
13 Protection and support services

Protection and support services aim to assist individuals and families in crisis or experiencing difficulties that hinder personal or family functioning. They aim to alleviate the difficulties and reduce the potential for recurrence. This chapter reports on:

- *child protection services*: functions of government which receive and assess allegations of child abuse and neglect, provide and refer clients to family support and other relevant services, and take statutory action to protect children;
- *supported placement services*: care for children placed away from their parents for protective or other family welfare reasons (also referred to as out-of-home care); and
- *supported accommodation and assistance services*: services to assist people who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

The major improvement from the 1998 Report is the progress towards developing outcome indicators for child protection and supported placements. A recent international literature review and critical analysis of child protection and supported placement outcome indicators (commissioned by the Steering Committee on behalf of the States and Territories) recommended a number of indicators, as well as steps to progress other indicators (see box 13.3 in section 13.1). Indicators on appropriateness for supported accommodation and assistance are reported for the first time.

Protection and support services covered in this chapter are mainly provided through State and Territory Government community services departments. The Commonwealth Government is involved in researching child protection, funding preventative strategies, and funding and planning supported accommodation and assistance. A range of other government services (such as education, health, justice, housing, police and disability services) also affect children who come into contact with community services departments for protective reasons.

Recurrent expenditure on statutory protection and placement was \$290 million across Australia in 1995-96 (ABS 1998).¹ Recurrent expenditure on the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) was \$224 million across Australia in 1997-98.

13.1 Child protection services

Profile of protection and support services

Child protection services are provided to protect children and young people at risk of harm within their families or in circumstances in which their families do not have the capacity to protect them.

Child protection activities include:

- receiving and responding to allegations of child abuse and neglect, including investigation and assessment where appropriate;
- providing support services (directly or through referral) where harm or a risk of harm is identified, to strengthen the capacity of families to care safely for children;
- initiating formal statutory intervention, including applying to the court for protective orders, to secure the safety of children or young people;
- ensuring the ongoing safety of children by working with families to resolve protective concerns;
- working with families to reunite children — removed for safety reasons — with their parents as soon as possible; and
- securing permanent alternative care when it is determined that a child is unable to be returned to the care of their parents.

This Report covers statutory child protection assessment and response services and supported placements.

¹ This figure only includes expenditure on statutory protection and placement (\$198 million) and foster care placement (\$92 million). Data are not available for other services in child protection and supported placements. Including data on other services could potentially double this expenditure figure.

Roles and responsibilities

State or Territory Governments are responsible for investigating and assessing child abuse and neglect reports, and making court applications when an order is required to protect a child.

This level of government also funds family support services and supported placements services, which may be provided by the government or by the non-government sector. The non-government sector plays a significant role in the provision of these services in all States and Territories (see the survey of community services in SCRCSSP 1997).

Box 13.1 Factors often associated with child abuse and neglect

Factors identified as common to many child abuse and neglect substantiations include social factors (such as social stresses, social isolation, poverty, unemployment, cultural expectations and norms, and poor housing) and lack of access to, or inability to access, support services.

A 1995 Victorian study found that families investigated as result of a notification of child abuse and neglect tended to be more likely than the wider community to:

- be renting (60 per cent compared with 23 per cent in the wider community);
- be on a pension or benefit (58 per cent compared with 26 per cent);
- be a single parent family (46 per cent compared with 17 per cent); and
- be more mobile (90 per cent of families had moved in the past five years compared with 42 per cent in the wider community).

Other major factors associated with child abuse and neglect include parents' disability, mental health, parenting skills and substance abuse.

Sources: AIHW (1997); DHS (1995).

Other areas of government also have a role in child protection and, more broadly, provide services for children who have come into contact with community services departments for protective reasons. For example:

- police services have a role in investigating serious allegations of child abuse and neglect, particularly criminal matters;
- education and child care services provide services for these children as well as having a role in mandatory reporting and protective behaviours education in some jurisdictions; and
- the health sector has a role in assessing child protection matters and delivering therapeutic, counselling and other services.

The child protection notification, investigation and substantiation process

There are various broad stages in the child protection/investigation process (figure 13.1). The specific procedures vary across jurisdictions, reflecting differences in legislation, policies and practices.

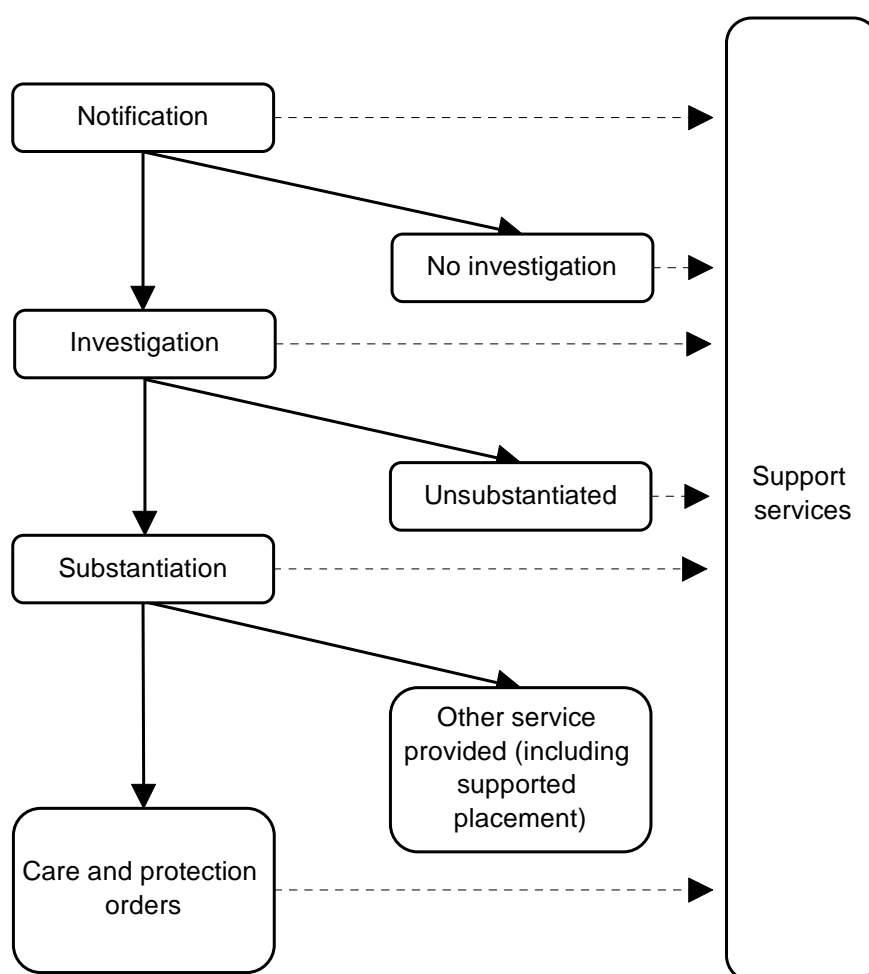
- Authorised departments are notified of concerns about the wellbeing of children. These reports may be made by groups of people mandated to report abuse or neglect or by other members of the community (including children subject to abuse or neglect). The most common sources of notifications in 1996-97 were parents or guardians, friends or neighbours, school personnel and police (AIHW 1998).
- In some jurisdictions, these reports are all viewed as notifications of abuse or neglect. In other jurisdictions, some reports are classified as notifications of abuse or neglect based on the information received, and other reports are classified as child concern reports (for example, where there are factors in the family which may place the child at risk of harm).
- Child protection services may initially assess child abuse and neglect notifications as requiring a response, with the appropriate response varying according to the level of alleged harm and the apparent needs of the child and family. The response may include investigation or another protective action. The department may refer cases of low level risk to support services.
- In jurisdictions where some reports or notifications of concern about the wellbeing of children are classified as child concern reports, the department may assess the needs of the child and family and provide or refer families to appropriate support services.
- If required, notifications of child abuse and neglect will be investigated, which involves the department obtaining further information about the child and his or her family, and assessing the child's circumstances and needs. This determines either:
 - that there is no reasonable cause to suspect the child has been, is being, or is likely to be abused or neglected or that there is insufficient information to determine abuse or neglect, and the notification is classified as unsubstantiated; or
 - that child abuse or neglect is substantiated.
- Two jurisdictions (Tasmania and SA) also have a 'child at risk' category. This applies when the notification is not classified as substantiated, but when there are reasonable grounds for suspecting the possibility of previous or future abuse or

neglect; further involvement of the department is considered to be warranted. These cases may be substantiated in other jurisdictions.

- If harm or risk of harm is substantiated, action will be taken to protect the child if it is required (including court action if warranted).

The family can be referred to appropriate support services at any point during the process of responding to a child protection notification.

Figure 13.1 **Child protection investigation process**



Dashed lines indicate that clients may or may not receive these services.

In 1997-98 there were around 98 000 notifications of suspected child abuse and neglect. It is not yet possible to compare the data across jurisdictions because there are significant differences in the definition of a notification. Victoria, for example, broadly defines notifications to include all reports to the community services department, including all child concern reports; WA and Tasmania deals with a number of reports as child concern reports when other states may classify them as

child protection notifications. Notifications in Victoria and NSW are largely caller defined, so the number and rate of notifications tend to be larger compared with jurisdictions where notifications are agency defined. Between 1996-97 and 1997-98, the number of notifications increased in Victoria (by 4.6 per cent), Queensland (by 11.3 per cent), WA (by 16.6 per cent), SA (by 15.4 per cent) and the NT (by 47.6 per cent) (table 13.1).

Table 13.1 Notifications of child abuse and neglect^a

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas^d</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>
1996-97	^b	31 707	15 478 ^c	2 099	10 094	2 363	1 220	481
1997-98	31 223	33 163	17 233	2 447	11 651	1 016	1 125	710
<i>Number of individual children notified per 1000 children aged 0–16 years (1996-97)</i>								
Indigenous	^b	92.6 ^e	33.5	18.1	63.2	10.0	43.9	9.4
Non-indigenous	^b	22.0	13.1	3.5	18.3	15.0	11.5	7.7
All children	^b	22.8	14.2	4.3	19.5	15.0	12.1	8.3
<i>Number of individual children notified per 1000 children aged 0–16 years (1997-98)</i>								
Indigenous	35.4	113.2 ^e	37.5	18.8	81.5	1.6	52.4	13.1
Non-indigenous	16.4	23.1	13.9	4.1	20.7	7.4	11.3	9.5
All children	17.1	24.0	15.3	4.9	22.5	7.1	12.0	10.9

^a Definitions of a notification vary. Refer to footnotes for each State and Territory in the source tables for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^b NSW data for 1996-97 were available for the period 1 April 1997 to 30 June 1997, during which 7776 notifications were made (representation in population: indigenous 39.3 per 1000 indigenous children; non-indigenous 18.3 per 1000 non-indigenous children; all children 19.0 per 1000 children). ^c Queensland data for 1996-97 related to the 1996 calendar year. ^d In July 1997 Tasmania introduced new intake and assessment guidelines which are likely to have contributed to the drop in the number of notifications in 1997-98. Child and family concern reports are no longer included in the count for notifications. Notifications include allegations of maltreatment and the focus of the department is on the level of harm rather than the incident. ^e Victoria was the only State or Territory that did not have an unknown category for indigenous and non-indigenous status. As a result the rates for indigenous children per 1000 population were higher than would have been the case if there had been an unknown category. This needs to be taken into account in comparing indigenous rates for Victoria with those of other jurisdictions. It should also be noted that a significant number of these notifications are not substantiated after investigation. It would appear that many reflect family support concerns rather than child protection issues.

Sources: tables 13A.1, 13A.4, 13A.6, 13A.8, 13A.10, 13A.12, 13A.14 and 13A.16.

If an investigation results in substantiation, then action may be needed to protect the child. This often occurs without the need for a court order, but a Children's Court or equivalent may issue a care and protection order on the basis of an application and recommendation from child protection services. However, not all applications are successful because the court is not bound by the recommendation. Different care and protection orders are available, such as exercising supervision by the authorities, or giving part or full custody or guardianship to the state. The types of orders available vary between jurisdictions.

At 30 June 1998 there were over 16 000 children on care and protection orders. The legislation varies across jurisdictions, but the vast majority of children on such orders are those with substantiated abuse and neglect. In some State and Territory legislation a wide range of factors (including truancy and homelessness) may lead to a child or young person being placed on an order. In other States' legislation, the need for an order (care and protection) is defined more narrowly (table 13.2).

Table 13.2 Children on care and protection orders^a

	<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>
30 June 1997	5 764	3 865	3 249	785	1 172	508	264	111	15 718
30 June 1998	5 987	4 215	3 433	799	1 102	520	255	138	16 449
<i>Number of children on care and protection orders per 1000 children aged 0–17 years (at 30 June 1997)</i>									
Indigenous	20.4	22.7	17.2	8.2	18.4	5.0	21.5	2.6	14.9
Non-indigenous	3.1	3.2	2.9	1.3	2.9	4.0	2.9	1.5	2.9
All children	3.7	3.4	3.7	1.7	3.3	4.0	3.2	1.9	3.3
<i>Number of children on care and protection orders per 1000 children aged 0–17 years (at 30 June 1998)</i>									
Indigenous	22.3	28.2	16.5	8.1	15.3	4.6	31.2	3.1	15.5
Non-indigenous	3.1	3.5	3.1	1.3	2.7	4.2	2.7	1.9	3.0
All children	3.8	3.7	3.8	1.7	3.1	4.2	3.2	2.4	3.5

^a Types of care and protection orders vary. Refer to footnotes for each State and Territory in the source tables for information about what each jurisdiction's data include.

Sources: tables 13A.2, 13A.4, 13A.6, 13A.8, 13A.10, 13A.12, 13A.14 and 13A.16.

Policy developments in child protection services

Between the late 1980s and mid-1990s the number of notifications of abuse and neglect increased across Australia. To deal with the increased level of notifications and to achieve better outcomes for children and families, a number of jurisdictions have developed response approaches that classify some reports as child concerns and others as relating to child abuse and neglect.

Several jurisdictions have increased emphasis on working arrangements with other key agencies. The NSW Government, for example, has introduced *Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention*. These guidelines outline the roles and responsibilities for the main government agencies and promote a coordinated and comprehensive response in the protection of children. This policy clearly states that child protection intervention and support for children, young people and families is a shared responsibility across service sectors.

Some jurisdictions have introduced, or are considering introducing, structured risk assessments to assist in decision making about ongoing risk where there has been substantiated child abuse or neglect. Such prediction of future risk may ultimately affect the rate of repeat abuse.

Significant legislative reviews are occurring in several jurisdictions to update child protection legislation. In addition, work is being finalised on proposals to resolve cross-jurisdictional issues so child protection orders originating in one State may be recognised in other States and Territories.

Framework of performance indicators

The framework of performance indicators for child protection services is based on shared government objectives (box 13.2).

