



# Demand for SAAP accommodation by homeless people 2005–06: summary

## Introduction

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) is a major part of Australia's overall response to homelessness and represents a broader social safety net designed to help people in crisis. In 2005–06, 1,300 non-government, community and local government organisations were funded nationally under SAAP to provide support and/or accommodation to people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness (AIHW 2007a: Table 2.3). These organisations ranged from small stand-alone agencies with single outlets to larger bodies with multiple outlets. Each agency was focused mainly on supporting a particular client group, such as young people, single men, single women, women and children escaping domestic violence, families, or a combination of client groups.

Although SAAP agencies support and accommodate large numbers of people every day, they cannot always meet all requests for SAAP accommodation. This bulletin presents key data on the people turned away from SAAP accommodation in 2005–06 and is a summary of the more detailed *Demand for SAAP accommodation by homeless people 2005–06* report (AIHW 2007b). More information about this topic, the components of the SAAP National Data Collection, a glossary and the counting rules governing the data used in this bulletin are contained in the full report. Note that the data in this bulletin refer only to people who made a valid unmet request for immediate SAAP accommodation or to those who were turned away.

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## How many people were turned away?

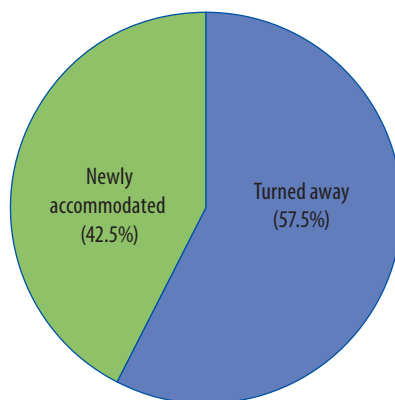
On an average day during the collection period, 395 people (consisting of 258 adults and unaccompanied children and 137 accompanying children) made a valid unmet request for immediate accommodation. Of those, 356 people (consisting of 225 adults and unaccompanied children and 130 accompanying children) were turned away without receiving SAAP accommodation and the remaining 39 subsequently found accommodation later on that same day.

## Turn-away as a per cent of people requiring new accommodation

When considered as a per cent of people requiring new and immediate SAAP accommodation (excluding those continuing their accommodation) on an average day:

- 54% of adults and unaccompanied children or just over 1 in 2 were turned away.
- 66% of accompanying children or 2 in 3 were turned away.
- 58% of all people or over 1 in 2 were turned away (Figure 1).

This measure provides an indication of a person's likelihood of obtaining SAAP accommodation.



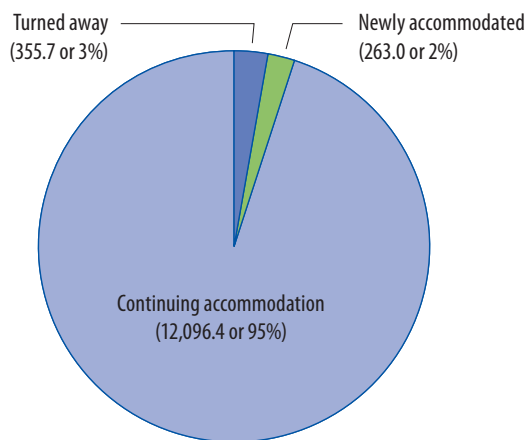
Source: AIHW 2007b:Table 9.1.

**Figure 1: Turn-away for people who required immediate accommodation, Australia, 7–13 December 2005 and 17–23 May 2006 (per cent daily average number of people requiring new accommodation)**

### Turn-away as a per cent of total expressed demand for SAAP accommodation

It is important to note that people requiring new and immediate accommodation made up only 5% (619) of the total demand for SAAP accommodation (12,715, including those continuing their accommodation) on an average day (derived from Figure 2). When considered in this light, 2% (263) of all people who had a demand for SAAP accommodation were newly accommodated and 3% (356) were turned away. This was also the case when broken down for adults and unaccompanied children (3%) and accompanying children (3%).

This measure provides an indication of the ability of SAAP to meet the total expressed demand for SAAP accommodation. However, while the relatively small number of people not accommodated relative to the total expressed demand for SAAP accommodation (3%) seems to suggest that a small increase in the number of places available on an average day could have a significant impact on the level of unmet demand for accommodation, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that this is not the case (refer to AIHW 2007b for more detail).



Source: AIHW 2007b:Figure 9.2.

**Figure 2: Demand for immediate SAAP accommodation for total people, Australia, 7–13 December 2005 and 17–23 May 2006 (daily average number and per cent of total demand for accommodation)**

## Who was turned away?

It becomes obvious that some groups have more difficulty obtaining SAAP accommodation than others.

