
15 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 do this by alleviating the difficulties and reducing the potential for their recurrence.

This chapter reports on:

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

A profile of child protection and out-of-home care services appears in section 15.1, followed by a brief discussion of recent policy developments in section 15.2. A framework of performance indicators for these services is outlined in section 15.3, and data are discussed in section 15.4. Future directions in performance reporting are discussed in section 15.5.

A profile of accommodation and assistance services funded under the supported accommodation and assistance program appears in section 15.6, followed by a brief discussion of recent policy developments in section 15.7. A framework of performance indicators for these services is outlined in section 15.8, and data are discussed in section 15.9. Future directions in performance reporting are discussed in section 15.10.

Jurisdictions' comments on both child protection and out-of-home care services, and supported accommodation and assistance services are reported in section 15.11. Definitions of data descriptors and indicators are provided in section 15.12.

Major improvements for the 2001 Report include enhanced reporting on Indigenous data, and further refinement to child protection outcomes indicators and child protection and out-of-home care efficiency data. The chapter has also been

restructured to merge the child protection and out-of-home care sections. This restructuring acknowledges that out-of-home care is part of the child protection process, and not a separate service.

Supporting tables

Supporting tables for chapter 15 are provided on the CD-ROM enclosed with the Report. The files are provided in *Microsoft Excel 97* format as \Publications\Reports\2001\attach15A.xls and in Adobe PDF format as \Publications\Reports\2001\attach15A.pdf.

Supporting tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 15A.3 is table 3 in the electronic files). They may be subject to revision. The most up-to-date versions of these files can be found on the Review web page (www.pc.gov.au/service/gsp/2001/). Users without Internet access can contact the Secretariat to obtain up-to-date versions of these tables (see details on the inside front cover of the Report).

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

Service overview

Child protection services are provided to protect children and young people aged 0–17 years who are at risk of harm within their families, or whose families do not have the capacity to protect them (box 15.1). The services include:

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

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- securing permanent alternative care when it is determined that a child is unable to be returned to the care of their parents and working with young people to identify alternative supported living arrangements where family reunification is not possible.

Box 15.1 Target populations

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

Certain environmental and demographic factors are associated with child abuse and neglect (box 15.2).

Box 15.2 Factors often associated with child protection concerns

Factors identified as common to many substantiated child protection concerns 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 a result of a child concern report 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 substantiated child protection reports include parent's disability, mental health, poor parenting skills and substance abuse.

Source: AIHW (1997) and DHS (1995).

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

Out-of-home care services are either home based care (such as foster care, care with the child's extended family and other home based arrangements) or facility based care (such as family group homes and community residential care). 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. Family preservation services are increasingly seen as an alternative to the removal of the child from their home for child protection reasons (box 15.3).

Box 15.3 Family preservation services

Family preservation services are specialist services established in each jurisdiction that aim to:

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

In 1999-2000, 35 family preservation programs and subprograms were operating across Australia (two in NSW, 18 in Victoria, four in Queensland, three in WA, seven in SA, and one in Tasmania).

The family preservation services differ from other types of child protection and family support services referred to in this chapter in that they:

- are funded or established explicitly to prevent separation of, or to reunify, families;
- provide a range of services as part of an integrated strategy focusing on improving family functioning and skills, rather than just providing a single type of service;
- are intensive in nature, averaging 8–10 hours service provision per week for a specified short term period (usually less than six months); and
- generally receive their referrals from a statutory agency and cases that are identified through the child protection process.

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

Expenditure data collected for the first time in this Report indicate that recurrent expenditure on family preservation services across all jurisdictions in 1999-2000 were at least \$28 million (table 15A.1). Table 15A.19 provides additional information about families and children who have been involved with family preservation services during 1999-2000.

Source: AIHW Family Preservation Services, Australia data collection (unpublished).

Roles and responsibilities

State and Territory governments fund child protection, out-of-home care, family preservation and other relevant services which may be delivered by the government or the non-government sector. The non-government sector plays a significant role in the delivery of other child protection services in all jurisdictions (see the survey of community services in SCRCSSP 1997). State and Territory community services departments are responsible for investigating and assessing reports to the department, referring families to support services and intervening where necessary (including making court applications when an order is required to protect a child and placing children in out-of-home care).

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

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

Size and scope

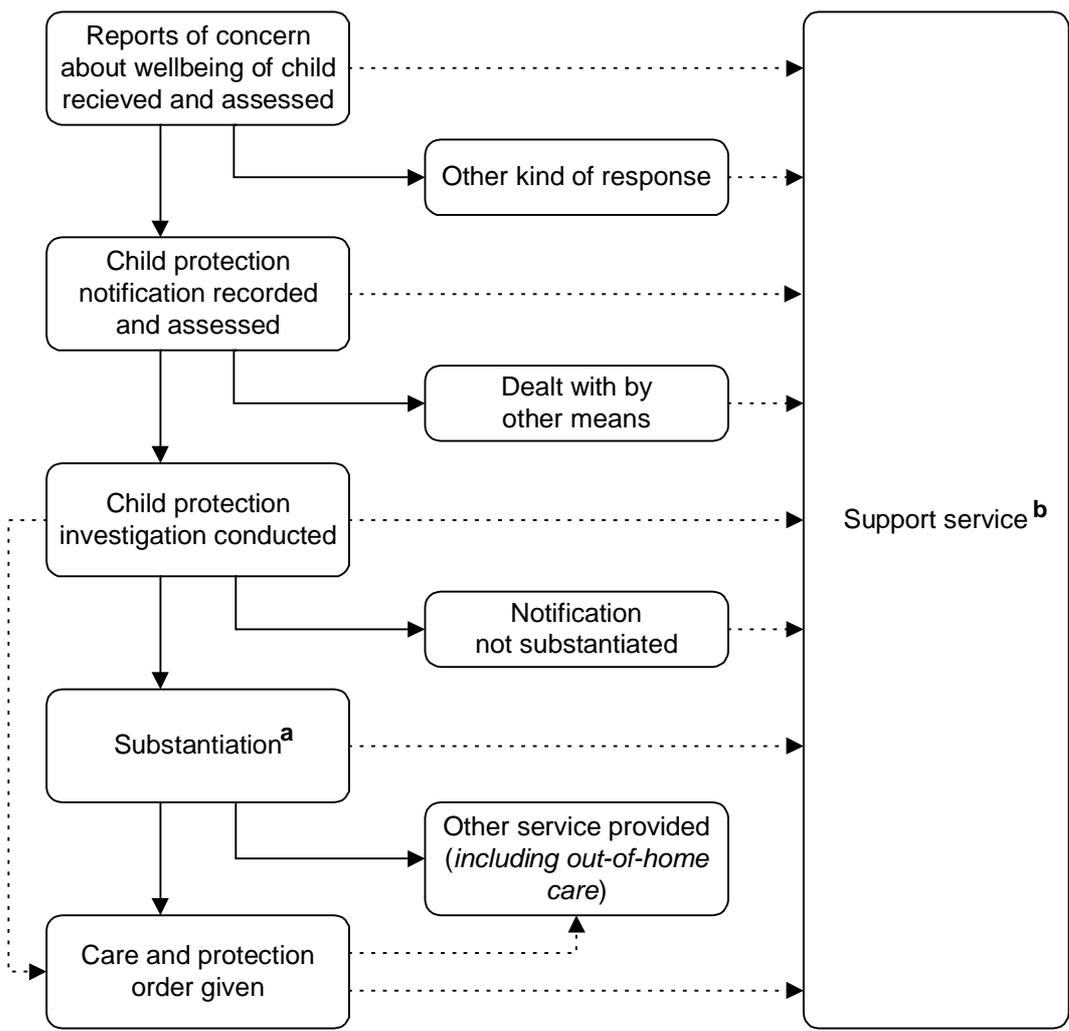
The child protection system

Child protection legislation, policies and practices vary among jurisdictions, but the broad processes in the child protection system are similar (figure 15.1).