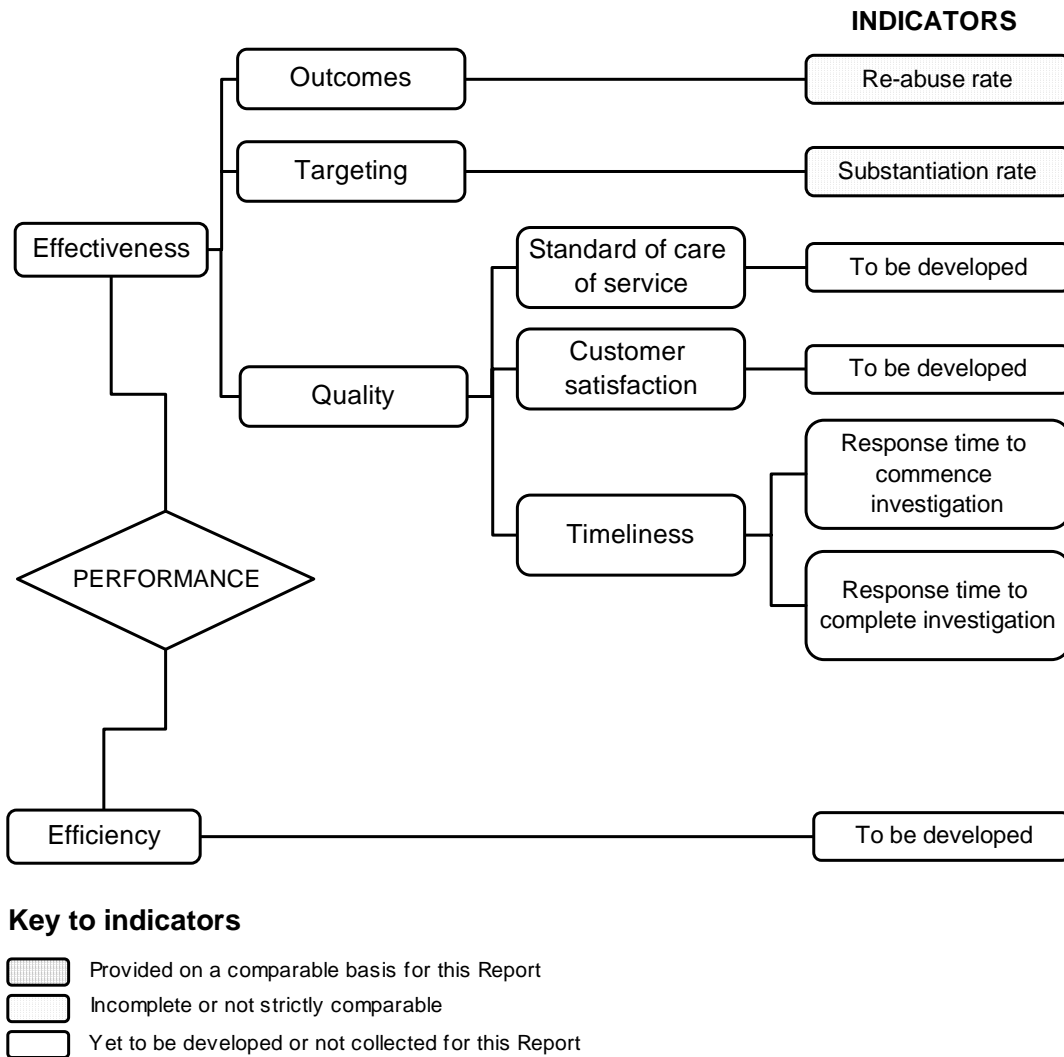
Box 13.2 Objectives for child protection services

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; and
- assist families to protect children and young people.

The framework identifies key result areas which indicate the extent to which these broad objectives are met (figure 13.2).

Figure 13.2 Performance indicators for child protection services



Future directions

Developing outcome indicators for child protection

The report from Gain and Young (1998) (box 13.3) will assist the development of improved outcome indicators for child protection and supported placement services. It is anticipated that data may be available for reporting on some new indicators for the 2000 Report.

Box 13.3 Developments in outcome indicators for child protection and supported placements

An international literature review and critical analysis of child protection and supported placement outcome indicators was commissioned by the Steering Committee (on behalf of the States and Territories) in May 1998.

The report noted that development and implementation of outcome indicators is still in its infancy, despite much discussion about their desirability and development over the past 15 years.

Major theoretical issues highlighted in the report concern the difficulty of clearly distinguishing output indicators and outcome indicators, the lack of current knowledge of causal links, the need to make explicit the assumptions that link indicators to outcomes, and the difficulty of defining outcomes that are a direct measure of program effectiveness. Long term outcome indicators, for example, are vital for showing what happens in children's lives, but they have considerable weaknesses as stand alone indicators of the effectiveness of child welfare services because many factors help shape the circumstances of a child's life. The general consensus in the literature is that a range of indicators and a range of data collection strategies are required to adequately describe the effectiveness of an intervention program.

The report noted that outcome indicators for both child protection and supported placements can be classified in terms of safety, permanency/stability and child wellbeing. The report recommended outcome indicators for the goals of safety and permanency/stability; the recommended safety indicators relate to keeping children free from subsequent abuse, and the recommended permanency/stability indicators relate to:

- achieving permanency by leaving children with their families, or reuniting children with their families after a supported placement, a permanent kinship or foster care placement or adoption; and
- maintaining stability by minimising the number of different care placements and placing children with familiar people or in familiar surroundings.

No preferred indicators for the child wellbeing goal were identified, given the lack of well developed and tested indicators in the international literature. However, the report's authors note that child (and family) wellbeing is an important area as a whole, and should be pursued as a longer term priority. A strategy suggested for developing wellbeing indicators was networking about work in progress in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australian States and Territories. This includes exploring the potential for adapting the UK *Looking After Children* approach to aggregated wellbeing outcome indicators (box 13.4). Relevant Australian work includes a major pilot client survey in Victoria (see 'Future directions' section).

Source: Gain and Young (1998).

A number of jurisdictions are undertaking or plan to undertake work to assess outcomes, for example:

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- Victoria is considering a longitudinal study over three years that involves examining outcomes for children who are on a guardianship or custody order and who are placed in out-of-home care following intervention by protection services (DHS 1998);
 - outcome indicators in WA have been reported to the Auditor General for several years. From 1998-99, more detailed output and outcome indicators (down to the zone level) will be reported internally between the purchaser and provider areas of the department; and
 - SA is undertaking an extensive base line measure of current performance in 'Guardianship of the Minister' cases with reference to worker activity and practice standards.

Using client surveys

Client views can be used to improve accountability and to learn important information about how to improve services. Client surveys are currently used in a number of service areas in the Report, including police services and housing. A national client satisfaction survey in disability services is also scheduled to be completed in 1999.

Applying these principles to child protection services is not yet common practice in Australia or overseas (DHS 1998). The Department of Human Services in Victoria is undertaking a two phased project to investigate a survey method and to develop and pilot a questionnaire. The first phase will identify the most appropriate method and tool to use with parents and young people, identify themes to be explored in the questionnaire, and identify strategies that will integrate client feedback into child protection practice and policy (due to be completed around April 1999). The second phase will develop and pilot the questionnaire (due to be completed in January 2000).

Improving the comparability of data

The States and Territories and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare are analysing the comparability of child protection data. This project will map both the similarities and the differences in jurisdictional definitions of the key concepts used in reporting on child protection data (including the major output categories referred to in this Report: notifications, investigations, substantiations and care and protection orders). A preliminary assessment will be made of the extent to which the child protection legislation, field work practices, policies and information systems of individual States and Territories contribute to the differences observed. The

project will also examine the feasibility of developing and applying generic national labels to the common tasks of child protection across Australia.

It is expected that this project will enable a better assessment of the validity and reliability of comparing existing States and Territories child protection data. It will also provide the necessary information that may allow greater comparability in future Reports.

Family support services

There are strong links between child protection, crisis accommodation and family support services. Coverage in this chapter may extend to family support services as data become available.

Work is in progress through the National Community Services Information Management Group to develop the business case for reporting data on family support services. Developing the business case will include specifying the scope, the anticipated benefits and costs, the existing capacity of States and Territories to report, and the viability or barriers to more comprehensive reporting. It is expected that the business cases will be completed by mid-1999.

Key performance indicator results

Targeting

Targeting, like appropriateness, is conceptually difficult to measure. The substantiation rate (the proportion of finalised investigations that result in substantiation) attempts to measure the effectiveness of targeting of investigation, recognising the human and financial cost of investigation where there is no abuse or neglect. Decisions on targeting must weigh up these costs of investigation with the cost of failing to investigate a case where abuse and neglect has occurred. However, the substantiation rate only provides information on one aspect of targeting — the proportion of investigations where abuse and neglect was substantiated. It provides no information on cases that were not investigated but for which an investigation would have substantiated abuse and neglect.

An increase in the substantiation rate may reflect better targeting (that is, the same number of investigations better targeted at cases where abuse and neglect has occurred) or more narrow targeting (that is, fewer investigations targeted at highest priority cases). In the latter case, the benefit (both human and financial) from fewer investigations needs to be weighed up against the costs of abuse and neglect having

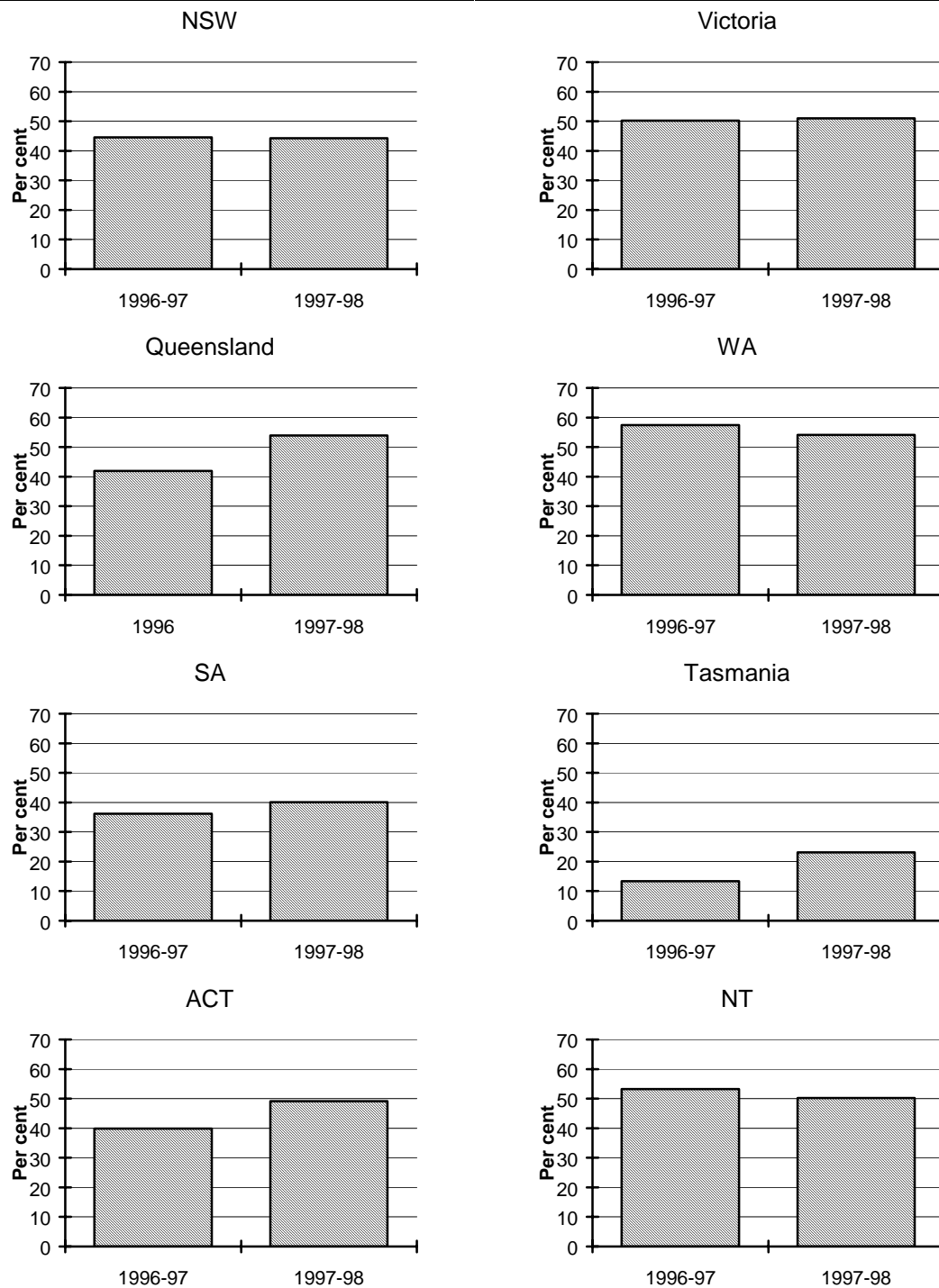
occurred in the 'lower risk' (as determined by the assessment process) cases that were no longer being investigated.

Thus, differences in the substantiation rate across jurisdictions (when comparable data are available) and changes over time within jurisdictions should be used to prompt further analysis rather than be considered as definitive performance information on their own.

Data that are comparable *across* jurisdictions were not available for this Report because definitions of investigation and substantiation vary across jurisdictions (for example, some jurisdictions assess cases before an 'investigation', while others call this assessment an 'investigation'). However, data are comparable *within* each jurisdiction between 1996-97 and 1997-98:

- in NSW, the substantiation rate remained relatively stable between 1996-97 and 1997-98 (45 per cent and 44 per cent respectively) (figure 13.3);
- in Victoria, the substantiation rate remained relatively stable (50 per cent and 51 per cent respectively);
- in Queensland, the substantiation rate increased from 42 per cent in 1996 to 54 per cent in 1997-98;
- in WA, the substantiation rate declined from 57 per cent in 1996-97 to 54 per cent in 1997-98;
- in SA, the substantiation rate increased from 36 per cent to 40 per cent;
- in Tasmania, the substantiation rate increased from 13 per cent to 23 per cent;
- in the ACT, the substantiation rate increased from 40 per cent to 49 per cent; and
- in the NT, the substantiation rate declined from 53 per cent to 50 per cent.

Figure 13.3 Proportion of finalised investigations of child abuse and neglect that were substantiated^a



^a Data were not comparable across jurisdictions because definitions of investigation and substantiation vary significantly. Consequently, rates should not be compared across jurisdictions.

Data sources: tables 13A.1, 13A.4, 13A.6, 13A.8, 13A.10, 13A.12, 13A.14 and 13A.16.

