

1 Introduction

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

This report provides an overview of assistance given to clients of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). SAAP was established in 1985 to consolidate a number of Commonwealth, State and Territory government programs designed to assist people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, including women and children escaping domestic violence.

The current program (SAAP IV) is governed by the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994*. This specifies that the overall aim of SAAP is to provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services to help homeless people achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence.

In 2001–02, 1,286 non-government, community or local government organisations were funded nationally under the program (Table 2.2). Such organisations range from small stand-alone agencies with single outlets to larger auspice bodies with multiple outlets. They provide accommodation and support services to a range of groups: families, single men, single women, young people, and women and children escaping domestic violence.

The SAAP National Data Collection

The main source of data on the provision of services through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program is the SAAP National Data Collection (NDC), which consists of a number of distinct components, each of which can be thought of as a separate collection. Currently, four components exist: the Client Collection; the Administrative Data Collection; the Demand for Accommodation Collection (formerly the Unmet Demand Collection); and the Casual Client Collection.

This report primarily presents analysis of the Client Collection. Some analysis of funding using the Administrative Data Collection is also presented to provide context. The Client Collection consists of information about all clients receiving SAAP support lasting more than 1 hour, while the Administrative Data Collection consists of general information about the agencies providing the services used by these clients. Appendix 1 provides an overview of these collections; further details are available in the SAAP National Data Collection annual report 1998–99 (AIHW 2000a).

Accurate interpretation of the analyses presented here requires an understanding of the particular concepts and terms used in the National Data Collection. A glossary of terms is therefore included at the beginning of this report. In addition, readers are encouraged to consult Appendix 1, which contains important information about estimation methods, measurement of concepts, examples for table interpretation, and counting rules used in the analyses in this report. Appendix 2 contains copies of the client form and the high-volume client form used to collect data in 2001–02. The National Data Collection Agency's (NDCA's) collectors' manual (AIHW 2001b) also contains information that can aid in the use and interpretation of the data presented here.

Structure and content of this report

Early in 2001 the SAAP Information Sub-committee reviewed the annual reports for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. As a consequence, annual reports for each State and Territory such as those for 1999–00 will no longer be produced. Instead, the national report has been expanded to include more State and Territory data, and the tables previously published in the State and Territory annual reports are presented in supplements published in conjunction with the national annual report. A further report that includes coverage of the general demand for SAAP services, unmet demand and casual client information for 2001–02 will be published in 2003.

Data in this report relate to the financial year ending 30 June 2002. Although most tables provide information about both completed and ongoing support periods, analyses of the duration of support and accommodation and of data items relating to client circumstances after support are necessarily limited to completed support periods only. In addition, a number of tables contain data for the 6 years that the National Data Collection has been conducted. It should be noted that while most estimates are adjusted for client non-consent and/or agency non-participation (see Appendix 1), no allowance has been made for agencies that provide forms for some but not all of their support periods. This is the first year that estimates of accompanying children have been adjusted for client non-consent and agency non-participation.

The analyses in this report are divided into nine main areas. Chapter 2 provides details of resources allocated under SAAP; Chapter 3 presents a discussion of the number of support periods provided by SAAP agencies; Chapter 4 outlines the demographic characteristics of clients; Chapter 5 analyses client groups and explores why clients sought assistance; and Chapter 6 provides analyses of the length of support periods and accommodation and the type of support provided to clients. Chapter 7 contains analyses of the services required by clients and how agencies met these needs, while the circumstances of clients before and after support periods in terms of income source, accommodation, living situation, and employment are examined in Chapter 8. The support provided to children accompanying a parent or guardian to a SAAP agency is discussed in Chapter 9. Finally, Chapter 10 presents comparisons of data from 1996–97 to 2001–02. Detailed tables follow the discussion in each chapter.

Estimates presented in this report are subject to revision. Revised tables, along with the reports themselves, are posted on the web site of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (www.aihw.gov.au). Regional tables and counts for all data items collected are available in hard copy or electronic format on request from the NDCA (NDCA@aihw.gov.au).