State and Territory community services departments are advised of concerns about the wellbeing of children through reports to the department. Reports may be made by people mandated to report (such as medical practitioners, police services, and school teachers and principals) or by other members of the community. These reports are then assessed and classified as child protection notifications, child concern reports or matters requiring some other kind of response. The most common source of notifications for finalised investigations in 1998-99 were school personnel (16 per cent), police (15 per cent), parents or guardians (12 per cent) and friends or neighbours (11 per cent) (AIHW 2000).

Jurisdictions count notifications at different points in responding to a report, ranging from the point of initial contact with the source of the report to the end of a screening and decision making process. This means the number of notifications is not strictly comparable across jurisdictions.

Figure 15.1 **Child protection system**



^a Tasmania also uses the category 'child at risk' where the notification is not substantiated, but there is reasonable ground for suspecting the existence of previous or future abuse, neglect or harm. This suspicion is a basis for continued departmental involvement. ^b Support services include family support or family preservation services provided by community service departments and referrals to other agencies.

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

Although defined differently across jurisdictions, around 80 022 children were the subject of child protection notifications (7461 Indigenous and 72 561 non-Indigenous children) were made in 1999-2000. Nationally, the rate of notifications per 1000 children aged 0–16 years was 17.9 (41.3 Indigenous and 17 non-Indigenous). Across

jurisdictions, the rate of notifications per 1000 children was highest in SA (28.5) and lowest in Tasmania (2.1) (table 15A.6).

In Victoria, SA and the NT notifications are caller defined. Instances where the person making the report believes a child is in need of protection are classified as notifications by the department. As a result, the rates per 1000 children are highest in these jurisdictions.

NSW, Queensland and the ACT screen each incoming report before deciding whether it will be designated and counted as a notification. This reduces the proportion of reports that become notifications. The number of reports that are screened out is not recorded in this collection.

WA and Tasmania also screen incoming reports, and use a narrower definition of notification than do other jurisdictions. These States define only reports of suspected maltreatment as notifications; other reports of concern that would be counted as notifications in other jurisdictions are classified as child and family concern reports, and the response is different from that for notifications of suspected maltreatment. Thus, the proportion of reports recorded as notifications is lower in WA and Tasmania than in other jurisdictions. The number of reports that are screened out is not reported in this chapter.

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

The criteria for substantiation vary across jurisdictions. In some jurisdictions, a notification is substantiated when an incident of abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur; in others, it is substantiated when the child has been harmed or is likely to be harmed, or when there is a combination of action and harm.¹

¹ In the past, the main focus of child protection legislation and policy was on the identification and investigation of narrowly defined incidents that were broadly grouped as types of abuse or neglect. Across all jurisdictions the focus is shifting away from the actions of parents and guardians, towards the outcomes for the child, and the identification and investigation of actual harm to the child and the child's needs.

Tasmania also has a 'child at risk' category. This applies when the notification is not substantiated, but when there are reasonable grounds for suspecting the possibility of previous or future harm, so further involvement of the community services department is considered to be warranted. If harm or risk of harm is substantiated, then action will be taken to protect the child if it is required (including court action if warranted). These cases may be substantiated in other jurisdictions.

If an investigation results in substantiation, then intervention by the relevant community services department may be needed to protect the child. This intervention can take a number of forms, including referral to other services, supervision, counselling or recourse to the court, or placement in out-of-home care. Although child protection concerns are often resolved without the need for a court order (which is usually a last resort when all other options have been exhausted), recourse to the court may take place at any point in the child protection investigation process (figure 15.1). The types of order available vary across jurisdictions.

At 30 June 2000, 18 905 children (3806 Indigenous and 15 099 non-Indigenous) were on care and protection orders. Nationally, the number of children on care and protection orders per 1000 children aged 0–17 years was 4 (19.9 for Indigenous and 3.3 for non-Indigenous children). Across jurisdictions, the rate of children on orders per 1000 children was highest in NSW (4.8) and lowest in the ACT (1.8) (table 15A.6).

Out-of-home care is one of a range of services provided to families and children where there is a need to provide safe care for a child. The current emphasis in policy and practice is to maintain the child within the family if at all possible, and to place a child in out-of-home care only if this will improve the outcome for the child. If it is necessary to remove the child from their home, then placement with the wider family or community is sought where possible, particularly in the case of Indigenous children (AIHW 1999a).

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

Approximately 16 923 children (3496 Indigenous and 13 427 non-Indigenous) were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June 2000. Nationally, the number of children in out-of-home care per 1000 children aged 0–17 years was 3.6 (18.3 Indigenous and 3 non-Indigenous). Across jurisdictions, the rate of children in out-of-home care per 1000 children was lowest in the ACT (2.6) and highest in Tasmania (4.6) (table 15A.9).

Funding

Recurrent expenditure on child protection and out-of-home care services was at least \$636.6 million across Australia in 1999-2000. This represents a \$91 million (or 17 per cent) increase from the 1998-99 expenditure. Nationally, out-of-home care services accounted for the majority (59 per cent, or \$373 million) of this expenditure. Some jurisdictions, however, have difficulty in separating expenditure on child protection from expenditure on out-of-home care services (table 15A.1).

15.2 Policy developments in child protection and out-of-home care services

Most jurisdictions are implementing child protection reforms to enhance the safety of children and ensure children and families receive the types of service most likely to meet their needs. Several jurisdictions have introduced or passed new legislation in 2000.

The Tasmanian *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997* was proclaimed on 1 July 2000 and changes the focus of child protection by emphasising that the family has primary responsibility for care and protection of children. The Act promotes support for families in preference to the removal of children, encourages involvement of the wider family and community in making decisions about children, and introduces family group conferencing.

Queensland's *Child Protection Act 1999* introduced a new range of time-limited protection orders (proclaimed in March 2000). The Act shifts the emphasis from determining abuse or neglect to determining whether a child or young person has suffered harm or is likely to suffer harm. This has enabled a more inclusive and child focused approach.

NSW legislation, which was proclaimed in December 2000, provides staff with greater flexibility in responding to a report of child abuse. It also shifts the focus to the children and young people most at risk, and emphasises a search for early solutions through cooperation between government and community agencies.

The ACT passed the *Children and Young People Act 1999* on 10 May 2000. The Act places an increased emphasis on family support and prevention services to assist children, young people and their families. The Act also articulates a strong set of guiding principles for decisions about the best interests of children.

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

The framework of performance indicators for child protection and out-of-home care services is based on shared government objectives (box 15.4).