Outcomes

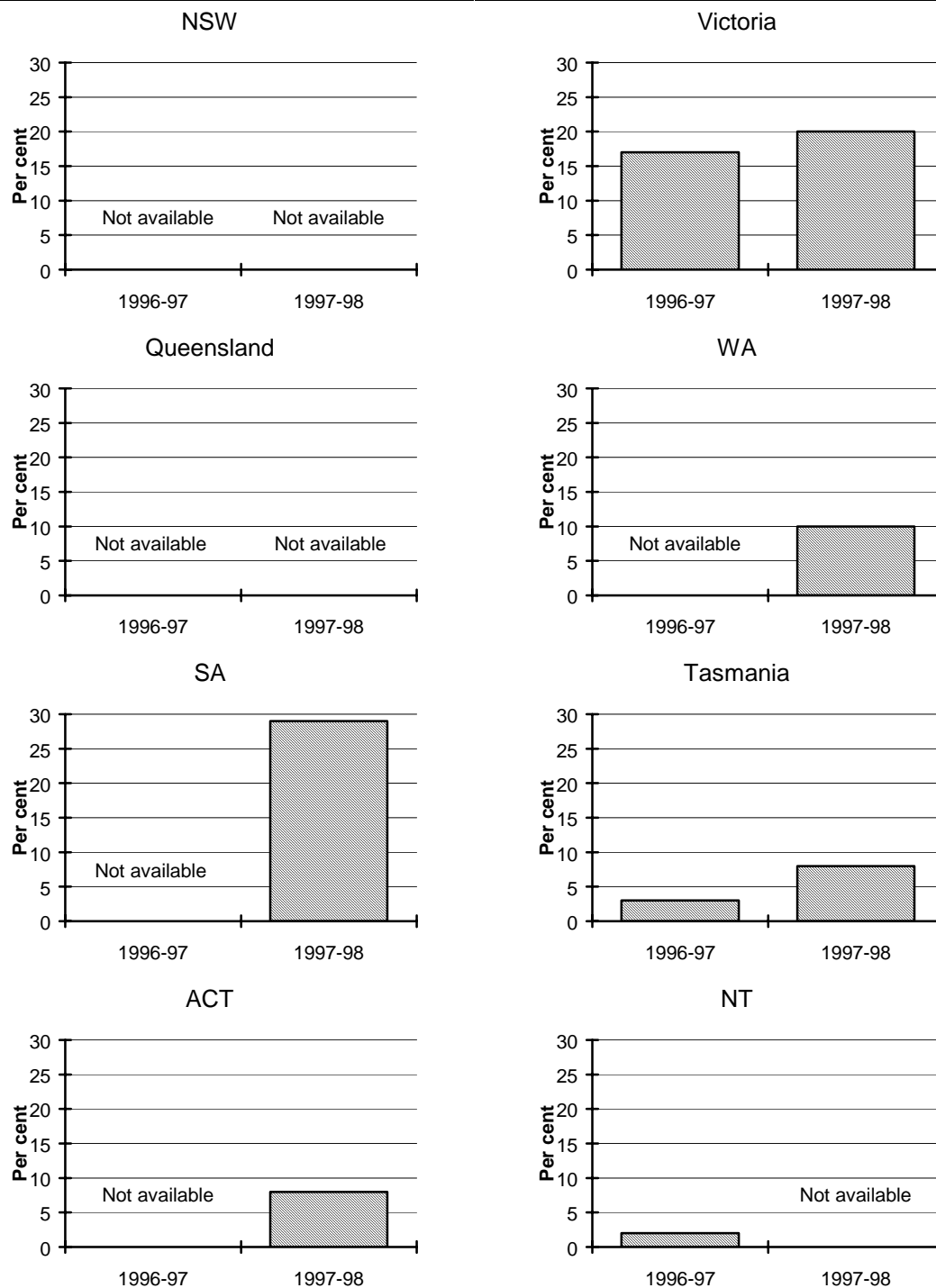
Child protection services aim to prevent the recurrence of abuse and neglect towards children so repeat abuse and neglect are an important indicator of the outcomes of these services. However, repeat abuse and neglect (or resubstantiation) may be affected by factors that are beyond the control of child protection services (a family's circumstances may change with the entry of new partners, for example). Repeat abuse and neglect may involve a range of types of abuse and neglect with varying levels of seriousness.

Repeat abuse and neglect is measured for those cases that were closed during the previous financial year and for which a further substantiation occurred within 12 months of case closure. This figure is then taken as a percentage of all cases that were closed during the same period to calculate the repeat abuse and neglect (or resubstantiation) rate.

Data that are comparable across jurisdictions were not available for this Report, but data are comparable within each jurisdiction between 1996-97 and 1997-98. Victoria and Tasmania were the only jurisdictions who supplied data for both years: Victoria's resubstantiation rate was 20 per cent in 1997-98 compared with 17 per cent in 1996-97; and Tasmania's resubstantiation rate was 8 per cent in 1997-98 compared with 3 per cent in 1996-97 (figure 13.4).

Only five jurisdictions (Victoria, WA, SA, Tasmania and the ACT) were able to supply information on repeat abuse and neglect for 1997-98.

Figure 13.4 Repeat abuse and neglect within 12 months of case closure^{a, b}



^a Children who were the subject of another substantiated notification in the 12 months after their cases were closed (as a proportion of all children who were the subject of a substantiated notification in the previous year and whose cases were closed during the previous year). ^b Data are not comparable across jurisdictions because definitions of case closure vary. Consequently, rates should not be compared across jurisdictions.

Data sources: tables 13A.3, 13A.5, 13A.7, 13A.9, 13A.11, 13A.13, 13A.15 and 13A.17.

13.2 Supported placements

Profile of supported placements

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

Supported placements can either be in family based care (such as foster care, care with the child's extended family, and other home based arrangements) or facility based care (such as family group homes). 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. The goal of child protection intervention is family reunification where this can be safely achieved, with many supported placements seen as a temporary alternative to assist the family (AIHW 1998). The outcomes of family reunification are being researched.

State or Territory Government departments fund supported placements, which may be provided by the department or by the non-government sector. The non-government sector plays a significant role in providing services in all States and Territories.

Composition of clients

There were approximately 14 400 children in supported placements across Australia at 30 June 1998. The rate of supported placements per 1000 children (aged 0–17 years) was highest in Tasmania (3.6 per 1000) and lowest in the ACT (2.2 per 1000) (table 13.3).

Children may enter supported placement for short term or long term care. Between 43 per cent (in Queensland and Tasmania) and 59 per cent (in WA) of children remained in continuous supported placement for two years or more (figure 13.5). The proportion of children in supported placement for less than one month ranged from 3 per cent in WA to 10 per cent in Tasmania.

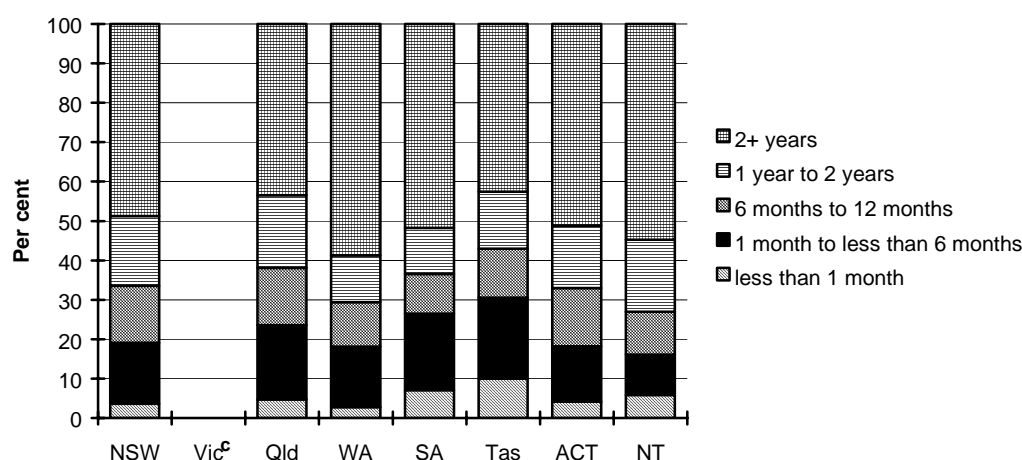
Table 13.3 Children in supported placements, 30 June 1998^a

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
<i>Children aged 0–17 years in supported placement</i>									
Indigenous children	1 153	320 ^b	522	310	188	34	36	71	2 634
Other	4 450	3 295	1 824	783	819	408	143	66	11 788
All children	5 603	3 615	2 346	1 093	1 007	442	179	137	14 422
<i>Children in supported placement (per 1000 children aged 0–17 years)</i>									
Indigenous children	21.5	30.7 ^b	10.1	11.6	18.0	4.6	24.4	3.0	14.2
Other	2.9	2.9	2.2	1.7	2.4	3.5	1.8	1.9	2.6
All children	3.5	3.2	2.6	2.3	2.8	3.6	2.2	2.3	3.1

^a Supported placements data were not the same for each State and Territory. Refer to footnotes for each State and Territory in the source tables for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^b Victoria was the only State or Territory that did not have an unknown category for indigenous and non-indigenous status. As a result the rates for indigenous children per 1000 population were higher than would have been the case if there had been an unknown category. This needs to be taken into account in comparing indigenous rates for Victoria with those of other jurisdictions.

Sources: tables 13A.18, 13A.22, 13A.26, 13A.30, 13A.34, 13A.38, 13A.42 and 13A.46.

Figure 13.5 Children by length of time in continuous supported placement, 30 June 1998^{a, b}



^a NSW and the ACT data only relate to children in nonrespite care. Queensland, WA, SA, Tasmania and the NT were unable to distinguish between respite and nonrespite care. Both types of placements were included. ^b Supported placements data were not the same for each State and Territory. Refer to footnotes for each State and Territory in the source tables for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^c Not available.

Data sources: tables 13A.18, 13A.22, 13A.26, 13A.30, 13A.34, 13A.38, 13A.42 and 13A.46.

Policy developments in supported placements

A number of jurisdictions are reviewing their service delivery models for out-of-home care. Following these reviews, a number of jurisdictions have introduced or

are piloting the UK *Looking After Children* model (box 13.4).

Box 13.4 *Looking After Children* project

The *Looking after Children* (LAC) project, sponsored by the UK Department of Health, is the main vehicle for implementing a greater focus by practitioners on outcome issues such as education and health in the United Kingdom (Dartington Social Research Unit 1997, as referred to in Gain and Young 1998).

The project has developed tools to help caseworkers to include outcomes planning in their day-to-day work. The project has defined seven developmental dimensions along which children need to progress to achieve long term wellbeing in adulthood (health, education, identity, family and social relationships, social presentation, self care skills, and emotional and behavioural development).

A demonstration project is underway in the United Kingdom to pilot selected variables for use as aggregated outcome indicators (primarily for children in out-of-home placements).

LAC case materials are being introduced in a number of jurisdictions across Australia:

- Barnardos and the University of NSW are undertaking a joint three-year longitudinal study in NSW to trial and evaluate the LAC system, involving all Barnardos' out-of-home care placements. The NSW Government is considering piloting LAC in a number of other out-of-home care services;
- the Victorian Government is trialing the LAC system with 50 children in eight agencies;
- the Queensland Government is looking at incorporating elements of the LAC recording system into its existing case management framework;
- the WA Government has trialed LAC Action and Assessment Records over the past two years, and these will be implemented across the State during 1998-99;
- the SA Government has trialed the LAC system in three locations and is now developing an alternative case management system which will appropriately address the SA context;
- the Tasmanian Government plans to implement the LAC system by 1999;
- in the ACT, a 1998 Substitute Care Review has recommended the introduction of LAC as a method of case management; and
- the NT Government has incorporated elements of the LAC system into its case management system with children in care.

As recommended by Gain and Young (1998), jurisdictions aim to exchange information on implementation issues and report on progressive results. This should inform discussions about the feasibility of applying aspects of the LAC based approach across jurisdictions.

Sources: Gain and Young (1998) and information provided by States and Territories.

Framework of performance indicators

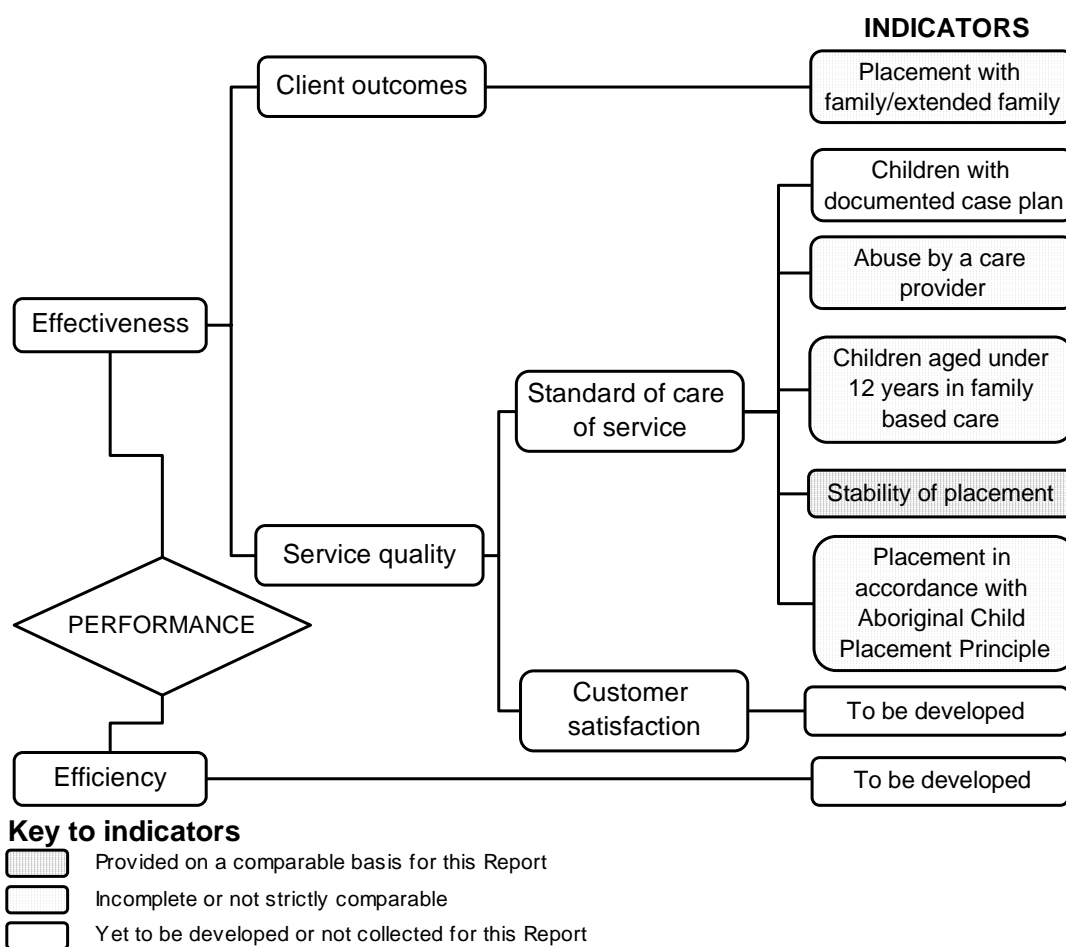
The framework of performance indicators for supported placement services is based on shared government objectives (box 13.5).

Box 13.5 Objective for supported placement services

Supported placement services aim to care for children and young people aged 17 years and under who cannot live with their parents for reasons of safety or family crisis.

The framework identifies key result areas which indicate the extent to which these broad objectives are met (figure 13.6).

Figure 13.6 Performance indicators for supported placement services



Future directions

Developing outcome indicators for supported placements

The report from Gain and Young (1998) will assist the development of improved outcome indicators for child protection and supported placement services. It is anticipated that data may be available for reporting on some new indicators for the 2000 Report.

