

# **Homeless people in SAAP**

**SAAP NDC  
Annual report  
2001–02**

**Australia**

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is Australia's national health and welfare statistics and information agency. The Institute's mission is to improve the health and well-being of Australians by informing community discussion and decision making through national leadership in developing and providing health and welfare statistics and information.

SAAP NDCA REPORT SERIES 7

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Annual report  
2001–02**

**Australia**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Canberra

AIHW cat. no. HOU 72

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### **Australian Institute of Health and Welfare**

Board Chair  
Dr Sandra Hacker

Director  
Dr Richard Madden

Any enquiries about or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Manager  
SAAP National Data Collection Agency  
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
GPO Box 570  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Phone: (02) 6244 1206

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# Preface

This is the sixth 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 and people who are 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 Sub-committee (formerly known as the SAAP Data Sub-committee). Valuable support and encouragement have been provided by the SAAP Coordination and Development Committee, which is responsible for the national direction of the SAAP program.

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 95% of agencies in Australia provided data in 2001–02 is testimony to their collective commitment to, and confidence in, the collection. A 94% participation rate was recorded in 2000–01. The proportion of SAAP clients who consented to the provision of their personal data to the National Data Collection Agency increased from 82% in 2000–01 to 87% in 2001–02.

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. Over time, the availability of time-series SAAP data will greatly increase the usefulness of the data. The publication of this sixth annual report and the release of 2001–02 data are one step towards this goal.

Dr 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
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

<b>Accompanying child</b>	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.
<b>Accompanying child support period</b>	<p>An <i>accompanying child support period</i> refers to each <i>support period</i> in which the 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 their 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>
<b>Agency</b>	An organisation or establishment that receives a specified amount of SAAP funds to provide services.
<b>Alpha code</b>	A predetermined combination of letters from a <i>client's</i> name, together with a letter designating the <i>client's</i> gender. A 'valid <i>alpha code</i> ' is a legitimate <i>alpha code</i> (that is, one containing only letters from the alphabet and ending in either M or F) joined to the <i>client's</i> reported year of birth and encrypted to create a unique <i>client</i> indicator.
<b>Case</b>	A <i>support period</i> provided to a SAAP <i>client</i> . The terms <i>case</i> and <i>support period</i> are used interchangeably in this report.
<b>Client</b>	A person aged 18 years or older, or a person of any age not accompanied by a parent or guardian, who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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</li><li>• is accommodated by a SAAP <i>agency</i>; or</li><li>• enters into an <i>ongoing support relationship</i> with a SAAP <i>agency</i>.</li></ul>
<b>Closed accompanying child support period</b>	An <i>accompanying child support period</i> associated with a <i>closed support period</i> .
<b>Closed support period</b>	A <i>support period</i> that had finished before the end of the reporting period – 30 June.
<b>English proficiency group 1 countries</b>	Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.
<b>English proficiency group 2–4 countries</b>	Countries, excluding Australia, that are not included in <i>English proficiency group 1</i> .

<b>Homeless person</b>	<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"> <li>• damages, or is likely to damage, their health; or</li> <li>• threatens their safety; or</li> <li>• marginalises them through failing to provide access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- adequate personal amenities, or</li> <li>- the economic and social supports that a home normally affords; or</li> </ul> </li> <li>• places them in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing; or</li> <li>• has no security of tenure – that is, they have no legal right to continued occupation of their home.</li> </ul> <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>
<b>Occasion of support</b>	<p>See <i>support period</i>.</p>
<b>Ongoing support relationship</b>	<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.</p> <p>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 help establish whether a person is considered a <i>client</i> for the purposes of the National Data Collection.</p>
<b>Record</b>	<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>
<b>Recurrent allocations</b>	<p>Amounts of money specifically allocated during the reporting period by a State or Territory department either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to SAAP <i>agencies</i> to fund salaries and associated on-costs, and ongoing operating costs; or</li> <li>• for use by each State or Territory for such purposes as training, research, evaluation, administration, and asset replacement or purchase.</li> </ul>
<b>Referral</b>	<p>For the purposes of the National Data Collection, a formal referral process – not simply the provision of information. A (formal) <i>referral</i> occurs when a SAAP <i>agency</i> contacts another organisation and that organisation 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>

