
15 Protection and support services

Protection and support services aim to assist individuals and families who are in crisis or experiencing difficulties that hinder personal or family functioning. They do this by alleviating the difficulties and reducing the potential for their recurrence.

This chapter reports on:

- *child protection services*: the functions of government that receive and assess allegations of child abuse and neglect, and/or harm to children and young people, provide and refer clients to family support and other relevant services, and intervene to protect children
- *out-of-home care services*: care for children placed away from their parents for protective or other family welfare reasons
- *supported accommodation and assistance services*: services to assist young people, adults and families who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

A profile of child protection and out-of-home care services appears in section 15.1. A framework of performance indicators is outlined in section 15.2 and data are discussed in section 15.3. Future directions in performance reporting are outlined in section 15.4.

A profile of accommodation and assistance services funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) appears in section 15.5. A framework of performance indicators for these services is outlined in section 15.6 and data are discussed in section 15.7. Future directions in performance reporting are discussed in section 15.8.

Jurisdictions' comments on both child protection and out-of-home care services, and supported accommodation and assistance services are reported in section 15.9. Definitions of data descriptors and indicators are provided in section 15.10.

New South Wales was unable to provide data for a significant number of items for the 2005 Report due to the introduction of a new client information system, the Key Information Directory System (KiDS) in 2003-04. KiDS represents a significant change in the reporting framework for child protection and out-of-home care data for NSW. An Information Quality Framework was introduced as part of the KiDS

implementation process to ensure that all published information based on KiDS data are accurate and consistent. The information quality process was still underway for a number of key data items when data were collected for the 2005 Report, resulting in limited data being available.

Supporting tables

Supporting tables for chapter 15 are provided on the CD-ROM enclosed with the Report. The files are provided in Microsoft Excel format as \Publications\Reports\2005\Attach15A.xls and in Adobe PDF format as \Publications\Reports\2005\Attach15A.pdf.

Supporting tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 15A.3 is table 3 in the electronic files). These files can be found on the Review web page (www.pc.gov.au/gsp). Users without Internet access can contact the Secretariat to obtain these tables (see details on the inside front cover of the Report).

15.1 Profile of child protection and out-of-home care services

Service overview

Child protection services

Child protection services are provided to protect children and/or young people aged 0–17 years who are at risk of harm within their families, or whose families do not have the capacity to protect them. These services include:

- receiving and responding to reports of concern about children or young people, including investigation and assessment where appropriate
- providing support services (directly or through referral) where harm or a risk of significant harm is identified, to strengthen the capacity of families to care safely for children
- initiating intervention where necessary, including applying for a care and protection order through a court and, in some situations, placing children or young people in out-of-home care to secure their safety
- ensuring the ongoing safety of children and young people by working with families to resolve protective concerns

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- working with families to reunite children (who were removed for safety reasons) with their parents as soon as possible. (In some jurisdictions, restoration may occur in voluntary placements as well.)
 - securing permanent out-of-home/alternative care when it is determined that a child is unable to be returned to the care of his or her parents, and working with young people to identify alternative supported living arrangements where family reunification is not possible.

Recent research suggests that the children and families who come into contact with the protection and support system often share common social and demographic characteristics. Families with low incomes or reliant on pensions and benefits, those who experienced alcohol and substance abuse, or a psychiatric disability, and those that have a family history of domestic violence were over-represented in the families that came into contact with the protection and support system (DHS 2002). Recent studies have also highlighted the incidence of child abuse and neglect within the Indigenous communities (Gordon Report 2002, box 15.1).

Box 15.1 Western Australian Gordon Inquiry

During 2002, the WA State Government received the findings from the Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities (the Gordon Inquiry). The Inquiry examined the circumstances surrounding the death of a 15-year-old girl in February 1999 at the Swan Valley Nyungah Community in Lockridge.

The final report of the Gordon Inquiry, released publicly in September 2002, showed that the incidence of violence and child abuse in Aboriginal communities was 'shocking and difficult to comprehend'. It stated that reported statistics show:

- Aboriginal women accounted for 50 per cent of all domestic violence incidents reported to police but represent only 3 per cent of the population
- Aboriginal communities experienced substantiated child abuse at more than seven times the rate of non-Aboriginal communities
- Aboriginal women living in rural and remote areas were 45 times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be victims of domestic violence (Gordon Report 2002).

The report also noted that the incidence of child abuse and family violence in Aboriginal communities was significantly under-reported. It found an urgent need for greater coordination across government agencies, more training for staff (including cross cultural training) and more and better resourced services, especially in remote areas. It also found that a lack of trust between Aboriginal communities and government agencies was a significant barrier to complaints of violence and abuse being made.

(Continued on next page)

Box 15.1 (Continued)

The WA Government accepted the challenges posed by the Gordon Inquiry and is implementing recommendations arising from the inquiry, in consultation with other major stakeholders. The recommendations attempt to address:

- the urgent need to strengthen responses to abuse and violence in Aboriginal communities
- the need for long term strategies to address the endemic nature of abuse and violence in many communities
- the needs of current and future generations of Aboriginal children through long term environmental, social and economic improvements leading to sustainable communities.

The new initiatives aimed at combating child abuse and family violence in Aboriginal communities have been funded over a four year period and involve the employment of more than 100 additional staff across a range of government agencies.

In addition, the government is exploring new ways of working across the public sector — for example, the Specialist Child Interviewing Unit involves a collaborative approach by the Department for Community Development, the WA Police Service and the Department of Health.

Source: Department for Community Development (unpublished); Gordon Report (2002).

Out-of-home care services

Out-of-home care services provide care for children and young people aged 0–17 years who are placed away from their parents or family home for reasons of safety or family crisis. These reasons include abuse, neglect or harm, illness of a parent and the inability of parents to provide adequate care. The placements may be voluntary or made in conjunction with care and protection orders.

Out-of-home care services are either home-based care (such as foster care, care with the child's extended family or other home-based arrangements), facility-based care (such as community residential care) or independent living (which is often intensively supported) as a transition to full independence or supported placements. Across jurisdictions, there has been a shift away from the use of facility-based (or residential) care towards foster care and other forms of home-based care, including relative/kinship care. Intensive family support services are increasingly perceived as an alternative to the removal of the child from his or her home for child protection reasons (box 15.2).

Box 15.2 Intensive family support services

Intensive family support services are specialist services established in each jurisdiction that aim to:

- prevent the imminent separation of children from their primary caregivers as a result of child protection concerns
- reunify families where separation has already occurred.

In 2003-04, at least 71 intensive family support programs and subprograms were operating across Australia (three in NSW, 46 in Victoria, four in Queensland, eight in WA, six in SA, two in Tasmania and two in the ACT). The NT does not fund any intensive family support services.

Intensive family support services differ from other types of child protection and family support service referred to in this chapter, in that they:

- are funded or established explicitly to prevent the separation of, or to reunify, families
- provide a range of services as part of an integrated strategy focusing on improving family functioning and skills, rather than providing a single type of service
- are intensive in nature, averaging at least four hours of service provision per week for a specified short term period (usually less than six months)
- generally receive referrals from a child protection service.

Intensive family support services may use some or all of the following strategies: assessment and case planning; parent education and skill development; individual and family counselling; anger management; respite and emergency care; practical and financial support; mediation, brokerage and referral services; and training in problem solving.

Expenditure data indicate that recurrent expenditure on intensive family support services across all jurisdictions was at least \$81.1 million in 2003-04 (table 15A.21). Table 15A.21 provides additional information about families and children who were involved with intensive family support services during 2003-04.

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (unpublished).

Roles and responsibilities

State and Territory governments fund child protection, out-of-home care, family support (including intensive family support) and other relevant services that may be delivered by the government or the non-government sector. State and Territory community services departments are responsible for investigating and assessing reports to the department, referring families to support services and intervening

where necessary (including making court applications when an order is required to protect a child and placing children in out-of-home care).

Other areas of government also have a role in child protection and provide services for children who have come into contact with community services departments for protective reasons. Examples include:

- police services, which investigate serious allegations of child abuse and neglect, particularly criminal matters, and may also work on child protection assessments with State and Territory community services departments
- courts, which decide whether a child will be placed on an order
- education and child care services, which provide services for these children and also conduct mandatory reporting and protective behaviours education in some jurisdictions
- health services, which support the assessment of child protection matters and deliver therapeutic, counselling and other services.

Size and scope

The child protection system

Child protection legislation, policies and practices vary among jurisdictions, but the broad processes in the child protection system are similar (figure 15.1).¹ State and Territory community services departments are advised of concerns about the wellbeing of children through reports to the department. Reports may be made by people mandated to report (such as medical practitioners, police services, and school teachers and principals) or by other members of the community. These reports are then assessed and classified as child protection notifications, child concern reports or matters requiring some other kind of response. The most common sources of notification for finalised investigations in 2002-03 were school personnel, police, parents and guardians, other relatives and friends, and neighbours (AIHW 2005).

Jurisdictions count notifications at different points in the response to a report, ranging from the point of initial contact with the source of the report to the end of a

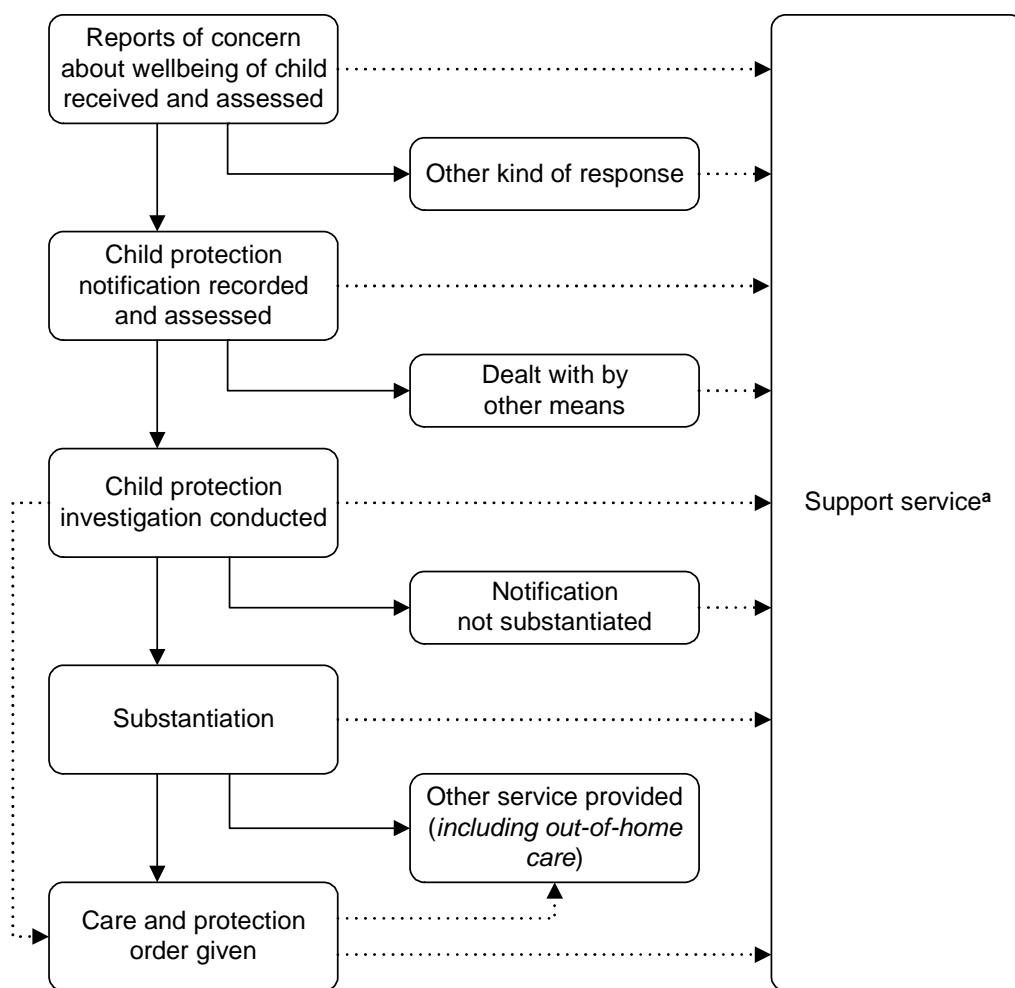
¹ Child protection services, care and protection orders and out-of-home care relate to children aged 0–17 years. Rates of children subject to notifications, investigations and substantiations, however, are calculated for children aged 0–16 years, given differences in jurisdictions' legislation, policies and practices regarding children aged 17 years.

screening and decision making process. This means the number of notifications is not strictly comparable across jurisdictions.

Notification

All jurisdictions except Victoria, Tasmania, the ACT and the NT screen incoming reports before deciding whether they will be designated and counted as a notification, thus reducing the proportion of reports that become notifications. WA undertakes a further screening process designed to differentiate between reports about harm/maltreatment and child and family concerns. This reduces the number of notifications, in that only reports about child harm/maltreatment are the subject of this report.

Figure 15.1 Child protection system



Note: Dashed lines indicate that clients may or may not receive these services, depending on need.

^a Support services include family support or family preservation services provided by community service departments and referrals to other agencies.

In all jurisdictions, notifications are investigated when deemed appropriate, based on the policies and practices in that jurisdiction. Once it has been decided that an investigation is required, the investigation process is similar across jurisdictions. The community services department may obtain further information about the child and his or her family by checking information systems for any previous history, undertaking discussion/case planning with agencies and individuals, interviewing/sighting the child and/or interviewing the caregivers/parents. At a minimum, the child is sighted whenever practicable, and the child's circumstances and needs are assessed. This investigation process determines whether the notification is substantiated or not substantiated (figure 15.1).

Although notifications are defined differently across jurisdictions, around 144 942 children aged 0–16 years were the subject of child protection notifications in 2003-04. Nationally, the rate of notifications per 1000 children in the population aged 0–16 years was 32.0 in 2003-04. Across jurisdictions, the rate was highest in Tasmania (47.0) and lowest in WA (4.9) (table 15A.8).

Indigenous children

Data on the number of notifications are collected very early in the child protection process and often before the agency has full knowledge of the child's family circumstances. This lack of full knowledge and the inherent difficulties in identifying Indigenous status mean it is not possible to collect reliable data on the number of notifications by Indigenous status.

Substantiation

The criteria for substantiation vary across jurisdictions. In the past, child protection legislation and policy focused on the identification and investigation of narrowly defined incidents that were broadly grouped as types of abuse or neglect. Across all jurisdictions, however, the focus is shifting away from the actions of parents and guardians, towards the desired outcomes for the child, the identification and investigation of actual and/or likely harm to the child, and the child's needs.

If an investigation results in substantiation, intervention by the relevant community services department may be needed to protect the child. This intervention can take a number of forms, including one or more of: referral to other services, supervision and support, an application to court, and a placement in out-of-home care.

Across Australia, at least 23 862 children were the subject of a substantiation in 2003-04 (excluding NSW, which could not provide substantiation data for 2003-04). The rate of children who were the subject of a substantiation per 1000

children in the population aged 0–16 years was 7.9. Across jurisdictions, this rate ranged from 14.0 per 1000 in Queensland to 2.0 per 1000 in WA (table 15A.8).

Indigenous children

Nationally in 2003-04, at least 3086 Indigenous children and 20 776 non-Indigenous children were the subject of a substantiation (excluding NSW, which could not provide substantiation data for 2003-04). The rate of children who were the subject of a substantiation per 1000 children in the population aged 0–16 years was 21.8 for Indigenous children and 7.2 for non-Indigenous children (table 15A.8).

Care and protection orders

Although child protection substantiations are often resolved without the need for a court order (which is usually a last resort), recourse to the court may take place at any point in the child protection investigation process (figure 15.1). The types of order available vary across jurisdictions.

Across Australia, at least 14 627 children were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2004 (excluding NSW, which could not provide care and protection order data for 30 June 2004). The rate of children on care and protection orders per 1000 children in the population aged 0–17 years was 4.6. Across jurisdictions, this rate ranged from 5.8 per 1000 in the NT to 3.4 per 1000 in WA (table 15A.8).

Indigenous children

Nationally, at least 2944 Indigenous children and 11 683 non-Indigenous children were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2004 (excluding NSW, which could not provide care and protection order data for 30 June 2004). The rate of children on care and protection orders per 1000 children in the population aged 0–17 years was 19.6 for Indigenous children and 3.8 for non-Indigenous children (table 15A.8).

Out-of-home care

Out-of-home care is one of a range of services provided to families and children where there is a need to provide safe care for a child. The current emphasis in policy and practice is to maintain the child within the family if possible and to place a child in out-of-home care only if this will improve the outcome for the child. If it is necessary to remove the child from his or her home, then placement with the wider family or community is sought where possible, particularly in the case of

Indigenous children (AIHW 2005). Continued emphasis is being placed on improving case planning and case management processes, to facilitate the safe return home of children in out-of-home care and to maximise case workers' contact time with children and families.

Across Australia, 21 795 children were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2004. The rate of children in out-of-home care per 1000 children in the population aged 0–17 years was 4.5. Across jurisdictions, this ranged from 5.7 per 1000 in NSW to 3.5 per 1000 in SA and WA (table 15A.11).

Indigenous children

Nationally, 5059 Indigenous children and 16 736 non-Indigenous children were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2004. The rate of children in out-of-home care per 1000 children in the population aged 0–17 years was 23.7 for Indigenous children and 3.7 for non-Indigenous children (table 15A.11).

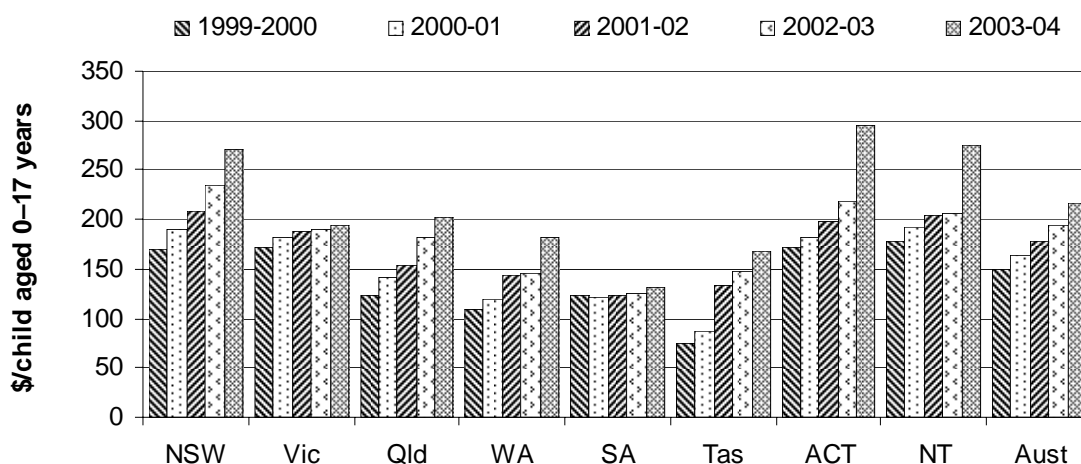
Funding

Recurrent expenditure on child protection and out-of-home care services was at least \$1041.4 million across Australia in 2003-04 — a real increase of \$110.8 million (11.9 per cent) from the 2002-03 expenditure. Nationally, out-of-home care services accounted for the majority (61.3 per cent, or \$638.6 million) of this expenditure. Some jurisdictions have difficulty in separating expenditure on child protection from expenditure on out-of-home care services (table 15A.1).

Nationally, real recurrent expenditure per child aged 0–17 years was \$217 in 2003-04. This varied across jurisdictions, from \$296 in the ACT to \$131 in SA (figure 15.2). Real recurrent expenditure on child protection and out-of-home care services per child aged 0–17 years increased in all jurisdictions between 2002-03 and 2003-04.

It is an objective of the Review to report comparable estimates of costs. Ideally, the full range of costs to government would be determined on a comparable basis across jurisdictions. Where the full costs cannot be counted, costs should be estimated on a consistent basis across jurisdictions. In the area of child protection, however, there are differences across jurisdictions in the expenditure reported. (Table 15A.4 identifies the level of consistency across jurisdictions for a number of expenditure items.) The scope of child protection systems also varies across jurisdictions, and expenditure on some services may be included for some jurisdictions and not for others (see page 15.6 for a discussion of the child protection system).

Figure 15.2 Real recurrent expenditure on child protection and out-of-home care services (2003-04 dollars)



Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 15A.1.

15.2 Framework of child protection and out-of-home care services performance indicators

The framework of performance indicators for child protection and out-of-home care services is based on shared government objectives (box 15.3).