Box 15.4 Objectives for child protection and out-of-home care services

The aims of child protection services are to:

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

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

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

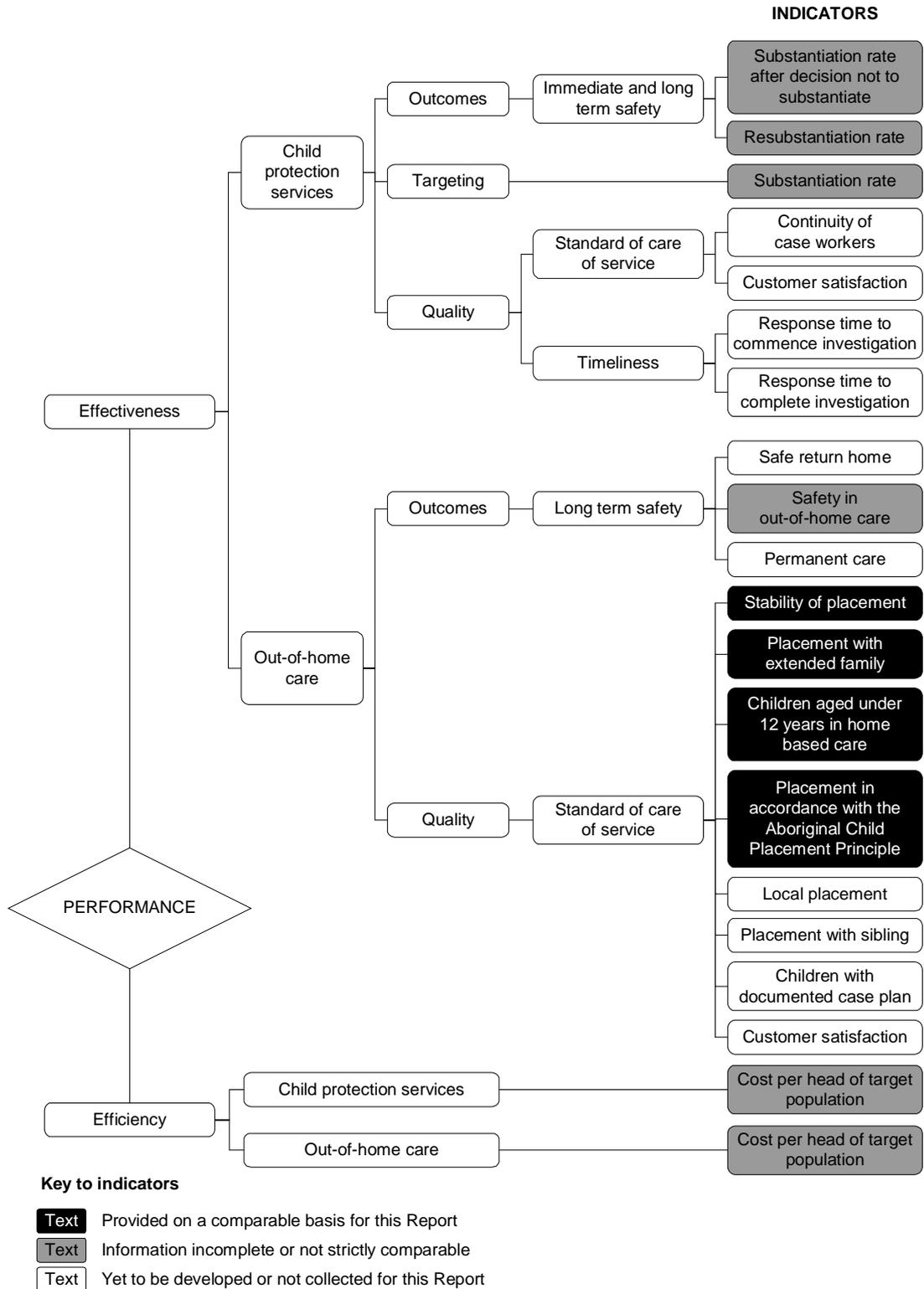
The goal of child protection is to maintain the child within the family wherever this can be safely achieved. In some situations, however, it may be necessary to place the child in out-of-home care. The framework identifies key result areas that indicate the extent to which these broad objectives are met (figure 15.2).

New and refined indicators

Major improvements for the 2001 Report include:

- improved reporting on Indigenous people's access to services. Indigenous data on substantiation rates, stability of placements, placement with extended family and children aged under 12 years in home based care are reported for the first time;
- refined expenditure data reporting to improve comparability across jurisdictions; and
- improved reporting on the resubstantiation rate and the rate of substantiation after an initial decision not to substantiate.

Figure 15.2 Performance indicators for child protection and out-of-home care services



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

Different delivery contexts, locations and types of client may affect the effectiveness and efficiency of child protection services. Appendix A contains detailed statistics and short profiles on each State and Territory, which may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter.

Effectiveness: child protection services

Outcomes — resubstantiation

Child protection services aim to prevent the recurrence of abuse and neglect or harm to children. One way of observing whether this is achieved is to measure the number of children who were the subject of a resubstantiation.

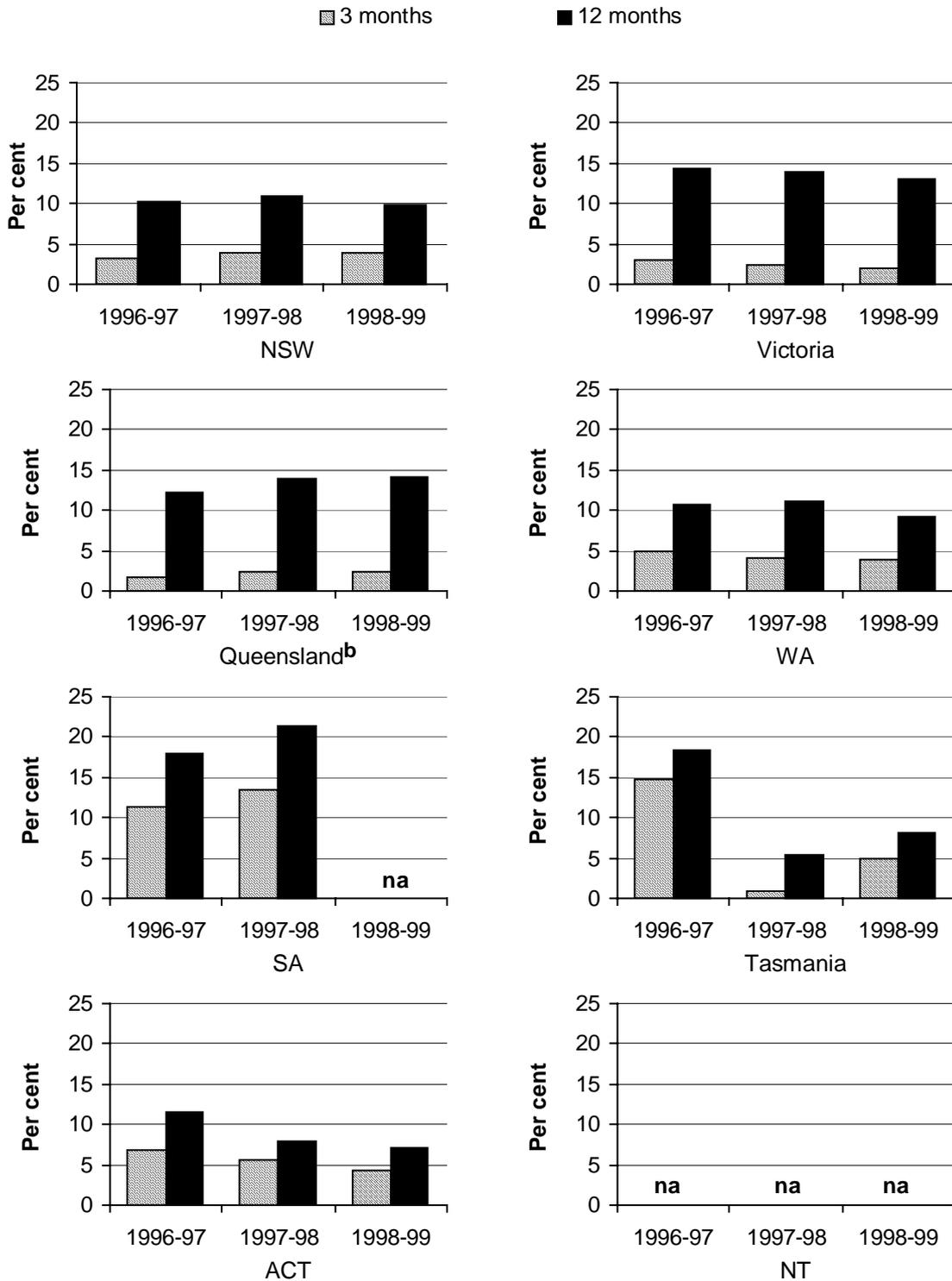
This indicator of service outcomes is important because it partly reveals the extent to which intervention by child protection services has not succeeded in preventing further harm. It should be noted, however, that reported results may be affected by factors that are beyond the control of child protection services — such as changes in the family situation (for example, illness, unemployment, a new partner).