Key performance indicator results

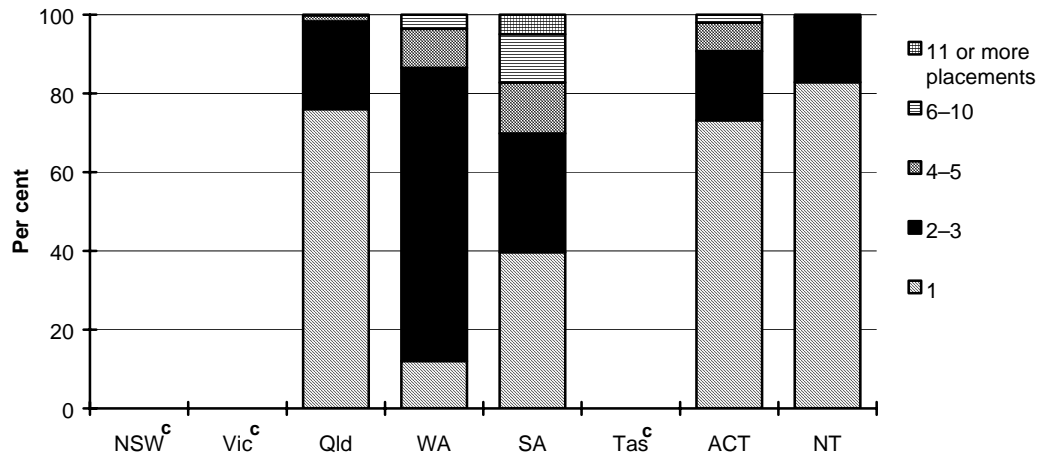
Stability of placement for children placed away from their family for protective reasons is an important indicator of service quality, particularly for those children who require long term placements. Many children will quite appropriately have more than one placement — for example, an initial emergency placement followed by a longer term placement — but more than three or four placements for a child may indicate some instability.

Data were collected on the number of placements for children who had exited out-of-home care in 1997-98. Data were grouped according to the length of time in care (less than one month, one month to less than six months, six months to less than one year, one year to less than two years, and two years or more).

Most children in Queensland, the ACT and the NT who exited out-of-home care in 1997-98 and who had been in out-of-home care for less than 12 months had only one placement. In SA, 40 per cent had one placement. In WA, 74 per cent of children had two or three placements (in WA children entering care are usually placed in an initial emergency placement followed by a second longer term placement when the child's needs are determined) (figure 13.7).

Children who had been in out-of-home care for 12 months or more tended to have more placements than those who had been in out-of-home care for less than 12 months. In WA and the ACT, most had two or three placements (51 per cent and 62 per cent respectively). In SA and the NT, most had six to 10 placements (25 per cent and 38 per cent respectively). The proportion of children who had been in out-of-home care for 12 months or more with six placements or more ranged from 5 per cent in the ACT to 54 per cent in the NT (figure 13.8).

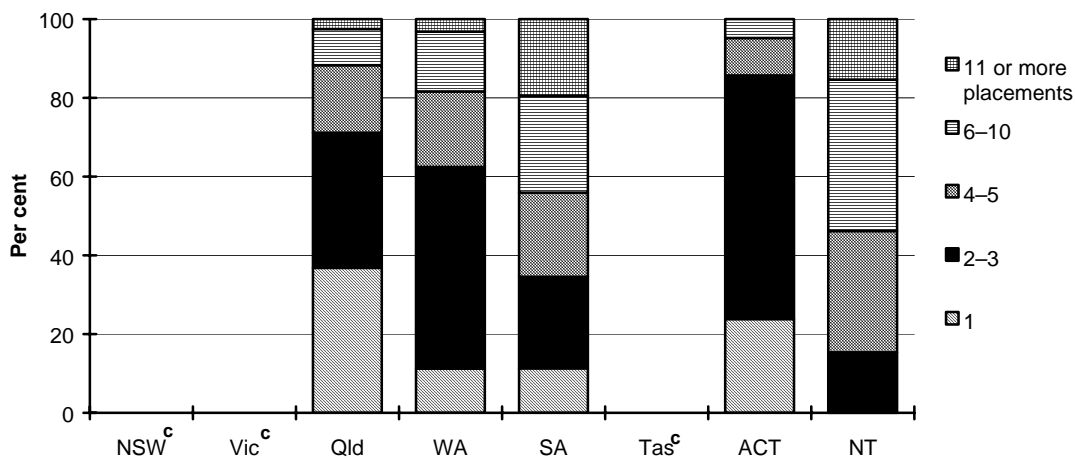
Figure 13.7 Number of placements for children exiting care after less than 12 months, 1997-98^{a, b}



^a Data refer to children exiting care in 1997-98. ^b Supported placements data were not the same for each State/Territory. Refer to footnotes for each State and Territory in the source tables for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^c Not available.

Data sources: tables 13A.20, 13A.24, 13A.28, 13A.32, 13A.36, 13A.40, 13A.44 and 13A.48.

Figure 13.8 Number of placements for children exiting care after 12 months or more, 1997-98^{a, b}



^a Data refer to children exiting care in 1997-98. ^b Supported placements data were not the same for each State/Territory. Refer to footnotes for each State and Territory in the source tables for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^c Not available.

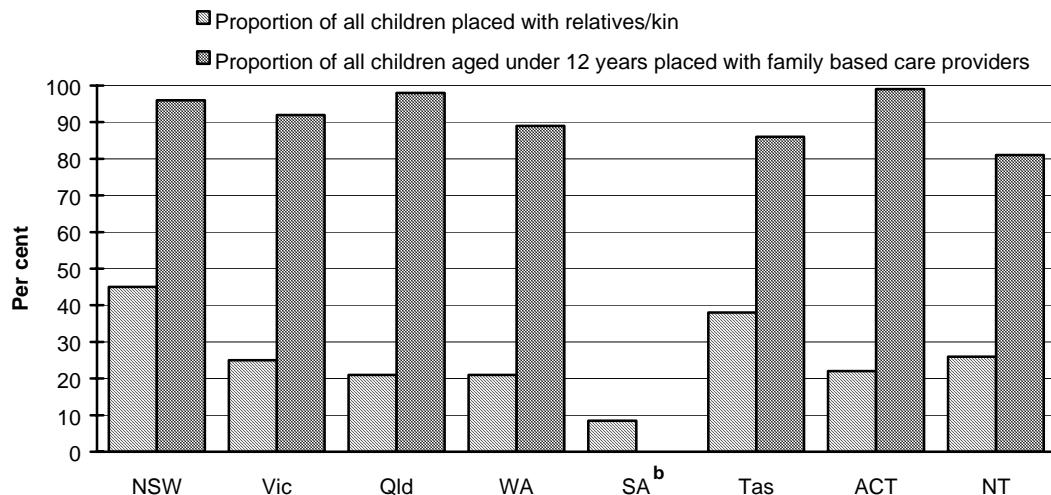
Data sources: tables 13A.20, 13A.24, 13A.28, 13A.32, 13A.36, 13A.40, 13A.44 and 13A.48.

The type of placement is another indicator of the quality of child placement. However, it is only currently possible to make limited jurisdictional comparisons because data were either not collected or collected differently across jurisdictions.

Placing children with their relatives or kin is generally preferred for children in supported placements. The proportion of children placed with relatives or kin range from 9 per cent in SA to 45 per cent in NSW (figure 13.9).

Placing young children in family based care is generally considered to be in their best interests. The proportion of children aged 12 years and under who were placed in family based care ranged from 81 per cent in the NT to 99 per cent in the ACT (figure 13.9).

Figure 13.10 Proportions of children in preferred placements, 30 June 1998^a



^a Refer to footnotes for each State and Territory in the source tables for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^b SA could not provide data on children placed with carers other than family based care providers.

Data sources: tables 13A.19, 13A.21, 13A.23, 13A.25, 13A.27, 13A.29, 13A.31, 13A.33, 13A.35, 13A.37, 13A.39, 13A.41, 13A.43, 13A.45, 13A.47 and 13A.49.

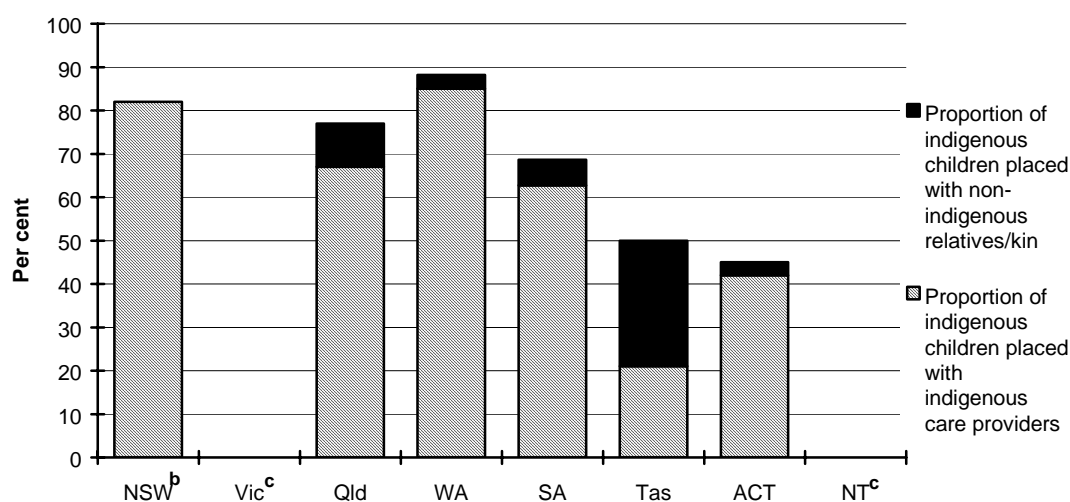
The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle has the following order of preference for placement of Aboriginal children:

- with the child's extended family;
- within the child's Aboriginal community; or
- with other Aboriginal people (NSW Law Reform Commission 1997).

This principle has been adopted by all jurisdictions either in legislation or policy.

The proportion of indigenous children placed with indigenous care providers ranged from 21 per cent in Tasmania to 85 per cent in WA at 30 June 1998 (figure 13.10). Placing indigenous children with non-indigenous relatives or kin also complies with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. The proportion of indigenous children placed with non-indigenous relatives or kin was highest in Tasmania (29 per cent) and lowest in WA and the ACT (3 per cent).

Figure 13.11 Placement of indigenous children, 30 June 1998^a



^a Refer to footnotes for each State and Territory in the source tables for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^b NSW could not provide data for indigenous children placed with non-indigenous relatives/kin. ^c Not available.

Data sources: tables 13A.19, 13A.23, 13A.27, 13A.31, 13A.35, 13A.39, 13A.43 and 13A.47.

13.3 Supported accommodation and assistance

Profile of supported accommodation and assistance

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.

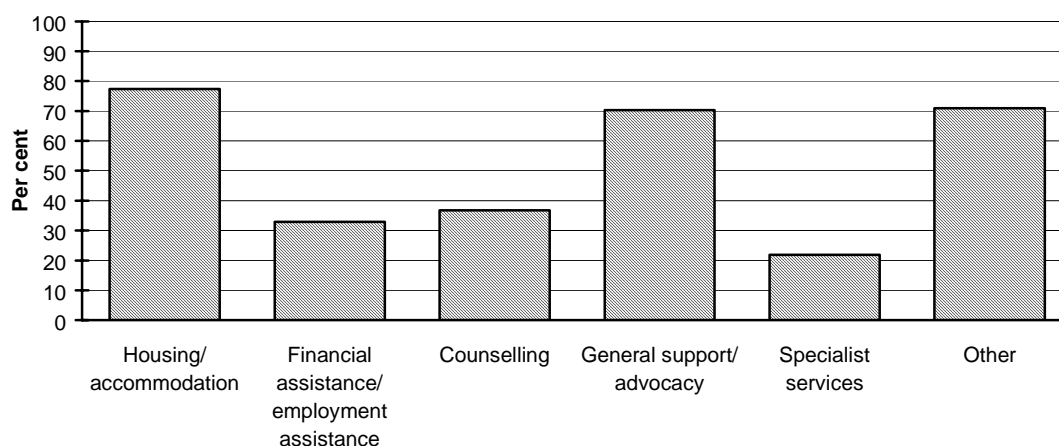
This section reports on services provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments jointly fund SAAP, which was established in 1985 to consolidate a number of existing programs.

Services provided

Services available under SAAP include supported accommodation, counselling, advocacy, links to health, education and employment services, outreach support and meals services.

Housing and accommodation services were provided in 77 per cent of support periods in 1997-98. General support and advocacy (70 per cent of support periods), counselling (37 per cent of support periods), financial and employment assistance (33 per cent of support periods), and specialist services (22 per cent of support periods) were also commonly provided (figure 13.11).

Figure 13.12 **Composition of SAAP support periods, 1997-98^{a, b}**



^a Agencies may provide more than one type of service as a part of a single support period; thus services provided do not sum to 100 per cent. ^b Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.50.

Agencies providing SAAP services

SAAP provides accommodation and support services to a range of groups such as homeless families, single men, single women, young people and women and children escaping domestic violence. There are around 1200 SAAP agencies of which most principally target one client group. During 1997-98 services were delivered by agencies targeting:

- young people (39 per cent of agencies);
- women escaping domestic violence (21 per cent);
- single men (8 per cent);

-
- families (8 per cent); and
 - single women (4 per cent) (table 13A.51).

Agencies targeting multiple client groups or general support accounted for 20 per cent of SAAP providers in 1997-98.

Agencies also vary in their SAAP service delivery model. The most common model in 1997-98 was medium to long term accommodation (40 per cent of agencies), followed by crisis or short term accommodation (34 per cent). All SAAP accommodation services involved support services too. Agencies also provided services other than accommodation: such as outreach support (5 per cent of agencies), day support (2 per cent), and telephone information and referral (2 per cent) (table 13A.52).

Roles and responsibilities

SAAP services are primarily delivered by non-government agencies, with some local government participation. States and Territories are responsible for day-to-day operations and directly fund the SAAP agencies. Research, strategy and other planning and development activities are coordinated at the national level by the National SAAP Coordination and Development Committee (which includes representatives of the Commonwealth and each State and Territory Governments).

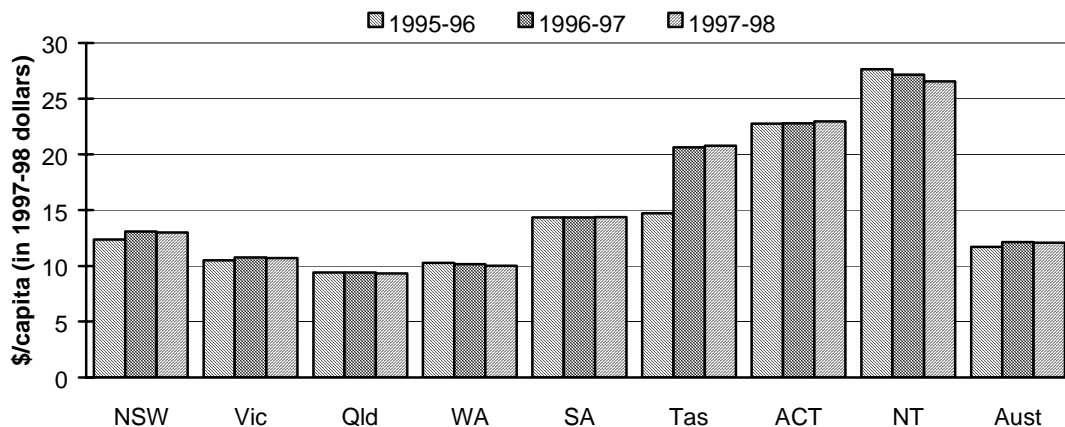
Recurrent funding of SAAP services was \$224 million in 1997-98 of which the Commonwealth Government contributed 56 per cent and State and Territories contributed 44 per cent (table 13A.53).