Box 15.3 Objectives for child protection and out-of-home care services

The aims of child protection services are to:

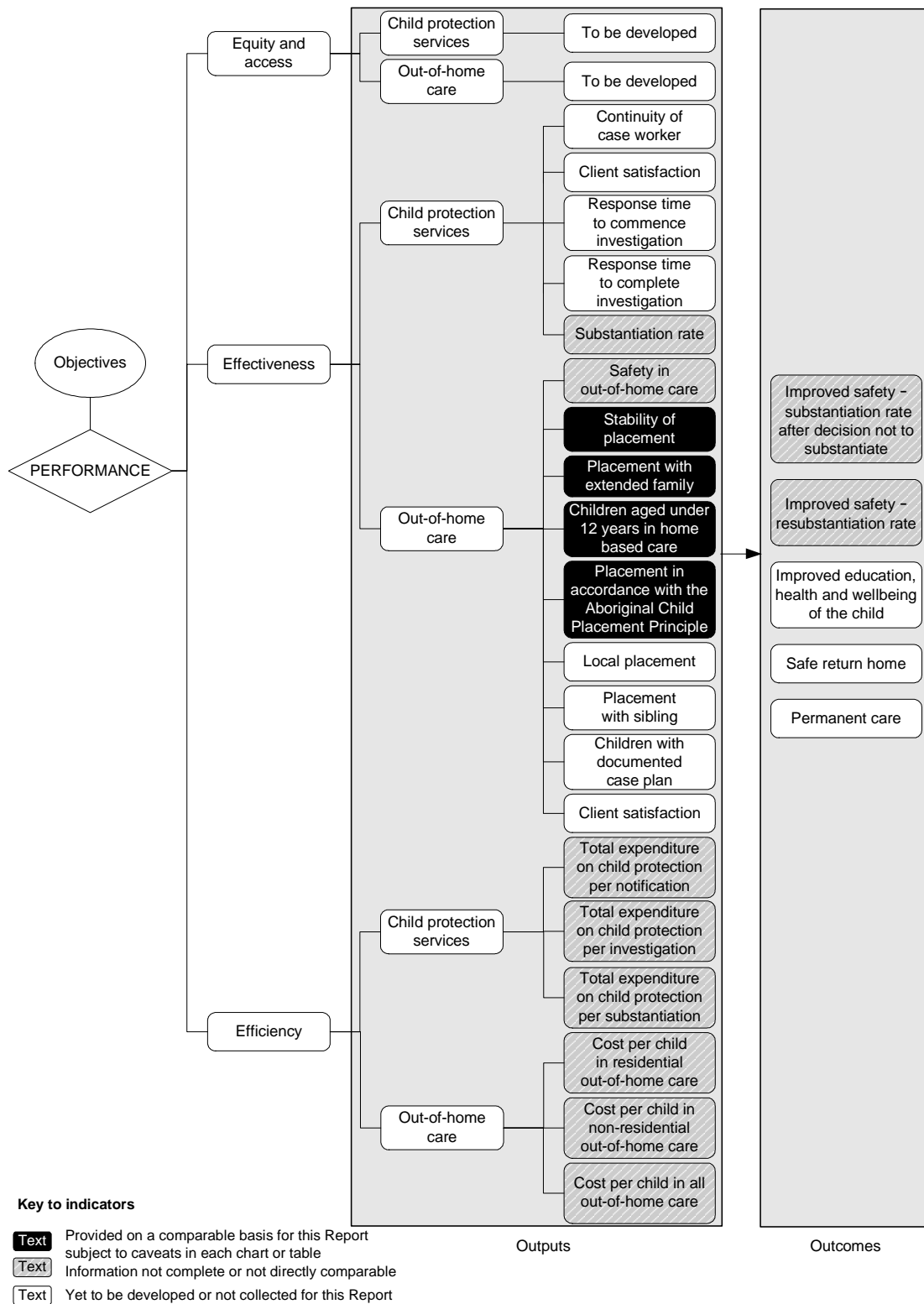
- protect children and young people at risk of harm within their family or in circumstances in which the family of the child or young person does not have the capacity to protect them
- assist families to protect children and young people.

The aim of out-of-home care services is to provide quality care for children and young people aged 17 years or under who cannot live with their parents for reasons of safety or family crisis.

Child protection and out-of-home care services should be provided in an efficient and effective manner.

The performance indicator framework and those indicators that are comparable in the 2005 Report are shown in figure 15.3. For data that are not considered strictly

Figure 15.3 Performance indicators for child protection and out-of-home care services



comparable, the text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. Chapter 1 discusses data comparability from a Report-wide perspective (see section 1.6).

15.3 Key child protection and out-of-home care services performance indicator results

Different delivery contexts, locations and types of client may affect the effectiveness and efficiency of child protection services. Appendix A contains detailed statistics that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators.

Outputs

Equity and access

The Steering Committee has identified equity and access as a key area for further development in future reports (box 15.4).

Box 15.4 Access to child protection and out-of-home care services by different groups

These indicators will provide output indicators of governments' objective to ensure that all clients have fair and equitable access to services on the basis of relative need and available resources.

These indicators are under development and data are currently not collected. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Effectiveness

Child protection services — continuity of case worker

The Steering Committee has identified 'continuity of case worker' as an indicator of the effectiveness of child protection services (box 15.5). No data on this indicator, however, were available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.5 Continuity of case worker

This indicator will provide an output indicator of governments' objective to ensure child protection services are delivered in an effective manner. The turnover of workers is a frequent criticism of the quality of child protection services. Effective intervention requires a productive working relationship to be developed between the worker and the child and family. Some changes in case worker, however, are requested by the family and are outside the control of the child protection service.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Child protection services — client satisfaction

The Steering Committee has identified 'client satisfaction' as an indicator of the effectiveness of child protection services (box 15.6). No data on this indicator, however, were available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.6 Client satisfaction

This indicator will provide an output indicator of governments' objective to provide high quality services that meet the needs of recipients.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Child protection services — response time to commence investigation

The Steering Committee has identified 'response time to commence investigation' as an indicator of the effectiveness of child protection services (box 15.7). No data on this indicator, however, were available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.7 Response time to commence investigation

This indicator will provide an output indicator of governments' objective to minimise the risk of harm to the child by responding to notifications of possible child protection incidents by commencing investigations in a timely manner.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Child protection services — response time to complete investigation

The Steering Committee has identified ‘response time to complete investigation’ as an indicator of the effectiveness of child protection services (box 15.8). No data on this indicator, however, were available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.8 Response time to complete investigation

This indicator will provide an output indicator of governments’ objective to minimise the risk of harm to the child by responding to notifications of possible child protection incidents by completing investigations in a timely manner.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Child protection services — substantiation rate

The ‘substantiation rate’ measures the effective targeting of child protection services (box 15.9).

Box 15.9 Substantiation rate

The ‘substantiation rate’ is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments’ objective to target investigations to those notifications where a substantive child abuse/neglect incident has occurred. It also provides an indication of the extent to which government has avoided the human and financial costs of an investigation where no harm has occurred.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of finalised investigations where harm or risk of harm was substantiated.

The ‘substantiation rate’ should be neither ‘extremely high’ nor ‘extremely low’.

A very low ‘substantiation rate’ may suggest that notifications and investigations are not accurately targeted at appropriate cases, with the undesirable consequence of distress to families and undermining the chances that families will voluntarily seek support. Low substantiation rates may also indicate that the scarce resources of the child protection system are being overwhelmed and that screening should be tightened. On the other hand, a very high ‘substantiation rate’ may indicate that either some appropriate cases are being overlooked at notification and investigation or that the criteria for substantiation are bringing ‘lower risk’ families into the statutory system.

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Box 15.9 (Continued)

Finalised investigations that were substantiated may fluctuate because of policy, funding and practice change, such as better targeting of investigative resources, the impact of mandatory reporting or other factors such as increased community awareness and willingness to notify suspected instances of child abuse, neglect or harm.

Due to the method difficulties in identifying the source of annual fluctuations in substantiation rates, differences across jurisdictions (when comparable data are available) and changes over time within jurisdictions are more appropriately used to prompt further analysis, rather than to be considered as definitive performance information.

Data that are comparable across jurisdictions were not available for this indicator because definitions of substantiation vary across jurisdictions, but data are comparable within each jurisdiction over time unless otherwise stated (figure 15.4).

In 2003-04, the proportion of finalised child protection investigations that were substantiated increased in all jurisdictions except WA and SA, where it declined slightly, from the 2002-03 proportion (figure 15.4) (excluding NSW, which could not provide substantiation data for 2003-04).

Out-of-home care — safety in out-of-home care

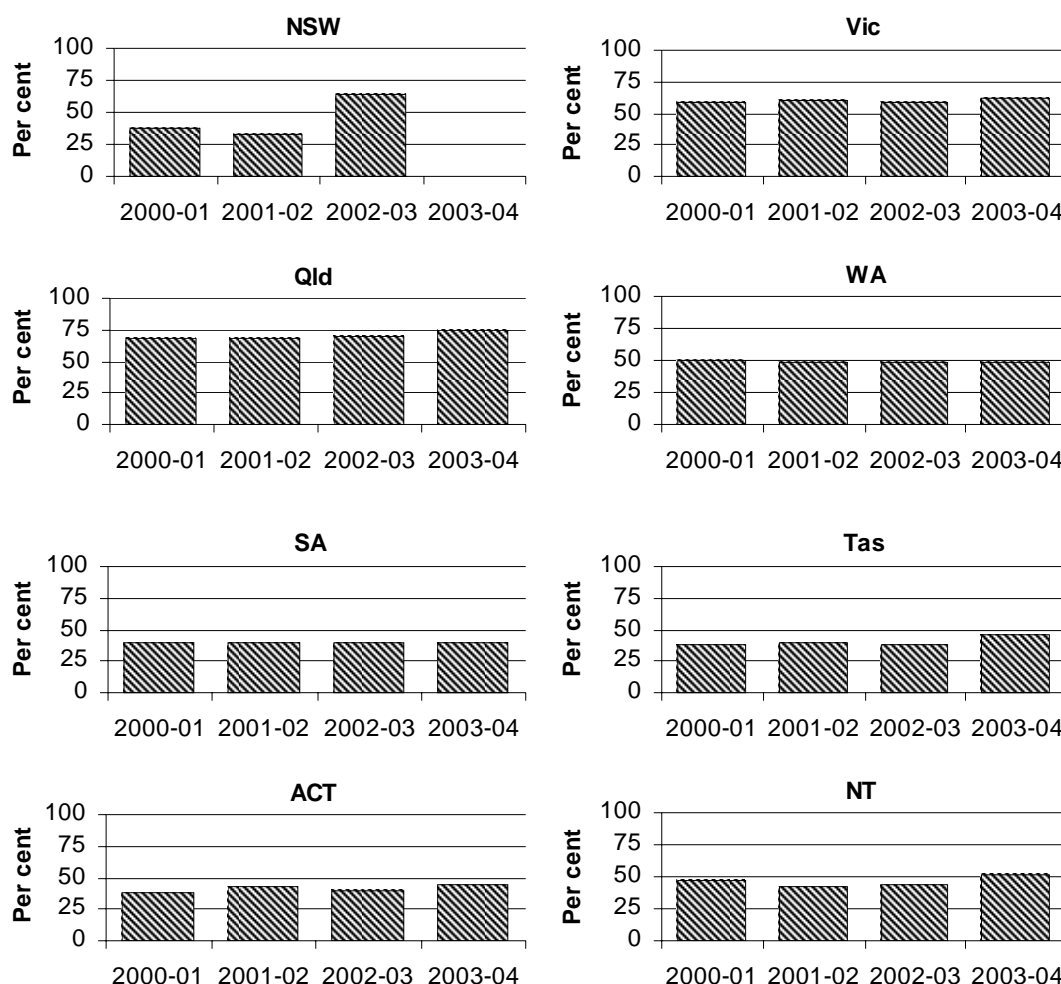
One indicator of the effectiveness of out-of-home care is the safety of clients in care situations (box 15.10).

Box 15.10 Safety in out-of-home care

'Safety in out-of-home care' is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments' objective to provide children who are under the care of the State with a safe home environment.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of substantiations where those responsible for harm or risk were carers or other people living in households providing out-of-home care. A low proportion is desirable.

Figure 15.4 Proportion of finalised child protection investigations that were substantiated^{a, b, c}



^a Data are not comparable across jurisdictions because definitions of substantiation vary significantly. Consequently, rates should not be compared across jurisdictions. ^b NSW child protection data from 2002-03 onwards are not comparable with data for previous years. ^c NSW was only able to provide limited data for 2003-04 due to the introduction of a new client information system. Full data are expected to be available for the 2006 Report.

Sources: AIHW (unpublished) *Child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations, Australia* data collection; tables 15A.33, 15A.50, 15A.67, 15A.84, 15A.101, 15A.118, 15A.135 and 15A.152.

Queensland, WA, Tasmania and the ACT provided 2003-04 data on the incidence of child protection substantiations where the person believed responsible for harm or risk to the child was either the carer or another person living in the household providing out-of-home care. These substantiations generally made up less than 1 per cent of total substantiations, except in Queensland where it was 8.1 per cent (table 15A.20). For WA, the data include abuse by foster carers or workers in placement services, but not abuse by others living in the household.

Out-of-home care — stability of placement

‘Stability of placement’ for children placed away from their family for protective reasons is an important indicator of service quality, particularly for those children who require long term placements (box 15.11). Data were collected on the number of different placements for children on a care and protection order who exited out-of-home care in 2003-04. Data were grouped according to the length of time in care (less than 12 months and 12 months or more).

Box 15.11 Stability of placement

‘Stability of placement’ is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments’ objective to provide high quality services that meet the needs of recipients on the basis of relative need and available resources.

This indicator is defined as the number of placements that a child has had during a period of continuous out-of-home care. Data are collected only for children who are on orders and who exit care during the reporting period.

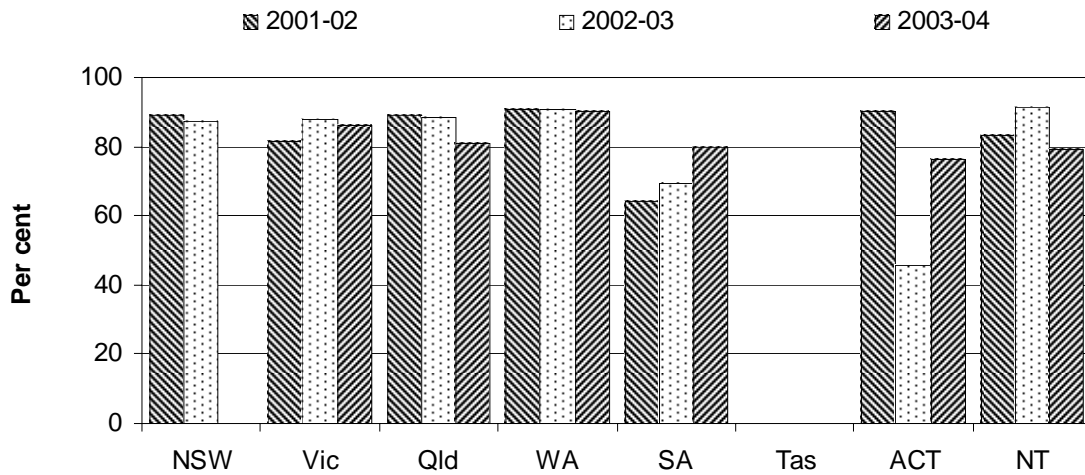
A low number of child placements (one or two) per period of care is desirable, but must be balanced against other placement quality indicators, such as placements in compliance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, local placements, and placements with siblings.

It needs to be noted that children may have multiple placements for good reasons, (for example, an initial placement followed by a longer term placement) or it may be desirable to change placements to achieve better child–family compatibility. It is not desirable for a child to stay in an unsatisfactory or unsupportive placement. Also, older children are more likely to have multiple placements as they move towards independence and voluntarily seek alternate placements.

There are limitations to counting placement stability using an exit cohort rather than entry cohort longitudinal data, because the sample is biased to children from recent entry cohorts with relatively short stays in care, and these children are likely to have experienced fewer placements. This indicator should be interpreted in conjunction with other placement indicators.

In all jurisdictions able to provide data, except the ACT and the NT, more than 80 per cent of the children on a care and protection order who exited care after less than 12 months experienced only one or two placements in 2003-04. The proportion of children experiencing only one or two placements ranged from 90.3 per cent in WA to 76.1 per cent in the ACT (figure 15.5).

Figure 15.5 Proportion of children on a care and protection order exiting care after less than 12 months, who had 1 or 2 placements^{a, b, c, d, e}



^a Data refer to children exiting care during the relevant financial year. ^b Refer to footnotes in the source table for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^c Data for Tasmania were not available. ^d NSW child protection data from 2002-03 onwards are not comparable with data for previous years. ^e NSW was only able to provide limited data for 2003-04 due to the introduction of a new client information system. Full data are expected to be available for the 2006 Report.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Children in out-of-home care, Australia* data collection; table 15A.19.

Across jurisdictions, children who had been in out-of-home care longer tended to have had more placements. The proportion of children exiting care in 2003-04 after 12 months or more who had experienced one or two placements ranged from 66.4 per cent in Victoria to 31.5 per cent in SA (figure 15.6).

Out-of-home care — placement with extended family

The type of placement is another indicator of the quality of child placement. Placing children with their relatives or kin is generally preferred for children in out-of-home care (box 15.12).

Box 15.12 Placement with extended families

'Placement with extended families' is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments' objective to provide services that meet the needs of the recipients on the basis of relative need and available resources. Placing children with their relatives or kin is generally the preferred out-of-home care placement option. This option is

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Box 15.12 (Continued)

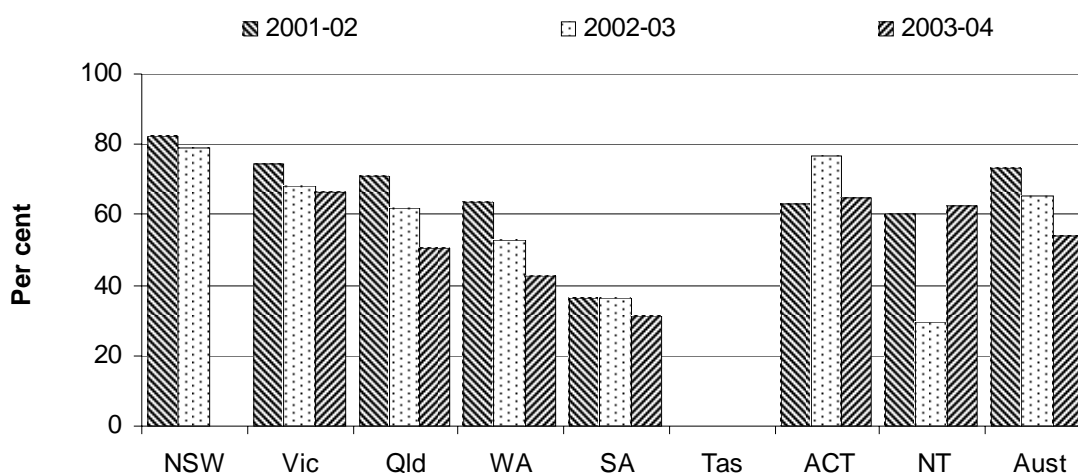
generally associated with better long term outcomes due to increased continuity, familiarity and stability for the child. Relatives are more likely to have or form long term emotional bonds with the child. Placement with familiar people can help to overcome the loss of attachment and belonging that can occur when children are placed out-of-home.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of all children in out-of-home care who are placed with relatives or kin who receive government financial assistance to care for that child.

A reasonably high rate for this indicator is considered desirable, but this is one factor among many that must be considered in the placement decision.

Placements with extended family may not always be the best option: long standing family dynamics may undermine the pursuit of case goals such as reunification; and the possibility of intergenerational abuse must be considered. In addition, depending on the individual circumstances of children, it may be more important to have a local placement that enables continuity at school, for example, rather than a distant placement with relatives.

Figure 15.6 Proportion of children on a care and protection order exiting care after 12 months or more, who had 1 or 2 placements^{a, b, c, d, e}

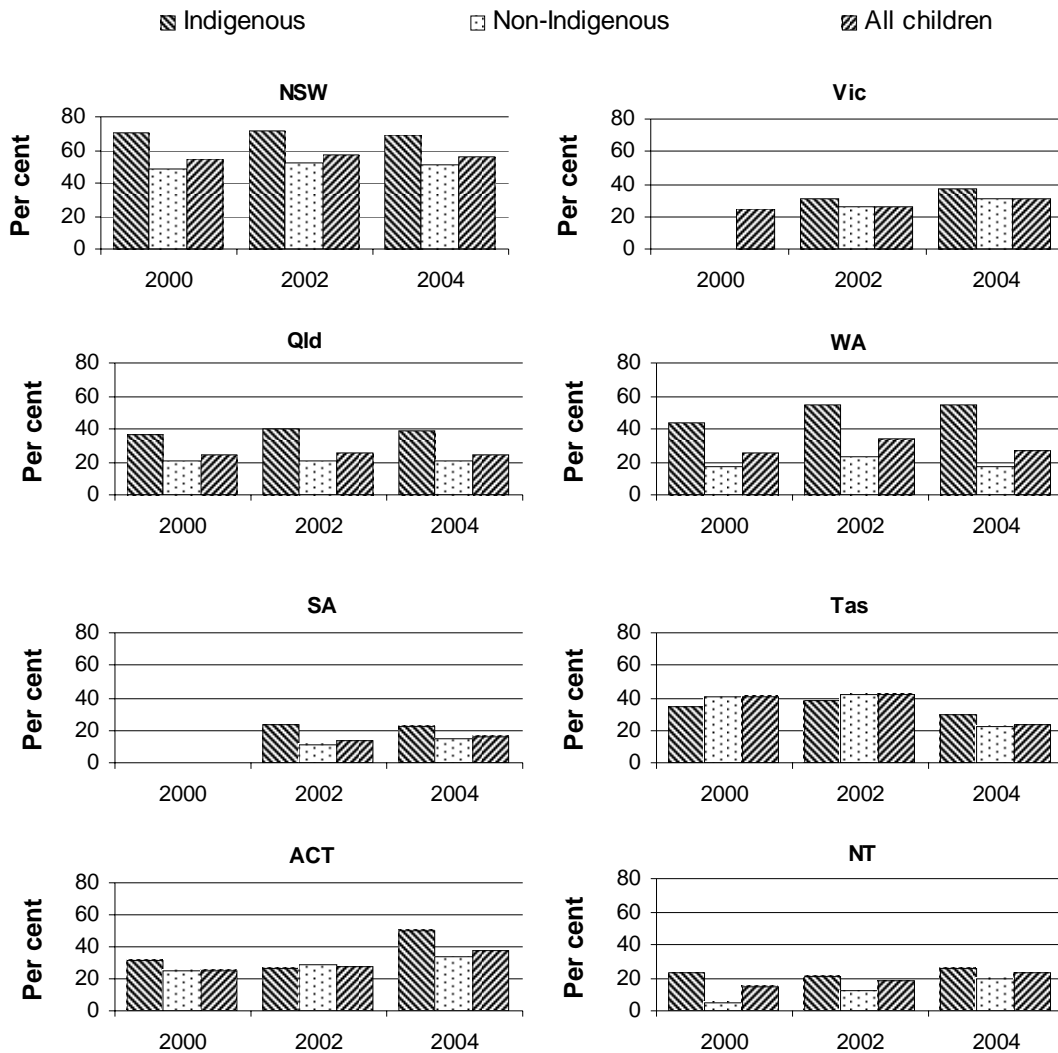


^a Data refer to children exiting care during the relevant financial year. ^b Refer to footnotes in the source table for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^c Data for Tasmania were not available. ^d NSW child protection data from 2002-03 are not comparable with data for previous years. ^e NSW was only able to provide limited data for 2003-04 due to the introduction of a new client information system. Full data are expected to be available for the 2006 Report.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Children in out-of-home care, Australia* data collection; table 15A.19.

