

7 Meeting the demand for accommodation

As noted in Chapter 6, some of the potential clients with valid unmet requests for SAAP accommodation might subsequently receive accommodation from another SAAP agency on the same day as making a request. The Met Demand Collection was introduced in 2001–02 in order to distinguish between people with unmet requests who could not be accommodated at all and people with unmet requests who eventually found SAAP accommodation by the end of each day of the Unmet Demand Collection period (22 to 23 August 2001 and 8 to 14 May 2002). Such information is essential for the calculation of turn-away rates.

This chapter provides two turn-away rates to assess whether there is sufficient SAAP accommodation to meet demand. First, the turn-away rate for daily requests gives the average daily percentage of people who cannot be accommodated relative to all people making a valid request for immediate SAAP accommodation on a particular day during the collection period.

Second, the turn-away rate for total demand for accommodation gives the average daily percentage of people who cannot be accommodated relative to all people making requests for SAAP accommodation, and who are continuing their accommodation from the previous day. Daily patterns are also discussed, with the second turn-away rate examined for each day of the Unmet Demand Collection period.

The data presented in this chapter will be underestimates because agencies must participate in all 3 collections – the Client, Unmet Demand and Met Demand Collections – to allow for the calculation of turn-away rates. In addition, turn-away rates are provided for adults or unaccompanied children. Turn-away rates for accompanying children cannot be given because daily information on accompanying children is not collected in the Client Collection.

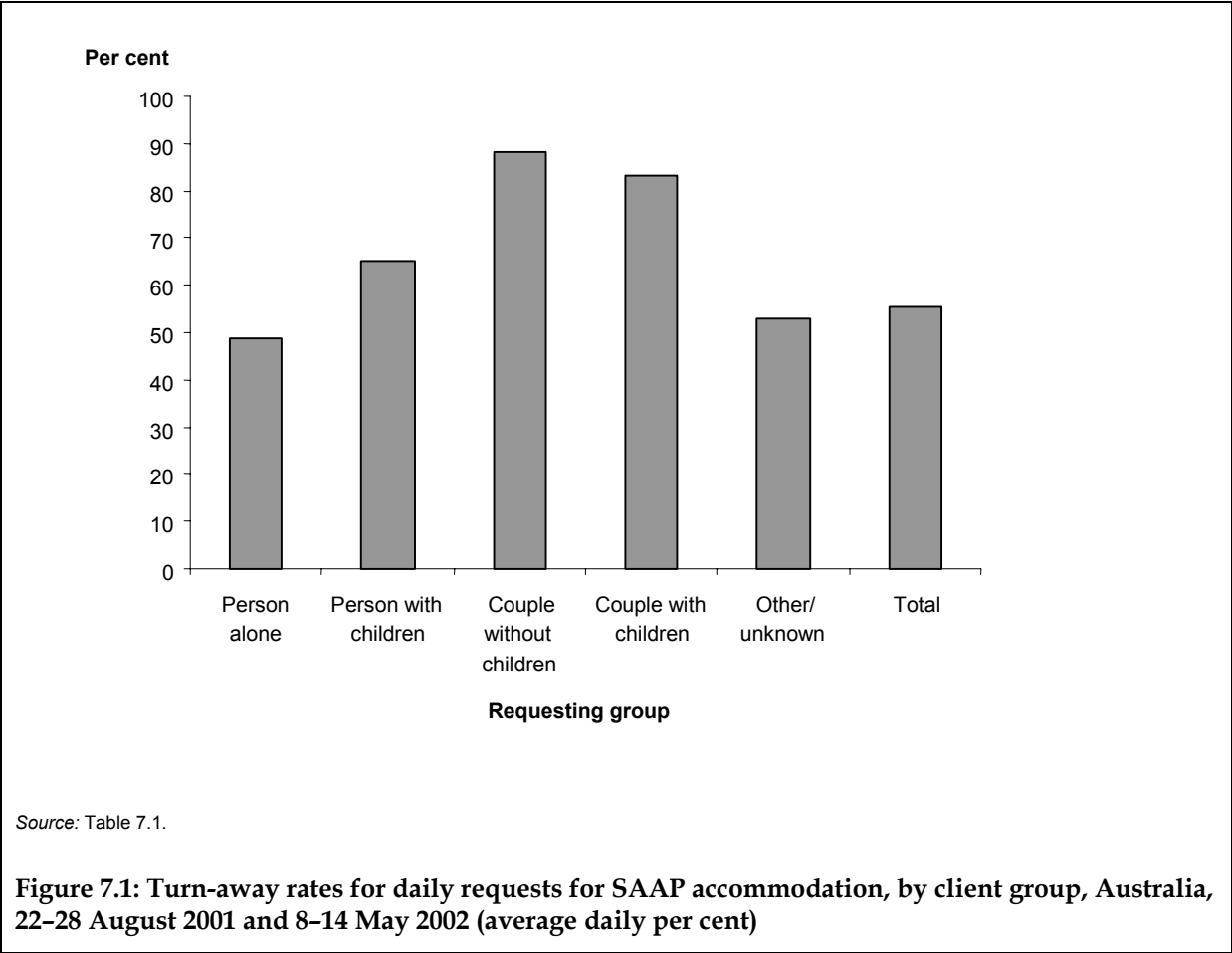
7.1 The turn-away rate for daily requests

