

**Demand for SAAP assistance
by homeless people
2001–02**

**A report from the SAAP
National Data Collection**

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SAAP NDCA REPORT SERIES 7

Demand for SAAP assistance by homeless people 2001–02

A report from the SAAP National Data Collection

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Canberra

AIHW cat. no. HOU 90

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Preface

This publication is one of the Series 7 reports on the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection for 2001–02. The series provides information on people who were homeless and people who were at risk of being homeless who accessed SAAP in 2001–02. This report looks at the demand for SAAP services and the ability of agencies to meet this demand.

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 Sub-committee. Valuable support and encouragement have been provided by the SAAP Coordination and Development Committee, which is responsible for the national direction of SAAP.

The partnership is built on shared goals and mutual trust. The key is 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 SAAP agencies in Australia continue to provide data for this report is testimony to their collective commitment to, and confidence in, the collection. Statistical adjustments to annual figures have been made to account for agencies' non-participation.

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.

Richard Madden
Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

SAAP Coordination and
Development Committee

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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 Commonwealth 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
NDC	National Data Collection
NDCA	National Data Collection Agency
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SMART	SAAP Management and Reporting Tool

Symbols

..	When used in a table, means not applicable
–	When used in a table, means nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)
n.a.	Not available
n.e.s.	Not elsewhere specified

Glossary

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 <i>agency</i> as a result of their parent or guardian being a client of the same <i>agency</i> . An accompanying child may or may not require or receive assistance.
Accompanying child support period	<p>Refers to each <i>support period</i> in which a child either accompanies their parent or guardian to a SAAP <i>agency</i> or receives assistance as a result of their parent or guardian's <i>support period</i>.</p> <p>Within an <i>accompanying child support period</i> 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 the parent's or guardian's <i>support period</i>, it is not possible to assess the 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.
Birthplace	<p>The country in which a person was born. Countries are divided into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australia;• other English-speaking countries (Canada; the Republic of Ireland; New Zealand; South Africa; England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and the United States of America); and• mainly non-English speaking countries.
Casual client	<p>A person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• receives assistance from a SAAP <i>agency</i> for less than 1 hour on a given day; and• does not establish an <i>ongoing support relationship</i> with the SAAP <i>agency</i>. <p>A <i>casual client</i> may receive <i>one-off assistance</i> from a SAAP <i>agency</i> on one or more occasions.</p>
Client	<p>A person aged 18 years or more, or a person of any age not accompanied by their 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 <i>client</i>, on a given day; or• is accommodated by a SAAP <i>agency</i>; or• enters into an <i>ongoing support relationship</i> with a SAAP <i>agency</i>.
Closed accompanying child support period	An <i>accompanying child support period</i> associated with a <i>closed support period</i> .

Closed support period	A <i>support period</i> that had finished before the end of the reporting period – 30 June.
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>
Invalid unmet request for assistance	<p>An unmet request for assistance is invalid if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the request is made at an <i>agency</i> of an inappropriate target group; • the requested service is not one that is provided by the <i>agency</i>; • Proffered assistance is refused; • It is not a request for <i>substantial support or assistance</i>. <p>All other <i>unmet requests for assistance</i> are said to be valid.</p>
Occasion of support	See <i>support period</i> .
One-off assistance	Assistance provided to a person who is not a <i>client</i> . It might include the provision of a meal, a shower, transport, money, clothing, telephone advice, information or a <i>referral</i> . Instances of unmet need for one-off assistance are not recorded in the SAAP National Data Collection.