Combined Commonwealth and State and Territory Government funding increased in real terms in all jurisdictions from 1996-97 to 1997-98 (table 13A.54). However, funding in real terms per person in the total population fell marginally in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA and the NT. SAAP funding per person in the total population ranged from \$9 in Queensland to \$27 in the NT in 1997-98 (figure 13.12).

Policy developments in supported accommodation and assistance

The current Commonwealth/State Agreements for SAAP expire at the end of 1999. As required under the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994*, a national evaluation of SAAP is being conducted (to be completed in early 1999). The evaluation has drawn on completed State and Territory evaluations and will feed into future policy directions and the future of the program.

Figure 13.13 Recurrent SAAP program funding per person in the total population^{a, b}



^a Total SAAP recurrent allocations (including State/Territory level allocations for program administration) were included in the analysis. ^b The total population figure is not indicative of the demand for SAAP services.

Data source: table 13A.55.

A key policy issue for SAAP is to improve links between SAAP and other programs or activities (such as housing, employment, training and specialist help for mental health problems). The performances of housing and mental health services are discussed in chapters 14 and 5 of this Report. Two recently completed studies — on clients with high and complex needs and on homelessness within the indigenous population — will advance this work.

The indigenous homelessness study has found this issue is complex. The study endorses a coordinated government approach across the range of program areas that have responsibility for responding to indigenous homelessness. Many of the key findings directly relate to SAAP, but a large number relate to other programs such as mental health, housing and family and children's services. The implementation of the findings relating to SAAP will lead to more effective and efficient service delivery for indigenous SAAP clients.

State and Territory reviews have led to restructuring to provide more appropriate and effective service delivery systems. Service agreements between agencies and State and Territory departments have been redeveloped to incorporate different reporting requirements and different targets. This has involved some work on developing and using output based funding. Implementation has been difficult given the diverse nature of the SAAP client group (both in terms of the range of different clients and the differing levels and complexity of need).

Framework of performance indicators

The framework of performance indicators for supported accommodation and assistance are based on SAAP's objectives (box 13.6).

Box 13.6 Objective for SAAP services

The objective of SAAP services is to provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services to help people who are homeless achieve the maximum possible degree of self reliance and independence.

The reporting framework for SAAP is shown in figure 13.13. Data on appropriateness (the extent to which the services provided match the expressed need of the client) are presented for the first time.

Future directions

Measuring client satisfaction

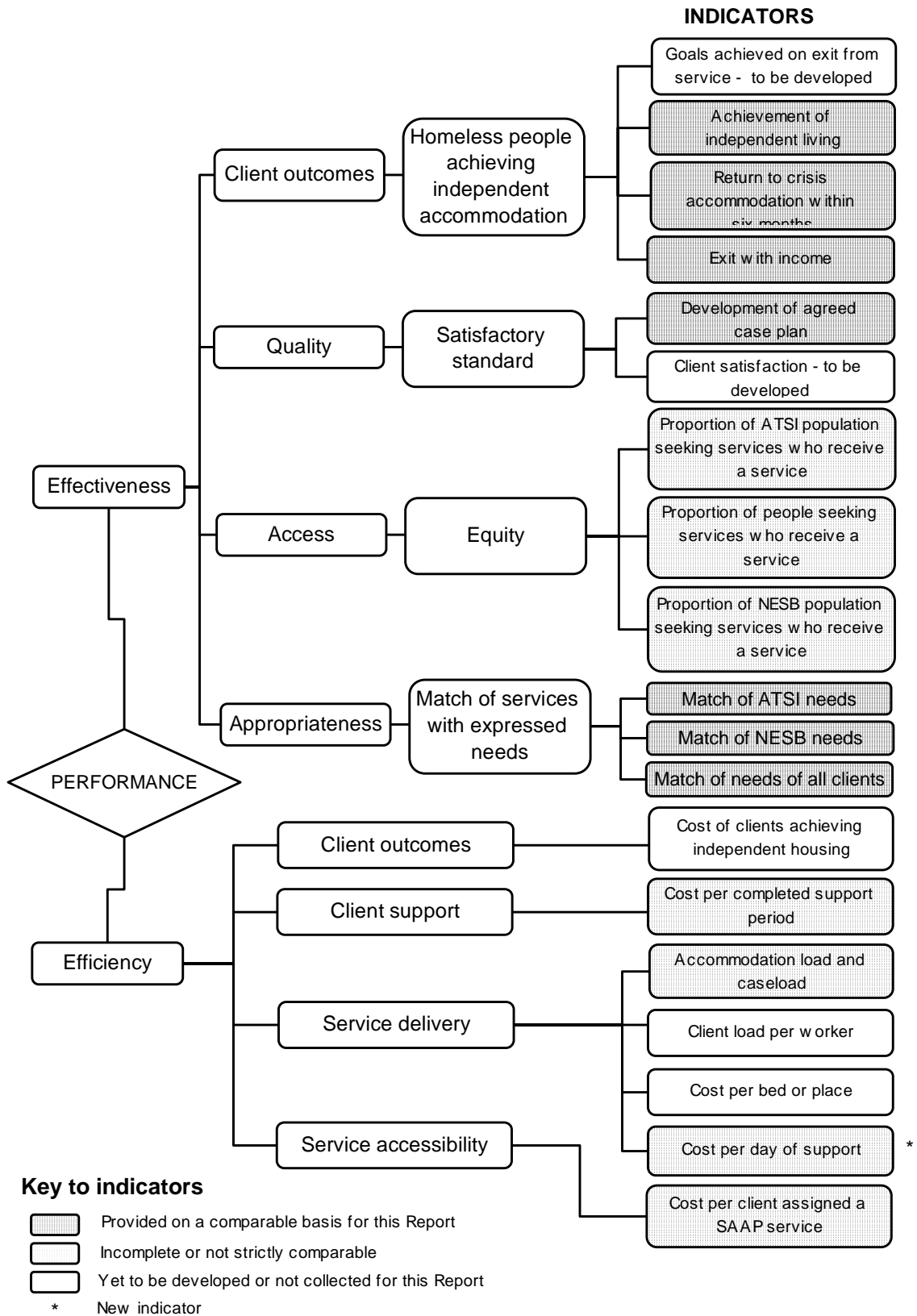
Client satisfaction is an important indicator of quality. The national evaluation of SAAP involves some work on assessing client satisfaction.

Improving data and information collection

Next year's focus will be on improving the data and information collection — in particular, improving data quality and the already high response rates, conducting special data collections and research (for example, the special collection on children accompanying adults in SAAP conducted in May and June 1998) and reviewing parts of the collection to improve collection arrangements.

A computer software package (SAAP Management and Reporting Tool — SMART) has been developed for SAAP agencies to electronically collect client information, which will improve the quality and usefulness of the data. SMART is being progressively implemented by SAAP agencies (with approximately one third now using the package). The package has been designed to enable data to be extracted periodically for input to the SAAP national data collection. This package will improve efficiency by eliminating the need for the collection of information via individual paper forms, and improve data quality by eliminating errors through checks built into the software. The package will enable the periodic collection of

Figure 13.14 Performance indicators for SAAP services



additional data for special purposes, because the range of client information recorded will be larger than required for the existing data collection.

Key performance indicator results

Outcomes

An important outcome for SAAP 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 of clients are recorded at the time of their exit from SAAP.

In all jurisdictions, most clients had 'no substantive change' in income source between entering and exiting SAAP services (table 13.4). The proportion ranged from 82 per cent in Queensland to 92 per cent in Tasmania.

Moving from having no income before receiving SAAP services to obtaining some income, or obtaining their own benefit, an extra benefit or a wage indicates greater client independence. The proportion of clients who moved from having no income support to obtaining some income ranged from 4 per cent in WA, Tasmania and the NT to 6 per cent in Victoria, Queensland and SA. The proportion of clients who obtained their own benefit, an extra benefit or a wage ranged from 1 per cent in Tasmania to 4 per cent in the NT.

Table 13.4 Change in client's income source after SAAP support, 1997-98 (per cent)^{a, b}

	<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>
Moved from no income to some income	5.3	6.3	5.6	3.7	5.5	3.5	5.1	4.1	5.3
Obtained own benefit/extra benefit/wages	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.1	1.2	2.0	4.4	2.4
Had no substantive change	82.7	84.7	81.6	88.7	85.4	91.6	84.0	82.8	84.4
Had no income before or after support	8.8	4.7	9.1	4.0	5.8	3.2	7.9	7.7	6.6
Moved from wage to government payments/ some income to no income	0.8	1.9	1.2	1.1	1.3	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

^a Excluded high volume records (data collected from high volume SAAP agencies — those with 50 or more new clients on a daily basis) because income source after support was not collected. ^b Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.56.

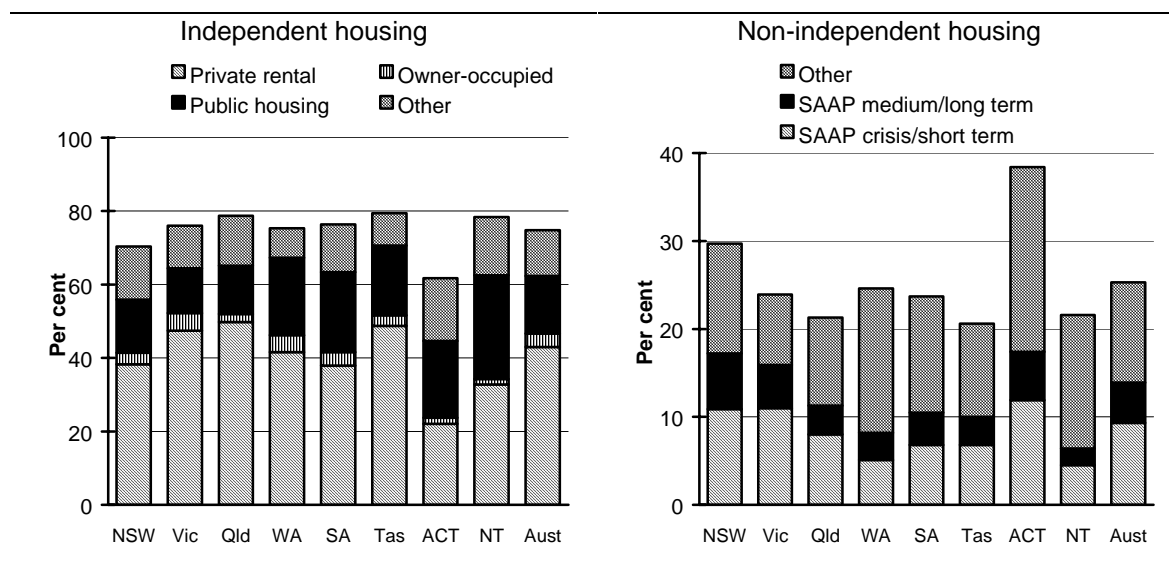
The proportion of clients who had no income before or after support ranged from 3 per cent in Tasmania to 9 per cent in NSW and Queensland. Nationally 1 per cent of clients exiting SAAP moved from a wage to government payment or some income to no income.

The proportion of clients achieving independent living at the end of a support period indicates the independence of clients after SAAP support. Nationally 75 per cent of clients achieved independent housing at the end of a support period in 1997-98. The proportion ranged from 62 per cent in the ACT to 79 per cent in Tasmania. It is important to note that data are only available for a third of completed support periods, and as such may not be representative of the total SAAP population.

By type of independent housing, 43 per cent of all clients moved to private rental housing, 16 per cent entered public housing and 4 per cent moved to owner-occupied housing in 1997-98. The proportion of clients moving to private rental housing was highest in Queensland (50 per cent) and lowest in the ACT (22 per cent). The proportion of clients moving to public housing ranged from 12 per cent in Victoria to 28 per cent in the NT.

By type of non-independent housing, 14 per cent of all clients continued to live in SAAP accommodation — 9 per cent in crisis or short term accommodation and 5 per cent in medium to long term accommodation. The proportion of clients remaining in SAAP accommodation was highest in NSW and the ACT (17 per cent) and lowest in the NT (6 per cent) (figure 13.14).

Figure 13.15 Change in clients' type of housing after SAAP support, 1997-98^{a, b, c}

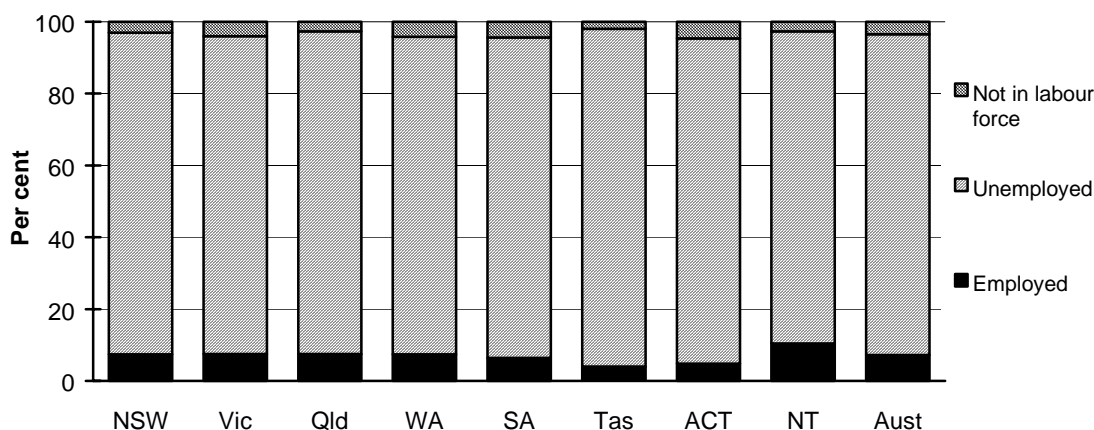


^a Excluded high volume records because not all items were included in high volume forms. ^b 'Other' independent housing may include living rent free in a house or flat. 'Other' non-independent housing may include SAAP funded accommodation at hostels, hotels or community placements; non-SAAP emergency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

Data source: table 13A.57.

Employment is another indicator of clients' achievement of self reliance and independence. Nationally, clients in only 46 per cent of support periods were participating in the workforce before support in 1997-98 (9 per cent were employed and 37 per cent were unemployed) (table 13A.58). Clients who were unemployed when entering SAAP, 7 per cent were employed at the end of the support period (3 per cent full time, 2 per cent part time and 2 per cent on a casual basis), 89 per cent remained unemployed and 4 per cent were not in the labour force (figure 13.15). Across jurisdictions, the proportion of clients who achieved employment ranged from 4 per cent in Tasmania to 10 per cent in the NT.

Figure 13.16 **Change in the labour force status of clients after SAAP support, 1997-98^{a, b, c}**



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

Data source: table 13A.59.