Resubstantiation is measured by counting the proportion of children who were the subject of a substantiation in the previous financial year (1998-99 for this Report), and who were subsequently the subject of a further substantiation within the following three and/or 12 months.

Data that are comparable across jurisdictions were not available for this Report, but data are comparable *within* each jurisdiction over time (figure 15.3). All jurisdictions except SA and the NT were able to provide data on this indicator for 1998-99.

- In NSW, the proportion of children who were the subject of a resubstantiation within three months was 4 per cent for children who were initially substantiated in 1998-99 (a slight increase of 0.1 percentage points from 1997-98). The proportion of children resubstantiated within 12 months was 9.8 per cent for children who were initially substantiated in 1998-99. This is a decline of 1 percentage point from 1997-98 (table 15A.26).

Figure 15.3 Proportion of children who were the subject of a substantiation during the previous year, who were the subject of a subsequent substantiation within 3 and 12 months^a



^a Data are not comparable across jurisdictions because definitions of substantiation vary significantly. Consequently, rates should not be compared across jurisdictions. ^b Data for Queensland were calculated retrospectively, see notes to table 15A.58 for details. **na** Not available.

Sources: tables 15A.26, 15A.42, 15A.58, 15A.74, 15A.90, 15A.109, 15A.122 and 15A.138.

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- In Victoria, the proportion of children who were the subject of a resubstantiation within three months was 1.9 per cent for children who were initially substantiated in 1998-99. This is a decline of 0.5 percentage points from 1997-98. The proportion of children resubstantiated within 12 months was 13.1 per cent for children who were initially substantiated in 1998-99. This is a decline of 0.7 percentage points from 1997-98 (table 15A.42).
 - In Queensland, a retrospective count was used. The proportion of children who were the subject of substantiation in 1999-2000 and who were also the subject of a prior substantiation in the previous three months was 2.3 per cent. This is a decline of 0.1 percentage points from the previous year. The proportion of children who were the subject of substantiation in 1999-2000 and who were also the subject of a substantiation in the previous 12 months was 14.1 per cent. This is an increase of 0.3 percentage points from the previous year. (table 15A.58).
 - In WA, the proportion of children who were the subject of a resubstantiation within three months was 3.8 per cent for children who were initially substantiated in 1998-99. This is a decline of 0.2 percentage points from 1997-98. The proportion of children resubstantiated within 12 months was 9.1 per cent for children who were initially substantiated in 1998-99. This is a decline of 1.9 percentage points from 1997-98 (table 15A.74).
 - In Tasmania, the proportion of children who were the subject of a resubstantiation within three months was 4.9 per cent for children who were initially substantiated in 1998-99. This is an increase of 4.1 percentage points from 1997-98. The proportion of children resubstantiated within 12 months was 8.2 per cent for children who were initially substantiated in 1998-99. This is an increase of 2.9 percentage points from 1997-98 (table 15A.106).
 - In the ACT, the proportion of children who were the subject of a resubstantiation within three months was 4.3 per cent for children who were initially substantiated in 1998-99. This is a decline of 1.3 percentage points from 1997-98. The proportion of children resubstantiated within 12 months was 7.1 per cent for children who were initially substantiated in 1998-99. This is a decline of 0.7 percentage points from 1997-98 (table 15A.122).