It must be noted that measures of 'turn-away' cannot be calculated for sex, age, country of birth and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. This is because the Demand for Accommodation Collection does not allow estimates of turn-away to be calculated according to demographic characteristics (AIHW 2007b:Chapter 6). Data referring to these demographics relate to people with a valid unmet request for immediate SAAP accommodation, some of whom were accommodated later that same day.

## Requesting group

The most likely requesting groups to be turned away were family groups. When considered as a per cent of all people requiring new accommodation, 75% of couples with children, 74% of couples without children and 66% of individual(s) with children requiring new and immediate SAAP accommodation were turned away, compared with 47% of individual(s) without children (Figure 3). In addition, individual(s) without children were the only group more likely to be accommodated than not.

When considered as a proportion of the total expressed demand for SAAP accommodation, SAAP was least likely to be able to meet the demand for accommodation from couples without children. Five per cent of couples without children who either required new accommodation or who were continuing their accommodation were not able to be accommodated, compared with between 2% and 3% for the other groups.

## Sex

Over half (52%) of all people with a valid unmet request for immediate accommodation were female, 48% were male (derived from AIHW 2007b:Table 5.4).

## Age

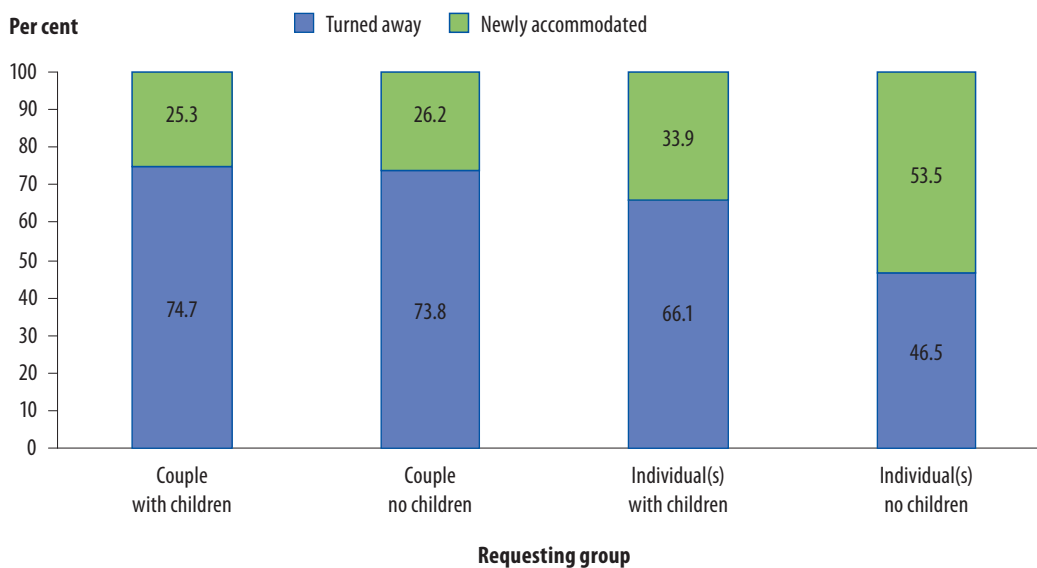
Over half (55%) of all people with a valid unmet request for immediate SAAP accommodation were under 20 years of age (derived from AIHW 2007b:Table 5.5).

## Country of birth

The vast majority of all people with a valid unmet request for immediate SAAP accommodation were born in Australia (93%)(derived from AIHW 2007b:Table 5.6).

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status

Close to one third (31%) of all people with a valid unmet request for immediate SAAP accommodation were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (derived from AIHW 2007b:Table 5.7). Note, however, that there was a high proportion of missing or unknown data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status (AIHW 2007b:Chapter 5).



Source: AIHW 2007b:Figure 9.1.

**Figure 3: Turn-away for people who required immediate accommodation, by requesting group, Australia, 7–13 December 2005 and 17–23 May 2006 (per cent daily average number of people requiring new accommodation)**

## What types of agencies were they turned away from?

People were most likely to be turned away from agencies that were primarily targeted at families, cross-targeted agencies and youth agencies. People were least likely to be turned away from agencies primarily aimed at supporting single men.