Table 7.1 shows the number of people requesting SAAP accommodation on a daily basis, and the percentage of people turned away without being accommodated. On average, of the 570 people requesting immediate accommodation, 55% (315) were unable to be accommodated by the end of the day. Data from Chapter 5 show that the most likely reason for this was that there was insufficient accommodation at the SAAP agency in question.

Only 29 people obtained SAAP accommodation after making an unsuccessful attempt(s) earlier in the day. The remaining 226 people obtained SAAP accommodation on their first attempt. These newly accommodated clients may have come from a variety of sources – for example, supported clients being newly accommodated, clients of one SAAP agency being referred to another for accommodation; potential clients taking up referrals arranged on a previous day, people referred by special referral centres, and people approaching a SAAP agency directly for the first time.

The turn-away rates for different requesting groups suggest that, overall, SAAP is more able to provide accommodation for people who present on their own: these people had the lowest daily turn-away rate (49%) (Figure 7.1). Although they represented only a small proportion of the total number of people requesting accommodation, couples with and without children

had by far the greatest difficulty obtaining SAAP accommodation: 80% of couples without children were turned away at the end of each day, and 83% of couples with children were turned away. Sixty-five per cent of individuals presenting with children were turned away.



On a state and territory basis, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria had the highest average daily turn-away rates for people requesting SAAP accommodation (73% and 72% respectively) (Table 7.2). New South Wales and the Northern Territory were the only jurisdictions where the number of people who were successful in obtaining accommodation on an average day was higher than the number of people who could not be accommodated. Their turn-away rates were therefore the lowest, at 49% and 40% respectively.

7.2 The turn-away rate for total demand for accommodation

The analysis in Section 7.1 shows that obtaining SAAP accommodation can be difficult, with 55% of average daily requests for immediate accommodation left unmet at the end of the day. The second turn-away rate discussed here examines this level of unmet demand for accommodation in relation to SAAP’s overall capacity to provide that accommodation.

Table 7.3 shows that on a national basis SAAP agencies are operating to capacity, with the total demand for SAAP accommodation unable to be completely met. On an average day

during the Unmet Demand Collection period, 7,825 people either requested SAAP accommodation or were continuing their accommodation. Of this total:

- 315 people made a valid unmet request for immediate accommodation and did not obtain SAAP accommodation by the end of the day;
- 255 were newly accommodated; and
- 7,255 were continuing their accommodation from the previous day and into the next day.

This gives a total demand for accommodation turn-away rate of 4%. That is, 315 people out of 7,825 were unable to be accommodated.