The proportion of children placed with relatives or kin at 30 June 2004 ranged from 55.5 per cent in NSW to 16.1 per cent in SA. The proportion was greater for Indigenous children than for non-Indigenous children in all jurisdictions (figure 15.7).

Figure 15.7 **Proportion of children in out-of-home care placed with relatives/kin, by Indigenous status, 30 June^a**



^a Victoria could not provide data by Indigenous status before 2001. SA could not provide data for 2000. Sources: AIHW (unpublished) *Children in out-of-home care, Australia* data collection; table 15A.16.

Out-of-home care — children aged under 12 years in home-based care

Placing children in home-based care is generally considered to be in their best interests, particularly for younger children (box 15.13).

Box 15.13 Children aged under 12 years in home-based care

'Children aged less than 12 years in home-based care' is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments' objective to provide services which meet the needs of the recipients.

Placing children in home-based care is generally considered to be in their best interests, particularly for younger children. Children will generally make better developmental progress (and have more ready access to normal childhood experiences) in family settings rather than in residential care.

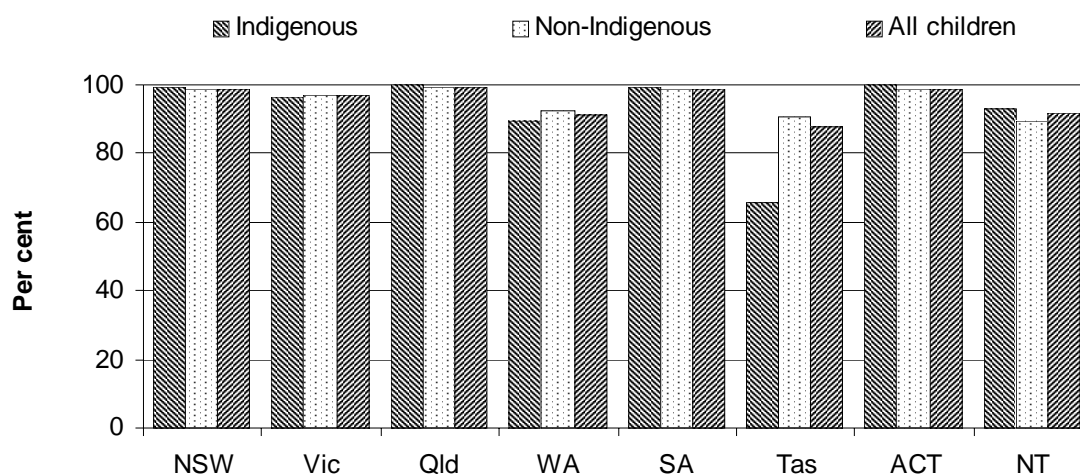
This indicator is defined as the proportion of children less than 12 years of age placed in home-based care divided by the total number of children under 12 years in out-of-home care.

A high rate for this indicator is considered desirable.

This indicator should be interpreted in conjunction with other placement indicators.

The proportion of children aged under 12 years in care who were placed in home-based care (excluding family group homes) at 30 June 2004 ranged from 99.6 per cent in Queensland to 87.9 per cent in Tasmania. In all jurisdictions except WA, Tasmania and the NT, the proportion of Indigenous children aged under 12 years who were placed in home-based care was broadly similar to that of non-Indigenous children. In WA and Tasmania, a greater proportion of non-Indigenous children were placed in home-based care. In the NT, a greater proportion of Indigenous children were placed in home-based care (figure 15.8).

Figure 15.8 Proportion of children aged under 12 years in out-of-home care and in a home based placement, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2004^a



^a Excluding family group homes.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Children in out-of-home care, Australia* data collection; table 15A.18.

Out-of-home care — placement in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle

Placing Indigenous children in circumstances consistent with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle is generally considered to be in their best interests (box 15.14).

According to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (NLRC 1997), the following hierarchy or placement preference should be pursued in protecting the safety and welfare of Indigenous children:

- placement with the child's extended family (which includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous relatives/kin)
- placement within the child's Indigenous community
- placement with other Indigenous people.

Box 15.14 Placement in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle

'Placement in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle' is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments' objective to protect the safety and welfare of Indigenous children while maintaining the cultural ties and identity of Indigenous children in out-of-home care.

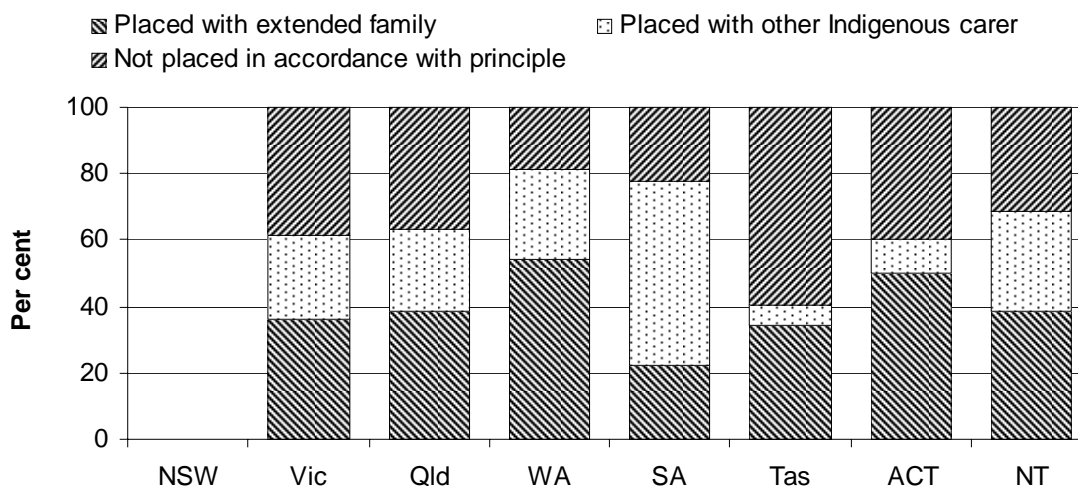
This indicator is defined as the number of Indigenous children placed with the child's extended family, Indigenous community or other Indigenous people, divided by the total number of Indigenous children in out-of-home care. Data are reported separately for children placed (i) with extended family, (ii) with other Indigenous carers, and (iii) not in accord with the Principle.

A high proportion of children placed in accordance with the principle is desirable, but this is one factor among many that must be considered in the placement decision.

All jurisdictions have adopted this principle, either in legislation or policy. The proportion of Indigenous children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2004 who were placed in accordance with the principle ranged from 81.0 per cent in WA to 40.4 per cent in Tasmania (figure 15.9).

The proportion of Indigenous children in out-of-home care who were placed with extended family at 30 June 2004 ranged from 54.3 per cent in WA to 22.0 per cent in SA. Placement with other Indigenous care providers (the child's Indigenous community or other Indigenous people) also complies with the principle. The proportion placed with other Indigenous care providers ranged from 55.5 per cent in SA to 6.4 per cent in Tasmania (table 15A.17).

Figure 15.9 **Placement of Indigenous children in out-of-home care, 30 June 2004^{a, b, c, d}**



^a Excludes Indigenous children living independently and those whose living arrangements were unknown. ^b 'Placed with another Indigenous carer' includes those living in Indigenous residential care. ^c Data for Tasmania and the ACT relate to a small number of Indigenous children (47 and 58 respectively) in care at 30 June 2004. ^d NSW was only able to provide limited data for 2003-04 due to the introduction of a new client information system. Full data are expected to be available for the 2006 Report.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Children in out-of-home care, Australia* data collection; table 15A.17.

Out-of-home care — local placement

The Steering Committee has identified 'local placement' as an indicator of the effectiveness of out-of-home care services (box 15.15). Data on this indicator, however, were not available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.15 Local placement

This indicator will provide an output indicator of governments' objective to provide services which meet the needs of the recipients.

Although data are currently not collected on this indicator, it is defined as the proportion of children attending the same school after entering care. Data will be provided for 3 and 12 months after entering care.

A placement close to where they lived prior to entering out-of-home care is believed to enhance the stability, familiarity and security of the child. It enables some elements of the child's life to remain unchanged (for example, they can continue attending the same school and retain their friendship network). It may also facilitate family contact if the child's parents continue to live nearby.

(Continued on next page)

Box 15.15 (Continued)

There is a need to balance this against other quality indicators of this type. For example, placement with a sibling or relative might preclude a 'local placement'. Also, a child might move to a new school in accordance with their progress at school (that is, a move from primary to secondary school).

A high rate of 'local placement' is desirable but this is one factor among many that must be considered in the placement decision.

Out-of-home care — placement with sibling

The Steering Committee has identified 'placement with sibling' as an indicator of the effectiveness of out-of-home care services (box 15.16). No data on this indicator, however, were available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.16 Placement with sibling

This indicator will provide an output indicator of governments' objective to provide services which meet the needs of the recipients.

Placement of siblings together promotes stability and continuity. It is a long standing placement principle that siblings should be placed together, where possible, in the interests of their emotional wellbeing. Children are likely to be more secure and have a sense of belonging within their family when placed with siblings.

Although data are currently not collected on this indicator, it is defined as the proportion of children who are on finalised orders and in out-of-home care at 30 June who have siblings also on orders and in out-of-home care, who are placed with at least one of their siblings.

A high rate of placement with siblings is desirable but this is one factor among many that must be considered in the placement decision. In circumstances of sibling abuse, or when a particular child in a family has been singled out as the target for abuse or neglect, keeping siblings together might not be appropriate.

Out-of-home care — children with documented case plan

The Steering Committee has identified 'children with documented case plan' as an indicator of the effectiveness of out-of-home care services (box 15.17). No data on this indicator, however, were available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.17 Children with documented case plan

This indicator will provide an output indicator of governments' objective to provide services that meet the needs of the recipients.

Case planning is essential to structured and purposeful work to support children's optimal development. Case plans outline intervention goals such as improved parent-child attachments, reunification or other forms of permanency, and set out the means to achieve these goals such as frequency of family contact and any remedial or special services considered appropriate for the individual child. Case plans also allow for the monitoring of a child's time in care.

Although data are currently not collected on this indicator, it is defined as the proportion of children on a finalised guardianship or custody order and in out-of-home care who have a documented case plan.

A high rate is desirable. All children should have a case plan.

The quality of the case plan must also be considered: the mere existence of the case plan does not guarantee that appropriate case work is occurring that meets the child's needs.

Out-of-home care — client satisfaction

The Steering Committee has identified 'client satisfaction' as an indicator of the effectiveness of out-of-home care services (box 15.18). No data on this indicator, however, were available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.18 Client satisfaction

This indicator will provide an output indicator of governments' objective to provide high quality services that meet the needs of recipients.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Efficiency

Understanding the efficiency of the child protection systems that they administer helps State and Territory governments to identify the key cost drivers of their systems and to weigh the efficacy of options for addressing child protection issues.

Challenges in reporting efficiency for child protection systems

Reporting comparable and meaningful efficiency data for child protection services is problematic for a number of reasons, including:

- *different systems and priorities across jurisdictions*: child protection systems in Australia have evolved independently under the auspices of State and Territory governments (section 15.1). This has resulted in variations in the processes and emphases placed on different service delivery paradigms (the different approaches to diversionary options, for example, see figure 15.1).
- *limitations of current information systems*: in most jurisdictions, it is not easy to explicitly identify resources expended on child protection services, out-of-home care services and other support services for families. This is partly due to the historic structure of information systems and the embedding of the government agencies responsible for child protection issues within larger community services departments. (Table 15A.4 identifies the level of consistency in expenditure data across jurisdictions.)

In response to these difficulties, in April 2002 the Review initiated a project to develop a method for annual reporting of efficiency data for a national framework of protection and support pathways (box 15.19).

Box 15.19 The pathways project — outcomes

The pathways project developed and tested a model that will ultimately allow jurisdictions to calculate more meaningful, comparable and robust efficiency measures (the 'pathways method'). The model is based on a top-down application of the activity-based costing method. A set of eight national pathways has been developed as a high level representation of the services that a protection and support client could receive in any jurisdiction. Each pathway consists of common activity groups for which an operational and non-operational resource allocation can be made. These activity groups act as the 'building blocks' for each of the pathways. The aggregate cost of each activity group within the pathway will allow for the unit cost of an individual pathway to be determined. The activity groups are:

- receipt and assessment of initial information about a potential protection and support issue
- provision of initial family support services
- provision of intensive family support services
- secondary information gathering and assessment
- provision of short term protective intervention and coordination services

(Continued on next page)

Box 15.19 (Continued)

- seeking a court order
- provision of longer term protective intervention, support and coordination services
- provision of out-of-home care services.

Before reporting against the activity groups can be undertaken with confidence, further refinement of activity group definitions and counting rules is required. Over the coming 12 months, the Review's Protection and Support Working Group will continue its development work in these areas. Implementation of the model has the potential to significantly improve the quality of national reporting of protection and support services efficiency measures.

Source: SCRCSSP (2003).

Although the framework was endorsed by all jurisdictions, refinement of counting rules and changes to information systems will be necessary before full reporting is possible for all jurisdictions. Partial reporting against the framework is anticipated for the 2006 Report.

Limitations of reported indicators

A preferred efficiency indicator would relate expenditure on particular child protection activities to a measure of output of those activities. As discussed, the pathways method is expected to deliver these data for future reports. In the interim, this Report includes broad proxy indicators for child protection (box 15.20) and out-of-home care efficiency (box 15.21).

Box 15.20 Child protection efficiency indicators

Three different child protection efficiency measures are included as output (efficiency) indicators of governments' objective to maximise the benefit to the community through the efficient use of taxpayer resources: total expenditure on child protection per notification; total expenditure on child protection per investigation; and total expenditure on child protection per substantiation. All three measures are imperfect proxy indicators and have real limitations. They are included as interim measures only, and will be replaced by a more robust method under development.

The three indicators are defined respectively as:

- the total expenditure on all child protection activities divided by the number of notifications

(Continued on next page)

Box 15.20 (Continued)

- the total expenditure on all child protection activities divided by the number of investigations
- the total expenditure on all child protection activities divided by the number of substantiations.

In each case, low expenditure per notification/investigation/substantiation suggests more efficient services but may indicate lower quality or different service delivery models.

These indicators do not represent the unit costs and need to be interpreted with care. Also, they cannot be added together to determine overall child protection efficiency indicators.

Better efficiency indicators would relate expenditure on particular child protection activities to a measure of output of those activities. Work is in progress to develop an activity-based costing method that will allow this type of reporting from existing information systems.

Box 15.21 Out-of-home care efficiency indicators

Three different out-of-home care efficiency measures are included as an output (efficiency) indicator of governments' objective to maximise the benefit to the community through the efficient use of taxpayer resources: expenditure per child in residential out-of-home care; expenditure per child in non-residential out-of-home care; and expenditure per child in all out-of-home care.

The three indicators are defined respectively as:

- the total annual expenditure on residential out-of-home care divided by the number of children in residential out-of-home care at 30 June
- the total annual expenditure on non-residential out-of-home care divided by the number of children in non-residential out-of-home care at 30 June
- the total annual expenditure on all out-of-home care divided by the number of children in all out-of-home care at 30 June

In each case, lower expenditure per child in care suggests more efficient services but may also indicate lower service quality.

These indicators needs to be interpreted with care because they do not represent unit cost measures. Expenditure per child in care at 30 June overstates the cost per child

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Box 15.21 (Continued)

because significantly more children are in care during a year than at a point in time. In addition, the indicator does not reflect the length of time that a child spends in care.

Better efficiency indicators would relate expenditure on particular out-of-home care activities to a measure of output of those activities. Work is currently in progress to develop an activity based costing method which will allow this type of reporting from existing information systems.

Child protection efficiency indicator results

Total expenditure on child protection per notification in 2003-04 ranged from \$7669 in WA to \$668 in Tasmania (figure 15.10a).

Total expenditure on child protection per investigation in 2003-04 ranged from \$7997 in WA to \$3052 in Queensland (excluding NSW, which could not provide data on investigations for 2003-04) (figure 15.10b).

Total expenditure on child protection per substantiation in 2003-04 ranged from \$19 149 in WA to \$5121 in Queensland (excluding NSW, which could not provide data on substantiations for 2003-04) (figure 15.10c).

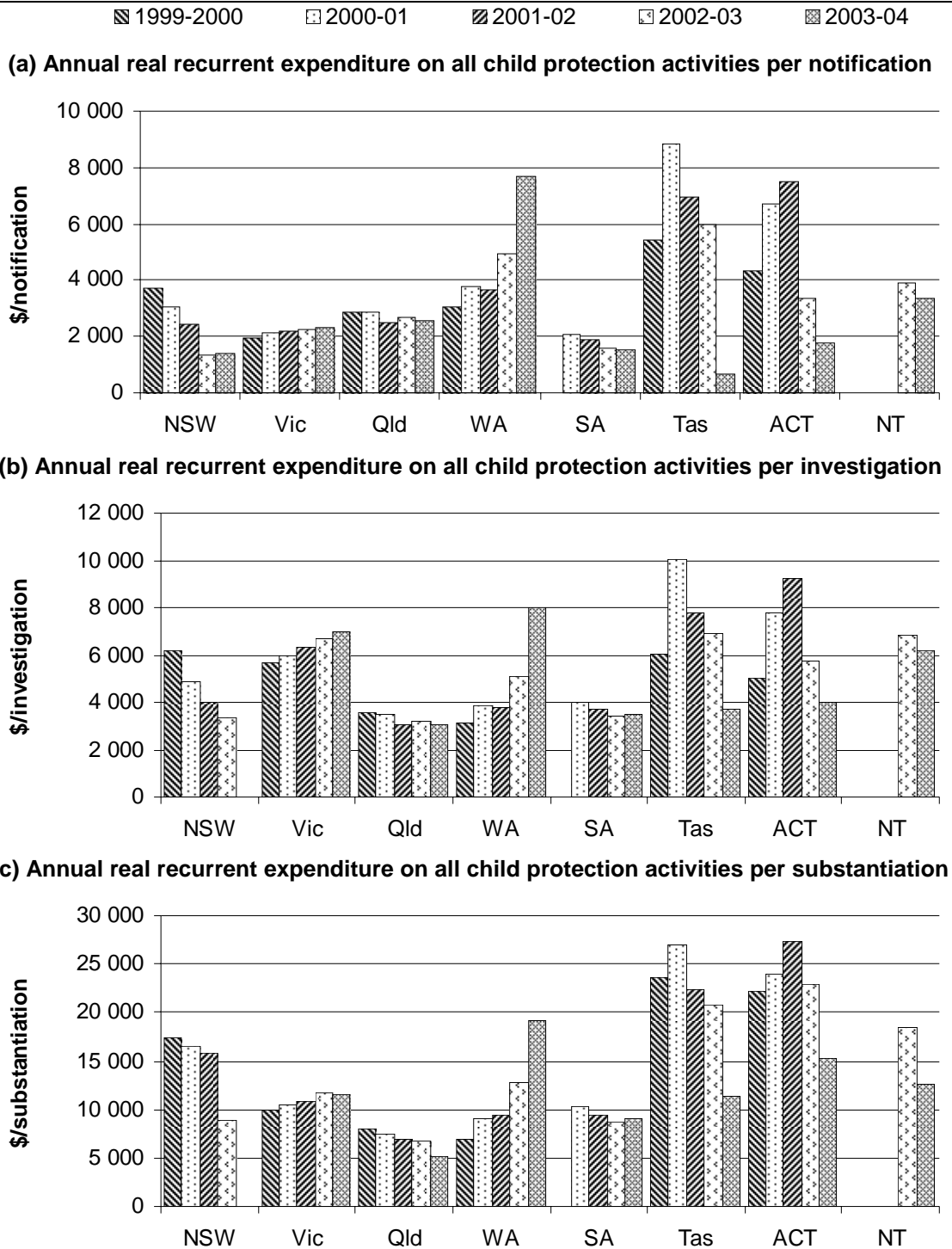
Out-of-home care efficiency indicator results

Victoria, WA, SA and the ACT were able to separate expenditure on out-of-home care into residential care and non-residential care. Across these four jurisdictions, expenditure on residential care at 30 June 2004 ranged from \$172 895 per child in residential care in Victoria to \$73 564 per child in SA at 30 June 2004 (figure 15.11a).

For those jurisdictions that provided data, expenditure on non-residential care ranged from \$40 279 per child in non-residential care in the ACT to \$17 167 per child in SA at 30 June 2004 (figure 15.11b).

All jurisdictions provided data on total expenditure on out-of-home care per child in care at 30 June 2004, which ranged from \$44 131 in the ACT to \$19 136 in SA (figure 15.11c).