The performance information above related to relatively short term outcomes — outcomes for clients immediately after their support period. Longer term outcomes are important but, as in most service areas, there are challenges in collecting information on these outcomes. The data collection for SAAP allows for the measurement of the number of SAAP clients and the number and types of services provided to clients (see box 13.7).

Box 13.7 Issues when analysing SAAP data

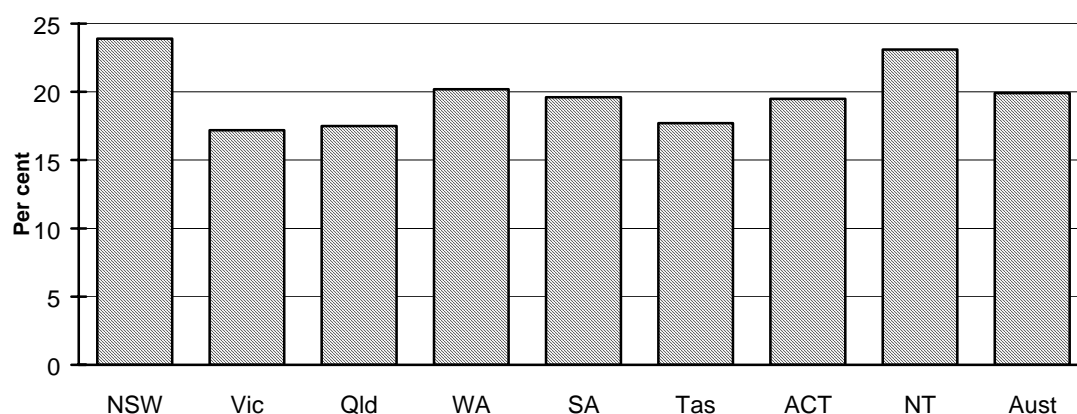
Two important issues should be considered when analysing SAAP data:

- informed consent is an essential component to the integrity of SAAP data. The principle of client/consumer rights (which underpins informed consent) recognises that SAAP 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; and
- comprehensive information is collected in the general client collection. The same level of 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).

An important longer term indicator of whether clients are achieving self reliance and independence is whether a client has needed to return to SAAP services. If a client received two or more support periods over the year then they must have returned to SAAP services after their initial support period. Nationally 20 per cent of clients

who exited from SAAP in 1997-98 returned before the end of the year. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 17 per cent in Victoria to 24 per cent in NSW (figure 13.16).

Figure 13.17 SAAP clients who exited from the service in 1997-98 and who returned to SAAP agencies before the end of that year^a



^a Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.60.

However, it may be appropriate for some clients to receive more than one support period (moving from crisis to medium term accommodation, for example).

A further medium term indicator of achieving self reliance and independence is achieving independent housing and not returning to SAAP within a specified period (in this case, six months).

However, given the data issues above, current estimates may not be representative of all clients: for example, nationally only approximately 30 per cent of clients provided information on their accommodation after exiting at least one support period over the year (table 13.5).

It is possible to estimate the proportion of clients who exit to independent housing and do not return to SAAP within six months (based on the subset of clients who provide information of accommodation on exit). However, because of the potential for bias in the data, these estimates should not be used for definitive performance comparisons between jurisdictions, rather they may be used to prompt further analysis of the reasons for cross-jurisdictional differences.

Table 13.5 Indicative estimates of clients exiting to independent housing and not returning within six months, 1997^{a, b}

<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>
Clients who provide information on accommodation on exit from support									
No.	9 389	11 795	5 201	3 569	2 967	1 487	1 169	1007	36 584
As a proportion of total clients ^c									
%	26	36	24	37	30	28	44	24	33
Clients recorded as exiting to independent accommodation and not returning within six months									
No.	3 397	5 015	2 007	1 334	1 080	618	442	377	14 270
Indicative estimates of clients exiting to independent housing and not returning within six months^d									
%	36	43	39	37	36	42	38	37	39

^a See notes to table 13A.61 for details of how the estimates were calculated. ^b Preliminary data. ^c Estimate based on estimated total number of clients for 1997-98 (not 1997). ^d Clients recorded as exiting to independent accommodation and not returning within six months as a proportion of clients who provide information on accommodation on exit from support.

Source: table 13A.61.

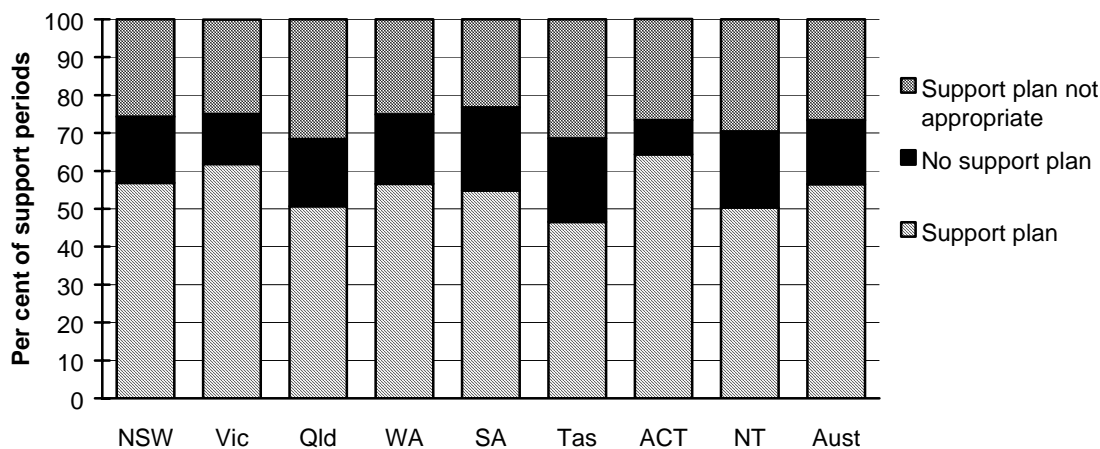
It is important to have data that are representative of all SAAP clients. Strategies are being implemented to progressively improve the data quality, including client consent rates and the provision of exit information. It is hoped that the data will eventually be robust enough to allow comparative performance assessment.

Quality

Reflecting an increased emphasis on case management, the existence of an agreed support plan is an indicator of service quality. However, an agreed support plan may be judged to be not appropriate for some support periods (such as when a support period is of a short term nature). Nationally, the case worker in 27 per cent of support periods judged that a support plan was not appropriate. This proportion ranged from 23 per cent of support periods in SA to 32 per cent of support periods in Queensland.

Nationally, there was an agreed support plan for 57 per cent of support periods in 1997-98. The proportion ranged from 47 per cent in Tasmania to 64 per cent in the ACT (figure 13.17).

Figure 13.18 Support periods, by existence of a support plan, 1997-98^{a, b}



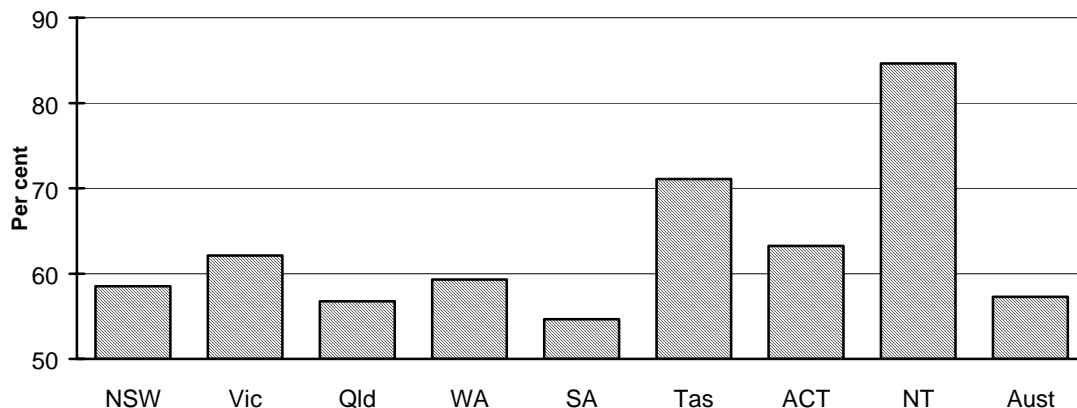
^a Excluded high volume records because not all items were included on high volume forms. ^b Preliminary data.
 Data source: table 13A.62.

Access

The ability of services to assist those in need is an indicator of access. Around 57 per cent of people seeking SAAP services received assistance in 1997-98. The proportion of potential SAAP clients who received SAAP support ranged from 55 per cent in SA to 85 per cent in the NT. The estimates of unmet demand should be interpreted with caution because they were based on a two-week data collection and thus may not be representative of the eventual success of clients accessing SAAP services over the full year (figure 13.18).

Potential clients were not provided with services for a number of reasons, including lack of available accommodation (the main reason for 80 per cent of potential clients who were not provided with services), insufficient staff (5 per cent), and lack of facilities for special needs such as disability, culturally specific needs and other special needs (3 per cent) (table 13A.63).

Figure 13.19 **SAAP clients as a proportion of estimated total demand, 1997-98^{a, b, c, d, e, f}**



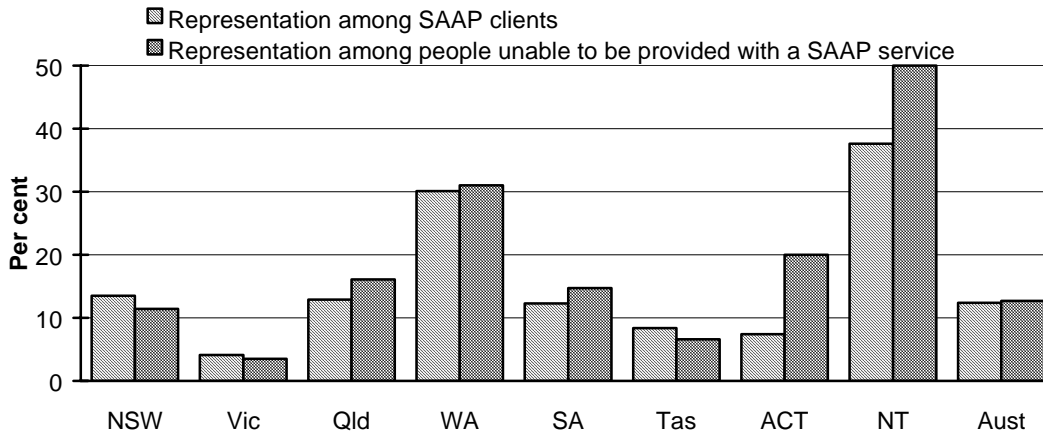
^a Data should be interpreted with extreme caution because both the number of SAAP clients and unmet demand were estimated. ^b See table 13A.64 for an explanation of how the number of SAAP clients was estimated. ^c Unmet demand estimates were only based on information collected in the two-week period 13–26 November 1997. As potential client data were only recorded during a two week period, a weighting of 26 has been applied to the count. ^d See notes to table 13A.64 for the definition of unmet demand. ^e Data on unmet demand should be interpreted with caution for several reasons. First, a person can make a request on more than one occasion and to more than one SAAP agency. 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 may not have been available to record. Therefore, the total numbers do not represent actual people. Second, a number of people may receive the ongoing support or accommodation from a SAAP agency at a later time, quite possibly soon after their initial request. As a result, this estimate 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. And finally, there are shortfalls in pro-rating from a two-week collection period to the full year. 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 two-week period which is 'typical' for all SAAP agencies. ^f Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.64.

SAAP targets homeless people in general, but access by special needs groups (such as indigenous people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds) is also important.

Nationally 13 per cent of people unable to be provided with a service were indigenous in 1997-98, compared with 12 per cent of SAAP clients who were indigenous. In Queensland, WA, SA, the ACT and the NT, the representation of indigenous people among people unable to be provided with a service was higher than the representation of indigenous people among SAAP clients; the inverse occurred in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania (figure 13.19).

Figure 13.20 Indigenous people among SAAP clients and among people unable to be provided with a SAAP service, 1997-98^{a, b, c}

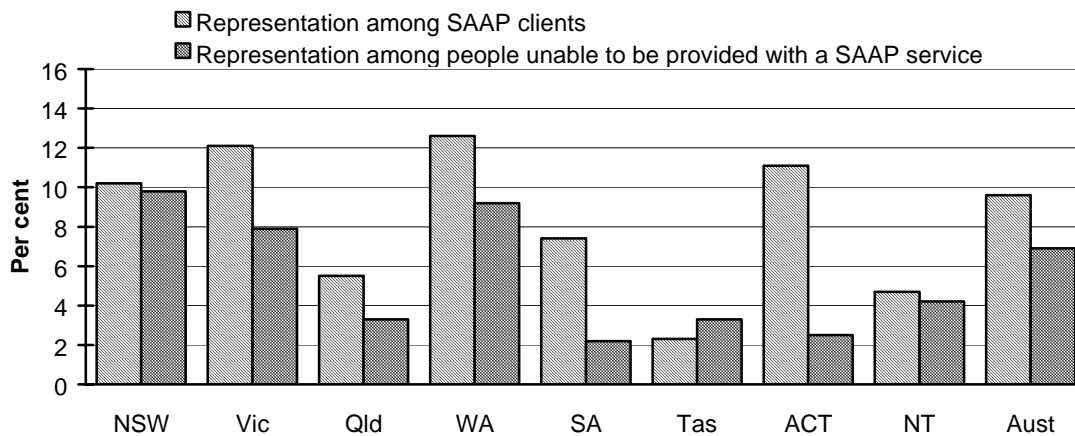


^a The number of people unable to be provided with a SAAP service was the 'unmet demand'. 'Unmet demand' estimates were based on the SAAP Unmet Demand Collection and thus should be interpreted with caution. See notes to table 13A.65 for more detail. ^b Unmet requests exclude those where the person refused an offer of assistance; those where a similar request was made at a SAAP funded agency within the collection period (to limit double counting); and those where the reason their request was not met was either that the referral was inappropriate (wrong target group) or that the service requested was not provided by the agency. ^c Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.65.

On average, the representation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds in people unable to be provided with a SAAP service (7 per cent) was lower than their among SAAP clients (10 per cent). Tasmania was the only jurisdiction where the representation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds among people unable to be provided with a SAAP service (3 per cent) was higher than their representation among SAAP clients (2 per cent) (figure 13.20).

Figure 13.21 Representation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds in SAAP clients and people unable to be provided with a SAAP service, 1997-98^{a, b, c}



^a The number of people unable to be provided with a SAAP service was the 'unmet demand'. 'Unmet demand' estimates were based on the SAAP Unmet Demand Collection and thus should be interpreted with caution. See notes to table 13A.66 for more detail. ^b Unmet requests exclude those where the person refused an offer of assistance; those where a similar request was made at a SAAP funded agency within the collection period (to limit double counting); and those where the reason their request was not met was either that the referral was inappropriate (wrong target group) or that the service requested was not provided by the agency. ^c Preliminary data.