## Why were they turned away?

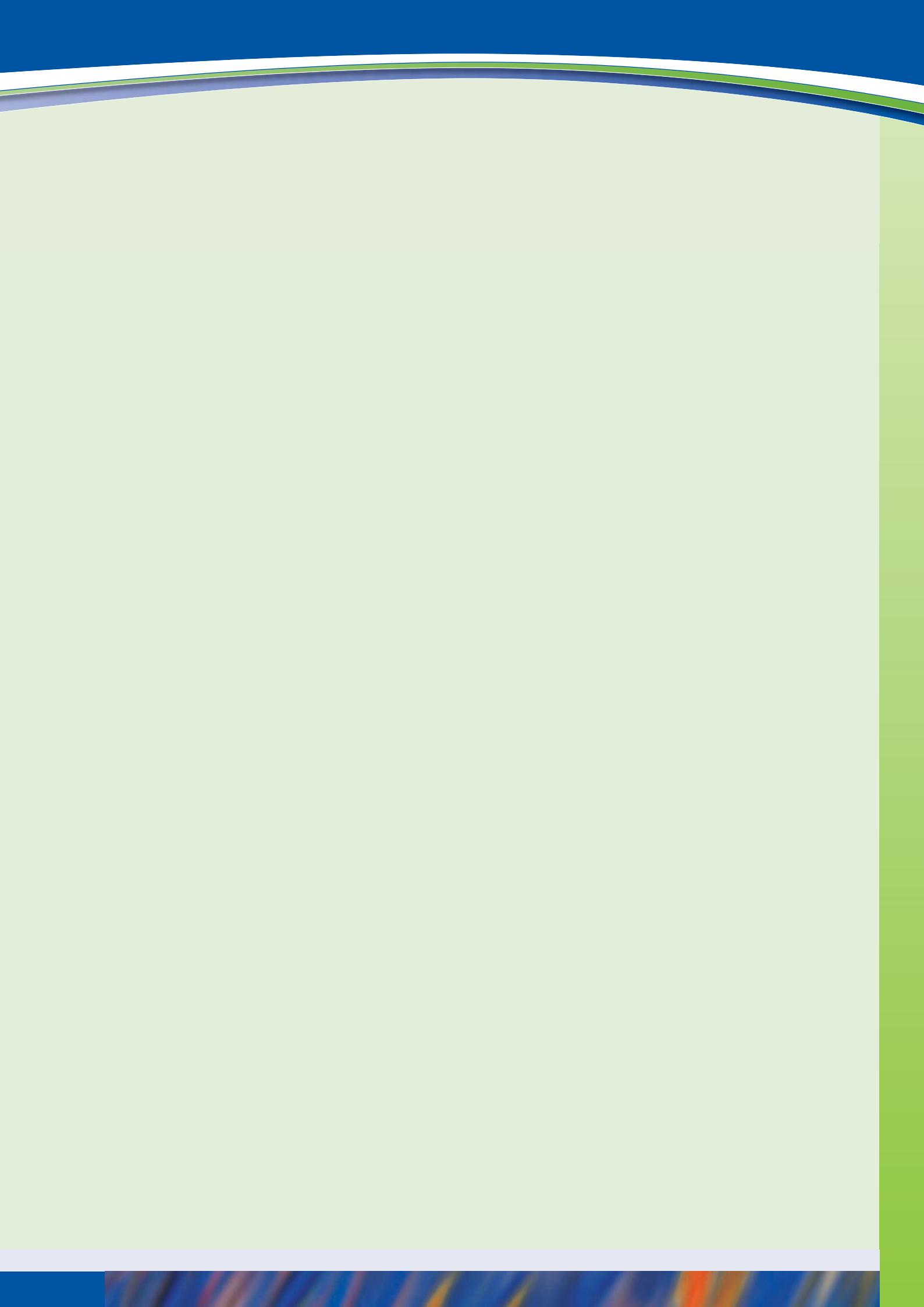
The most common reason that individuals or groups were turned away was because of a lack of accommodation (in 80% of valid unmet requests). This was either because insufficient accommodation was available at the agency itself (59%) or because a referral agency was unable to refer the group on because they had no vacancies on their books (21%).

## Conclusion

SAAP agencies appear to be operating to capacity, with the demand for SAAP accommodation unable to be completely met. Some groups experience more difficulty than others in obtaining SAAP accommodation. For more information about this and meeting the demand for SAAP accommodation, please refer to the full report (AIHW 2007b).

## References

- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2007a. Homeless people in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2005–06 Australia. SAAP NDCA report Series 11. Cat. no. HOU 156. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2007b. Demand for SAAP accommodation by homeless people 2005–06: a report from the SAAP National Data Collection. SAAP NDCA report Series 11. Cat. no. HOU 169. Canberra: AIHW.



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