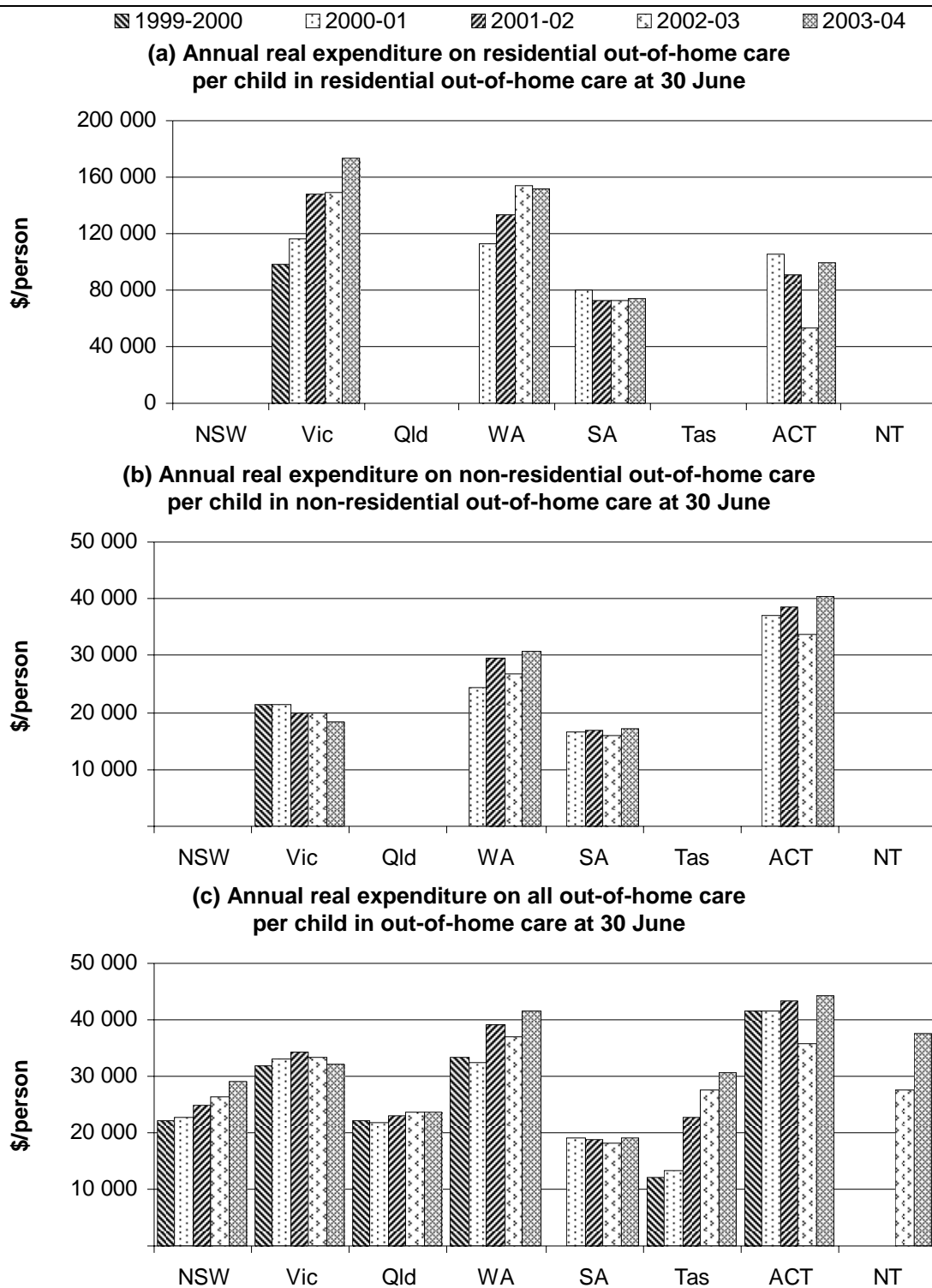
Figure 15.10 Child protection efficiency indicators (2003-04 dollars)^{a, b, c, d}



^a Real expenditure based on ABS gross domestic product price deflator (2003-04 = 100) (table A.26). ^b These data cannot be interpreted as the 'expenditure per notification', 'expenditure per investigation' or 'expenditure per substantiation' because each is based on the total expenditure of all child protection activities. Differences across jurisdictions reflect the quantity of the three activities rather than a difference in unit costs. ^c NSW child protection data from 2002-03 onwards are not comparable with data for previous years. ^d NSW was only able to provide limited data for 2003-04 due to the introduction of a new client information system. Full data are expected to be available for the 2006 Report.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 15A.2.

Figure 15.11 **Out-of-home care efficiency indicators (2003-04 dollars)^{a, b}**



^a Real expenditure based on ABS gross domestic product price deflator (2003-04 = 100) (table A.26). ^b ACT data are affected by the higher subsidy levels for carers, higher award costs in the ACT due to a more recently negotiated agreement, and the effect of a small number of children in care with special high support needs.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 15A.3.

Outcomes

Improved safety — substantiation rate after a decision not to substantiate

Substantiation rate after a decision not to substantiate' is important because it partly reveals the extent to which an investigation has not succeeded in identifying the risk of harm to a child who is subsequently the subject of substantiated harm (box 15.22).

Box 15.22 Improved safety — substantiation after a decision not to substantiate

'Improved safety — substantiation after a decision not to substantiate' is included as an outcome indicator of governments' objective to reduce the risk of harm to children by appropriately assessing notifications of possible child protection incidents.

It also provides a measure of the adequacy of intervention offered to children in terms of protecting them from further harm.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of children who were the subject of an investigation in the previous financial year that led to a decision not to substantiate, and who were later the subject of a substantiation within three or 12 months of the initial decision not to substantiate.

A low rate for this indicator is desirable.

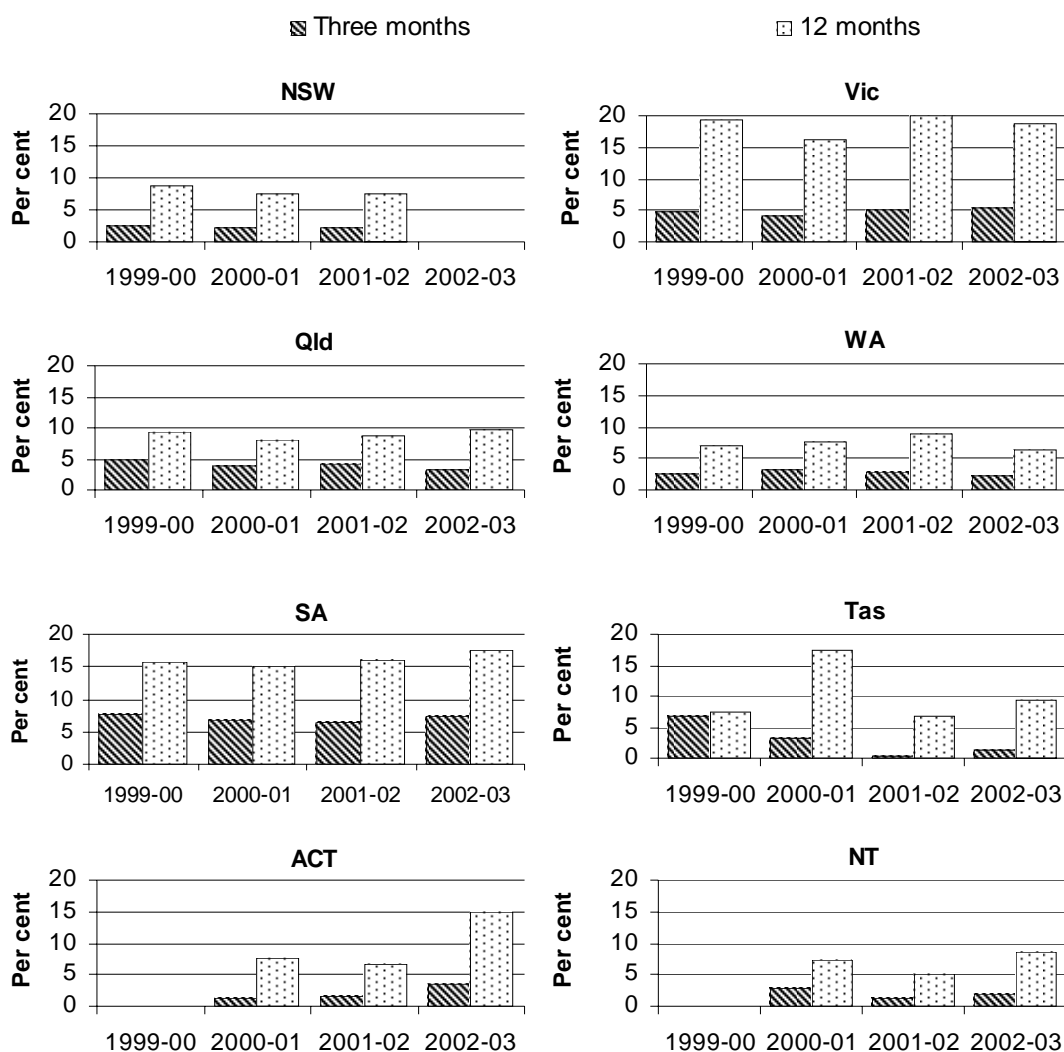
A demonstrable risk of harm might not have existed in the first instance. As such, reported results may be affected by factors beyond the control of child protection services, and circumstances might have changed after the initial decision not to substantiate was made. In addition, this indicator does not distinguish between subsequent substantiations which are related to the initial notification (that is, the same source of risk of harm), and those which are unrelated to the initial notification (that is, a different source of risk of harm).

Data that are comparable across jurisdictions were not available for this indicator, but data are comparable within each jurisdiction over time (figure 15.12).

In all jurisdictions except Queensland and WA, the proportion of children who were the subject of an investigation within three months after a decision not to substantiate increased in 2002-03 compared with the proportion in the previous year (excluding NSW, which did not provide data for 2002-03) (figure 15.12).

The proportion of children who were the subject of an investigation within 12 months after a decision not to substantiate also increased in 2002-03 in all jurisdictions except Victoria and WA (excluding NSW which did not provide data for 2002-03) (figure 15.12).

Figure 15.12 Improved safety — substantiation rate after a decision not to substantiate^{a, b}



^a Data are not comparable across jurisdictions because definitions of substantiation vary significantly. Consequently, rates cannot be compared across jurisdictions. ^b NSW was only able to provide limited data for 2003-04 due to the introduction of a new client information system. Full data are expected to be available for the 2006 Report.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations, Australia* data collection; tables 15A.31, 15A.48, 15A.65, 15A.82, 15A.99, 15A.116, 15A.133 and 15A.150.

Improved safety — resubstantiation rate

The ‘resubstantiation rate’ is important because it partly reveals the extent to which child protection services succeed in preventing the recurrence of abuse and neglect or harm to children (box 15.23).

Box 15.23 Resubstantiation rate

'Resubstantiation rate' is included as an outcome indicator of governments' objective to reduce the risk of harm, and to prevent the recurrence of abuse and neglect or harm to children.

This indicator also partly reveals the extent to which intervention by child protection services has succeeded in preventing further harm.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of children who were the subject of a substantiation in the previous financial year, who were subsequently the subject of a further substantiation within the following three or 12 months.

A low rate for this indicator is desirable.

Reported results may be affected, however, by factors beyond the control of child protection services, such as changes in the family situation (for example, illness, unemployment or a new partner). In addition, this indicator does not distinguish between subsequent substantiations that are related to the initial notification (that is, the same source of risk of harm) and those that are unrelated to the initial notification (that is, a different source of risk of harm).

Data that are comparable across jurisdictions were not available for this indicator, but data are comparable within each jurisdiction over time (figure 15.13).

In WA, SA, the ACT and the NT, the proportion of children who were the subject of a resubstantiation within three months of an initial substantiation increased in 2002-03 compared with the proportion in the previous year; the proportion remained unchanged in Tasmania and fell in all other jurisdictions (excluding NSW, which did not provide data for 2002-03) (figure 15.13).

The proportion of children who were the subject of a resubstantiation within 12 months of an initial substantiation increased in all jurisdictions except Victoria, WA and the NT (excluding NSW, which did not provide data for 2002-03) (figure 15.13).

Improved education, health and wellbeing of the child

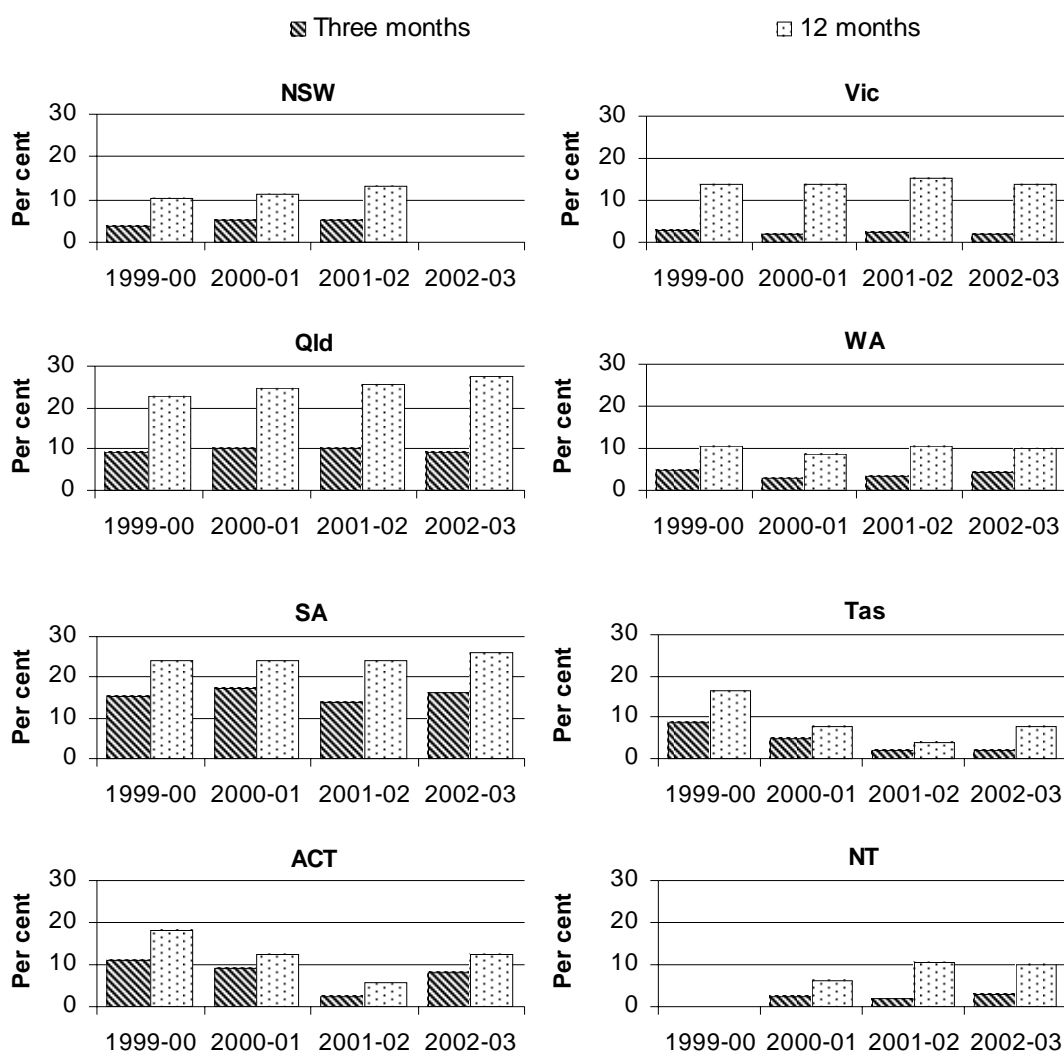
The Steering Committee has identified 'improved education, health and wellbeing of the child' as a key outcome indicator for development for future reports (box 15.24).

Box 15.24 Improved education, health and wellbeing of the child

These indicators will provide an indicator of governments' objective to maximise children's life chances by ensuring children in care have their educational, health and wellbeing needs met.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Figure 15.13 Improved safety — resubstantiation rate^{a, b}



^a Data are not comparable across jurisdictions because definitions of substantiation vary significantly. Consequently, rates cannot be compared across jurisdictions. ^b NSW was only able to provide limited data for 2003-04 due to the introduction of a new client information system. Full data are expected to be available for the 2006 Report.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations, Australia* data collection; tables 15A.32, 15A.49, 15A.66, 15A.83, 15A.100, 15A.117, 15A.134 and 15A.151.

Safe return home

The Steering Committee has identified ‘safe return home’ as a key area for further development of outcome indicators for future reports (box 15.25).

Box 15.25 Safe return home

This indicator will provide an indicator of governments’ objective to remove the risk of harm to the child while maintaining family cohesion. For children who cannot be protected within their family and are removed from home, often the best outcome is when effective intervention to improve their parents’ skills or capacity to care for them enables them to return home.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Permanent care

The Steering Committee has identified ‘permanent care’ as a key area for further development of outcome indicators for future reports (box 15.26).

Box 15.26 Permanent care

This indicator will provide an indicator of governments’ objective to provide appropriate care for children who cannot be safely reunified with their families. Appropriate services are those that minimise the length of time before secure, permanent placement is achieved.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

15.4 Future directions in child protection and out-of-home care services performance reporting

Improving national child protection data

Between 2000 and 2003, the National Child Protection and Support Services (NCPASS) Data Working Group, under the auspice of the National Community Services Information Management Group, reviewed the reporting framework used

to collect the national child protection data. The review aimed to establish the feasibility of updating the national reporting framework so the national data:

- more accurately reflect the current responses of states and territories to child protection and child concern reports
- present a more comprehensive data set, and
- increase the consistency and comparability of the data reported.

The review resulted in the development of a broader framework to count responses to calls received by community services departments about the safety and wellbeing of children. The responses include those that occur outside the formal child protection system. The new framework incorporates data elements such as the provision of advice and information, the assessment of needs, and the provision of general and intensive family support services.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in conjunction with NCPASS, is developing data dictionaries to support the new reporting framework. It is envisaged that these dictionaries will be tested during 2005 and subsequently used by jurisdictions to provide unit record data. This will increase the richness of child protection and out-of-home care data that are currently available with aggregated data.

Client satisfaction

Client views can be used to report on service delivery and to learn important information about how to improve services. Although the use of client surveys in child protection services is not yet common, the Victorian Department of Human Services has measured customer satisfaction in the past. This survey assessed customer satisfaction with client involvement, levels of care, services offered and links to other services, and perceptions of child protection workers. The survey outcomes revealed specific strengths, as well as areas for improvement in service delivery.

15.5 Profile of supported accommodation and assistance

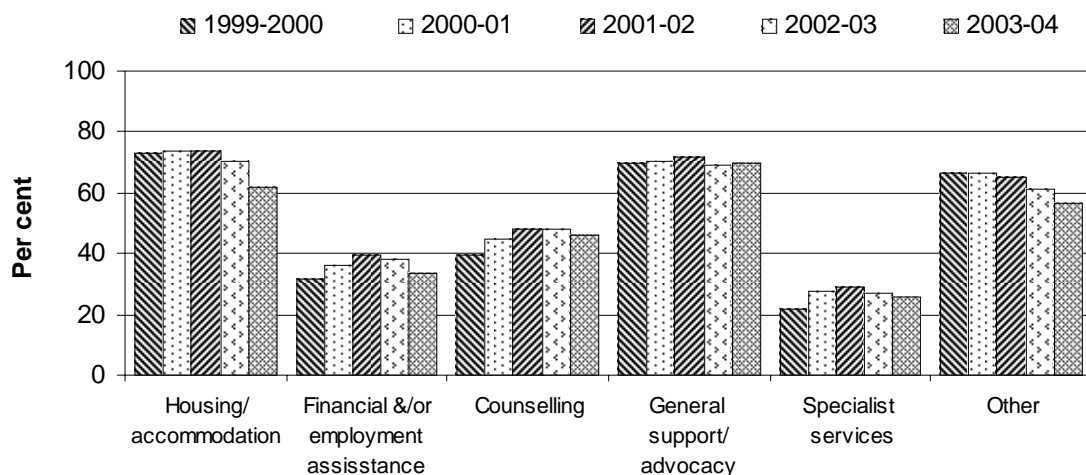
Service overview

Supported accommodation and assistance services aim to assist people who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless as a result of a crisis, including

women and children escaping domestic violence. Sections 15.5–15.8 report on services provided under SAAP. Data descriptors, indicators and terms are defined in section 15.10.

The primary focus of SAAP is to use a case management approach to support homeless people, and adults and children escaping domestic violence. Through this process, clients are offered a range of services, including supported accommodation; counselling; advocacy; links to housing, health, education and employment services; outreach support; brokerage; and meals services. Housing and accommodation services were provided in 62.0 per cent of support periods in 2003-04. General support and advocacy (provided in 69.9 per cent of support periods), counselling (46.2 per cent), financial and employment assistance (33.6 per cent) and specialist services (25.7 per cent) were also commonly provided (figure 15.14).

Figure 15.14 **Services received during a SAAP support period^a**



^a Agencies may provide more than one type of service as part of a single support period, so services provided during a period do not sum to 100 per cent.

Source: SAAP National Data Collection Agency (NDCA) (unpublished) Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.163.

Size and scope

Support services funded by SAAP are provided by agencies to a range of groups, such as homeless families, single men, single women, young people, and adults and children escaping domestic violence. At least 1293 agencies are funded under the SAAP program, and most target principally one client group. Services were delivered in 2003-04 by agencies targeting:

-
- young people (36.7 per cent of agencies)
 - women escaping domestic violence (22.2 per cent)
 - families (9.5 per cent)
 - single men (7.5 per cent)
 - single women (3.6 per cent).

Agencies targeting multiple client groups or providing general support accounted for 20.5 per cent of service providers in 2003-04 (table 15A.164).

Agencies also vary in their service delivery model. The most common models in 2003-04 were the provision of medium term to long term supported accommodation (36.7 per cent of agencies) and the provision of crisis or short term supported accommodation (35.2 per cent). Agencies also provided services other than accommodation, such as outreach support (5.3 per cent of agencies), day support (1.9 per cent), and telephone information and referral (1.2 per cent). A further 12.8 per cent of agencies provided multiple services and 1.9 per cent provided agency support (table 15A.165).

Roles and responsibilities

Non-government agencies, with some local government participation, deliver most SAAP services. The Australian, State and Territory governments jointly fund SAAP, which was established in 1985 to consolidate a number of existing programs. The State and Territory governments have responsibility for the day-to-day management of SAAP, including distributing funding to SAAP funded agencies. Research, strategy, and other planning and development activities are coordinated at the national level by the SAAP National Coordination and Development Committee (which includes representatives of the Australian Government and each State and Territory government).