People requesting accommodation on a daily basis made up only 7% of the total daily demand for accommodation, with 3% obtaining accommodation and 4% being turned away. This suggests that a 4% increase in bed capacity could satisfy reported unmet demand for accommodation, although this assumes that all those who need SAAP accommodation are currently approaching SAAP agencies and that demand is consistent across geographical locations and target groups. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that this is not the case.

The large number of homeless people enumerated in the 1996 Census (only a small proportion of whom were accommodated in SAAP – see Chapter 1) suggests a significant level of hidden need. The low percentage of new requests for SAAP accommodation on a daily basis suggests that people in need of accommodation may not be approaching SAAP agencies because they are aware of the difficulty of obtaining SAAP accommodation.

That the number of valid unmet requests for immediate accommodation is not considerably larger than the number of people seeking such accommodation suggests that people seeking SAAP accommodation do not make repeated attempts if they fail initially. In fact, Tables 5.3 and 6.1 suggest that few potential clients seeking immediate accommodation make more than one attempt at appropriate SAAP agencies (requests made by individuals [326.4] divided by the number of individuals [293.3] = 1.11).⁶

Furthermore, the difficulty of obtaining a referral once a person has not been successful – each day, on average, only 138 referrals for accommodation were arranged for 357 unmet requests for immediate accommodation – may be telling many potential clients that SAAP accommodation is difficult to obtain and that trying at another agency is unlikely to prove successful on that day (Table 5.4). They might, however, try again on subsequent days.

Turn-away rates varied across presenting groups and states and territories, indicating that the demand for accommodation is not uniform across the country. As with the first turn-away rate, people presenting alone had the lowest overall turn-away rate (4%). People presenting with children also had a 4% turn-away rate, and couples with children had a rate of 5%. Couples presenting without children had the highest overall turn-away rate (13%).

On a state and territory basis, South Australia had the lowest overall turn-away rate (2%); it was followed by New South Wales (3%) (Table 7.4). Victoria and the Northern Territory both had a rate of 4%, Western Australia had a rate of 5%, and Queensland and Tasmania both had a rate of 6%. The Australian Capital Territory had the highest turn-away rate of all the States and Territories at 7%.

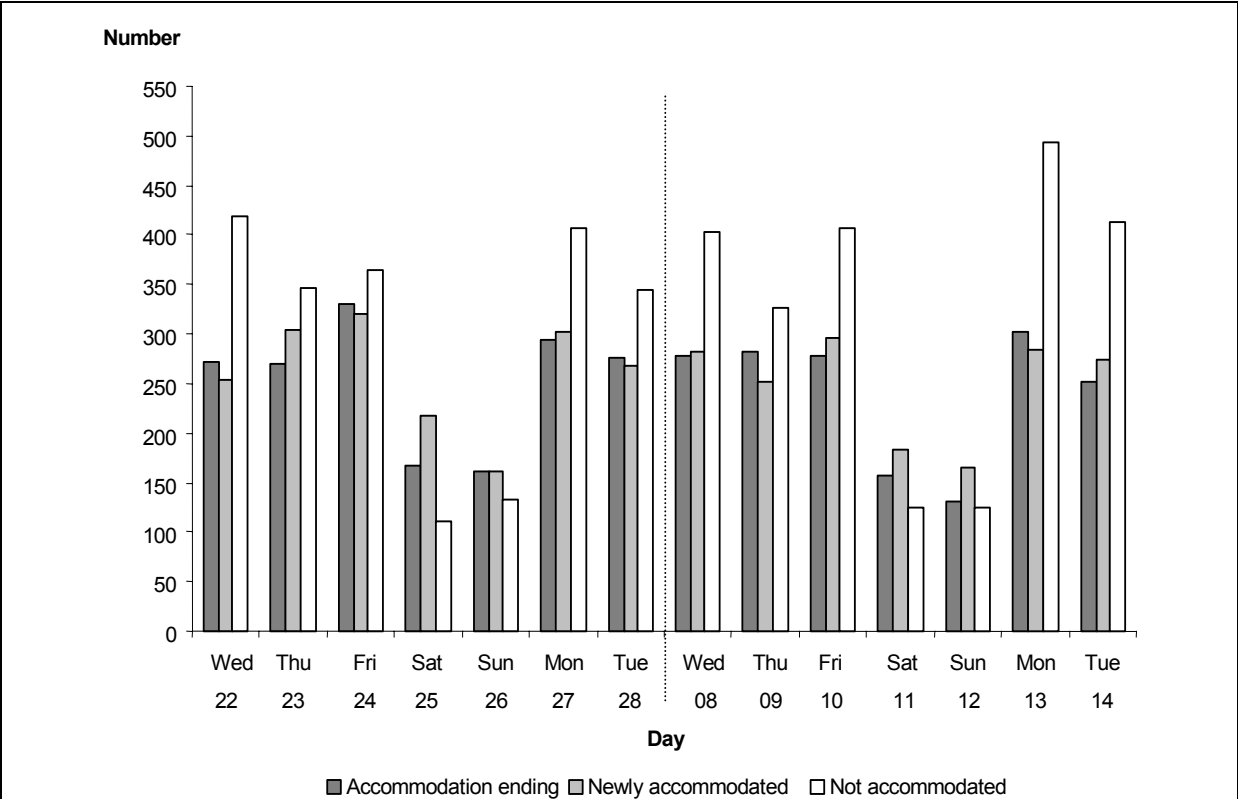
⁶ From Table 5.3 – estimated number of valid unmet requests for SAAP accommodation required within 24 hours by the requesting groups ‘person alone’ and ‘person with children’. From Table 6.1 – number of potential clients requesting accommodation required within 24 hours presenting in the groups ‘person alone’ and ‘person with children’.