<b>Support</b>	Assistance, other than <i>supported accommodation</i> , provided to a client as part of an <i>ongoing support relationship</i> between a SAAP agency and the <i>client</i> . For the purposes of the National Data Collection, <i>support</i> also includes contact with, or work on behalf of, a <i>client</i> for generally more than 1 hour on a given day. <i>Support</i> may be provided to the <i>client</i> individually or in group sessions.
<b>Support period</b>	<p>A <i>support period</i> commences when a <i>client</i> begins to receive <i>support</i> and/or <i>supported accommodation</i> from a SAAP agency. The <i>support period</i> is considered to finish when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the <i>client</i> ends the relationship with the <i>agency</i>; or</li> <li>• the <i>agency</i> ends the relationship with the <i>client</i>.</li> </ul> <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 a period of 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>
<b>Supported accommodation</b>	Accommodation paid for, or provided directly by, a SAAP agency. The accommodation may be provided at the <i>agency</i> or may be purchased using SAAP funds – at a motel, for example.
<b>Young client (or young person)</b>	A <i>client</i> aged under 25 years at the commencement of <i>support</i> .

# Summary

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

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has developed a scheme that adjusts for incomplete coverage in the Client Collection. It adjusts estimates to allow for agency non-participation, for clients who do not consent to provide complete information for support periods, for clients who give valid consent for some support periods but not for others, and for clients who do not give consent in any of their periods of support. It should be noted, however, that, while 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 Institute has also developed a scheme that adjusts for incomplete coverage of accompanying children. This is the first year the scheme has been used to report on the children associated with SAAP clients.

This national report is accompanied by State and Territory supplements. The State and Territory data appear in this national report, however, more detailed State and Territory tables are included in the supplements. A further report that includes coverage of the demand for SAAP services, unmet demand and casual client information will be published in 2003.

## Funding

Funding for the 1,286 SAAP agencies operating across Australia during 2001–02 was provided jointly by the Commonwealth and the State and Territory governments. For the 2001–02 financial year, the total recurrent allocation under SAAP in Australia was \$285m (Table 2.1). Recurrent funding to agencies was \$269m; in real terms, this was 17% more than the funding provided in 1996–97 (Table 10.1).

## Level of support

It is estimated that SAAP agencies in Australia supported 95,600 clients, to whom they provided 177,000 occasions of support during 2001–02 (Table 3.1). The average number of support periods per client was 1.8. On average there were between 19,700 and 21,000 support periods on any day during 2001–02 (Table 3.2).

## Age, gender and cultural and linguistic diversity

There were more female clients (56%) than male clients (44%). The average age of male clients was 33 years and the average for female clients was 30 years (Table 4.1). Most SAAP clients (85%) were born in Australia (Table 4.3). Overall, Indigenous clients were over-represented as SAAP clients relative to their population size: less than 2% of Australians aged 10 years or over identified as Indigenous Australians in June 2001, compared with 17% of SAAP clients in 2001–02 (Table 4.4). The over-representation of Indigenous Australians influenced the relative proportions of other cultural and linguistic groups in SAAP, in particular the large proportion of Australian-born people, and the under-representation of people born overseas.

Repeat use of SAAP services was less likely among female clients than male clients: males averaged 2.0 support periods each while females averaged around 1.7 (Table 4.2). There were also some differences in repeat usage within age groups. Furthermore, on average Indigenous clients had more support periods each (2.4) than other clients (Table 4.4).

