
HOUSING PREFACE

Features of the sector

Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments fund and deliver a range of housing assistance services which aim to provide choice for low-income individuals and families and to assist those who are unable to access the private rental market for reasons such as discrimination or special needs. The two main types of assistance are housing programs and rent assistance.

Housing programs include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, community housing, home purchase assistance and crisis accommodation and the largest housing program, public rental housing.

Commonwealth Government funding for housing programs is made available to State and Territory Governments under the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement (CSHA). States and territories match this funding and further contribute to the delivery of housing assistance within their jurisdictions through a range of mechanisms, including home lending programs and joint ventures with the private sector. The first CSHA was signed in 1945 and, despite undergoing regular review, its essential objectives remain the same.

Commonwealth Government rent assistance is provided through the Commonwealth Government social security system. It is paid to private renters who are recipients of Department of Social Security payments, low income families and certain clients of the Department of Veterans' Affairs or the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

The objectives of rent assistance are to:

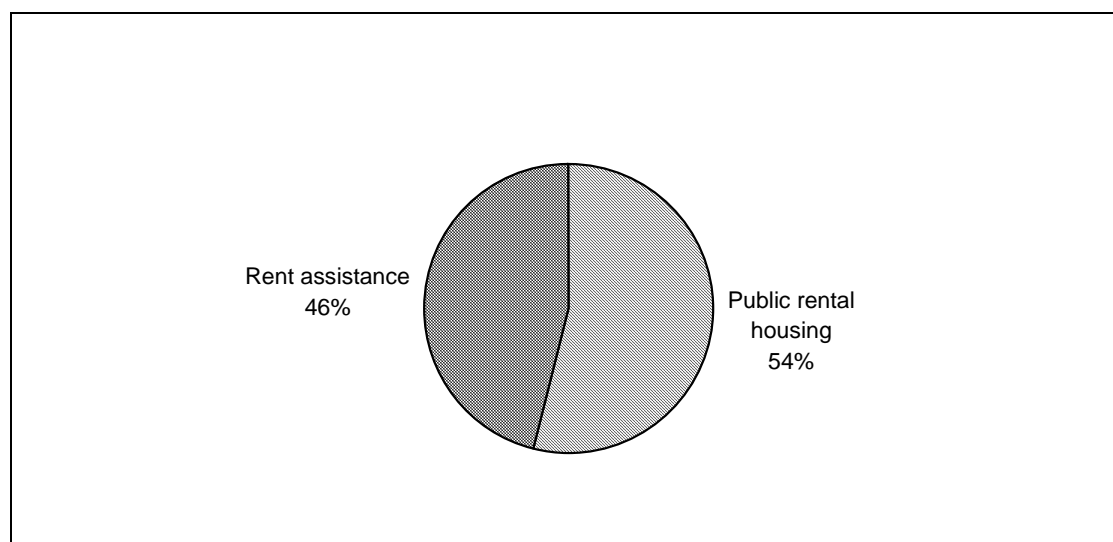
- provide additional income for income support recipients who are renting housing in the private rental market in recognition of the housing costs they face; and
- improve housing affordability for income support recipients renting housing in the private market.

The focus in this Report is on public rental housing and community housing programs. Reporting does not cover rent assistance, although its future inclusion is being considered.

Government expenditures

Commonwealth, State and Territory Government expenditure on housing assistance was \$3.5 billion in 1995–96 — \$1.9 billion for public housing programs (which included public housing and community housing) and \$1.6 billion for rent assistance in the private rental market. A large part of the expenditure on housing programs (\$1.55 billion) was delivered through the CSHA. Funding for community housing comprised \$74.4 million provided by the Commonwealth through the Community Housing Program. The State and Territory Governments were unable to provide accurate data on their level of funding.

Government expenditure on housing assistance, 1995–96



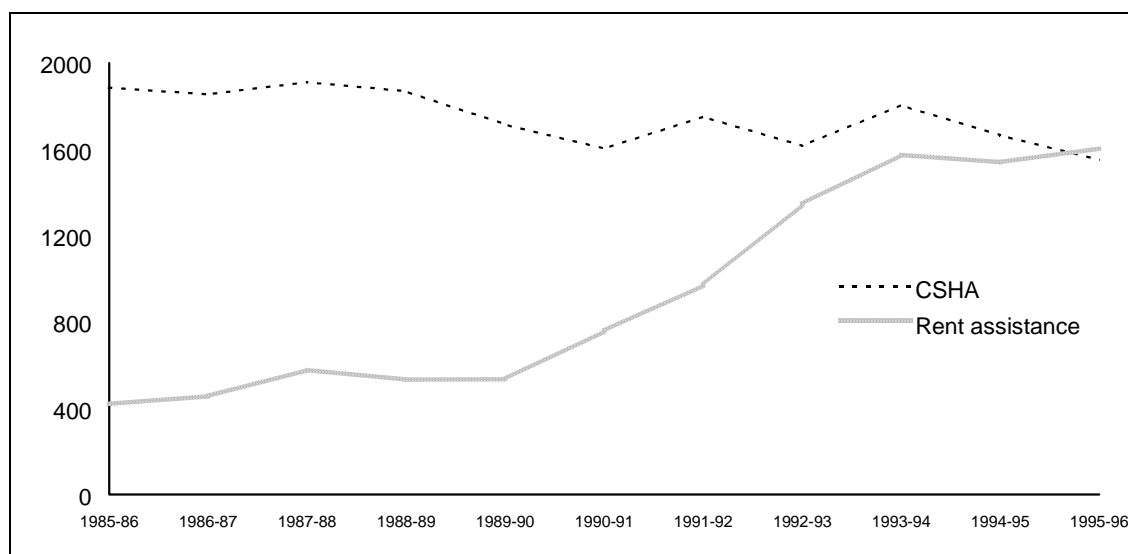
Sources: DSS 1997; DSS unpublished data

Rent assistance was paid to over 1 million people renting in the private housing market in 1995–96, while public rental housing was provided to over 406 000 households (including non-rebated households).¹

Between 1989–90 and 1995–96, the provision of rent assistance to income support recipients and low-income families with children more than tripled in real terms while expenditure on public housing assistance declined.

¹ As rent assistance is paid on the basis of an income unit and public housing assistance is provided to households, the two levels of provision are not strictly comparable.

Government expenditure on public rental housing and rent assistance, 1985–86 to 1995–96 (\$ million in 1995–96 dollars)



Sources: Table 13A.82

Links among services

The users of public and community housing services not only include those on low incomes, but also people who previously received crisis accommodation, are older or have disabilities and require additional support services. Thus close links exist between public and community housing services and other government programs and support services such as:

- the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program which funds community-based accommodation and services for homeless people;
- health services for people with mental health illnesses;
- disability services which assist people with disabilities;
- the Home and Community Care Program which provides services for frail older people and younger people with disabilities and their carers;
- accommodation support and community access services, provided by State and Territory Governments;
- housing and infrastructure assistance for indigenous people, provided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and State and Territory Governments; and
- local government activities which include housing services and community services such as meals-on-wheels.

