodation assistance provided (provided in 50% of support periods).

The three broad types of services most commonly provided to accompanying children were accommodation, basic support services and general support or advocacy – provided in 67%, 63% and 39% of accompanying child support periods, respectively (Table 6.5).

Meeting the needs of clients and accompanying children (Chapter 7)

After a client has finished receiving support, it is possible to review which needs were or were not met during that support period. On average, clients requested approximately 6 different types of services during a support period (derived from Table 7.3, Part b). Note that the number of times a service was requested, provided or referred is not collected, only that the service was requested, provided or referred sometime during the client's support. SAAP agencies directly provided services for 90% of service types requested during 2004–05 (Table 7.3). In addition to this, agencies were able to refer clients to other organisations for a further 6% of requests. Consequently, 96% of the 855,800 expressed needs were met at least to some extent.

Direct provision of requested services was particularly high for basic support services such as meals and shower facilities (provided in 98% of cases), and general support and advocacy services (96%). Requests for housing or accommodation were met directly in 84% of cases. Agencies were least successful in meeting requests for specialist services. Specialist services

were provided directly in 71% of cases and a further 22% were referred, leaving 7% of such needs neither provided for nor referred to other organisations.

Overall, there were 29,000 requests for services, or 3%, that were not provided or referred by the end of support (Table 7.3). Housing and accommodation services accounted for the largest proportion of unmet needs (31%), followed by specialist services (17%) and financial or employment services (15%) (Table 7.5). Females with children had the highest number of unmet needs (6,300) and the highest number of closed support periods with unmet needs (3,200).

Agencies reported that accompanying children required some 153,300 distinct service types in 38,100 closed accompanying child support periods. On average, accompanying children received 4 different types of services in each closed accompanying child support period where services were requested (derived from Table 7.4, Part b).

Just under 94% of the services requested for accompanying children were able to be provided directly (Table 7.4, Part b). In addition to this, agencies were able to refer accompanying children for another 5% of the services they required, resulting in 150,900 of the requested services being met to some extent.

Basic support services were the group of services most often provided to accompanying children (in 98% of instances where these types of services were requested), followed by general support and advocacy (95%) and accommodation (92%). Specialist services were the least likely to be provided directly by agencies (81%) but the most likely to be referred (in 17% of requests for this service type).

Accompanying children had some needs remaining unmet after support in 1,400 closed accompanying child support periods – with around 2,400 unmet needs distributed across all service types (Tables 7.4 and 7.6). The most common unmet need involved counselling (25% of unmet needs), with basic support services and general support or advocacy services contributing 22% and 16%, respectively, to the total unmet needs (Table 7.6). Specialist services made up the lowest proportion of unmet needs for accompanying children (8% of unmet needs).

Circumstances of clients before and after support (Chapter 8)

Across all closed support periods, clients' source of income did not vary much from before to after support (Table 8.1). However, among clients who specifically requested assistance with obtaining or maintaining a government pension or benefit, the proportion of closed support periods in which clients had no income and were not awaiting a government payment fell from 16% before support to 6% after support.

Across all closed support periods, the most common accommodation types immediately before support were private rental (17%) SAAP or other emergency housing (15%), and public or community housing (14%) (Table 8.2). After support, the most common types of client accommodation were private rental (19%), public or community housing (18%) and SAAP or other emergency housing (17%).

For clients who specifically requested assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing, there were more marked changes for several accommodation types. In particular, accommodation in public or community housing more than doubled, rising from 9% of closed support periods before support to 20% after (Table 8.2). In addition, accommodation in privately rented dwellings increased from 19% before support to 27% after support.

How long a client was accommodated in SAAP or CAP accommodation had an effect on the type of accommodation clients moved into following support. Clients who were

accommodated for longer periods in SAAP or CAP accommodation were more likely to move into independent forms of housing. Following 13 weeks of accommodation, clients more often exited into public or community housing after support than into other types of accommodation. Conversely, the proportions living in a car, park, tent, street or squat after support generally decreased as the length of SAAP or CAP accommodation provided to the client increased.

The most common living situations for clients before receiving SAAP support were living alone (in 24% of closed support periods) or with their spouse or partner either with or without children (22%) (Table 8.4). After support, it was most common for clients to be living alone (in 28% of closed support periods) or alone with their children (20%).

Overall, there was little difference in the profile of clients' employment status before and after receiving support. However, for clients who specifically requested employment assistance, the proportion of closed support periods in which they were employed in some capacity more than doubled from around 9% before support to 20% after support.

Support from 1996–97 to 2004–05 (Chapter 9)

The number of support periods has fluctuated throughout the 9 years of the National Data Collection. In 1996–97 there were an estimated 156,500 support periods (Table 9.2). This increased to 164,300 in 1997–98, but dropped back over the next 2 years, returning almost to the 1996–97 level in 1999–00 (Figure 9.1). In 2000–01 there was a rise to 170,700 support periods. The number of support periods increased further in 2002–03 to 176,300 and then to 187,200 in 2003–04, before decreasing to 173,100 in 2004–05. The reasons for these variations are outlined in Chapter 9. Note that changes in reporting practices over time make year to year comparisons of support periods difficult.

The number of clients associated with those support periods has also varied over the 9 years. The highest number of clients was recorded in 2004–05 and the lowest in 1996–97 (Table 9.2). The prevalence of SAAP use in the community for the past 5 years was highest in 2003–04, with 58 SAAP clients for every 10,000 people aged 10 years and over (Table 9.4).

There are indications that the way support is being delivered in Australia has changed over the past 5 years. In particular, there was a decrease in the percentage of closed support periods in which support plans have been used. The decrease was generally steady from 62% in 2000–01 to 53% in 2004–05.