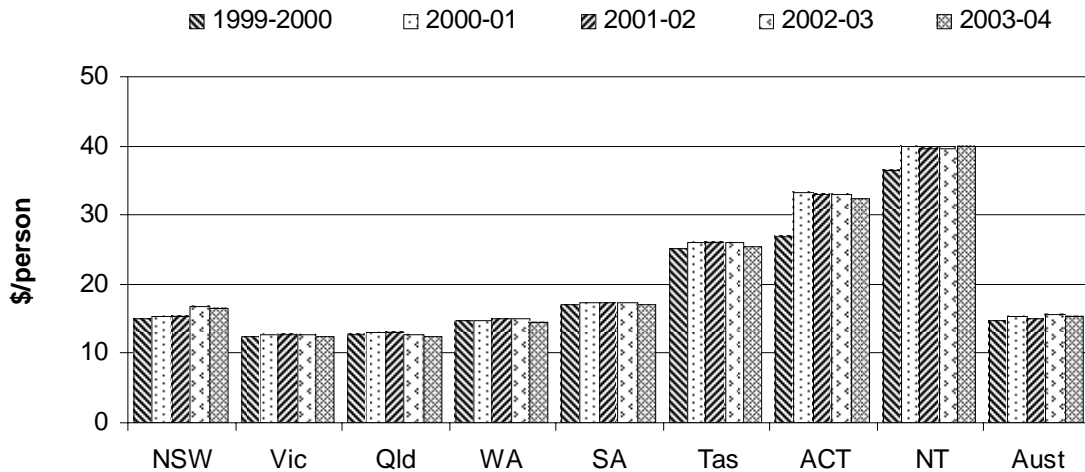
Funding

Recurrent funding of SAAP services was \$303.8 million in 2003-04, of which the Australian Government contributed 56.4 per cent and the states and territories contributed 43.6 per cent (table 15A.166). Recurrent SAAP funding per person in the total population was \$15 nationally in 2003-04. It ranged from \$40 in the NT to \$12 in Victoria and Queensland (figure 15.15).

Combined Australian, State and Territory government funding per person for the period 1999-2000 to 2003-04 increased (in real terms) in NSW, the ACT and the

NT, and remained relatively stable in all other jurisdictions. The largest increase was experienced in the ACT with a rise from \$27 to \$32 over the period (table 15A.168).

Figure 15.15 **Real recurrent SAAP funding in the residential population (2003-04 dollars)^{a, b, c}**



^a Includes total recurrent allocations (including State and Territory level allocations for program administration). ^b The total population figure is not indicative of the demand for these services. ^c Real expenditure, based on the ABS gross domestic product price deflator 2003-04 = 100 (table A.26).

Source: Department of Family and Community Services (DFaCS) (unpublished); table 15A.168.

15.6 Framework of supported accommodation and assistance performance indicators

The performance indicator framework is based on the shared government objectives for SAAP services (box 15.27).

Box 15.27 Objectives for SAAP services

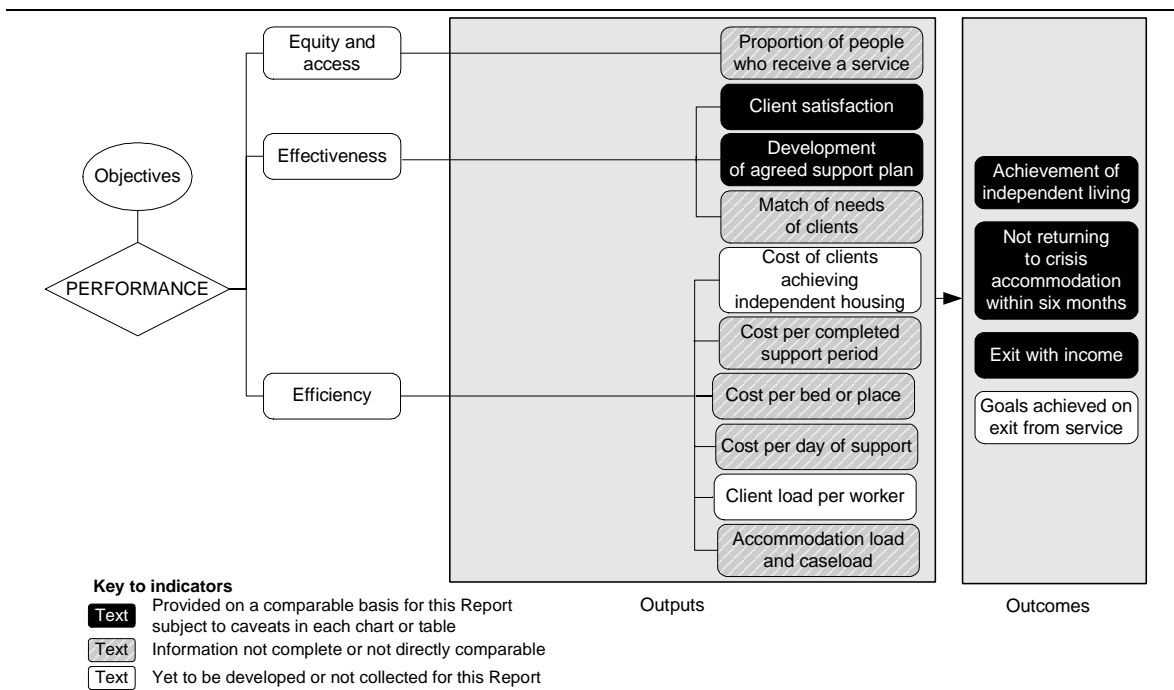
The overall aim of SAAP is to provide transitional supported accommodation and a range of related support services, so as to help people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence. Within this aim, the goals are to:

- resolve crises
- re-establish family links where appropriate
- re-establish the capacity of clients to live independently of SAAP.

These services should be provided in an equitable and efficient manner.

The performance indicator framework shows which data are comparable in the 2005 Report (figure 15.16). For data that are not considered directly comparable, the text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. Chapter 1 discusses data comparability from a Report-wide perspective (see section 1.6).

Figure 15.16 Performance indicators for SAAP services



15.7 Key supported accommodation and assistance performance indicator results

The data collection for SAAP allows for the measurement of the number of clients and of the number and types of service provided to clients (box 15.28).

Outputs

Equity and access

Proportion of people who receive a service

Supported accommodation and assistance services target homeless people in general, but access by special needs groups (such as Indigenous people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds) is particularly important (box 15.29).

Box 15.28 Issues when analysing SAAP data

The following three important issues need to be considered when analysing SAAP data.

- Informed consent is an essential component of the integrity of the data. The principle of client/consumer rights (which underpins informed consent) recognises that clients do not receive services under a mandatory order. They have the right to accept or reject the services offered, as they have the right to provide or not provide information while receiving SAAP services.
- Comprehensive information cannot be collected for all clients, such as casual clients and clients of high volume agencies (those accommodating 50 or more clients per night, telephone referral agencies, day centres, and information and referral centres).
- Clients consented to provide personal details for the SAAP client collection for 88 per cent of support periods in 2003-04. A weighting system has been developed to adjust for agency non-participation (93 per cent of agencies participated in the client collection) and non-consent.

Box 15.29 Proportion of people who receive a service

The 'proportion of people who receive a service' is included as an output (equity and access) indicator of governments' objective to ensure all Australians have equitable access to SAAP services on the basis of relative need. The indicator measures unmet demand for assistance. Unmet demand occurs when a homeless person seeking supported accommodation or support cannot be provided with that assistance (although one-off assistance may be provided).

This indicator is defined as the number of valid requests for services that were met, divided by the total number of valid requests made. Data are reported for all SAAP clients, and separately for Indigenous people and people from non-English speaking countries.

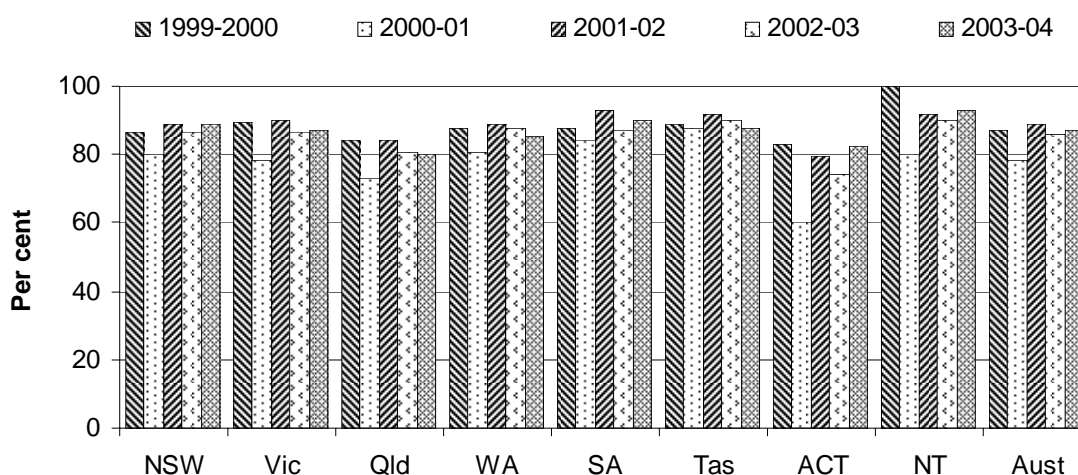
A higher proportion of valid requests receiving assistance is desirable.

Data for assessing access to SAAP services are available from the data collection on unmet demand and the data on clients. Assessing the experience of target groups using data from the unmet demand collection is, however, problematic. The client data and unmet demand data are not strictly comparable: the former count clients and each client's cultural status, whereas the latter are based on valid requests for services and record the cultural status of everyone in the group, making no distinction between adults and accompanying children. Also, the two week sample period over which data are collected may not be representative of the eventual

success of clients accessing SAAP services over the full year (see notes to tables 15A.181–15A.182).

The available data suggest around 86.9 per cent of requests for SAAP services nationally were provided with the assistance requested in the data collection period in 2003-04 (one week in December 2003 and one week in May 2004). Across jurisdictions, the proportion of requests for services that were fulfilled ranged from 92.7 per cent in the NT to 80.1 per cent in Queensland (figure 15.17).

Figure 15.17 Proportion of requests for SAAP services that were provided with the requested support, December and May^{a, b}



^a See table 15A.182 for an explanation of how the number of SAAP clients was estimated and for the definition of unmet demand. ^b Data on unmet demand need to be interpreted with care for several reasons. First, a person can make a request on more than one occasion and to more than one SAAP agency on the same day. While double counting has been limited through the exclusion of those requests where the person had made a similar request to a SAAP agency within the collection period, this information might not always have been available to record; therefore, the total number of requests does not represent the number of people making requests. Second, a number of people may receive ongoing support or accommodation from a SAAP agency at a later time, quite possibly soon after their initial request. As a result, estimates may overstate the actual level of unmet demand. Third, a number of potential clients have their needs met by other means and do not return to a SAAP agency. Many factors influence the capacity of individual SAAP agencies to meet day-to-day demand for their services; it is not possible to identify a one week period on two separate occasions per year that represents a typical week for all SAAP agencies.

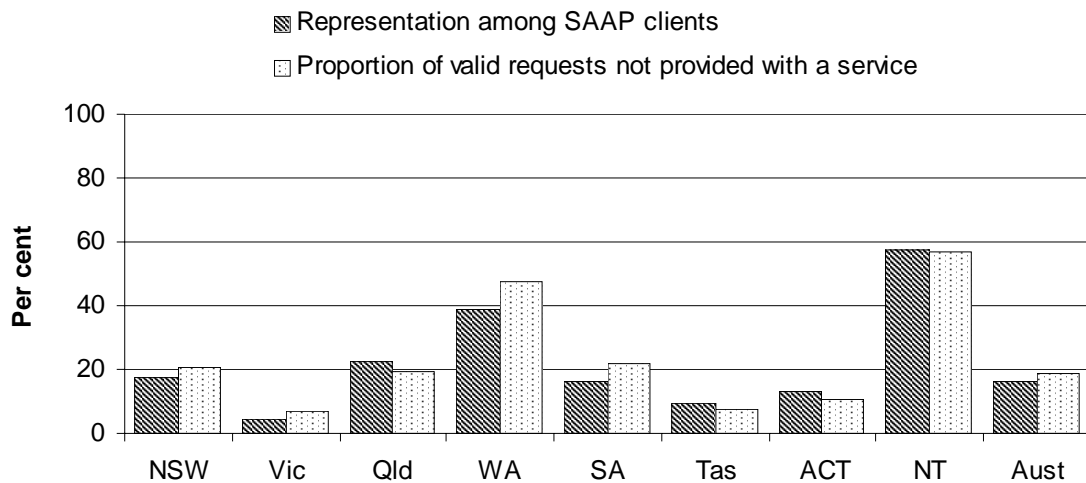
Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Client and Unmet Demand Collections; table 15A.182.

Requests for SAAP services were not met for a number of reasons in 2003-04, including a lack of available accommodation (the main reason that 65.6 per cent of potential clients were not provided with services), no vacancies at the referral agency (20.4 per cent), and insufficient staff (1.8 per cent) (table 15A.181).

Nationally, 18.7 per cent of SAAP service requests by Indigenous people in the data collection period in 2003-04 did not result in the assistance requested — a proportion that was higher than the representation of Indigenous clients among

SAAP clients. In NSW, Victoria, WA and SA, the proportion of valid requests by Indigenous people that did not result in the provision of a service was higher than the representation of Indigenous people among clients (figure 15.18).

Figure 15.18 Indigenous people as a proportion of SAAP clients, and unmet requests for accommodation made by Indigenous SAAP clients as a proportion of total unmet requests for accommodation, 2003-04^{a, b}

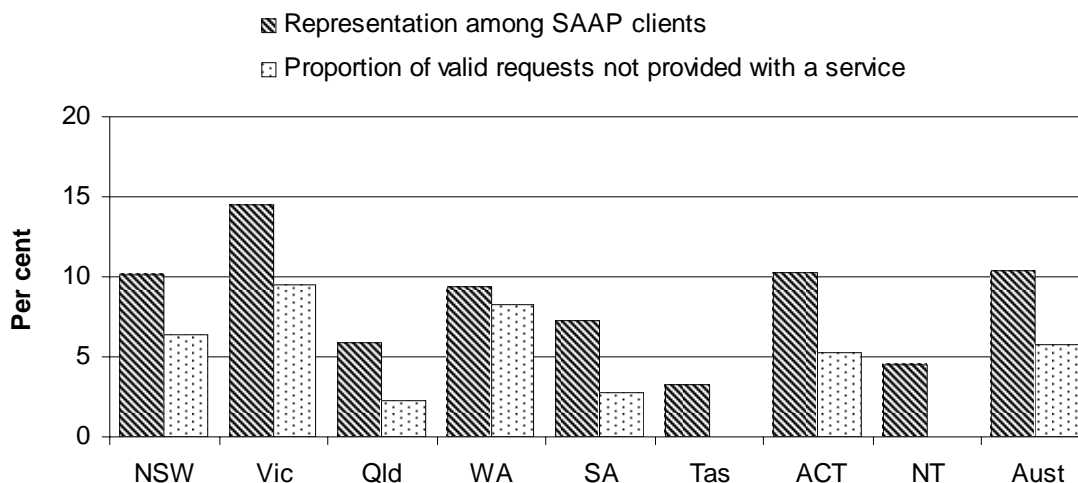


^a The number of people unable to be provided with a SAAP service was the 'unmet demand'. See notes to table 15A.183 for more detail. ^b Excludes people who refused offered assistance; those who made a similar request at a SAAP funded agency within the collection period (to limit double counting); and those whose request was not met because either the referral was inappropriate (wrong target group) or the agency did not provide the type of service requested.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Client and Unmet Demand Collections; table 15A.183.

Nationally, 5.7 per cent of SAAP service requests by people from non-English speaking backgrounds in 2003-04 did not result in the assistance requested. In all jurisdictions, the proportion of valid requests from people from non-English speaking backgrounds that did not result in the assistance requested was lower than the representation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds among clients (figure 15.19).

Figure 15.19 People from non-English speaking backgrounds as a proportion of SAAP clients and unmet requests for accommodation made by people of non-English speaking backgrounds as a proportion of total unmet requests for accommodation, 2003-04^{a, b}



^a The number of people unable to be provided with a SAAP service was the 'unmet demand'. See notes to table 15A.184 for more detail. ^b Excludes people who refused offered assistance; those who made a similar request at a SAAP funded agency within the collection period (to limit double counting); and those whose request was not met because either the referral was inappropriate (wrong target group) or the agency did not provide the type of service requested.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Client and Unmet Demand Collections; table 15A.184.

Effectiveness

Client satisfaction

'Client satisfaction' is an important indicator of how successfully SAAP services meet the needs of clients (box 15.30).

Box 15.30 Client satisfaction

'Client satisfaction' is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments' objective to provide high quality services that meet the needs of SAAP recipients.

The indicator is defined as the proportion of clients who thought their overall satisfaction with the assistance they had received from the SAAP service was either good or really good.

A higher proportion suggests greater client satisfaction with the overall SAAP service.

Data from the national SAAP client satisfaction survey are available for the first time in this report (box 15.31). These data relate to a four week period beginning 11 November 2003. Similar surveys are expected to be conducted periodically in the future.

Box 15.31 National SAAP client satisfaction survey

The inaugural SAAP client satisfaction survey was conducted in November 2003 to obtain information on client satisfaction from SAAP clients at the national level for performance information and service delivery purposes.

The survey consisted of 12 questions on client satisfaction with aspects of service provision and was implemented using a reverse call centre technique that allowed SAAP clients to initiate the phone call to the call centre. All SAAP agencies were invited to participate in the study. Over the four week period of the survey, 1000 clients from 205 agencies participated in the survey.

Despite the limitations of self-selection (both agencies and clients could opt out), the demographic characteristics of the clients who responded were broadly similar to population parameters, suggesting the non-response bias was low. The questionnaire seemed to be readily understood by clients, with low levels of non-response.

The 2003 survey suggested clients:

- felt that the help they received was better than expected (71 per cent)
- rated staff as either good (21 per cent) or really good (72 per cent). Clients were most satisfied with the ability of staff to be friendly and fair; they were least satisfied with staff availability, service timeliness and the extent of their involvement in decision-making
- were either satisfied (29 per cent) or very satisfied (57 per cent) with the time taken by agencies to provide services
- were generally happy with response times — 59 per cent rated the length of time it took to receive service as faster than expected, while only 10 per cent felt it took longer than expected
- felt their accommodation was good (26 per cent) or really good (47 per cent). Only a small proportion of clients rated their accommodation as bad. Clients were most satisfied with availability, comfort and cleanliness; they were least satisfied with accommodation modernity and the availability of workers.

The client satisfaction survey also provided information on client expectations and satisfaction with aspects of the service, such as timeliness, accommodation and staff.

Source: CBSR (2004).

Nationally, 91 per cent of respondents felt that the service they had received from SAAP services was either good or really good in 2003. Across jurisdictions, this proportion ranged from 98 per cent in WA to 87 per cent in the ACT (table 15.1).

Table 15.1 Client satisfaction with help received from SAAP, 2003^a

	<i>Unit</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Really good	%	58	68	78	55	66	71	45	62	66
Good	%	31	19	19	43	26	20	42	34	25
Just OK	%	7	7	2	2	7	4	9	4	6
Bad	%	2	4	1	–	–	3	3	–	3
Don't know/ no opinion	%	1	1	–	–	1	3	–	–	1
Total	no.	230	362	150	51	99	64	22	22	999

^a Data relate to survey question 2A: 'Thinking about this stay with [INSERT NAME OF AGENCY], overall, was the help you got ...?'. – Nil or rounded to zero

Source: CBSR (2004).

Development of agreed support plan

The existence of an agreed support plan is an indicator of service quality (box 15.32).

Box 15.32 Development of an agreed support plan

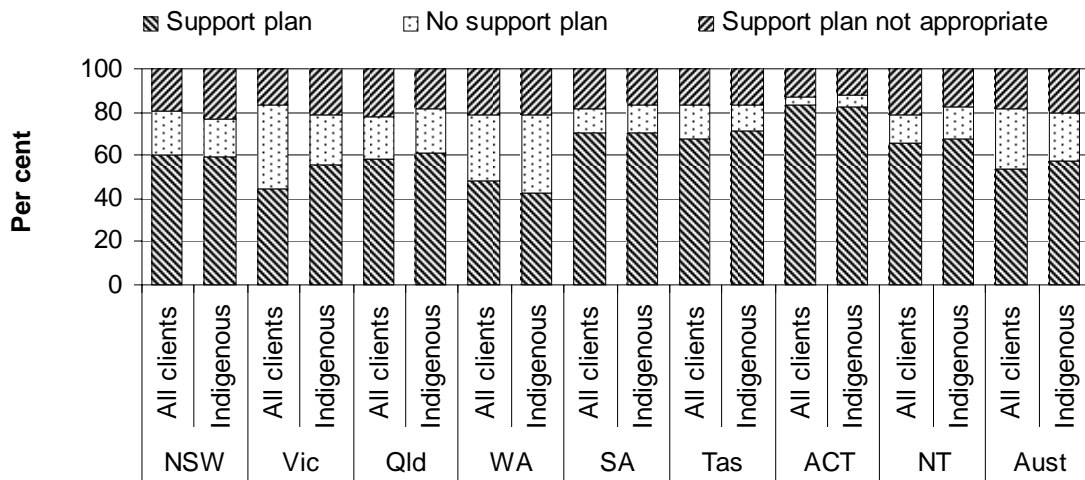
'Development of an agreed support plan' is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments' objective to provide high quality services that are appropriately targeted to meet the needs of SAAP clients.

This indicator is defined as number of support periods with an agreed support plan divided by the total number of support periods. Data are reported for all SAAP clients, and separately for Indigenous people and people from non-English speaking countries.

A higher proportion of support periods with agreed support plans is desirable. In some instances, however, a support plan may be judged to be inappropriate (such as when a support period is short term).

Nationally, there was an agreed support plan for 53.8 per cent of support periods for all clients in 2003-04 (compared with 57.7 per cent for Indigenous clients) (figure 15.20). Across jurisdictions, the proportion for all clients ranged from 83.0 per cent in the ACT to 44.6 per cent in Victoria in 2003-04; for Indigenous clients, the proportion ranged from 82.4 per cent in the ACT to 42.4 per cent in WA (figure 15.20).

Figure 15.20 **Support periods, by the existence of a support plan, 2003-04^{a, b}**



^a Excludes high volume records because not all items are included on high volume forms. ^b See notes to table 15A.179 for more detail.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; tables 15A.179 and 15A.180.

Match of needs of clients

The proportion of clients receiving services that they need is an indicator of appropriateness (box 15.33).