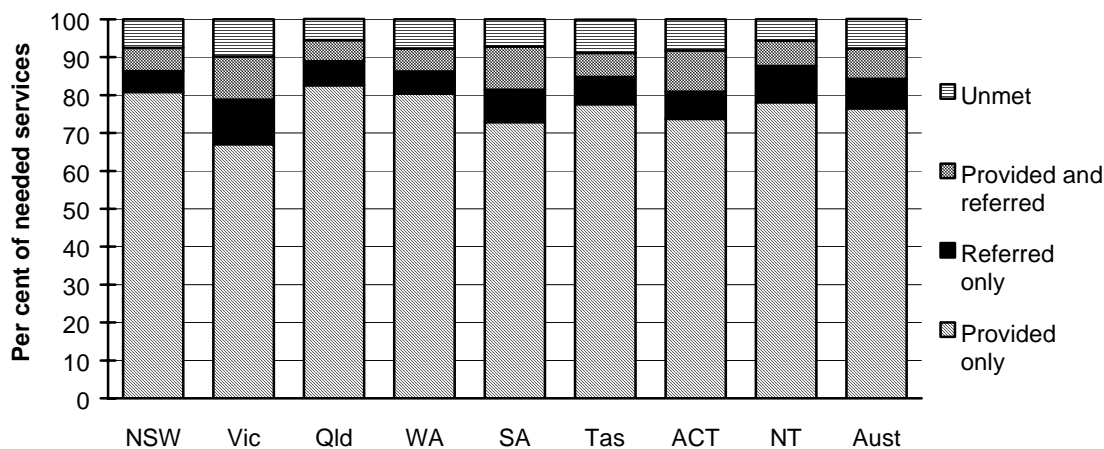
Data source: table 13A.66.

Appropriateness

The proportion of clients receiving services they need is an indicator of appropriateness. Data are collected on which services were needed by clients, and whether these services were provided or the clients were referred to another SAAP agency. The range of needed services is broad (ranging from meals or laundry facilities to long term accommodation), so the impact of not providing these services varies.

The proportion of clients who received needed services or were referred to another SAAP agency for needed services was 92 per cent in 1997-98. Across jurisdictions the proportion ranged from 90 per cent in Victoria to 94 per cent in Queensland and the NT (figure 13.21).

Figure 13.22 Support needs of SAAP clients, by met and unmet, 1997-98^a

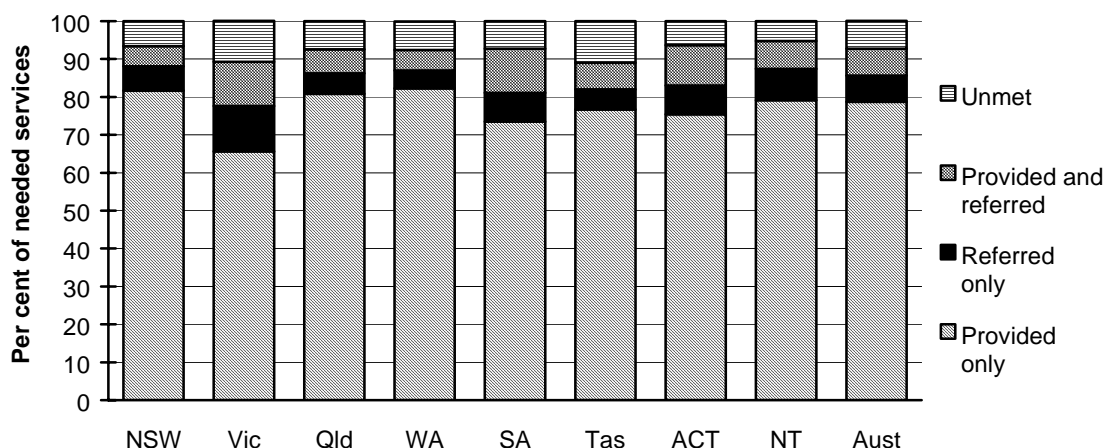


^a Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.67.

For indigenous clients, 93 per cent of needed SAAP services were either provided or clients were referred to another SAAP agency for these services in 1997-98 — 1 percentage point higher than the proportion for all clients. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 89 per cent in Victoria and Tasmania to 95 per cent in the NT (figure 13.22).

Figure 13.23 Support needs of indigenous clients, met and unmet, 1997-98^a



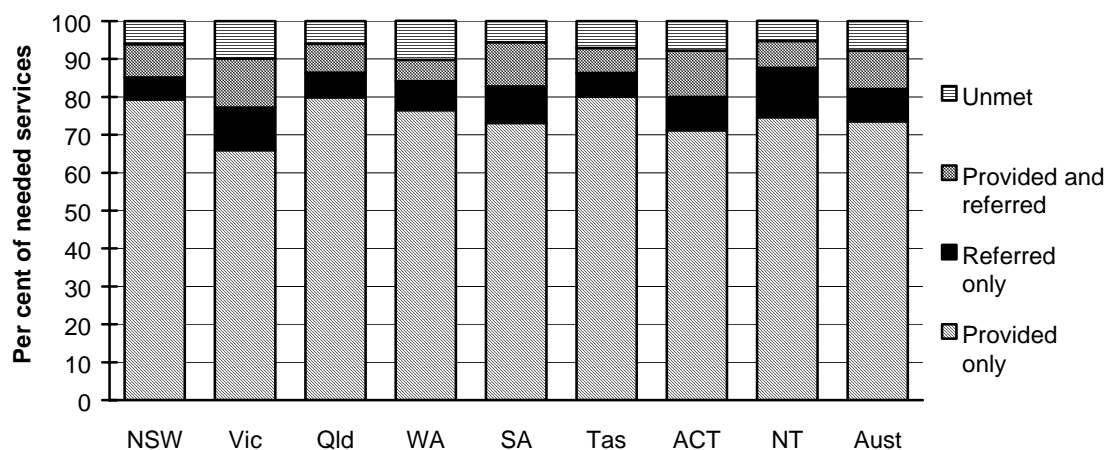
^a Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.68.

For clients from a non-English speaking background, the proportion of needed SAAP services that were either provided or clients were referred to another SAAP agency was 92 per cent in 1997-98 — the same proportion for all clients. Across

jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 90 per cent in Victoria and WA to 95 per cent in the NT (figure 13.23).

Figure 13.24 Support needs of clients from a non-English speaking background, met and unmet, 1997-98^a



^a Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.69.

Efficiency

A proxy indicator of efficiency is government inputs per unit of output (unit cost).

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

The unit cost analysis includes only expenditure by service delivery providers. Conceptually, unit cost indicators should include some of the administration costs borne by State and Territory departments in administering these services, but this is not yet possible.

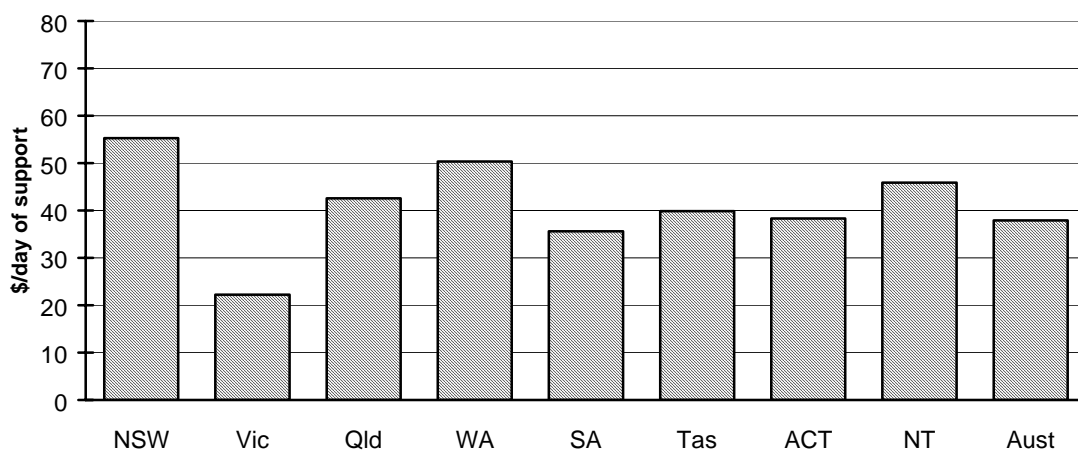
Some categories of SAAP clients were not included in efficiency calculations, such as accompanying children. Significant assistance was also provided to a number of SAAP clients on a short term basis such as potential clients (defined as unmet demand) and casual clients (see table 13A.78 for definitions). Preliminary data for 1997-98 indicates that 656 682 support periods were provided to casual clients.

The recurrent cost to government of clients achieving independent living is a broad indicator of the cost of achieving SAAP outcomes. An indicator of achieving independent living is the number of client exiting to independent housing and not

returning within six months. However, as discussed earlier, there are data quality issues associated with this indicator. It is hoped to report on this indicator in future Reports.

The recurrent cost per day of support for homeless clients receiving support and/or supported accommodation (excluding casual and potential clients, and accompanying children who receive services as clients in their own right) averaged \$38 in 1997-98. It ranged from \$22 in Victoria to \$55 in NSW (figure 13.24).

Figure 13.25 **Recurrent cost per day of support for homeless clients, 1997-98^{a, b}**

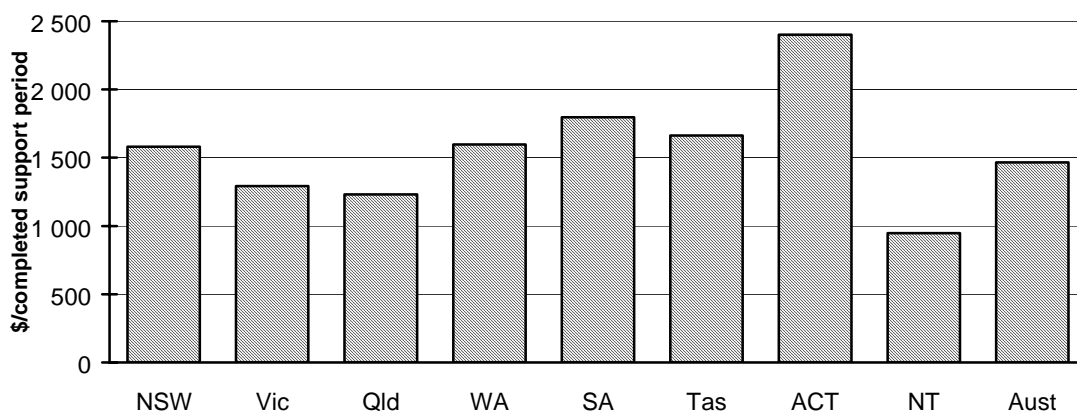


^a See notes to table 13A.70 for a description of what the analysis included. ^b Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.70.

The recurrent cost per completed support period (excluding casual and potential clients, and accompanying children who receive services as clients in their own right) averaged \$1466 in 1997-98. Across jurisdictions it ranged from \$948 in the NT to \$2402 in the ACT (figure 13.25).

Figure 13.26 Recurrent cost per completed support period, 1997-98^{a, b}

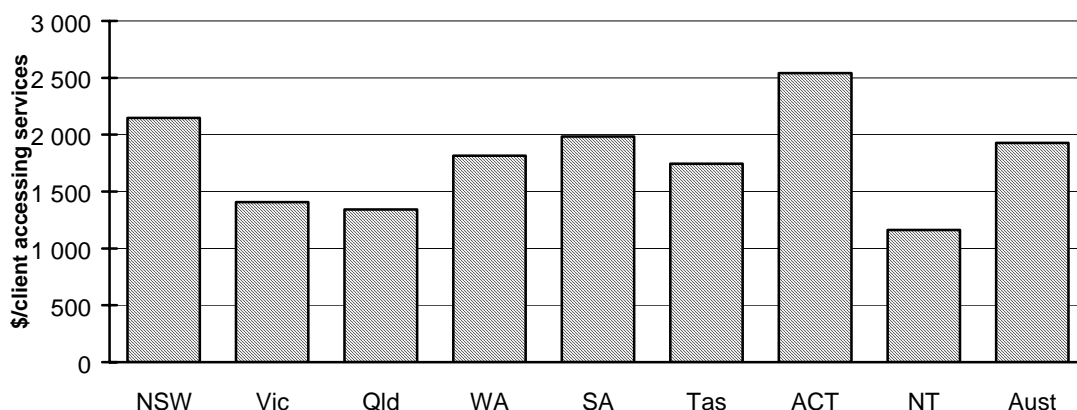


^a See notes to table 13A.71 for a description of what the analysis included. ^b Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.71.

Nationally, the recurrent cost per client accessing SAAP services was \$1929 in 1997-98. This varied across jurisdictions, from \$1163 in the NT to \$2541 in the ACT (figure 13.26).

Figure 13.27 Recurrent cost per client accessing services, 1997-98^{a, b, c}

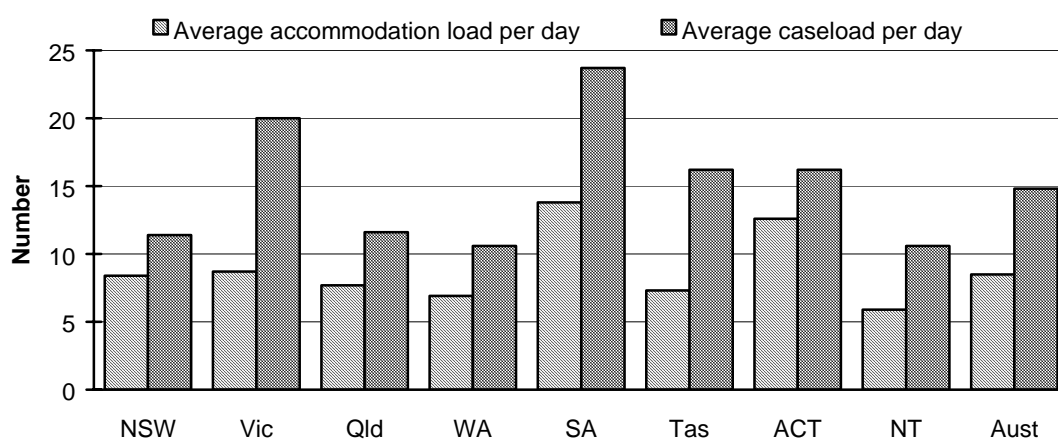


^a Estimate based on the following calculation: of 156 589 forms received nationally in 1997-98, 112 744 forms had a valid alpha code and related to 79 389 clients. This represented an average of 1.42 support periods per client. Assuming that clients who did not supply alpha codes were provided with the same number of support periods, it was estimated that the remaining 43 845 forms represent 30 874 individuals. Thus the best national estimate for the total number of clients was $79\,389 + 30\,874 = 110\,263$. This calculation has been applied to each State/Territory, using the relevant client and form numbers. The average number of support periods varies in each State and Territory. The national estimate varies from the total of each State/Territory estimate as a result of rounding. ^b See notes to table 13A.72 for a description of what the analysis included. ^c Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.72.

The average accommodation load is an indicator of the average number of people accommodated per day per agency. The average accommodation load ranged from 5.9 in the NT to 13.8 in SA in 1997-98. The average caseload is an indicator of average number of people being supported per day per agency. The average caseload ranged from 10.6 in WA and the NT to 23.7 in SA in 1997-98 (figure 13.27). Differences in the average accommodation load and case load may reflect differences in the average size of agencies across jurisdictions.

Figure 13.28 **Average accommodation load and caseload per day, 1997-98^{a, b}**



^a See notes to table 13A.73 for a description of how accommodation and caseload were estimated.

^b Preliminary data.

Data source: table 13A.73.