Outcomes — substantiation after decision not to substantiate

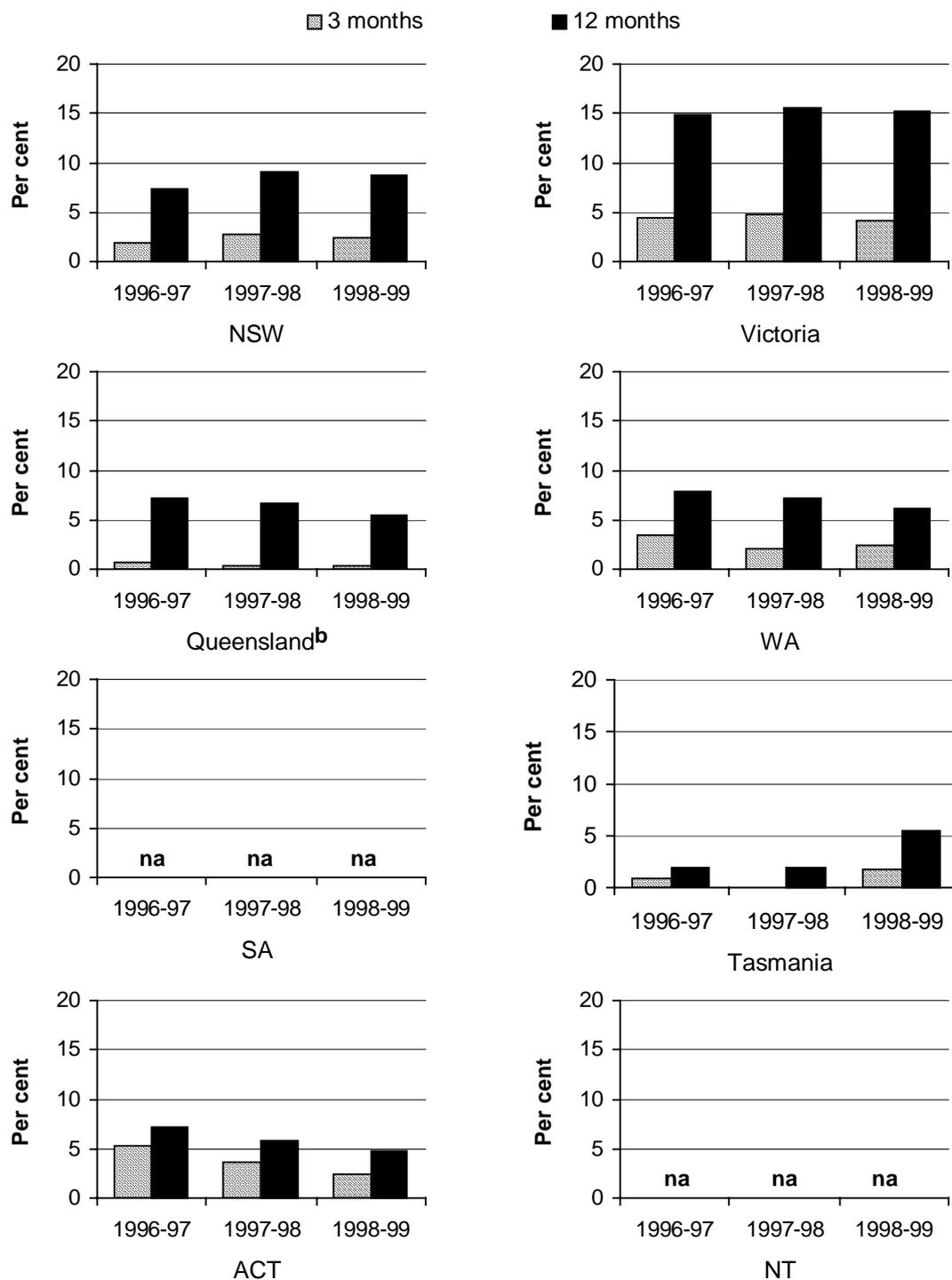
This indicator measures the proportion of children who were the subject of an investigation in the previous financial year which lead to a decision not to substantiate, who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within three and 12 months of the initial decision not to substantiate.

This indicator of service outcomes is important because it partly reveals the extent to which an investigation has not succeeded in identifying the risk of harm to a child who is subsequently the subject of substantiated harm. It should be noted, however, that a demonstrable risk of harm may not have existed in the first instance. As such, reported results may be affected by factors that are beyond the control of child protection services — such as changes in the family situation (for example, illness, unemployment, a new partner).

Data that are comparable across jurisdictions were not available for this Report, but data are comparable *within* each jurisdiction over time (figure 15.4). All jurisdictions except SA and the NT were able to provide data for this indicator.

- In NSW, the proportion of children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate in 1998-99, and who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within three months was 2.3 per cent, a decline of 0.4 percentage points from 1997-98. The proportion of children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate in 1998-99, and who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within 12 months was 8.7 per cent. This is a decline of 0.4 percentage points from 1997-98 (table 15A.25).
- In Victoria, the proportion of children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate in 1998-99, and who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within three months was 4.0 per cent. This is a decline of 0.9 percentage points from 1997-98. The proportion of children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate in 1998-99, and who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within 12 months was 15.1 per cent. This is a decline of 0.5 percentage points from 1997-98 (table 15A.41).
- In Queensland, a retrospective count was used. The proportion of children who were the subject of substantiation in 1999-2000 and who were also the subject of a prior decision not to substantiate in the previous three months was 0.4 per cent, the same as the previous year. The proportion of children who were the subject of substantiation in 1999-2000 and who were also the subject of a decision not to substantiate in the previous 12 months was 5.4 per cent. This is a decline of 1.2 percentage points from the previous year (table 15A.57).

Figure 15.4 Proportion of children who were the subject of an investigation and decision not to substantiate in the previous year, who were the subject of a subsequent substantiation within 3 and/or 12 months^a



^a Data are not comparable across jurisdictions because definitions of substantiation vary significantly. Consequently, rates should not be compared across jurisdictions. ^b Data for Queensland were calculated retrospectively, see notes to table 15A.57 for details. **na** Not available.

Sources: tables 15A.25, 15A.41, 15A.57, 15A.73, 15A.89, 15A.105, 15A.121 and 15A.137.

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- In WA, the proportion of children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate in 1998-99, and who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within three months was 2.4 per cent. This is an increase of about 0.4 percentage points from 1997-98. The proportion of children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate in 1998-99, and who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within 12 months was 6.2 per cent. This is a decline of 0.9 percentage points from 1997-98 (table 15A.73).
 - In Tasmania, the proportion of children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate in 1998-99, and who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within three months was 1.7 per cent. This is an absolute increase of 0.8 percentage points from 1996-97. The proportion of children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate in 1998-99, and who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within 12 months was 5.5 per cent. This is an increase of 3.7 percentage points from 1997-98 (table 15A.105).
 - In the ACT, the proportion of children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate in 1998-99, and who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within three months was 2.4 per cent. This is a decline of 1.1 percentage points from 1997-98. The proportion of children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate in 1998-99, and who were subsequently the subject of a substantiation within 12 months was 4.8 per cent. This is a decline of 1.0 percentage points from 1997-98 (table 15A.121).

Targeting — substantiation rate

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 no harm has occurred. Decisions on targeting must weigh up these costs of investigation with the cost of failing to investigate a case where harm has occurred. However, the substantiation rate provides information on only one aspect of targeting — that is, the proportion of investigations that substantiated harm. It provides no information on cases that were not investigated but for which an investigation would have substantiated harm.