Box 15.33 Match of needs of clients

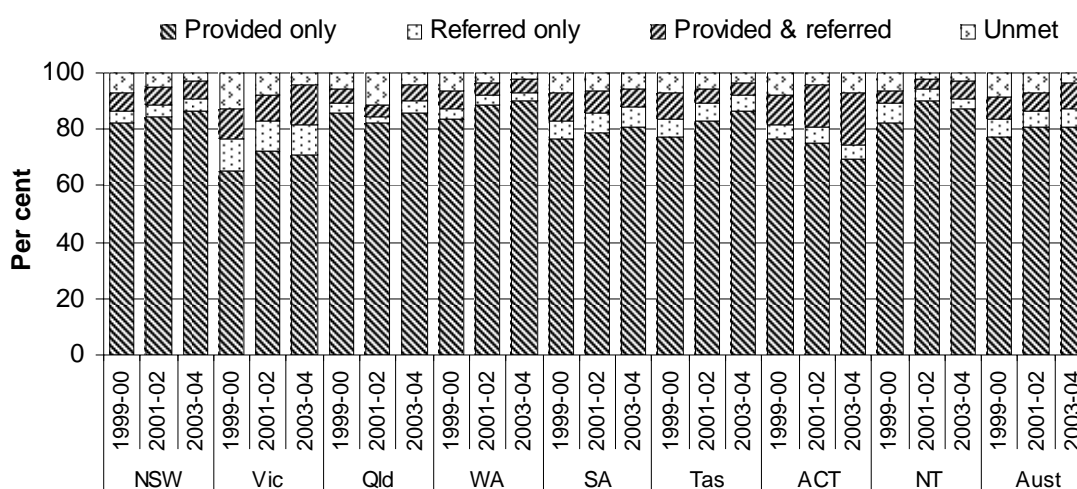
'Match of needs of clients' is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments' objective to ensure that SAAP services which meet their client's individual needs. This is a measure of appropriateness. The range of needed services is broad (ranging from meals to laundry facilities to long-term accommodation), so the effect of not providing these services varies.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of clients who were provided with the services they need, clients who were referred to another agency or clients whose needs were not met. Data are reported for all SAAP clients, and separately for Indigenous people and people from non-English speaking countries.

A higher proportion of clients who received services they need or were referred to another agency is desirable.

Nationally, the proportion of clients who received needed services or were referred to another agency for needed services was 96.1 per cent in 2003-04. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 97.7 per cent in WA to 93.0 per cent in the ACT (figure 15.21).

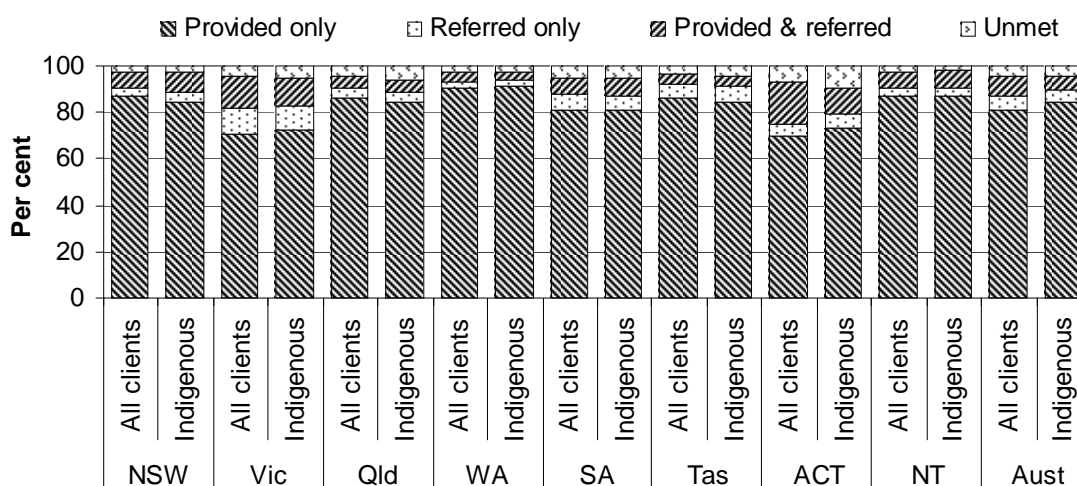
Figure 15.21 SAAP clients, by met and unmet support needs



Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.185.

Nationally, 96.1 per cent of Indigenous clients in 2003-04 either received needed SAAP services or were referred to another agency for these services — the same proportion as for all clients. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 98.2 per cent in the NT to 90.5 per cent in the ACT (figure 15.22).

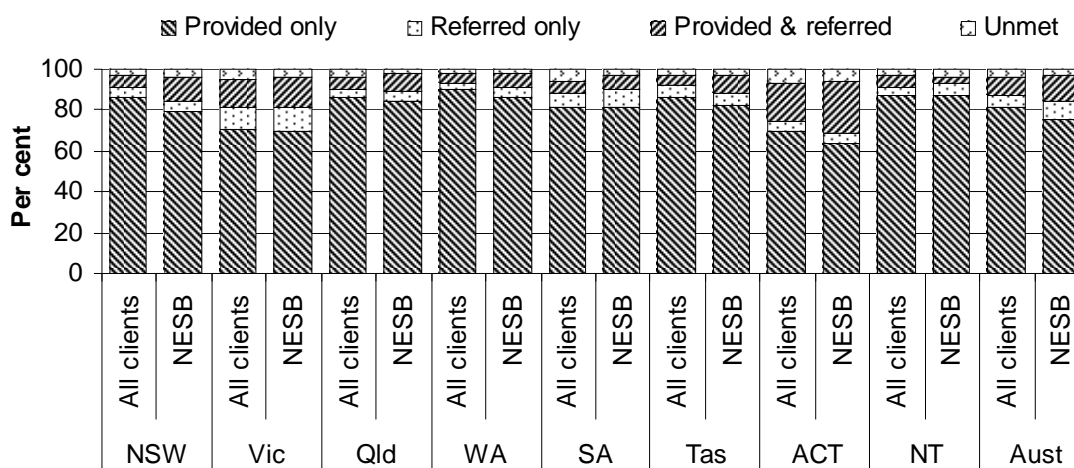
Figure 15.22 Indigenous clients, by met and unmet support needs, 2003-04



Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; tables 15A.185 and 15A.186.

Nationally, 96.6 per cent of clients from a non-English speaking background in 2003-04 either received needed services or were referred to another agency. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 98.2 per cent in WA to 94.5 per cent in the ACT (figure 15.23).

Figure 15.23 Clients from non-English speaking backgrounds, by met and unmet support needs, 2003-04



NESB = Non-English speaking background

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; tables 15A.185 and 15A.187.

Efficiency

Across jurisdictions, there are varying treatments of expenditure items (for example, superannuation) and different counting and reporting rules for generating financial data. Efficiency indicators may reflect these differences.

Cost of clients achieving independent housing

The Steering Committee has identified the 'cost of clients achieving independent housing' as an indicator of the efficiency of SAAP services (box 15.34). Data for this indicator, however, were not available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.34 Cost of clients achieving independent housing

The 'cost of clients achieving independent housing' will provide an output (efficiency) indicator of governments' objective to maximise the availability and quality of services through the efficient use of taxpayer resources.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Cost per completed support period

‘Cost per completed support period’ provides a proxy indicator of the efficiency of SAAP services (box 15.35).

Box 15.35 Cost per completed support period

The ‘cost per completed support period’ is included as an output (efficiency) indicator of governments’ objective to maximise the availability and quality of services through the efficient use of taxpayer resources. This indicator provides a proxy indicator of efficiency, measuring government inputs per unit of output (unit cost).

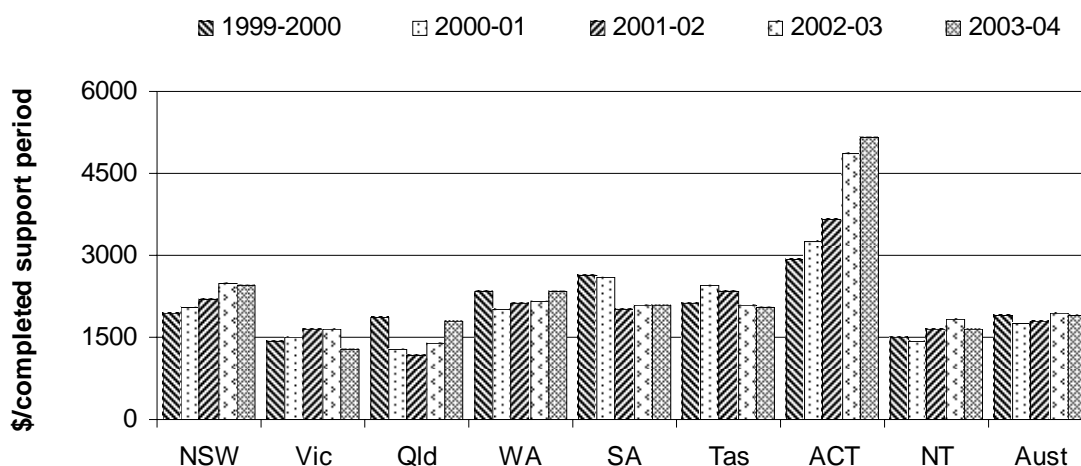
This indicator is defined as total expenditure on SAAP services divided by the number of completed support periods (excluding casual and potential clients, and accompanying children).

Lower ‘cost per completed support period’ is desirable, but may also indicate lesser service quality.

Unit cost analyses include only expenditure by service delivery providers. Conceptually, unit cost indicators should include administration costs borne by State and Territory departments in administering services, but this is not yet possible. In addition, capital costs are excluded because capital funding for SAAP is provided under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement through a special purpose program (the Crisis Accommodation Program).

The recurrent ‘cost per completed support period’ (excluding casual and potential clients, and accompanying children) averaged \$1900 in 2003-04. Across jurisdictions, this cost ranged from \$5160 in the ACT to \$1290 in Victoria (figure 15.24).

Figure 15.24 **Real recurrent cost per completed support period (2003-04 dollars)^a**



^a See notes to table 15A.189 for a description of the analysis.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.189.

Cost per bed or place

‘Cost per bed or place’ provides a proxy indicator of the efficiency of SAAP services (box 15.36).

Box 15.36 Cost per bed or place

‘Cost per bed or place’ is included as an output (efficiency) indicator of governments’ objective to maximise the availability and quality of services through the efficient use of taxpayer resources. This indicator provides a proxy indicator of efficiency, measuring government inputs per unit of output (unit cost).

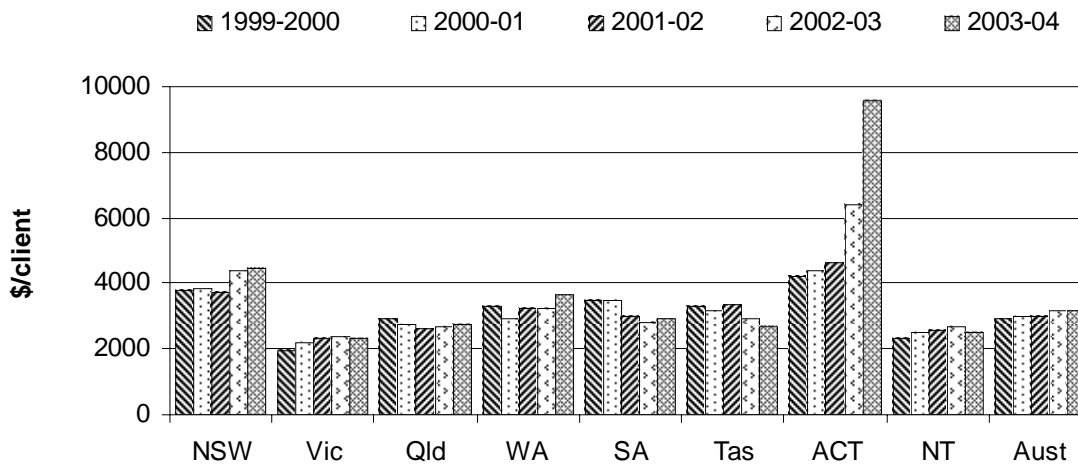
This indicator is defined as total expenditure on SAAP services divided by the number of clients accessing a bed or place over the year.

Lower ‘cost per bed or place’ is desirable, but may also indicate lesser service quality.

Unit cost analyses include only expenditure by service delivery providers. Conceptually, unit cost indicators should include administration costs borne by State and Territory departments in administering services, but this is not yet possible. In addition, capital costs are excluded because capital funding for SAAP is provided under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement through a special purpose program (the Crisis Accommodation Program).

Nationally, the recurrent cost per client accessing SAAP services was \$3190 in 2003-04. This cost varied across jurisdictions, from \$9580 in the ACT to \$2340 in Victoria (figure 15.25).

Figure 15.25 Real recurrent cost per client accessing SAAP services (2003-04 dollars)^a



^a See notes to table 15A.190 for a description of the analysis.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.190.

Cost per day of support

'Cost per day of support' provides a proxy indicator of efficiency of SAAP services (box 15.37).

Box 15.37 Cost per day of support

The 'cost per day of support' is included as an output (efficiency) indicator of governments' objective to maximise the availability and quality of services through the efficient use of taxpayer resources. This indicator provides a proxy indicator of efficiency, measuring government inputs per unit of output (unit cost).

This indicator is defined as total expenditure on SAAP services divided by the number of days of support for SAAP clients receiving support and/or supported accommodation (excluding casual and potential clients, and accompanying children who receive services as clients in their own right).

Lower 'cost per day of support' is desirable, but may also indicate lesser service quality.

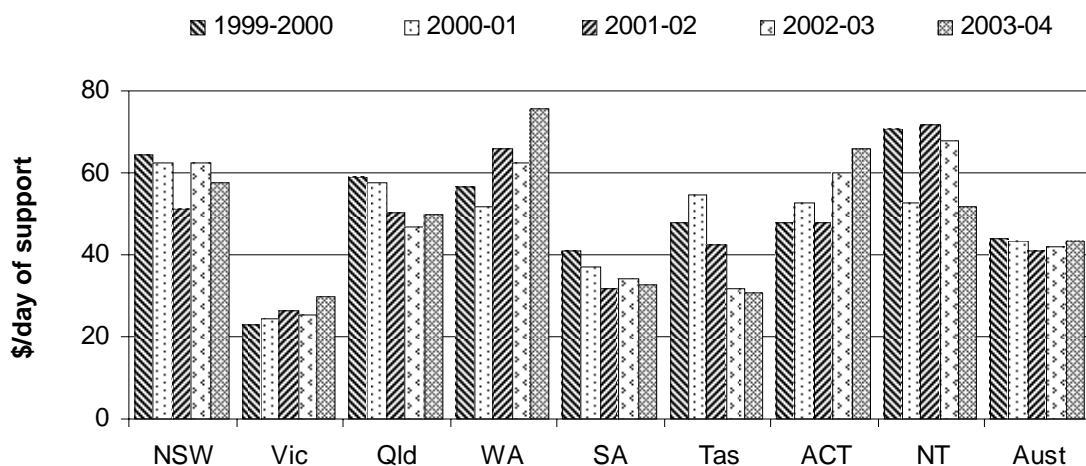
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Box 15.37 (Continued)

Unit cost analyses include only expenditure by service delivery providers. Conceptually, unit cost indicators should include administration costs borne by State and Territory departments in administering services, but this is not yet possible. In addition, capital costs are excluded because capital funding for SAAP is provided under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement through a special purpose program (the Crisis Accommodation Program).

The recurrent ‘cost per day of support’ for averaged \$44 in 2003-04. Across jurisdictions, this cost ranged from \$76 in WA to \$30 in Victoria (figure 15.26).

Figure 15.26 Real recurrent cost per day of support for homeless clients (2003-04 dollars)^a



^a See notes to table 15A.188 for a description of the analysis.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.188.

Client load per worker

The Steering Committee has identified ‘client load per worker’ as an indicator of the efficiency of SAAP services (box 15.38). No data on this indicator, however, were available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.38 Client load per worker

This indicator will provide an output (efficiency) indicator of governments' objective to maximise the availability and quality of services through the efficient use of taxpayer resources.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Accommodation load and caseload

'Accommodation load and caseload' provide proxy indicators of the efficiency of SAAP services (box 15.39).

Box 15.39 Accommodation load and caseload

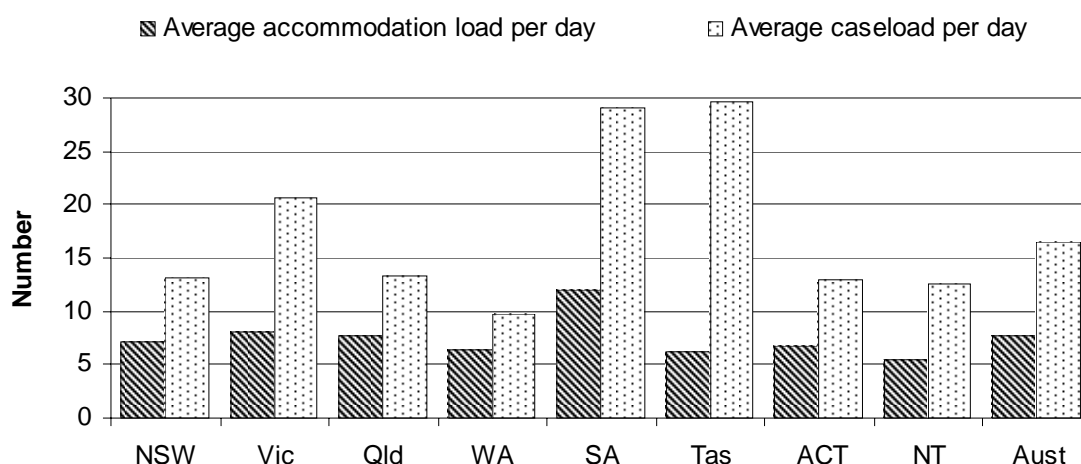
'Accommodation load and caseload' are included as output (efficiency) indicators of governments' objective to maximise the availability and quality of services through the efficient use of taxpayer resources. Average accommodation load and caseload are output indicators of efficiency, and they indicate levels of output by agencies.

The average accommodation load is defined as the average number of people accommodated per day per agency. The average caseload is defined as the average number of people being supported per day per agency.

High loads may mean greater efficiency or, alternatively, a lesser quality service. Accommodation load and caseload are likely to be affected by the size of the agencies funded under the SAAP Program.

Nationally, the average accommodation load was 7.6 in 2003-04. Across jurisdictions, it ranged from 12.0 in SA to 5.5 in the NT (figure 15.27). The average caseload in 2003-04 was 16.5 nationally and ranged from 29.6 in Tasmania to 9.7 in WA (figure 15.27).

Figure 15.27 Average accommodation load and caseload per day, 2003-04^a



^a See notes to table 15A.191 for a description of how accommodation load and caseload were estimated.
 Source SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.191.

Outcomes

An important outcome is clients' achievement of self-reliance and independence. Characteristics that may indicate whether clients can live independently include their income, housing status and workforce status. These characteristics are recorded at the end of a client's support period.

Achievement of independent living

'Achievement of independent living' is an important indicator of clients' self-reliance and independence. Data are reported separately for clients' success in achieving independent housing and employment (box 15.40).

Box 15.40 Achievement of independent living

'Achievement of independent living' is included as an outcome indicator of governments' objective to enable clients to participate as productive and self-reliant members of society at the end of their support period. Two indicators of independent living are reported: achievement of independent housing and achievement of employment.

Achievement of independent housing is defined as the number of clients achieving independent housing at the end of a support period divided by the total number of completed support periods. A higher proportion of achievement of independent housing at the end of their support period is desirable.

Achievement of employment is defined as the change of labour force status of clients after their program support, compared with their labour force status before entering the program. A higher proportion of clients who were unemployed before entering SAAP, but who were able to gain employment after their program support is desirable.

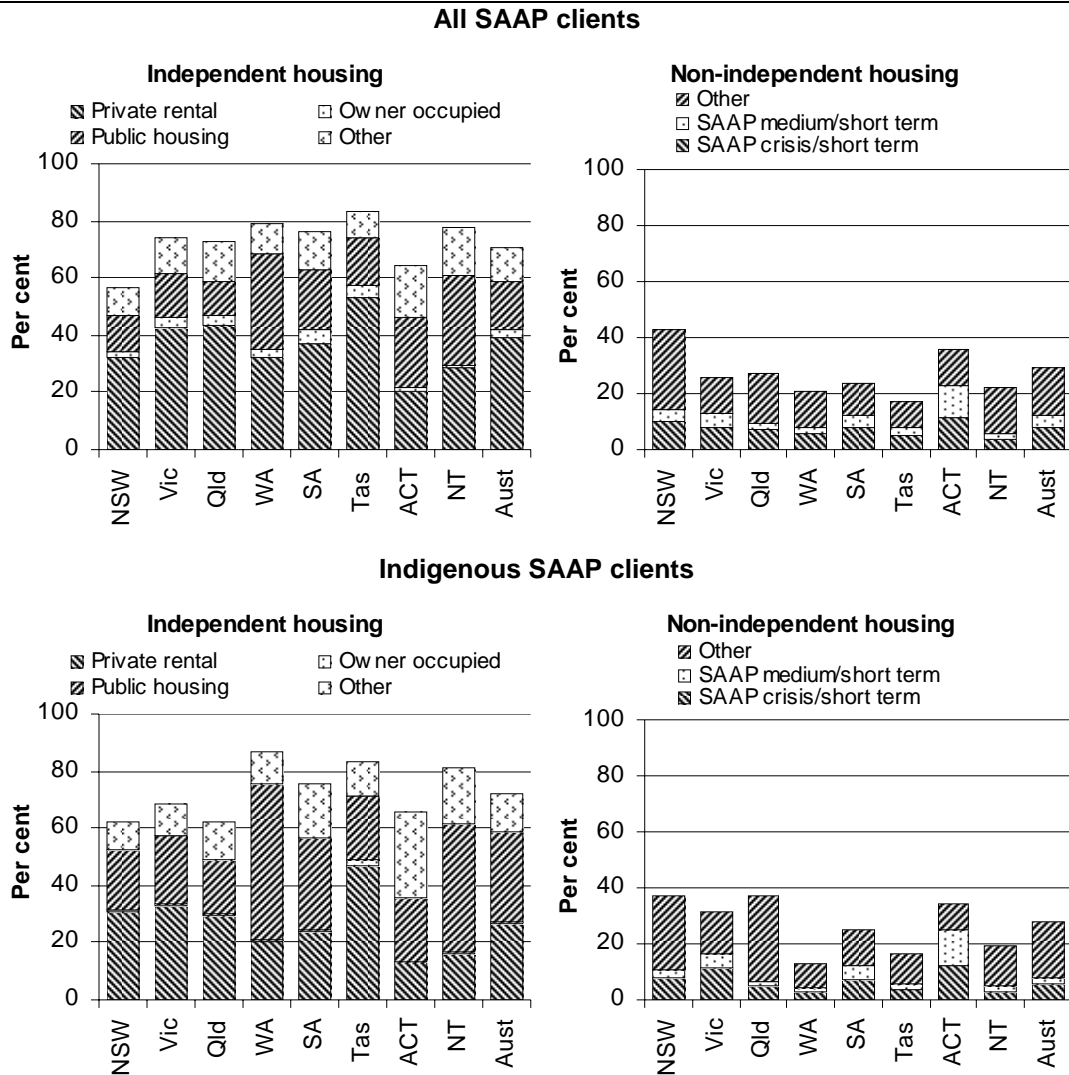
These two indicators relate to relatively short term outcomes – that is, outcomes for clients immediately after their support period. Longer term outcomes are important, but more difficult to measure.