Ongoing support relationship	<p>A relationship between a SAAP <i>agency</i> and a person whereby some assistance has been provided to that person, and it is agreed that future contact will occur between the person and the <i>agency</i> for the purpose of providing additional assistance. An invitation to return to the <i>agency</i> if the need arises does not constitute an <i>ongoing support relationship</i>.</p> <p>This definition is used to establish whether a person is considered a <i>client</i> for the purposes of the National Data Collection.</p>
Potential client	<p>A person aged 18 years or more, or a person of any age not accompanied by a parent or guardian, who requests <i>support</i> or <i>supported accommodation</i> (that is, <i>substantial support or assistance</i>) from a SAAP <i>agency</i> but who is not provided with that assistance.</p> <p>People are not considered <i>potential clients</i> if their only <i>unmet requests for assistance</i> are <i>invalid</i> – that is, requests made at an agency of an inappropriate target group, if the requested service (for example, accommodation) is not one that is provided by the <i>agency</i>, or if proffered assistance is refused.</p> <p>A potential client for one SAAP <i>agency</i> may at the same time be a client of another. A potential client may receive <i>one-off assistance</i> from a SAAP <i>agency</i> after making an unmet request for <i>substantial support or assistance</i>.</p>
Record	<p>A unit of analysis. In any particular situation, it can refer to a <i>client</i>, an <i>occasion of support</i>, and so on.</p>
Referral	<p>A (formal) <i>referral</i> occurs when a SAAP <i>agency</i> contacts another <i>agency</i> (SAAP or non-SAAP) and that <i>agency</i> accepts the person concerned for an appointment or interview. A <i>referral</i> has not been provided if the person is not accepted for an appointment or interview.</p>
Substantial support or assistance	<p><i>Support</i> or <i>supported accommodation</i> provided to a <i>client</i> as part of an <i>ongoing support relationship</i> between a SAAP <i>agency</i> and the <i>client</i>.</p>
Support	<p>Assistance, other than <i>supported accommodation</i>, provided to a <i>client</i> as part of an <i>ongoing support relationship</i> between a SAAP <i>agency</i> and the <i>client</i>. <i>Support</i> also includes contact with, or work on behalf of, a client for generally more than 1 hour on a given day. <i>Support</i> may be provided to the <i>client</i> individually or in a group.</p>
Support period	<p>An occasion of <i>support</i> provided to a SAAP <i>client</i>. A <i>support period</i> commences when a <i>client</i> begins to receive <i>support</i> from a SAAP <i>agency</i>. The <i>support period</i> is considered to finish when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the <i>client</i> ends the relationship with the <i>agency</i>; or • the <i>agency</i> ends the relationship with the <i>client</i>. <p>If it is not clear whether the <i>agency</i> or the <i>client</i> has ended the relationship, the <i>support period</i> is assumed to have ended if no assistance has been provided to the <i>client</i> for 1 month. In such a case, the date the <i>support period</i> ended is 1 month after the last contact with the <i>client</i>.</p>

Supported accommodation (SAAP/CAP 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 request for assistance

An unmet request for assistance occurs when a person requests, but does not receive, *support* or *supported accommodation*; that is, the person wishes to become a *client* of a SAAP *agency* but is not accepted, or the person does not accept the *agency's* offer of *support* or *supported accommodation*.

A person whose request for *support* or *supported accommodation* cannot be fulfilled might be given *one-off assistance*. Such a person would be a *casual client*, but not a *client*, of the *agency*.

Valid unmet request for assistance

An *unmet request for assistance* is valid if:

- the request is made at an *agency* of an appropriate target group;
- the requested service is one that is provided by the *agency*;
- proffered assistance is not refused; and
- it is a request for *substantial support or assistance*.

All other unmet requests for assistance are said to be *invalid*.

Summary

In 2001-02, 1,286 non-government, community or local government organisations were funded nationally under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) (Chapter 1). This report provides information on the wide range of substantial support services provided by these agencies to people experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. An analysis of one-off or casual assistance provided by SAAP agencies on a daily basis is also included.

Additionally, the report presents information about the level of unmet need in SAAP, as agencies can not always meet all of the requests from existing SAAP clients, or any of the requests from potential clients. A major focus of this report is level of unmet demand for accommodation, as the provision of accommodation is one of the core activities of SAAP. Turn-away rates for people requesting SAAP accommodation are included in the report for the first time.

Support provided to clients

- In 2001-02 SAAP agencies provided an estimated 95,600 clients with accommodation and/or support lasting more than 1 hour. These clients received a total of 177,000 occasions of support (Table 2.1).
- In total, clients received at least 1,048,000 distinct services and were provided with more than 137,400 referrals to meet their needs (derived from Table 3.1).
- Accommodation was provided directly to clients in 110,600 support periods, with referrals to SAAP or CAP accommodation being arranged in 8,400 support periods. In addition, assistance to obtain other housing was provided in 61,200 support periods and referrals for such assistance were arranged in 20,100 support periods (derived from Table 3.1).
- Clients supported for 1 day or less were less likely to have their needs met than those supported for longer periods. Thirty-eight per cent of closed support periods were for clients supported for 1 day or less. For these clients, 12% of requested services were neither provided nor referred, compared with 5% for clients supported for more than 1 day (Table 3.2).
- Employment and training assistance was not provided or referred in 96% of requests made by clients supported for 1 day or less, compared with 18% for clients supported for more than 1 day. Assistance with obtaining or maintaining non-SAAP or non-CAP housing was not provided or referred in 37% of requests made by clients supported for less than 1 day compared with 13% for those supported for longer periods.