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

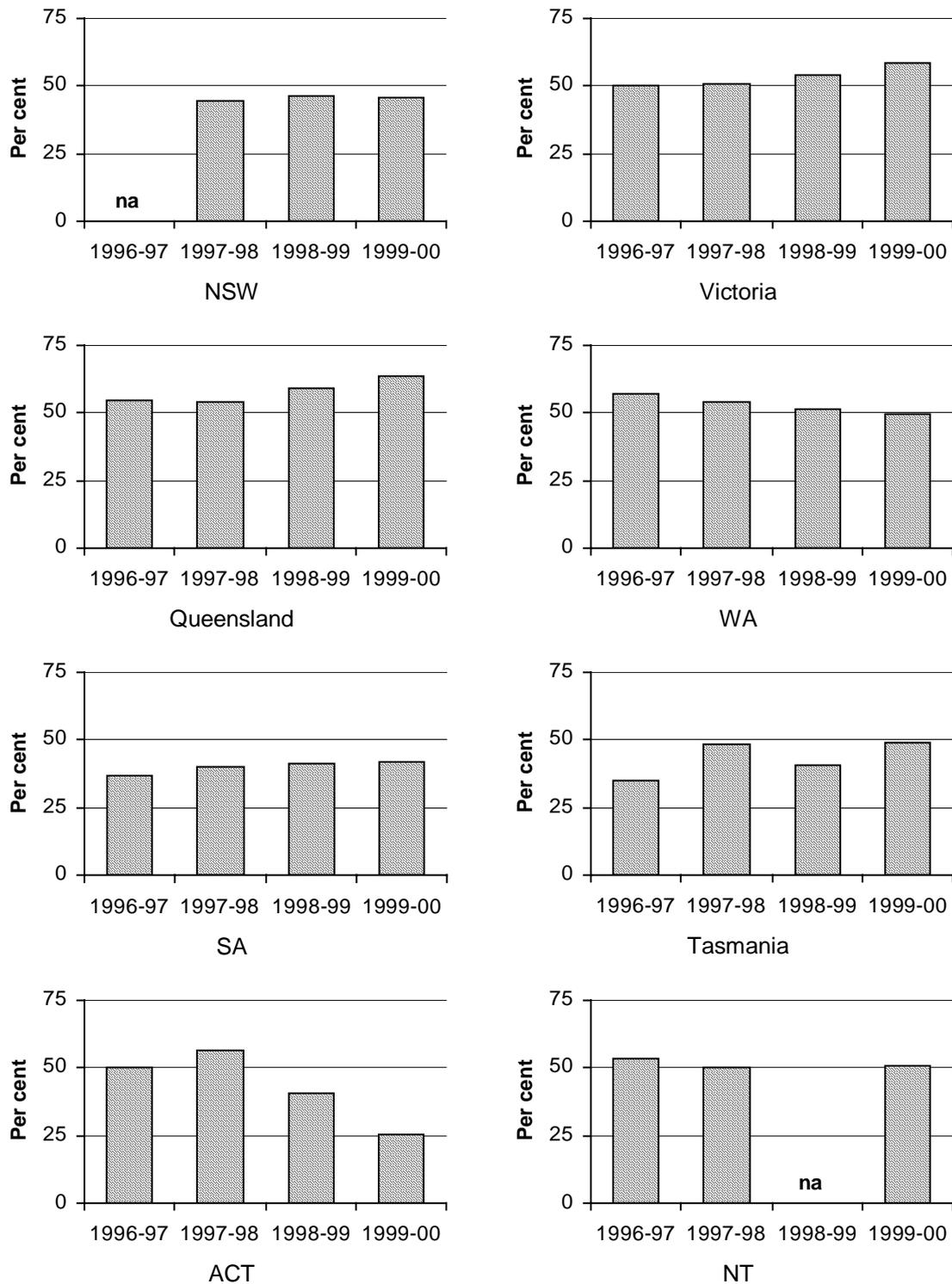
the 'lower risk' (as determined by the assessment process) cases that were not investigated.

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.

Data that are comparable across jurisdictions were not available for this Report because definitions of substantiation vary across jurisdictions, but data are comparable *within* each jurisdiction over time (figure 15.5). Six jurisdictions provided full data for the four years 1996-97 to 1999-2000.

- In NSW, the substantiation rate was 45.9 per cent in 1999-2000, a decline of 0.4 percentage points from 1998-99 (table 15A.21).
- In Victoria, the substantiation rate was 58.5 per cent in 1999-2000, an increase of 4.3 percentage points from 1998-99 (table 15A.37).
- In Queensland, the substantiation rate was 63.5 per cent in 1999-2000, an increase of 4.7 percentage points from 1998-99 (table 15A.53).
- In WA, the substantiation rate was 49.4 per cent in 1999-2000, a decline of 2.2 percentage points from 1998-99 (table 15A.69).
- In SA, the substantiation rate was 41.7 per cent in 1999-2000, an increase of 0.6 percentage points from 1998-99 (table 15A.85).
- In Tasmania, the substantiation rate was 48.9 per cent in 1999-2000, an increase of 8.2 percentage points from 1998-99 (table 15A.101).
- In the ACT, the substantiation rate was 25.4 per cent in 1999-2000, a decline of 15.1 percentage points from 1998-99 (table 15A.117).
- In the NT, the substantiation rate was 50.7 per cent in 1999-2000, a decline of 0.3 percentage points from 1997-98 (table 15A.133). The NT was unable to provide data for 1998-99.

Figure 15.5 Proportion of finalised child protection investigations that were substantiated^{a, b}



^a Data are not comparable across jurisdictions because definitions of substantiation vary significantly. Consequently, rates should not be compared across jurisdictions. ^b From 1997-98 those notifications where it is possible to substantiate the presence of risk factors, which place a child at risk of significant harm, are also included. **na** Not available.

Sources: tables 15A.21, 15A.37, 15A.53, 15A.69, 15A.85, 15A.101, 15A.117 and 15A.133.

Effectiveness: out-of-home care services

Client outcomes — safety in out-of-home care

One indicator of the effectiveness of out-of-home care is the safety of clients in care situations. Only Queensland, WA, Tasmania and the ACT were able to provide data on the incidence of child protection substantiations of harm where the person believed responsible was either the carer or another person living in the household in 1999-2000. The number of substantiated cases as a proportion of all children in out-of-home care ranged from zero per cent in Tasmania and the ACT to about 2 per cent in Queensland (table 15A.18). Data are not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in policy and recording.

Service quality — stability of placement

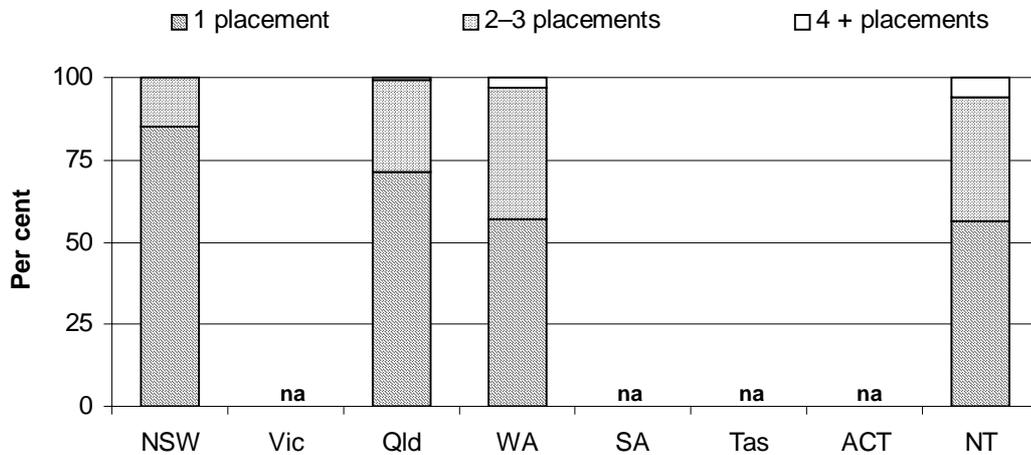
Stability of placement for children placed away from their family for protective reasons is an important indicator of service quality, particularly for those children who require long term placements. Many children will quite appropriately have more than one placement — for example, an initial emergency 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 *different* placements for children who had exited out-of-home care in 1999-2000. Data were grouped according to the length of time in care (less than 12 months and 12 months or more).

For the jurisdictions able to provide data, the majority of children exiting care after less than 12 months had had only one placement. The proportion of children having had only one placement ranged from 56 per cent in the NT to 85 per cent in NSW (figure 15.6).

With the exception of NSW, children who had been in out-of-home care longer tended to have more placements. For Queensland, WA and the NT, the proportion of children exiting care after 12 months or more who experienced two or more placements ranged from 63 per cent in Queensland to 87 per cent in the NT (figure 15.7).