Data on the proportion of unemployed clients who achieved employment after support are available for only one third of completed support periods, so may not represent the total SAAP population.

Independent living — housing

Nationally, 70.8 per cent of clients achieved independent housing at the end of a support period in 2003-04. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 83.2 per cent in Tasmania to 56.7 per cent in NSW. Nationally, the proportion of Indigenous clients achieving independent housing at the end of a support period was 72.0 per cent in 2003-04 (figure 15.28).

Figure 15.28 Accommodation type on exit from SAAP support, 2003-04^{a, b}



^a Excludes high volume records because not all items are included in high volume forms. ^b 'Other' independent housing may include living rent free in a house or flat. 'Other' non-independent housing may include: SAAP funded accommodation at hostels, hotels or community placements; non-SAAP emergency accommodation; car, tent or squat; and an institutional setting.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; tables 15A.171 and 15A.172.

By type of independent housing on exiting from SAAP, 39.0 per cent of all clients in 2003-04 moved or returned to private rental housing, 16.6 per cent were in public housing, and 3.0 per cent were in owner occupied housing. Among Indigenous clients 26.5 per cent moved or returned to private rental housing, 31.7 per cent to public housing, and 0.6 per cent to owner occupied housing. The proportion of all clients moving or returning to private rental housing was highest in Tasmania (53.4 per cent) and lowest in the ACT (20.5 per cent). The proportion moving or returning to public housing ranged from 33.3 per cent in WA to 11.8 per cent in Queensland (figure 15.28).

By type of non-independent housing on exiting from SAAP, 12.2 per cent of all clients in 2003-04 moved to or continued to live in SAAP accommodation, 7.9 per cent were in crisis or short term accommodation and 4.3 per cent were in medium term to short term accommodation. Among Indigenous clients, 8.2 per cent moved to or continued to live in SAAP accommodation, 5.9 per cent were in crisis or short term accommodation and 2.3 per cent were in medium term to short term accommodation. The proportion of all clients moving to or continuing to live in SAAP accommodation was highest in the ACT (22.6 per cent) and lowest in the NT (5.5 per cent) (figure 15.28).

Independent living — employment

Nationally, 9.0 per cent of support periods in 2003-04 involved clients who were employed before support, while 28.2 per cent involved clients who were previously unemployed (table 15A.173). Of the clients who were unemployed when entering SAAP, about 8.2 per cent were employed at the end of the support period (2.8 per cent full time, 1.8 per cent part time and 3.7 per cent on a casual basis), 83.9 per cent remained unemployed and 7.9 per cent were not in the labour force (figure 15.29). Across jurisdictions, the proportion of clients who were previously unemployed and achieved employment at the end of the support period ranged from 10.5 per cent in SA to 6.3 per cent in Tasmania (Table 15A.174).

Figure 15.29 Unemployed SAAP clients, by labour force status after SAAP support, and Indigenous status 2003-04^{a, b}



^a Data are for people who were unemployed when entering SAAP services. ^b Excludes high volume records because not all items are included on high volume forms.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; tables 15A.174 and 15A.175.

Among Indigenous clients who were unemployed when entering SAAP in 2003-04, about 3.9 per cent were employed at the end of the support period (1.4 per cent full time, 0.9 per cent part time and 1.6 per cent on a casual basis), 87.2 per cent remained unemployed and 8.9 per cent were not in the labour force (table 15A.175).

Not returning to SAAP service within the year or six months

The proportion of clients exiting support to independent housing and not returning to SAAP is an important indicator of longer term self-reliance (box 15.41). Data on the proportion of clients who exited to independent housing and did not return within six months are available for only one third of completed support periods, so may not represent the total SAAP population.

Box 15.41 Not returning to SAAP service within the year

‘Not returning to SAAP service within the year’ is included as an outcome indicator of governments’ objective to enable clients to successfully participate in society at the end of their support period. An important longer term indicator of whether clients are achieving self-reliance and independence is whether a client needs to return to SAAP services. A further medium term indicator is when the client exits to independent housing and does not return to SAAP within a specified period (in this case, six months).

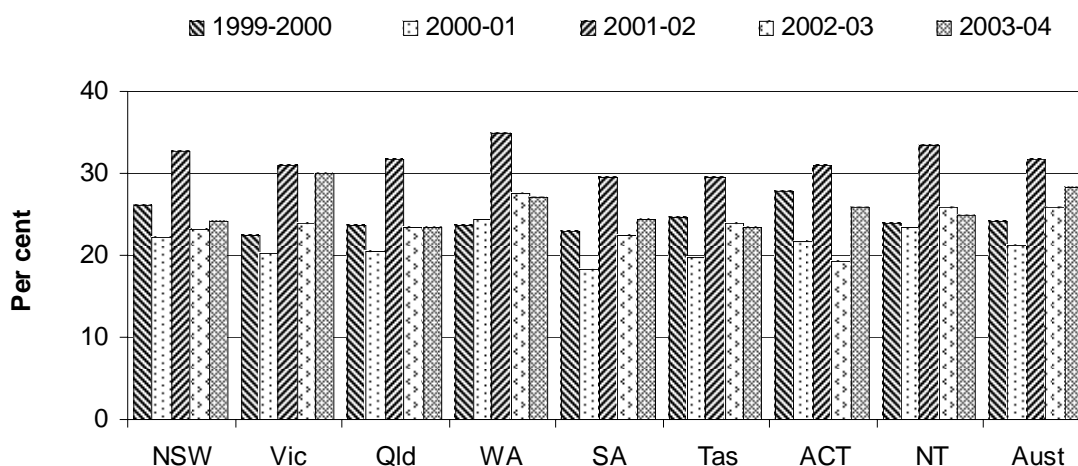
This indicator is defined as the proportion of clients returning to crisis accommodation within the year.

A low proportion of clients returning to the program within the year is desirable.

It needs to be noted that it may be appropriate for some clients to receive more than one support period (moving from crisis to medium term accommodation, for example). One group that makes multiple use of SAAP are single adults, especially older single men. A number of SAAP clients with long term problems also access SAAP services a number of times before being able to address their issues.

Nationally, 28.4 per cent of clients (28.5 per cent of Indigenous clients) returned to SAAP services during 2003-04 after having exited the program less than 12 months earlier (table 15A.176, table 15A.177). Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 30.1 per cent in Victoria to 23.4 per cent in both Queensland and Tasmania (figure 15.30). Among Indigenous clients, the proportion ranged from 32.1 per cent in WA to 23.4 per cent in NSW (table 15A.177).

Figure 15.30 Clients who returned to a SAAP service after having exited the program less than 12 months earlier^a



^a Data from 2001-02 are based on estimated support periods per client, rather than on observed support periods per client as reported in previous years.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.176.

Estimates of clients exiting support to independent housing and not returning to SAAP within six months are affected by the data issues discussed in box 15.28. Current estimates may not represent all clients — for example, only 58.1 per cent of clients nationally provided information on their accommodation after exiting at least one support period in 2003-04 (table 15.2). Given the potential for data bias, these estimates need to be interpreted with care.

Table 15.2 Indicative estimates of clients who exited SAAP to independent housing and did not return within six months, 2003-04^a

Unit	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Clients who provided information on accommodation after exit from support									
no.	12 600	24 100	7 700	5 000	3 600	2 300	1 000	1 900	58 200
As a proportion of total clients ^c									
%	52.9	71.5	45.3	62.5	40.0	53.5	71.4	63.3	58.1
Clients recorded as exiting to independent accommodation and not returning within six months									
no.	4 500	9 600	3 400	2 600	1 700	1 000	400	900	24 000
Indicative estimates of clients exiting to independent housing and not returning within six months									
%	35.7	39.8	44.2	52.0	47.2	43.5	40.0	47.4	41.2

^a See notes to table 15A.178 for details of how the estimates were calculated.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.178.

It is important to have data that represent all SAAP clients. Strategies are being implemented to improve the data quality progressively, including improving client

consent rates and the collection of exit information. It is hoped that the data will be robust enough eventually to allow comparative performance assessment.

Exit with income

The proportion of clients who experience a positive change in income source (from having no income support to obtaining some income, for example) is an indicator of independence and self-reliance (box 15.42). Data are available for only four fifths of completed support periods, so may not represent the total SAAP population.

Box 15.42 Exit with income

'Exit with income' is included as an outcome indicator of governments' objective to enable clients to independently participate in society at the end of their support period. Client independence is enhanced when the client moves from having no income before entering SAAP services to obtaining some income (including wages and/or benefits) on exit from SAAP services.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of clients who exited SAAP with an income source.

A higher proportion of clients exiting SAAP with an income source is desirable.

The proportion of all clients in 2003-04 who had no substantive change in income source ranged from about 94.0 per cent in Victoria to 85.2 per cent in the ACT (figure 15.31).

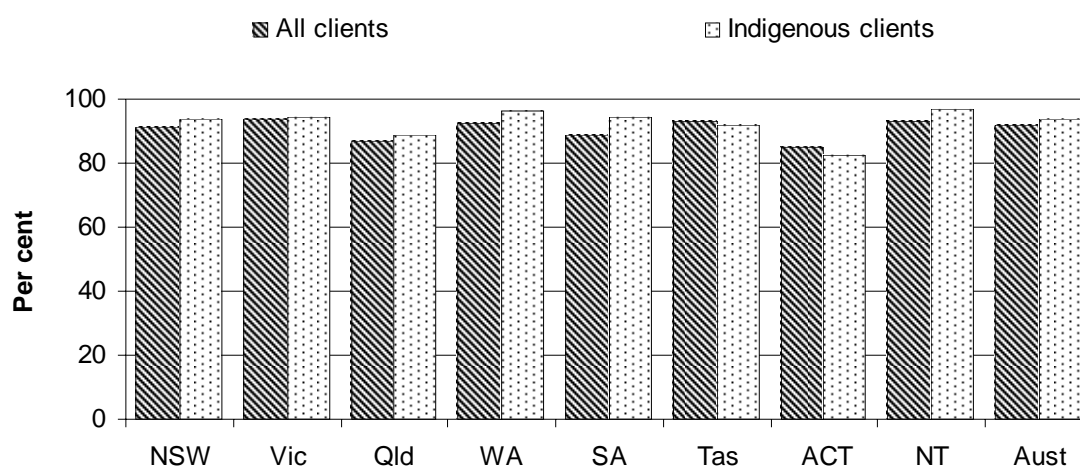
The proportion of clients who moved from having no source of income to obtaining some income in 2003-04 ranged from 3.0 per cent in the ACT to 1.0 per cent in Tasmania. The proportion who obtained their own benefit or a wage ranged from 1.8 per cent in SA to 0.8 per cent in Victoria. The proportion who had no income before or after support ranged from 8.9 per cent in the ACT to 2.7 per cent in the NT.

Nationally, 0.6 per cent of clients exiting SAAP moved from having a wage to receiving a government payment, or from having some income to having no income (table 15A.169).

The proportion of Indigenous clients who moved from having no income support to obtaining some income ranged from 2.8 per cent in the ACT to 0.2 per cent in Tasmania. The proportion who obtained their own benefit or a wage ranged from 0.8 per cent in Victoria to 0.2 per cent in WA. The proportion who had no income before or after support ranged from 14.1 per cent in the ACT to 1.8 per cent in the NT.

Nationally, 0.4 per cent of Indigenous clients exiting SAAP moved from having a wage to receiving a government payment, or from having some income to having no income (table 15A.170). The proportion who had no substantive change in income source ranged from about 97.1 per cent in the NT to 82.5 per cent in the ACT.

Figure 15.31 Proportion of clients who had no substantive change in income source after SAAP support, by Indigenous status, 2003-04^a



^a Excludes clients of high volume agencies (those accommodating 50 or more clients per night, telephone referral agencies, day centres, and information and referral centres) because data on income source after support were not collected.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; tables 15A.169 and 15A.170.

Goals achieved on exit from service

The Steering Committee has identified ‘goals achieved on exit from service’ as an outcome indicator of SAAP services (box 15.43). No data for this indicator, however, were available for the 2005 Report.

Box 15.43 Goals achieved on exit from service

This indicator will provide an outcome indicator of governments’ objective to ensure all SAAP services meet the needs and expectations of users.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

15.8 Future directions in supported accommodation and assistance performance reporting

Measuring client satisfaction, client outcomes and clients with high and complex needs

‘Client satisfaction’ is an important indicator of quality. Work on developing measures of ‘client satisfaction’ within the SAAP population was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved consultation with a number of SAAP agencies, clients and stakeholders to develop options for measuring client satisfaction. The second stage of the project set out to test a measurement method through a client satisfaction survey conducted in November 2003. Results from the survey are being used for performance reporting this year. Similar surveys to measure the level of SAAP client satisfaction are expected to be conducted periodically in future.

The projects on measuring client outcomes and on clients with high and complex needs have also been completed. The client outcomes project tested the applicability of specific outcome measurement tools across a range of SAAP service types and found that a limited subset of tools was suitable for use with SAAP but that no one tool was suited to measuring all services or service types. The high and complex needs project produced a measurement tool that enables level, type and complexity of client need to be measured and reported on statistically. The implementation of these tools will require further consideration and consultation with stakeholders.

Improving data and information collection

An Information Management Plan (IMP) for SAAP IV was adopted in 2001 by the SAAP National Coordination and Development Committee. The committee has approved the guiding principles of the IMP, and work is progressing. The first stage of implementation involves defining the information needs of all stakeholders more precisely and then determining the best way in which to collect and use this information.

The implementation of the IMP will:

- place increased emphasis on electronic data capture
- reduce the data collection burden and standardise collected data items through the new core data set
- improve data reliability through the new alpha code
- enhance communication in the sector through a new SAAP website

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- increase support provided to SAAP agencies through extra training
 - encourage SAAP agencies' use of local data for research purposes through the Service and Regional Research Program.

Electronic data capture within SAAP agencies currently occurs through the use of specially developed software (the SAAP Management and Reporting Tool — SMART), which is provided free to SAAP agencies and supported through specially developed training and documentation, and the provision of a hot line. Agencies are encouraged to submit their data via SMART rather than via paper forms. During the implementation of the IMP process, SMART will be maintained, enhanced and supported with increased training.

The new core data set is a result of a review that took place in consultation with stakeholders and SAAP agencies. The new core data set consists of fewer data items than on the current form and will reduce the data collection burden on SAAP agencies. The high volume forms (a shorter version of the questionnaire) will be phased out, ensuring all collected data items are standardised across all types of SAAP agency.

A new alpha code is needed in SAAP data to enable longitudinal analyses of trends and patterns of client service use. The Home and Community Care program alpha code, which contains more information and has a lower rate of duplication, is likely to be adopted in SAAP. Testing of the core data set and the new alpha code has already occurred. If these trials are successful, the new changes to the data collection will be implemented from 1 July 2005.

Review of SAAP performance reporting and framework

A mid-term review of the SAAP bilateral performance reporting and performance framework was conducted in the first half of 2003. The review assessed the national performance framework (including the national performance indicators) and the bilateral reporting process used by the jurisdictions to report performance to the Australian Government. As a result of the review findings, changes have been adopted to streamline the bilateral reporting, and some enhancements and other changes will be made to the national performance indicators.

15.9 Jurisdictions' comments

This section provides comments from each jurisdiction on the services covered in this chapter. Appendix A contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. These data cover a range of demographic and geographic characteristics, including age profile, geographic distribution of the population, income levels, education levels, tenure of dwellings and cultural heritage (including Indigenous and ethnic status).

Australian Government comments

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2003-04 was the fourth year in the five year Support Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Agreement between the Australian Government and the states and territories. This is the fourth set of SAAP Agreements (SAAP IV).

The Australian Government is providing over \$800 million for SAAP IV. This represents an increase of over \$260 million or some 30 per cent over total Australian Government funding for the SAAP III agreement.

As SAAP IV approaches its final year in 2004-05, its evaluation has been conducted. The evaluation involved an intensive and exhaustive investigation of all the issues that might impact on the implementation of the program, drawing together the results of a series of separate evaluations of components of the program and taking into account the views of SAAP consumers, service delivery agencies and other stakeholders, as well as data from the State/Territory Annual Performance Reports and the National Data Collection and research outputs from the SAAP IV Research Program. The evaluation describes the achievements of SAAP IV and discusses options for the future.

Work on the implementation of the Information Management Plan is continuing. The SAAP sector and stakeholders have been consulted about changes that will occur in the data collection. SAAP data continue to be a rich source of information on homeless people and their use of SAAP service. The Australian Government sponsored the July issue of the 'Parity' magazine specifically focusing on data and research into homelessness.

The Australian Government has progressed a number of new activities and increased support for existing activities, which are designed to support homeless people. As part of the 2004-05 budget, the Government has committed \$10.4 million in new funding for the Household Organisational Management Expenses (H.O.M.E.) Advice Program. This program builds on the success of the Family Homelessness Prevention Pilots that the Government introduced as a new budget measure in 2001.

The Reconnect Program which assists young people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless will receive over \$80 million over the next four years. Currently there are 97 Reconnect services across Australia run by community and local government organisations that provide help to about 7000 young people and 5000 families each year.

Through the Transitional to Independent Living Allowance (TILA), the Government provided assistance to young people leaving state-supported care by providing one-off assistance up to the value of \$1000. In 2002-03 through to 2004-05 funding of \$6.0 million will be distributed directly to 21 non-government organisations (NGOs) administering TILA.

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New South Wales Government comments

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Child protection and supported placements

In 2003-04, the roll-out of the enhanced funding package for the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) commenced with the appointment of more than 150 additional child protection caseworkers during the year. The increased focus by DoCS on prevention and early intervention activity was reflected in additional funding for projects to consolidate and expand the service network supporting families participating in the Early Intervention Program. The Program is consistent with research that demonstrates the efficacy of intervening early in the life of a child, and early in the onset of family difficulties; projects include family support, centre-based child care, supported playgroups, parenting programs, home visiting and one-stop shop family centres, specialist family support services with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) family workers, Aboriginal playgroups and young parent groups.

Implementation of the three-stage proclamation plan for the commencement of key out-of-home care provisions of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 was successfully completed in 2003-04 with the third and final stage occurring in March 2004. DoCS continues its program of research, development and design of improved models of care and support services to better address the needs of out-of-home care children and young people; enhancements include assessment and screening tools for children and young people with high and complex needs, professional foster care services, intensive case management, and relative and kinship care services. Additional funds were allocated this year to expand services by Aboriginal service-providers for Aboriginal children and young people.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

NSW spent 2003-04 consolidating reforms implemented in the first three years of SAAP IV, with an emphasis on improving service coordination. Finalisation of the Western Sydney Homelessness Strategic Implementation Plan, implementation of a Parramatta men's SAAP coalition and the continued roll out of the inner city SAAP Reform process are key examples of work in progress.

SAAP also became a partner in an expanded Joint Guarantee of Service for people with a mental health disorder (JGOS). Department of Housing, NSW Health, Aboriginal Housing Office and Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council are all strategic partners in this Agreement. Through regional agreements, SAAP services will work collaboratively with partner agencies under JGOS to sustain public, Aboriginal and community housing for clients with a mental health disorder and improve pathways for SAAP clients into public, Aboriginal and community housing.

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Victorian Government comments

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Child protection and supported placements

The Victorian Government has embarked on a reform process including a review of the *Children and Young Person's Act (1989)*. A series of reports were commissioned on the Victorian Child Protection and Placement system, which will contribute to the review. In September 2004 the Government released a final discussion paper, *Protecting Children: ten priorities for children's wellbeing and safety*, which provided a framework for translating the reform directions proposed in these reports into system, policy, practice and legislative change. Key priorities include a focus on earlier and more co-ordinated service responses for vulnerable children and families, a stronger focus on children and young people's stability and developmental needs, strengthening Aboriginal self-management to improve the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and more flexible, solution-focused protective interventions. Consultations on the proposals contained in the discussion paper are now concluding with new legislation planned in 2005.

To support the overall reform directions, the 2004-05 Budget provided a total of \$34.8 million over four years to strengthen child protection and family support services. The budget allocation built on the success of the Family Support Innovation Projects that commenced in 2002-03 and introduced a number of targeted strategies to address areas of particular concern, including 15 Family Support Innovation Projects, a new adolescent mediation and diversion service, new Aboriginal family decision making and family violence services and additional funds to carers to meet the educational and health needs of children and young people placed in their care by the State.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

The report of the Victorian Homelessness Strategy (VHS) Directions for Change released in February 2002 provides the framework for ongoing development of homelessness assistance.

During 2003-04, the key emphasis of the VHS has been on the development and implementation of the Youth Homelessness Action Plan (YHAP).

The VHS Youth Homelessness Action Plan, launched in May 2004, has mapped the needs of young people who are homeless or at risk and provided directions for improved responses, including development of independent living skills programs for young people at risk of homelessness, especially young people leaving care; expansion of services for families and young people to assist family reconciliation; and targeted employment, education and training programs for young people with high needs.