Further analysis of unmet demand at a finer level would help determine if particular geographical locations or sub-populations are experiencing significantly higher or lower levels of unmet demand for accommodation. Such an analysis, however, would not be able to determine the extent of any hidden need caused by people not seeking assistance when they need it. It must also be noted that there is the possibility that demand for SAAP accommodation varies throughout the year, and the figures presented here are for two separate weeks of the year only.

7.3 Daily demand for SAAP accommodation

Whether there is sufficient SAAP accommodation to meet demand can also be examined by looking at demand on a daily basis. Table 7.5 shows the overall demand for SAAP accommodation for each day in the 2 weeks covered by the Unmet Demand Collection.

As observed in previous *Demand for SAAP assistance* reports (AIHW 2001a:12; AIHW 2002b:25), in general, the fortnightly patterns are similar for clients starting accommodation, clients ending their accommodation and potential clients (Figure 7.2). Interestingly, weekends saw the smallest numbers of clients beginning their stay, clients leaving their accommodation and potential clients – dropping to around half of their weekday averages or lower. For clients continuing their accommodation for another day, the pattern was reversed: these numbers increased at weekends, rising on Saturday and again on Sunday before dropping on Monday.



Source: Table 7.5.

Figure 7.2: Daily numbers of clients starting accommodation, clients ending accommodation and potential clients, Australia, 22-28 August 2001 and 8-14 May 2002

The increase in the number of clients continuing their accommodation is consistent with the drop in the number of newly accommodated clients on weekends, assuming that accommodation is difficult to obtain (Table 7.5). The fall in the number of potential clients is surprising, however, since a greater scarcity of accommodation resulting from people staying on in their accommodation would be expected to lead to a rise in the number of potential clients. Apart from weekends, the number of potential clients was always higher than the number of clients starting accommodation on that day – a range of 43 to 208 more people being turned away than being accommodated.

The number of clients accommodated on any particular day fluctuated by only 2% during the 2-week collection period, ranging from 7,411 to 7,584, with a daily average of 7,510. On average, 255 clients began their accommodation each day, 247 finished, and an average of 7,255 were continuing their accommodation. During the collection period the maximum number of clients beginning their accommodation on any day was 321, on Friday 24 August. This date also had the highest number of clients finishing their accommodation (330). Monday 13 May had the maximum number of people unable to be accommodated (493) and the second-highest number of clients finishing their accommodation (303).