13.4 Jurisdictions' comments

This section provides comments from each jurisdiction on the three services covered in this chapter (child protection, supported placements and supported accommodation and assistance). Appendix A contains detailed statistics and short profiles on each State and Territory, which may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. Presented is general descriptive information by jurisdiction, including age profile; geographic distribution of the population; income levels; education levels; tenure of dwellings; and cultural heritage (such as aboriginality and ethnicity).

Commonwealth Government comments

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The Commonwealth and the States have worked cooperatively with the community sector during 1998 to further progress and enhance a range of strategies designed to make the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) more effective and efficient.

The Program has been the focus of a series of State evaluations leading to a national evaluation as required under the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994* and Agreements. This activity will be completed in February 1999 and will form the basis for discussions about the future of SAAP.

The SAAP national data collection was further refined and enhanced during 1998 with a number of measures designed to increase participation rate (already very high) and data quality. A special collection on children accompanying an adult(s) was conducted during the year and is expected to yield a considerable amount of information about this group.

A range of support materials were developed during the year to assist SAAP agencies achieve greater effectiveness using a case management approach including:

- a resource kit for indigenous SAAP agencies;
- three supplements to the Case Management Resource Kit, to support agencies working with accompanying children, with clients with a mental health difficulty and with clients from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds;
- three training modules to support SAAP workers assisting accompanying children; and
- a resource document containing examples of good practice.

The SAAP research program was advanced in 1998 with:

- completion of a major project on homelessness in the Indigenous population;
- progress towards the final stages of a major project on SAAP clients with high and complex needs;
- work on a modelling project to provide estimates of homeless people in Australia;
- commissioning of a project on early intervention and homelessness; and
- tendering of a project on client outcomes in SAAP.

During the year the Commonwealth provided additional resources to support strategies aimed at assisting families break the cycle of domestic violence and to continue an established rural and remote domestic violence initiative. These activities support and complement the work of SAAP in assisting women and children escaping domestic violence.

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New South Wales Government comments

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The NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) Corporate Plan is organised into **seven key result areas**: our clients; our services; results; processes; our people; partnerships; and communities.

In 1998, extensive consultation about the NSW Care and Protection legislation resulted in the new *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. The Bill was passed by the Government in November 1998 and will provide impetus for ongoing reform of Child and Family Services in NSW.

Reform in 1998 has focused on implementing recommendations from the NSW Police Royal Commission Paedophile Inquiry Final Report 1997, with a strong emphasis on interagency cooperation in protecting and supporting children and their families. For example, DoCS has:

- established eight metropolitan Joint Investigative Teams (JIT) and a rural strategy that involves police and DoCS jointly investigating cases where there are issues of high risk and/or criminality;
- participated in the development of the NSW Child Protection Council's *Making a Difference: Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Guidelines* and coordinated a process for the guidelines to be used by people who work with children and families;
- implemented *Practice Solutions: Professional Development Program* in all Community Service Centres, including training in case management and supervision;
- organised Interagency Working Groups to facilitate Government service provision and support for children and families;
- continued the move to *community based services* for young people with high support needs;
- continued to work with foster carers to build relationships between carers and DoCS staff;
- extended three new Sydney aftercare services for young people to rural areas and introduced a Statewide leaving and aftercare service for Aboriginal young people;
- developed case management training for SAAP services;
- developed internet training program for SAAP Management Committees;
- developing 'whole of government' approach to homelessness called *Partnerships Against Homelessness*.

DoCS aims to be a vital part of a strong community, capable of enriching social capital, which collaboratively works together with its community partners to solve problems faced by children, young people and their families.

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Victorian Government comments

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The redevelopment of Youth and Family Services in Victoria was referred to in the *1998 Report on Government Services*. It involves a fundamental re-design of Victoria's targeted children's, youth and family services including those reported on in this chapter. The objectives of the redevelopment include strengthening preventive services to balance and complement statutory intervention services, providing clearer access to services, introducing client-based funding where appropriate, grouping services to more effectively respond to individual and family needs, delivering services according to area configurations, specifying clearly the core objectives and outcomes of the service system and developing accountability measures based on client outcomes.

The initial phase of the redevelopment focused on establishing these strategic directions. It also included the increased provision of placement and support services through non-government agencies. Subsequent work has addressed the development of the units of services to be purchased, the outcome measures, service standards, and the specification of areas in which services are to be delivered. This work has been undertaken in close consultation with regions and the non-government sector.

It is being proposed, subject to further consultation, that targeted services will be grouped into a number of broad categories including support services for families, intensive support services for children and families, early intervention services for families, support services for young people, intensive support services for young people, and homeless and family violence services.

As a consequence, revised output categories and performance indicators will be developed in Victoria to complement the new service groupings.

Contestable service purchasing arrangements will be progressively introduced during 1999-2000 following consultation on the purchasing specifications and the finalisation of tender specifications. These arrangements are expected to lead to increased service quality and effectiveness, and greater accountability for the achievement of client outcomes.

Another major initiative for Victoria is the development of a new risk assessment framework which will guide practice and professional decision making through all phases of protective intervention. A related initiative is the implementation of the Enhanced Client Outcomes (ECO) initiative. ECO offers differentiated responses to minimise the need for further protective intervention for children and their families where this is appropriate. ECO has been successfully piloted in two regions during 1998-99 and will be implemented throughout all Victorian regions in 1999-2000.

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Queensland Government comments

Child Protection

“ Extensive community consultation about new child protection legislation occurred under the Labor Government in Queensland prior to a Bill being introduced in November 1998. It is expected that new child protection legislation will be passed in 1999. Queensland has commenced a process of collaborative work between the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care and the community sector to reform child protection service delivery. The Child Protection Reform Strategy will ensure coordinated planning of both government and community service strategies to meet legislative requirements.

Supported Placements

During 1998 careproviders were provided with pre-service training through *Sharing The Care*, a course nationally accredited by the Queensland Training Authority. The course aims to improve standards of care for Queensland children through ensuring consistency of recruitment and assessment of careproviders. Funding was provided in 1998 for a Transition from Care pilot program to target young people moving from care and protection orders to independence, in particular those without on-going adult support.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

The major focus of SAAP in Queensland in 1997-98 was the State Evaluation of SAAP which was completed in May 1998. This involved an extensive consultation with service providers, service users and government departments. The report from the Queensland SAAP Evaluation highlights the need to continue reforms currently being implemented and proposes improvements to the program.

The second annual Queensland SAAP Summit was held from 11–13 November 1998. It covered target groups (especially rural and remote issues, accompanying children and access), SAAP service infrastructure, sub-regional service integration, and housing issues (especially exit options and integration of CAP and SAAP services). The Summit this year also focussed on reviewing current ministerial advisory arrangements.

A twelve month pilot project has been established to focus on the case management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using SAAP services. An indigenous project worker has been employed to monitor and respond to case management issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

SAAP agencies throughout Queensland have been receiving SMART (SAAP Management and Reporting Tool) training to allow them to use this computer tool for national data collection and service planning, monitoring and evaluation.

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Western Australian Government comments

Child Protection

“ As a part of a general restructure of Family and Children’s Services in 1997-98 designed to improve service delivery and align with output based management structures, child protection and supported placement services are now delivered through specialist teams based in zones. There are now specialist intake teams, Protection of Children teams for investigation and statutory intervention, intensive family support teams (still to become operational) managing counselling, treatment and reunification services and Care for Children teams who manage supported placements. Staff are developing specialised skills and knowledge as part of the new teams. With a Funder–Purchaser–Provider model now introduced, all services provided by zones of the department, including child protection and care for children services have been specified to form part of zone service agreements. Zones will begin reporting to the service purchasing wing of the department in 1998-99 about outputs produced (quantity, quality and timeliness) and outcomes achieved as part of these service agreements.

The Child Protection Register, established as a pilot to allow better exchange of information between agencies is awaiting legislative changes in 1998-99 when it will be able to be fully implemented. An independent evaluation of the development of the innovative New Directions Approach by FCS in Western Australia, was carried out by Professor Nigel Parton and Dr Corinne Wattam from the UK. Their final report will be available in 1998-99.

Supported Placements

A Moving to Independent Living service has been funded through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. A project has also commenced to look at using young people who have quite recently left care to act as mentors for young people preparing to leave care. Steady work has taken place to adapt the intake, assessment and action records of the Looking After Children (LAC) program to suit the Western Australian situation. It is hoped that a widespread introduction of the materials will take place in the coming year.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

For Western Australia 1997-98 was a year in which many plans developed in previous years came to fruition. These included the funding of seven new services across the state and the implementation of a number reform projects. One of these was an information technology project to assist SAAP services to install and customise the SAAP Management and Reporting tool (SMART) on their computers. Other significant developments were the introduction of the Crisis Assistance, Supported Housing Award on 1 January 1998 which affected SAAP services, the evaluation of SAAP in Western Australia by an independent consultant and increased emphasis on cross-governmental communications. ”

South Australian Government comments

Child Protection

“ Key aspects of the Child Protection reform have now been implemented. There has been a predictable increase in notifications resulting from the establishment of one free call centralised number which now takes 90 per cent of all notifications across the State. The differential response system has resulted in rapid targeting of investigative resources to children in danger, investigation of children at risk and a less intrusive response to families where the risk to the children's safety is not high. The Risk Assessment Instrument used to ascertain the risk of re-abuse for substantiated cases is currently being validated. At present, approximately 80 per cent of substantiated cases remain open for service provision.

The introduction of the Central Aboriginal Intake Team to provide a culturally appropriate response to Aboriginal children and families has also had an increase in notifications. It is planned to establish local forums in 1998-99 to determine mechanisms for consultation between Aboriginal clans and the department.

Supported Placements

Implementation of the alternative care restructure which involves the purchasing of most alternative care services from the non-government sector is continuing. Demand for family preservation and reunification programs remains high. Greater emphasis is being placed on relative and kinship placements for Aboriginal children and, generally, there is an increase in the number of relative placements being supported.

One significant feature of the reform is the requirement to notify the department of all placements arranged by other agencies which exceed seven days duration. This has the effect of increasing the number of children counted as being in supported placement.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

The reform of SAAP funded domestic violence services is being implemented. Service specifications developed included specific output, outcome and quality performance indicators. These are being incorporated in service agreements with service providers.

New initiatives in 1997-98 have included the development of a new model of working with residents of boarding houses and a major focus on improving the linkages and protocols between services assisting homeless people. A review of the needs of inner city homeless adults including appropriate exit points, meal services and crisis accommodation responses is being undertaken.

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Tasmanian Government comments

Child Protection — Care and Protection Services

“ Tasmania is progressing towards proclamation of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* on 1 July 1999. The legislation maximises opportunities for children to grow up in a safe and stable family environment and to reach their full potential. The central principles of the legislation are based on the best interests of the child being paramount, that families are responsible for the care and protection of their children and that the Government will work in partnership with the community to support families.

To ensure that the legislation is successfully implemented a range of infrastructure projects are currently under way. These projects include the introduction of Structured Decision Making and Central Intake.

Supported Placements — Out of Home Care

The implementation of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* requires the establishment of a Commissioner for Children. Under the legislation the Commissioner will be required to establish a range of advisory mechanisms to ensure that the views of children and children in care are represented.

Tasmania is introducing the Looking After Children (LAC) model to ensure that outcomes for children in care are maximised. This case management tool is based upon international and national application and is currently under evaluation in the United Kingdom.

The State is currently conducting a review of Out-of-Home care and the findings of this review will be used to inform future service development and restructure.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Services

A total of 41 services are funded from SAAP to provide a comprehensive safety net and support service for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In 1998 SAAP was independently evaluated by the Centre for Public Management and Policy of the University of Tasmania. The evaluation has highlighted the need to further enhance reporting and output based funding arrangements, and recommend moving the program to a more flexible service delivery model.

During the 1997-98 period Tasmania has improved the proportion of clients with case plans in place.

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Australian Capital Territory Government comments

Child protection

“ Feedback on the public consultation paper proposing new child protection legislation was received and considered and approval has been given for a Bill to be drafted.

The focus on continuing improvement of the intake process has continued.

- Danger Assessments have been introduced to better assess the immediate danger to children.
- A new category of ‘consultations’ has been introduced for those matters where a person is concerned about a child but where the situation is assessed as not sufficiently serious for the statutory child protection system to treat the matter as a formal notification of abuse and neglect. Intake workers discuss the concerns with the caller, are supportive and suggest referral or supports.

Supported Placements

A Review of the Substitute Care program in the ACT was commissioned and undertaken. The Review considered the factors driving current demand; analysed the current supply of substitute care services and their adequacy and effectiveness; analysed the way substitute care services in the ACT are provided and funded; and advised on matters of quality assurance, including the potential of the Looking After Children Program. The consultant reported in June 1998. The recommendations are now being considered.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

As part of its public sector reform program, the ACT government has developed a staged process to introduce service purchasing arrangements for programs delivered by community sector organisations. This has included the development of a new output-based Service Agreement, which incorporates detailed service specifications and provision for six-monthly reporting by services against agreed outputs.

As a whole of ACT government initiative, the ACT commenced a project directed at identifying an appropriate model for introducing quality standards across services in the ACT. Draft service standards specific to SAAP services have also been developed and will be introduced in conjunction with the broader framework.

The evaluations of the ACT case management adviser and the SAAP Program in the ACT were both undertaken. The SAAP evaluation contained recommendations which are currently being considered by the sector and government. The report generally supports the continued progression of reforms and the importance of an integrated approach to service provision for homeless people or those at risk of homelessness.

New consultative arrangements were established for SAAP, including a Program Advisory Committee and a Policy Forum to be held twice a year.

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Northern Territory Government comments

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The Family Youth and Children's Services Program (FYCS) of Territory Health Services is responsible for child protection and out of home care services and administration of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

The NT population is comparatively youthful with approximately 34 per cent of the population being under 20 years of age. One in three children are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, of whom up to 70 per cent live in Aboriginal communities in rural areas.

Child Protection

Universal mandatory reporting applies in the NT and all allegations accepted as notifications must be investigated by way of a home visit.

Design and engineering work on a new client information system to replace the existing system, which has been in place since 1984, continued throughout the year. Implementation of the new Community Care Information System (CCIS) is expected to be phased in during 1998-99. The new client information system will considerably enhance the data collection and reporting capacity of the NT, when fully implemented.

Supported Placements

A high proportion of children in the NT are placed in home based care arrangements with either unrelated foster carers or with family or kinship carers. In addition there are four family group homes which provide both reception and longer term placements for children.

Program reforms have continued during 1997-98. A new program and case management model incorporating improved assessment and planning tools was piloted and evaluated. The program model enables workers to report outcomes for children for each phase of the care process. The development of service standards and a service planning framework are continuing projects.

Supported Accommodation

The 31 service outlets which are funded under SAAP in the NT are located in the five main population centres and provide services to a range of clients, including a significant proportion of Aboriginal clients.

Major activity has revolved around the ongoing implementation of the SAAP reform agenda. Key projects have included a major consultancy on and subsequent implementation of case management into SAAP services, the completion of a comprehensive evaluation of the program in the NT and the development and implementation of an improved Ministerial advisory mechanism, to provide input on program development from a range of stakeholders including service providers and government agencies.

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