Overall, for every 10,000 people aged 10 and over, there were 56 SAAP clients (Table 4.2). The highest prevalence of SAAP use was among people aged 18 and 19 years, for whom there were 147 SAAP clients for every 10,000 in the general population. The next highest rates of use were by 15 to 17 year-olds and 20 to 24 year-olds, for whom there were 116 and 117 SAAP clients, respectively, for every 10,000 in these age groups.

The proportion of people accessing SAAP services also varied by gender. Females were more likely to use SAAP services than males: there were 62 female clients for every 10,000 females aged 10 and over in the general population and 50 male clients per 10,000 males. The highest rate of use was by 18–19 year-old females among whom there were 174 clients per 10,000 females, compared to 122 male clients per 10,000 males.

### **Client group and reasons for seeking support**

Nationally, males aged 25 years and over presenting alone at SAAP agencies accounted for the largest proportion of all support periods (33%), followed by 20% for female clients with children (Table 5.1). Overall, 6% of support periods were for couples with or without children, while males with children accounted for just 1% of all support periods.

The most common main reasons clients gave for seeking assistance were domestic violence (in 22% of support periods), eviction or the ending of previous accommodation (12%), usual accommodation was unavailable (10%) and relationship or family breakdown (10%) (Figure 5.2). Reasons varied considerably according to the composition of the assisted client group.

### **Support provided**

Of the 177,000 support periods in 2001–02, over 159,000 finished before 30 June 2002 (Table 2.1 and Chapter 6). Of these closed support periods, 38% lasted for 1 day or less, and a further 19% lasted from 2 to 7 days (Table 6.1). A significant proportion (15%) of closed support periods lasted from 1 to 3 months. This pattern was not consistent across the States and Territories. For example, only 15% of support periods in the Australian Capital Territory lasted for 1 day or less, while 28% of support periods in Tasmania were for 1 to 3 months.

Around 4,700 of the closed support periods reported during 2001–02 involved total accommodation of less than 1 day (Table 6.3). A further 93,400 support periods included some accommodation of 1 day or longer. In 34% of these support periods the accommodation was for 1 day only and in 27% it was for 2 to 7 days; in 8%, accommodation lasted for over 3 months. Males with children and couples with children tended to be accommodated for longer than other clients (Table 6.3).

The services commonly provided to clients varied markedly according to the person or group being assisted, due to their varying needs. However, the three broad types of support services most often provided during 2001–02 were housing and accommodation services (in 77% of all support periods), general support and advocacy (75%), and basic support services (68%) (Table 6.4). Within the program, SAAP or CAP (Crisis Accommodation Program) accommodation was the main form of housing or accommodation assistance, being provided in 64% of support periods.

## Meeting the needs of clients

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 six different types of services during a support period (derived from Table 7.2). SAAP agencies directly provided services for 87% of requests during 2001–02. In addition to this, agencies were able to refer clients to other organisations for a further 5% of requests. Consequently, nearly 914,000 (or 93%) of the 987,000 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 97% of cases) and general support and advocacy services (91%). Agencies were least successful in meeting requests for financial and employment services: 16% of such needs were neither provided for nor referred to other organisations.

Overall, there were 73,300 requests for services, or 7%, that were not provided or referred (Table 7.2). Housing and accommodation services accounted for the largest proportion of these unmet needs (31%), followed by financial and employment assistance and general support and advocacy (21% of unmet needs respectively) (Table 7.3). Unaccompanied males aged 25 or over had the highest number of support periods with unmet needs throughout the year, at 11,500 support periods. However, this client group had proportionately fewer identified unmet needs compared with other groups.

## Circumstances of clients before and after support

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 to obtain or maintain a government pension or benefit, the proportion of support periods in which clients had no income and were not awaiting a government payment fell from 18% before support to 6% by the end of support.