7.4 Summary

SAAP agencies are operating to capacity with respect to accommodation. The high turn-away rate for daily requests (55%), the low daily turnover rate for accommodation (there are relatively few people leaving their accommodation and taking up accommodation compared with those continuing their accommodation) and the relatively low referral rate for those requiring immediate accommodation suggest that finding accommodation in a SAAP agency is difficult for some.

The relatively small turn-away rate for total demand for accommodation (4%) suggests, however, that a small increase in capacity could have a significant impact on the level of unmet demand for accommodation – assuming that all those who need SAAP accommodation are currently approaching SAAP agencies and that this level of unmet demand is uniform across geographical locations and target groups and throughout the year. A regional analysis of unmet demand would help to determine whether accommodation agencies are generally operating at capacity or whether there is a problem in locating any spare capacity on a particular day in particular locations. This type of analysis, however, would not reveal the extent of any hidden need caused by people not seeking assistance when they need it.

7.5 Tables

Table 7.1: People requesting SAAP accommodation and percentage of people turned away, by client group, Australia, 22–28 August 2001 and 8–14 May 2002 (daily average number)

	Person alone	Person with children	Couple without children	Couple with children	Other/unknown	Total
Potential clients (not accommodated) ^(a)	190.3	77.1	18.9	23.1	6.0	315.4
Newly accommodated clients ^(b)	200.9	41.3	2.5	4.6	5.4	254.6
People making a successful first request	178.0	38.4	1.5	3.2	4.8	225.8
People accommodated in subsequent request(s) ^(a)	22.9	2.9	1.0	1.4	0.6	28.9
Total number of people making requests for accommodation	391.1	118.4	21.4	27.7	11.4	570.1
Turn-away rate (%)	48.6	65.1	88.3	83.3	52.8	55.3

(a) People with valid unmet requests for immediate accommodation.

(b) Figures are based on support periods with accommodation. It can reasonably be assumed that a client will not start more than one period of accommodation on the same day.

Notes

1. Cases excluded due to missing data: 0.
2. Adjustments have been made for missing data from the Met and Unmet Demand Collections (see Appendix 2).
3. 'Other/unknown' includes those cases where the assisted unit was reported as 'other' or where it was not reported at all.
4. 'Valid unmet requests' excludes those made at an agency of an inappropriate target group, if the requested service (for example, accommodation) is not provided by the agency, or where proffered assistance is refused. An adjustment for missing information on validity of request has been made (see Appendix 2).
5. Only data from agencies that participated in all 3 collections (the Client Collection, the Unmet Demand Collection and the Met Demand Collection) are included. Consequently, the figures understate the level of activity in SAAP agencies.
6. Figures are unweighted.

Sources: SAAP Client Collection, Met Demand Collection and Unmet Demand Collection.

Table 7.2: People requesting SAAP accommodation and percentage of people turned away, by state and territory, Australia, 22–28 August 2001 and 8–14 May 2002 (daily average number)

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Potential clients (not accommodated) ^(a)	80.6	72.1	83.2	29.2	17.3	12.0	15.3	5.8	315.4
Newly accommodated clients ^(b)	83.7	27.6	79.1	28.1	16.0	5.6	5.8	8.6	254.6
People making a successful first request	72.7	20.8	73.7	25.2	15.0	4.8	5.3	8.1	225.7
People accommodated in subsequent request(s) ^(a)	11.0	6.8	5.4	2.9	1.0	0.8	0.5	0.5	28.9
Total number of people making requests for accommodation	164.3	99.7	162.3	57.3	33.3	17.6	21.1	14.4	570.0
Turn-away rate (%)	49.1	72.3	51.3	50.9	52.0	68.0	72.6	40.2	55.3

(a) People with valid unmet requests for immediate accommodation.

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Sources: SAAP Client Collection, Met Demand Collection and Unmet Demand Collection.