Unmet requests of clients

- For clients with support periods that finished between 1 July 2001 and 30 June 2002, in 93% of the 108,700 support periods where SAAP or CAP accommodation was sought the request was met. A further 3% were referred, leaving 4% of requests (3,800) unmet (Section 3.4).
- Assistance with obtaining short-term accommodation or independent housing was neither provided by the agency nor referred in 3,800 (10%) and 14,800 (33%), respectively, of closed support periods in which it was requested.

Support provided to accompanying children

- A total of 50,800 accompanying children and 68,100 accompanying child support periods were reported for 2001–02 (Table 2.1).
- SAAP or CAP accommodation was provided in 72% of accompanying child support periods, and referrals were made for such accommodation in 5% of cases. Overall, nearly 172,900 distinct services were provided to accompanying children and around 18,200 referrals were made (Table 3.3).
- Eighty-nine per cent of accompanying child support periods were for children that accompanied their mother or female guardian.

One-off assistance

The following points relate to data collected during the Casual Client Collection period, from 21 February to 6 March 2002.

- There was an estimated 32,490 casual contacts made by individuals and groups for one-off assistance. These casual contacts relate to 34,480 individuals (Table 4.1).
- On average, 2,540 individuals received some type of one-off assistance (not associated with more substantial support) from SAAP agencies on any day.
- On average, 1.9 services were provided during a casual client contact, with information and meals generally being the most common forms of one-off assistance.
- The number of casual contacts dropped considerably on weekends compared with weekdays (Table 4.3).

Unmet requests for SAAP accommodation

The following points relate to data collected during the Unmet Demand Collection period, from 22 to 28 August 2001 and from 8 to 14 May 2002.

- Around 8,020 valid unmet requests for accommodation were reported by individuals or groups (Table 5.1). The most common reason for unmet requests was that insufficient accommodation was available – in 84% of valid unmet requests (Table 5.1).
- On any day, there was an average of 573 valid unmet requests for accommodation by individuals and groups (Table 5.2). Around 62% (357) of these requests were for accommodation required within 24 hours. Referrals to other accommodation services were arranged following 138 valid unmet requests (Table 5.4).
- Of the 573 valid unmet requests for accommodation, 198 (35%) were made by individuals or couples with children.
- Information and referrals for accommodation were the most common forms of one-off assistance received by people with unmet requests for SAAP assistance (Table 4.4).

Number of people making unmet requests for SAAP accommodation

On a daily basis, some people made more than one valid unmet request for accommodation during the Unmet Demand Collection period, from 22 to 28 August 2001 and from 8 to 14 May 2002. This section refers to the number of people making those requests.

- On an average daily basis, there was a total of 949 people (567 potential clients and 383 accompanying children) with unmet requests for accommodation (Table 6.1). Of these

people, 344 potential clients and 202 accompanying children had unmet requests for immediate accommodation.

- People who were born in Australia or in other English-speaking countries were more likely to require accommodation within 24 hours (54% and 58%, respectively). People from non-English speaking countries were more likely to require accommodation after 24 hours (63%) (Table 6.3).

Meeting the demand for accommodation: turn-away rates

The following points relate to data collected during the Unmet Demand Collection period, from 22 to 28 August 2001 and 8 to 14 May 2002. Data refer to the number of individual adults or unaccompanied children turned away on an average daily basis rather than requests. Accompanying child data are not included.

- Of the 570 people making requests for immediate SAAP accommodation on an average daily basis, 55% (315) were turned away without being accommodated (Table 7.1).
- Of all people continuing their accommodation or requesting immediate accommodation on a daily basis (7,825), the turn-away rate for those who could not be accommodated by the end of the day was 4% (Table 7.3).
- An average of 247 clients left their SAAP or CAP accommodation and 255 clients started their accommodation each day. An average of 7,255 people continued their accommodation (Table 7.5).
- The number of clients either ending or starting their SAAP or CAP accommodation and the number of people with unmet requests for accommodation were at their lowest on weekends. In contrast, the number of clients continuing their accommodation increased on weekends.