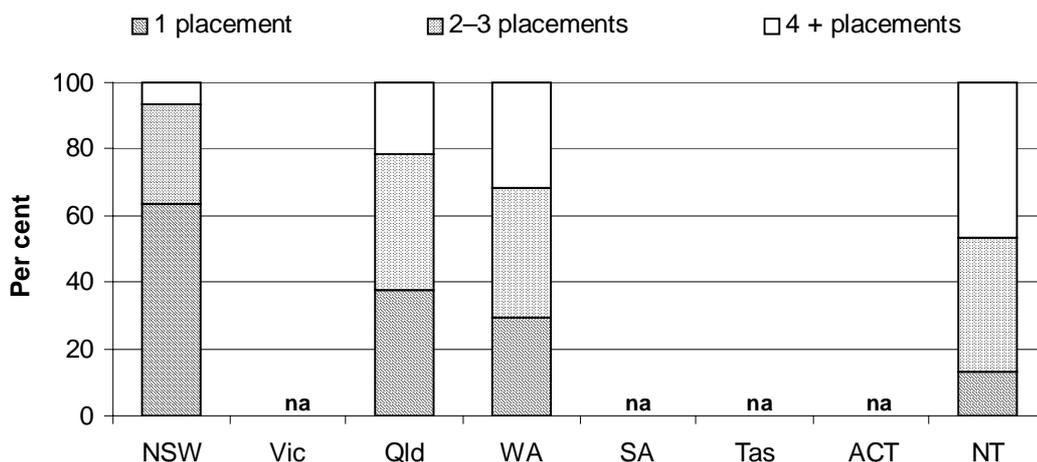
Figure 15.6 Children exiting care after less than 12 months by number of different placements, 1999-2000^{a, b, c}



^a Data refer to children exiting care in 1999-2000. ^b Out-of-home care data are not the same for each State and Territory. Refer to footnotes in the source tables for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^c In the 2000 Report data was included for both the number of 'care situations' and the number of 'placements'. For the 2001 Report these indicators have been combined. The revised indicator is the number of 'placements'. Placements are defined as the number of different carers the child had over a given period. **na** Not available.

Source: table 15A.17.

Figure 15.7 Children exiting care after 12 months or more by number of different care placements, 1999-2000^{a, b, c}



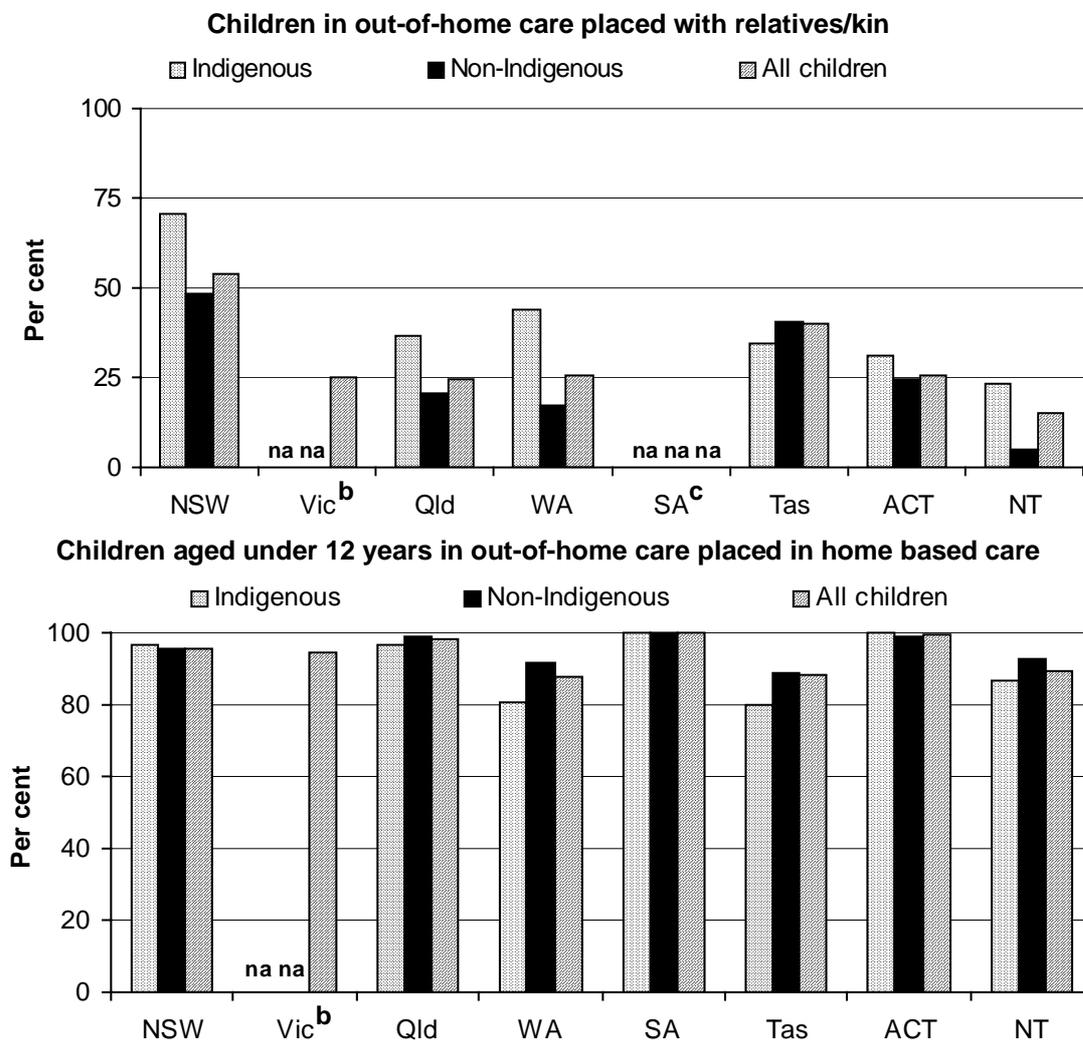
^a Data refer to children exiting care in 1999-2000. ^b Out-of-home care data are not the same for each State and Territory. Refer to footnotes in the source tables for information about what each jurisdiction's data include. ^c In the 2000 Report data was included for both the number of 'care situations' and the number of 'placements'. For the 2001 Report these indicators have been combined. The revised indicator is the number of 'placements'. Placements are defined as the number of different carers the child had over a given period. **na** Not available.

Source: table 15A.17.

Service quality — placement with extended family or in home based care

The type of placement is another indicator of the quality of child placement. Placing children with their relatives or kin is generally preferred for children in out-of-home care. The proportion of children placed with relatives or kin (at 30 June 2000) ranged from 14.8 per cent in the NT to 54.1 per cent in NSW. The proportion of children placed with relatives or kin was greater for Indigenous than for non-Indigenous children in all jurisdictions except Tasmania (figure 15.8).

Figure 15.8 Proportion of children in preferred placements by Indigenous status, 30 June 2000^a



^a Refer to footnotes for tables 15A.14 and 15A.16. for information about what each jurisdiction's data include.
^b Victoria was unable to provide data on Indigenous children. ^c SA was unable to provide data for 1999-2000.
na Not available.

Source: tables 15A.14 and 15A.16.