Other significant work commenced includes the development of Homelessness Assistance Service Standards and a 'Charter of Rights for consumers using Homelessness Assistance services.

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Queensland Government comments

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Child protection and supported placements

In March 2004, the Queensland Government committed to the reform of the State's child protection system. This was in response to the recommendations of the January 2004 Crime and Misconduct Commission Report 'Protecting children: An inquiry into Abuse of Children in Foster Care' and the December 2003 Audit of Foster Carers Subject to Child Protection Notifications.

The primary recommendation of the Crime and Misconduct Commission was for the creation of a system that reflected a whole-of-government approach to child protection. A central component of the new child protection system was the establishment of the Department of Child Safety to focus exclusively on child protection and to act as lead agency in facilitating a whole-of-government response to child protection.

The Department of Child Safety was officially launched on 24 September 2004. The State Government allocated \$269 million operational and \$35 million capital funding to the new department in the 2004-05 State Budget.

The Department of Child Safety will focus exclusively on child protection and will progress the reform agenda by implementing a number of initiatives including: training and support for foster carers; strategies to improve services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families; partnerships with non-government agencies; improved external and internal accountabilities within the Department of Child Safety and the broader child protection system; and sound systemic support for front-line service delivery.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

Queensland continued to experience high unmet demand for SAAP services in 2003-04, particularly in regions of high population growth and declining housing affordability. SAAP data shows that client numbers in Queensland have increased from a total of 14 900 in 1996-97 to 16 100 in 1999-2000 and up to 18 900 in 2002-03. The figure for 2003-04 is expected to continue this trend.

A high proportion of Queenslanders who are turned away from SAAP services are homeless families and children. Indigenous people continued to make up a high proportion of SAAP service users in Queensland (22.7 per cent in 2003-04).

The Queensland Government continued the development and implementation of coordinated strategies under its Homelessness Action Plan. A Chief Executive Officers Sub-Committee on Homelessness, with a Focus on Public Intoxication has been established to coordinate responses to homelessness and public space issues.

The Department of Communities has commenced a major project to strengthen its funded non-government agencies, including SAAP-funded agencies. It is anticipated that the project will improve the quality of SAAP service delivery and establish more effective, efficient client-focused service models.

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Western Australian Government comments

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Child protection and supported placements

The *Children and Community Services Bill (2003)* was introduced into Parliament. The Bill reflects current research evidence and contemporary practice and gives clear direction for a model of best practice, with an emphasis on supporting family wellbeing and the capacity of families to care safely for their children.

A shared responsibility, multi-agency approach to child protection has been promoted and strengthened through the development of the Interagency Collaborative Framework for Protecting Children. This Framework is supported by agreed Reciprocal Child Protection Reporting Procedures.

An Extended Family Care Framework has been developed to promote the active support of relative carers within the context of the Department's broader statutory responsibilities for promoting and building the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, their families and communities.

Five non-government placement services have been funded to also provide reunification services for children and young people placed with them.

A Duty of Care Unit has been established within the Department. Its role is to support officers to respond appropriately to allegations of abuse in care and to review and audit all reported allegations of abuse of children in departmental care since 1993. A strategy to prevent abuse in care is being implemented that includes a central register of government and non-government carers to ensure carers are appropriately screened, assessed and registered and the mandatory training for all government and non-government carers.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

The National Evaluation of the SAAP IV agreement was a significant process during 2003-04. Consultations with SAAP funded services and the SAAP State Advisory Committee assisted in informing the Western Australian submission to the National Evaluation which identified key areas for the future direction of SAAP.

A Standardised Service Agreement across government was introduced for all funded services and an Industry Plan for the Non-Government Human Services Sector (June 2004) was developed. Other achievements during 2003-04 include: a new supported accommodation service in Broome (state funded); development of the SAAP sexual diversity and gender identity project; a range of activities to enhance SAAP services in rural and remote areas; and completion of SAAP protocols with the Western Australian Police Service.

State Homelessness Strategy initiatives included: nine support and advocacy services to assist people in private rental to maintain housing, two financial counselling services to assist young people, three new services for young people leaving care, funding for children from homeless families and country refuges, a funding increase to five services to support young homeless parents.

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South Australian Government comments

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Child protection and supported placements

In 2003-04, the South Australian government implemented the following responses to the recommendations of the Layton Report, Semple Review of Alternative Care and the findings of the Family and Youth Services Workload Analysis Project:

- Additional \$8.3 million over 4 years to develop service responses for vulnerable families
- Increased staffing levels in Children, Youth and Family Services
- Given all children and young people under the Guardianship of the Minister priority access to all Government services
- Assisted the release of children from Immigration Detention by providing support to live in the community
- Partnership with the Australian Government to provide housing in Port Augusta for mothers and children who were formerly residing in Baxter Detention Centre
- Completed a review of Aboriginal children who are in non-Aboriginal foster care placement and developed cultural maintenance plans for Aboriginal children and young people in foster care
- Worked with the Family Court of Australia to implement Project Magellan to speed resolution of contact and residence disputes where there are serious allegations of child abuse
- Held a state-wide ‘Shared Learning and Development Forum’ for foster carers, government and non-government service providers and community agencies including CREATE foundation
- Established a Special Investigations Unit to ensure allegations of abuse in care are independently investigated

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

Across South Australia in excess of 2000 people receive support from a SAAP agency at any given time and 820 of these clients are living within SAAP accommodation. Achievements in 2003-04 include:

- Continuation of the visiting schedule of all SAAP agencies in South Australia providing information, advice for all SAAP programs
- Additional funding has been provided to City Homeless Assessment and Support Team (CHAST) to improve service provision and establish best practice
- The Central Eastern Domestic Violence Service moved to a core and cluster facility which enables a better standard of property amenity and case management for women and children escaping domestic violence.

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Tasmanian Government comments

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Child protection and supported placements

On 1 July 2003, the Department of Health and Human Services changed its method of reporting to include all notifications to care and protection services. Prior to this date, notifications of 'child harm and maltreatment' were counted but notifications classified as 'child and family concern' were not. As a consequence of the change in reporting, the number of notifications recorded in 2003-04 is significantly higher than previous years.

The Department of Health and Human Services has also introduced new rates of reimbursement for carers. The rates reflect the cost of caring for a child in Tasmania who is not in care, and recognise the additional needs of children on care and protection orders.

Other developments in out-of-home care include the introduction of Looking After Children, the development of a kinship care program and policies and guidelines that address the needs of children and young people who leave care.

At a broader level, the Department of Health and Human Services has established the Our Kids Bureau. Its aim is to develop policies, programs and services in collaboration with government and community organisations that improve the health and well-being of children in Tasmania.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

During 2003-04 Tasmania continued to develop the service system and evaluate many of the projects initiated through the restructure of the service system. In addition to this an evaluation of SAAP IV in Tasmania was initiated. This will be completed in 2004-05.

Key achievements for 2003-04 included further refinement of the Common Assessment Tool, and the enhancement of State based data collections system for client brokerage expenditure and sexual assault support services.

A significant achievement for 2002-03 was the commencement of Enhanced Client Assessment training across the sector. This is a modular-based, accredited training package being delivered by TAFE. Training is available to all SAAP workers.

A range of short-term projects also commenced in 2003-04. These projects include:

- strategies to enhance responses for clients with complex needs;
- the development of specific early intervention responses for young people;
- enhanced responses for Indigenous clients; and
- strategies to enhance collaboration with other government departments.

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Australian Capital Territory Government comments

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Child protection and supported placements

In May 2004, The ACT Commissioner for Public Administration released her report, 'The Territory as Parent', which reviewed the safety of children in care. In response to that report, the Government created the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support. The Government's aim in revising the structural arrangements and increasing resources was to improve practice and reporting standards.

The jurisdiction has had difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified staff due to the recruitment campaigns being conducted in other states. To counteract this problem, extensive recruitment campaigns were conducted locally, nationally and internationally.

Consistent with national trends, there continues to be significant growth in child protection reports in the ACT. In order to meet this growth, a single child protection contact point for the public was established. This was accompanied by the introduction of a revised risk assessment framework and a revised procedures manual.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

In 2003-04 the ACT Government allocated substantial additional resources to strengthen its response to homelessness as outlined in *Breaking the Cycle – the ACT Homelessness Strategy*. SAAP sector capacity has been increased by 30 per cent including the provision of additional services for families in crisis, men experiencing chronic homelessness and a range of responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness. During 2003-04, \$2.4 million has been directed toward enhanced service capacity and quality, recognising unmet demand.

The ACT Government's contribution to the response to homelessness has increased from 44.7 per cent of total funding to 55 per cent by the end of 2004. An additional \$33 million was allocated to increase the range of housing stock available, including the provision of properties for families supported by SAAP. The 2003-04 data reflects this investment before client outcomes are evident. It is expected that future performance outcomes will reflect the investment strategy.

Factors influencing ACT results in the 2005 Report are consistent with those in 2004. The small size of ACT service providers leads to proportionally larger overhead and indirect costs compared to larger jurisdictions. Due to the limited availability of affordable housing options for clients leaving the SAAP, the length of stay in services is greater than in other jurisdictions. The nature of the ACT's largest SAAP funded provider skews the performance outcomes for the ACT overall. Reform in relation to this SAAP service is progressing.

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Northern Territory Government comments

Child protection and supported placements

The Northern Territory Government increased the Family and Children's Services' budget in December 2003 with a view to improving child protection services and systems over the next five years. Part of the increased funds has been used to employ new child protection staff, to increase foster carer rates, and to ensure quality care for children in care through a partnership project with CREATE. Another initiative resulted in the employment of additional Indigenous apprentices and cadets and providing tailored services to some of the highest need children in care and their carers.

In 2005 there are plans for a new Intensive Family Support Service in Darwin and the development of a number of remote community child and family projects in partnership with the Commonwealth, Aboriginal organisations and local government.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

This year saw a consolidation of initiatives funded under SAAP IV. The Salvation Army program 'Towards Independence', in Darwin, continued the good work providing support to 33 families, 25 per cent of whom identified as Indigenous Australians. The Anglicare Youth Housing Program – Palmerston and Rural is an effective and efficient one-worker service that provided good outcomes through a range of accommodation and support options. After support, 50 per cent of clients were boarding in private homes, 11 per cent were living rent-free and 6 per cent were in public housing. In Alice Springs, the Bill Braitting Housing enclave for people transitioning from treatment programs to independent living was reviewed and improved structures and processes are being implemented including exit options to public housing. Also in Alice Springs, The development of the Ampe Akweke (baby place) project for young pregnant Indigenous women was documented and it was found that the young women did not stay for the expected long periods but preferred to remain in the town camps and receive outreach support. The outreach support included working with the household to improve outcomes for the young woman and her child.

15.10 Definition of key terms and indicators

Child protection and out-of-home care services

Care and protection orders

Legal orders or administrative/voluntary arrangements involving the community services department, issued in respect of an individual child who is deemed to be in need of care and/or protection. Community services department involvement may include:

- total responsibility for the welfare of the child (for example, guardianship)
- responsibility for overseeing the actions of the person or authority caring for the child
- responsibility for providing or arranging accommodation, or reporting or considering the child's welfare.

The order may have been from a court, children's panel, minister of the Crown, authorised community services department officer or similar tribunal or officer.

Care and protection orders are categorised as:

- finalised guardianship and finalised custody orders sought through a court
- finalised supervision and other finalised court orders that give the department some responsibility for the child's welfare (excluding interim orders)
- interim and temporary orders (including orders that are not finalised)
- administrative or voluntary arrangements with the community services department, for the purpose of child protection.

Children are counted only once, even if they are on more than one care and protection order.

Child

A person aged 0–17 years.

Child at risk

A child for whom no abuse or neglect can be substantiated but where there are reasonable grounds to suspect the possibility of prior or future abuse or neglect, and for whom continued departmental involvement is considered warranted.

Child concern reports

Reports to community services departments regarding concerns about a child, as distinct from notifications of child abuse and neglect. The distinction between the two differs across and within jurisdictions.

Children in out-of-home care during the year

The total number of children who are in at least one out-of-home care placement at any time during the year. A child who is in more than one placement is counted only once.

Exited out-of-home care

Where a child does not return to care within two months.

Family based care

Home-based care (see 'placement types').

Family group homes

Residential child care single dwelling establishments that have as their main purpose the provision of substitute care to children. They are typically run like family homes, with a limited number of children who eat together as a family group and are cared for around the clock by resident substitute parents.

Foster care	Care of a child who is living apart from his or her natural or adoptive parents in a private household, by one or more adults who act as 'foster parents' and are paid a regular allowance by a government authority or non-government organisation for the child's support. The authorised department or non-government organisation provides continuing supervision or support while the child remains in the care of foster parents.
Foster parent	Any person (or such a person's spouse) who is being paid a foster allowance by a government or non-government organisation for the care of a child (excluding children in family group homes).
Guardian	Any person who has the legal and ongoing care and responsibility for the protection of a child.
Indigenous person	Person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community with which he or she is associated. If Indigenous status is unknown, then a person is considered to be non-Indigenous.
Investigation	An investigation of child abuse and neglect that involves identifying harm or risk of harm to the child, determining an outcome and assessing protective needs. It includes the interviewing or sighting of the subject child where practicable.
Investigation finalised	Where an investigation is completed and an outcome is recorded by 31 August.
Investigation not finalised	Where an investigation is commenced but an outcome is not recorded by 31 August.
Length of time in continuous out-of-home care	The length of time for which a child is in out-of-home care on a continuous basis. A return home of less than seven days is not considered to break the continuity of placement.
Non-respite care	Out-of-home care for children for child protection reasons.
Notification	Contact with an authorised department by persons or other bodies making allegations of child abuse or neglect, or harm to a child.
Other relative	A grandparent, aunt, uncle or cousin, whether the relationship is half, full, step or through adoption, and can be traced through or to a person whose parents were not married to each other at the time of the child's birth. This category includes members of Aboriginal communities who are accepted by that community as being related to the child.
Out-of-home care	Overnight care, including placement with relatives (other than parents) where the government makes a financial payment. Includes care of children in legal and voluntary placements (that is, children on and not on a legal order) but excludes placements made in disability services, psychiatric services, juvenile justice facilities and overnight child care services.
Placement types	<p>Four main categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facility-based care (placement in a residential building where the purpose is to provide placement for children and where there are paid staff, including placements in family group homes) • home-based care (placement in the home of a carer who is reimbursed for expenses for the care of the child). The three subcategories of home-based care are foster care/community care, relative/kinship care and other

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independent living (including private board) • other (including unknown).
Relatives/kin	Family members other than parents, or a person well known to the child and/or family (based on an existing relationship).
Respite care	Out-of-home care on a temporary basis for reasons other than child protection — for example, when parents are ill. Excludes emergency care provided to children who are removed from their homes for protective reasons.
Safety in out-of-home care	The proportion of children in out-of-home care who are the subject of a child protection substantiation, where the person believed responsible for the child abuse, neglect or harm is living in the household (or was a worker in a residential care facility).
Stability of placement	<p>Number of placements for children who have exited out-of-home care and do not return within two months. Placements exclude respite or temporary placements lasting less than seven days. Placements are counted separately where there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a change in the placement type — for example, from a home-based to a facility-based placement • within placement type, a change in venue or a change from one home-based placement to a different home-based placement. <p>A particular placement is counted only once, so a return to a previous placement is another placement.</p>
Substantiation	Notification for which an investigation concludes there is reasonable cause to believe that the child has been, is being or is likely to be abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. It does not necessarily require sufficient evidence for a successful prosecution and does not imply that treatment or case management is, or is to be, provided.

Supported accommodation and assistance

Accommodation	Crisis or short term accommodation, medium term to long term accommodation, and other SAAP funded accommodation (which comprises accommodation at hostels, motels and hotels, accommodation in caravans, community placements and other SAAP funded arrangements).
Accommodation load (of agencies)	The number of accommodation days divided by the number of days for which the agency is operational during the reporting period, where the number of accommodation days equals the sum of accommodation days for all clients of an agency who are supported during the reporting period. The average accommodation load is the mean value of all agencies' accommodation loads. Support periods without valid accommodation dates are assigned the interquartile modal duration of accommodation for agencies of the same service delivery model in the same jurisdiction.
Agency	The body or establishment with which the State or Territory government or its representative agrees to provide a SAAP service. The legal entity has to be incorporated. Funding from the State or Territory government could be allocated directly (that is, from the government department) or indirectly (that is, from the auspice of the agency). The SAAP service could be provided at the agency's location

	or through an outlet at a different location.
Caseload (of agencies)	The number of support days (the sum of support days for all clients of the agency who are supported during the reporting period) divided by the number of days for which the agency is operational during the reporting period. The average caseload is the mean value of all agencies' caseloads. Support periods without valid support dates are assigned the interquartile modal duration of support for agencies of the same service delivery model in the same jurisdiction.
Casual client	A person who is in contact with a SAAP agency and receives one-off assistance for generally not more than one hour, and who does not establish an ongoing relationship with an agency.
Client	A person who receives supported accommodation or support.
Crisis or short term supported accommodation	Supported accommodation for periods of generally not more than three months (short term), and for persons needing immediate short term accommodation (crisis).
Cross-target/multiple/general services	SAAP services targeted at more than one primary client group category — for example, SAAP services for single persons regardless of their gender.
Day support	Support provided only on a walk-in basis — for example, an agency that provides a drop-in centre, showering facilities and a meals service at the location of the SAAP agency.
Homeless person	<p>A person who does not have access to safe, secure and adequate housing. A person is considered to not have such access if the only housing to which he or she has access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is damaged, or is likely to damage, the person's health • threatens the person's safety • marginalises the person by failing to provide access to adequate personal amenities or the economic and social supports that a home normally affords • places the person in circumstances that threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing • is of unsecured tenure. <p>A person is also considered homeless if living in accommodation provided by a SAAP agency or some other form of emergency accommodation.</p>
Indigenous person	A person who is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island descent, who identifies as being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and who is accepted as such by the community with which they are associated.
Medium term to long term supported accommodation	Supported accommodation for periods over three months. Medium term is around three to six months and long term is longer than six months.
Multiple service delivery model	SAAP agencies that use more than one service delivery model to provide SAAP services — for example, crisis or short term accommodation and support, as well as day support (that is, the provision of meals).
Non-English speaking background services	Services that are targeted at persons whose first language is not English.

Non-recurrent funds	SAAP funds received for non-recurrent purposes, such as funds for research, a special one-off project or replacement of capital items (for example, furniture and motor vehicles).
Non-SAAP accommodation places	Accommodation places in the form of permanent beds (owned or managed by the agency) that use funds other than SAAP funds.
One-off assistance	Assistance provided to a person who is not a client, such as the provision of a meal, a shower, transport, money, clothing, telephone advice, information or a referral.
Ongoing support period	A support period for which, at the end of the reporting period, no support end date and no after-support information are provided.
Other special characteristics	Primary or secondary characteristics that are not included in those of a service's primary client or group, or in other categories of the secondary client group — for example, a service specifically targeted at homeless persons with a disability.
Outlet	A premise owned/managed/leased by an agency at which SAAP services are delivered. Excludes accommodation purchased using SAAP funds (for example, at a motel).
Outreach support services	Services that exist to provide support and other related assistance specifically to homeless people. These clients may be isolated and able to receive services and support from a range of options that enhance their flexibility (for example, advocacy, life skills and counselling). Generalist support and accommodation services may also provide outreach support in the form of follow-up to clients where they are housed. In this context, support is provided 'off site'.
Providers	Agencies that supply support and accommodation services.
Real expenditure	Actual expenditure adjusted for changes in prices. Adjustments are made using the GDP(E) price deflator and expressed in terms of final year prices.
Recurrent funding	Funding provided by the Australian, State and Territory governments to cover operating costs, salaries and rent.
Referral	When a SAAP agency contacts another agency and that agency accepts the person concerned for an appointment or interview. A referral is not provided if the person is not accepted for an appointment or interview.
SAAP service	Supported accommodation, support or one-off assistance that is provided by a SAAP agency and intended to be used by homeless persons.
Service delivery model	The mode or manner in which a service is provided through an agency. The modes of service delivery could be described as crisis or short term accommodation and support; medium term to long term accommodation and support; day support; outreach support; telephone information; and referral or agency support. An agency may deliver its services through one or more of these means of delivery.
Service provider	A worker or volunteer employed and/or engaged by a SAAP agency, who either directly provides a SAAP service or in some way contributes to the provision of a SAAP service. Includes administrative staff of an agency, whether paid or not paid.
Single men services	Services provided for males who present to the SAAP agency without a partner or children.

Single women services	Services provided for females who present to the SAAP agency without a partner or children.
Support	SAAP services, other than supported accommodation, that are provided to assist homeless people or persons at imminent risk of becoming homeless to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence. Support is ongoing and provided as part of a client relationship between the SAAP agency and the homeless person.
Support period	<p>The period that commences when a SAAP client establishes or re-establishes (after the cessation of a previous support period) an ongoing relationship with a SAAP agency. The support period ends when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support ceases because the SAAP client terminates the relationship with the SAAP agency • support ceases because the SAAP agency terminates the relationship with the SAAP client • no support is provided to the SAAP client for a period of three months. <p>A support period is relevant to the provision of supported accommodation or support, not the provision of one-off assistance.</p>
Supported accommodation	Accommodation provided by a SAAP agency in conjunction with support. The accommodation component of supported accommodation is provided in the form of beds in particular locations or accommodation purchased using SAAP funds (for example, at a motel). Agencies that provide accommodation without providing support are considered to provide supported accommodation.
Telephone information and referral	Support delivered via telephone without face-to-face contact. Support provided may include information and/or referral.
Total funding	Funding for allocation to agencies (not available at the individual client group level) for training, equipment and other administration costs.
Unmet demand	A homeless person who seeks supported accommodation or support, but is not provided with that supported accommodation or support. The person may receive one-off assistance.
Women escaping domestic violence services	Services specifically designed to assist women and women accompanied by their children, who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless as a result of violence and/or abuse.
Youth/young people services	Services provided for people who are independent and above the school leaving age for the State or Territory concerned, and who present to the SAAP agency unaccompanied by a parent/guardian.

15.11 References

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