Table 7.3: Demand for SAAP accommodation and people turned away as a percentage of total average daily demand, by client group, Australia, 22–28 August 2001 and 8–14 May 2002 (daily average number of people)

	Person alone	Person with children	Couple without children	Couple with children	Other/ unknown	Total
Potential clients (not accommodated) ^(a)	190.3	77.1	18.9	23.1	6.0	315.4
Clients ^(b)						
Accommodation ending	196.9	39.0	2.5	3.8	4.6	246.8
Newly accommodated	200.9	41.3	2.5	4.6	5.4	254.6
Continuing accommodation	4,675.5	1,794.7	122.7	436.1	226.2	7,255.2
Total accommodated	4,876.4	1,836.0	125.2	440.7	232.6	7,509.9
Total demand for accommodation	5,066.6	1,913.1	144.1	463.9	237.6	7,825.3
Turn-away rate (%)	3.8	4.0	13.1	5.0	2.5	4.0

(a) People with valid unmet requests for immediate accommodation.

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Notes

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2. Client Collection cases excluded due to missing data: 49.
3. The accommodation status of a client on a particular day is based on the reported periods of accommodation within a support period.
4. Clients may start and end accommodation on the same date.
5. 'Valid unmet requests' excludes those made at an agency of an inappropriate target group, if the requested service (for example, accommodation) is not provided by the agency, or where proffered assistance is refused. An adjustment for missing information on validity of request has been made (see Appendix 2).
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Table 7.4: Demand for SAAP accommodation and people turned away as a percentage of total average daily demand, by state and territory, Australia, 22–28 August 2001 and 8–14 May 2002 (daily average number of people)

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Potential clients (not accommodated) ^(a)	80.6	72.1	83.2	29.2	17.3	12.0	15.3	5.8	315.4
Clients ^(b)									
Accommodation ending	80.4	26.1	74.9	28.6	16.7	6.3	4.9	8.9	246.8
Newly accommodated	83.7	27.6	79.1	28.1	16.0	5.6	5.8	8.6	254.6
Continuing accommodation	2,389.6	1,849.1	1,181.1	574.2	744.8	174.9	206.4	135.0	7,255.2
Total Accommodated	2,473.4	1,876.8	1,260.2	602.4	760.8	180.5	212.2	143.6	7,509.9
Total demand for accommodation	2,553.9	1,948.9	1,343.4	631.6	778.1	192.5	227.5	149.4	7,825.3
Turn-away rate (%)	3.2	3.7	6.2	4.6	2.2	6.2	6.7	3.9	4.0

(a) People with valid unmet requests for immediate accommodation.

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Table 7.5: Daily demand for SAAP accommodation, people turned away as a percentage of total daily demand, Australia, 22–28 August 2001 and 8–14 May 2002 (number of people per day)

	Wed 22 Aug	Thu 23 Aug	Fri 24 Aug	Sat 25 Aug	Sun 26 Aug	Mon 27 Aug	Tue 28 Aug	Wed 8 May	Thu 9 May	Fri 10 May	Sat 11 May	Sun 12 May	Mon 13 May	Tue 14 May	Daily Average
Potential clients (not accomm.)^(a)	419	347	364	111	132	406	344	403	327	406	125	125	493	414	315.4
Clients^(b)															
Accommodation Ending	272	269	330	168	162	294	277	279	282	278	158	131	303	252	246.8
Newly Accommodated	254	304	321	218	162	303	268	282	251	296	183	165	285	273	254.6
Continuing Accommodation	7,249	7,234	7,237	7,366	7,416	7,281	7,312	7,174	7,160	7,142	7,272	7,322	7,189	7,219	7,255.2
Total accommodated	7,503	7,538	7,558	7,584	7,578	7,584	7,580	7,456	7,411	7,438	7,455	7,487	7,474	7,492	7,509.9
Total demand for accommodation	7,922	7,885	7,922	7,695	7,710	7,990	7,924	7,859	7,738	7,844	7,580	7,612	7,967	7,906	7,825.3
Turn-away rate (%)	5.3	4.4	4.6	1.4	1.7	5.1	4.3	5.1	4.2	5.2	1.6	1.6	6.2	5.2	4.0

(a) People with valid unmet requests for immediate accommodation.

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