Across all closed support periods, the most common forms of client accommodation immediately before support were SAAP or other emergency accommodation (in 20% of support periods) and private rental (16%) (Table 8.3). Public and community housing showed the greatest increase in use following support, from 10% of support periods before support to 17% after. Living in a car, tent, park, street or squat showed the greatest decrease, from 9% of support periods before support to 3% after. Different patterns of use of accommodation types were observed in the various States and Territories, although the main shifts in accommodation types from before to after support were similar (Table 8.2).

For clients who specifically sought assistance to obtain independent housing, there were more marked changes in accommodation type before and after support. In particular, accommodation in public or community housing nearly tripled (rising from 8% of support periods before support to 22% after) (Table 8.3). The proportion of support periods in which clients were renting privately also increased (from 18% before to 25% after).

The most common living situations for clients before receiving SAAP support were with a spouse or partner, either with or without children (in 23% of support periods); living alone (20%); or living short-term with relatives or friends (18%) (Table 8.4). After support, it was most common for clients to be living alone (in 21% of support periods); alone with children (18%); or with a spouse or partner, with or without children (16%).

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 support periods in which they were employed in some capacity doubled from around 9% before support to 19% after support (Table 8.5).

## **Support provided to accompanying children**

In 2001–02, 50,800 accompanying children received around 68,100 support periods (Table 9.2). Just under 90% of accompanying children were 12 years of age or under. Nine per cent of accompanying children were aged 13 to 15 years. The remaining 2% of children were aged 16 or 17. Accompanying child support periods showed a similar distribution for age. Accompanying children and accompanying child support periods were divided evenly between girls and boys. Ninety-five per cent of accompanying children were born in Australia (Table 9.3). Two per cent of children were born in Oceania. All other birthplaces accounted for the remaining 3% of accompanying children.

Of the 68,100 accompanying child support periods, 44,500 were for children who required and/or received assistance (Table 9.4). Ninety per cent of these accompanying child support periods occurred when females presented with children at a SAAP service. Couples with children had on average more accompanying children requiring assistance (2.2) per support period than any other family grouping. The average number of children requiring assistance per support period was 2.0.

The two broad types of services most commonly provided to accompanying children were accommodation and basic support services (including meals, transport and hygiene-related facilities) – provided in 72% and 68% of accompanying child support periods, respectively (Table 9.4). Agencies reported that accompanying children required some 158,000 distinct services, with a child requiring on average four types of services per support period (derived from Table 9.5). Of these requests for services, 93% (146,500) were provided to some extent. In addition to this, agencies were able to refer children on for another 4% (or 6,200) of the services they required, leaving just over 3% (or 5,400) of requested services that were neither provided nor referred. Unmet requests for services were spread over a number of service types, with counselling services (25%) accounting for the greatest proportion (Table 9.6). Levels of service provision and requests remaining unmet at the end of support varied depending on whether children were accompanying a male or female client or a couple.

## **Support from 1996–97 to 2000–01**

The number of support periods has fluctuated throughout the 6 years of the National Data Collection. In 1996–97 there were an estimated 156,500 support periods (Table 10.2). 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 10.1). In 2000–01 there was a rise to 170,700 support periods. The number of support periods increased to 177,000 in 2001–02.

The number of clients provided with SAAP services showed a similar pattern, although the changes were less pronounced in the last 4 years. The highest number of clients was recorded in 2001–02 (95,600) and the lowest in 1996–97 (83,200) (Table 10.2). The prevalence of SAAP use in the community for the past 5 years was highest in 1997–98, with 59 SAAP clients for every 10,000 people aged 10 or over, and lowest in 1999–00, with 55 SAAP clients per 10,000 people aged 10 or over (Table 10.3).

Over the past 5 years of the collection there has been a steady increase in the number of support periods in which support plans have been used, from 54% of completed support periods in 1997–98 to 60% in 2001–02 (Table 10.5). There were no obvious sustained trends in the duration of support: after increasing slightly from 5 days in 1997–98 and 1998–99 to 6 days in 1999–00, the median length of support dropped back to 4 days in 2000–01 and 2001–02 (Table 10.6).