Placing younger children in home based care is generally considered to be in their best interests particularly for younger children. The proportion of children aged 12 years and under who were placed in home based care (at 30 June 2000) ranged from 87.9 per cent in WA to 99.8 per cent in SA. In NSW, Queensland, SA and the ACT the proportion of Indigenous children aged 12 years placed in home based care was similar to the proportion of non-Indigenous children. In WA, Tasmania and the NT the proportion of Indigenous children aged 12 years placed in home based care was marginally smaller than the proportion of non-Indigenous children (figure 15.8).

It is also desirable to place children locally so some elements of their life remain unchanged, for example, by enabling the child to continue attendance at the same school. Data are not yet available for this indicator.

Service quality — placement in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle

The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle outlines a preference for the placement of Indigenous children. In order of preference, the Principle requires Indigenous children to be placed:

- with the child's extended family;
- within the child's Aboriginal community; or
- with other Aboriginal people (NLRC 1997).

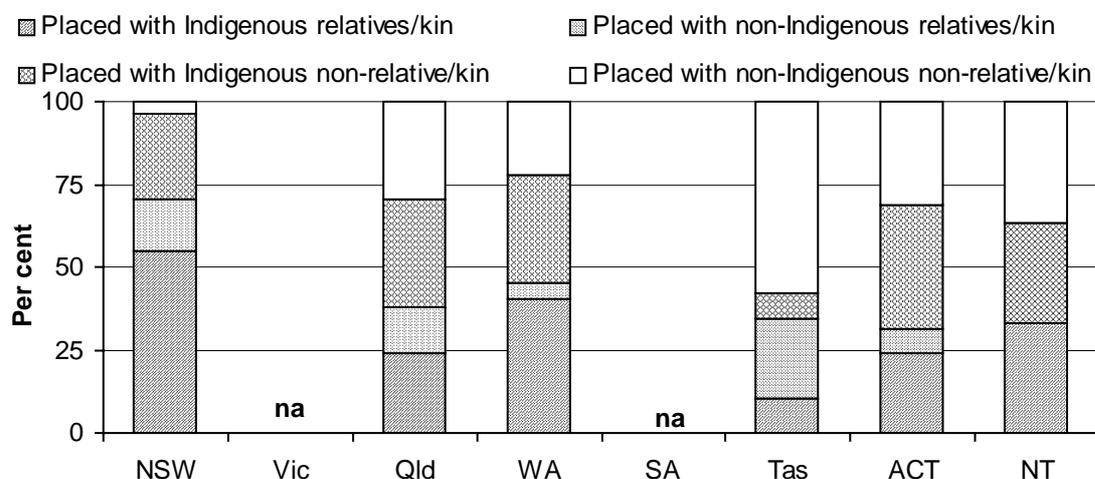
All jurisdictions have adopted this principle either in legislation or policy.

Placement with Indigenous care providers (relatives/kin and others) and placement with non-Indigenous relatives/kin satisfy the requirements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.

The proportion of Indigenous children placed in accordance with the principle ranged from 42 per cent in Tasmania to 96 per cent in NSW at 30 June 2000 (figure 15.9).

Placing Indigenous children with Indigenous and non-Indigenous relatives or kin (that is, part of their extended family) is the most preferred option under the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. Placement with Indigenous relatives/kin ranged from 10.5 per cent in Tasmania to 55 per cent in NSW. Placement with non-Indigenous relatives/kin ranged from 5.2 per cent in WA to 23.7 per cent in Tasmania. Placement with Indigenous care providers (non relatives/kin) also complies with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and ranged from 7.9 per cent in Tasmania to 37.9 per cent in the ACT (table 15A.15).

Figure 15.9 Placement of Indigenous children, 30 June 2000^{a, b}



^a Refer to footnotes in the source table for information about what the data include. ^b Placement with non-Indigenous non-relative/kin does not satisfy the requirements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. **na** Not available.

Source: table 15A.15.

Efficiency

It is an objective of the Review to report comparable estimates of costs. Ideally, the full range of costs to government would be determined on a comparable basis across jurisdictions. Where the full costs cannot be counted, costs should be estimated on a consistent basis across jurisdictions. (Table 15A.2 identifies the level of consistency across jurisdictions for a number of expenditure items.) The scope of activity covered may also differ and influence comparability. Expenditure may include, for example, some elements of other services for some jurisdictions.

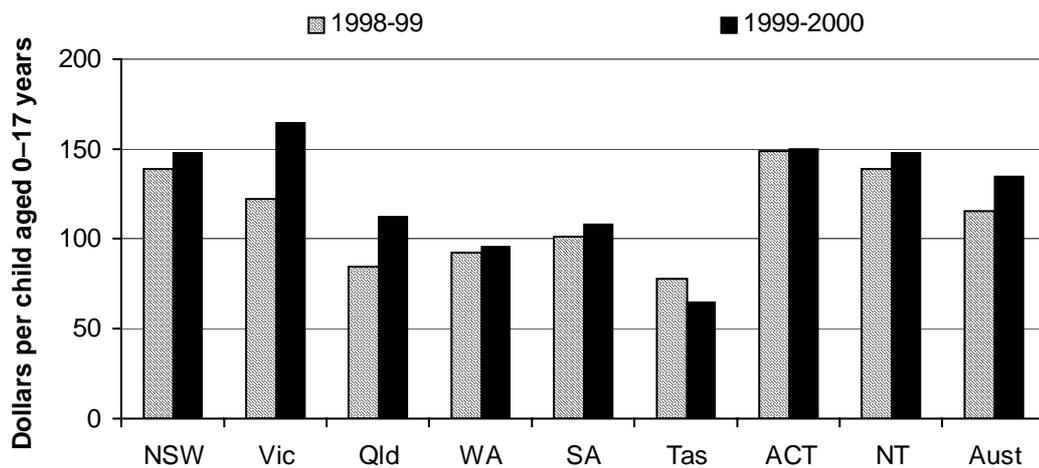
All jurisdictions except SA and the NT were able to provide separate recurrent expenditure data for child protection and out-of-home care services. Average recurrent expenditure on child protection and out-of-home care services per child aged 0–17 years increased in all jurisdictions except Tasmania between 1998-99 and 1999-2000 (figure 15.10). (The target population for child protection is generally 0–17 years.)

Child protection services

A proxy indicator of efficiency is government expenditure on child protection per head of target population (defined as children aged 0–16 years). Estimated national recurrent expenditure on child protection services per child aged 0–16 years was

\$48.67 for Australia in 1999-2000. Across jurisdictions, this expenditure ranged from \$17.64 per child aged 0–16 years in Tasmania to \$79.66 per child aged 0–16 years in the ACT (excluding SA and the NT, which were unable to separate child protection and out-of-home care expenditure) (table 15A.1).

Figure 15.10 Recurrent expenditure on child protection and out-of-home care services, (dollars per child aged 0–17 years)



Source: table 15A.1.

Out-of-home care services

A proxy indicator of efficiency is government expenditure on out-of-home care per head of target population (children aged 0–17 years). Average recurrent expenditure on out-of-home care per child aged 0–17 years was \$78.96 for Australia in 1999-2000. Across jurisdictions, expenditure ranged from \$48.15 per child aged 0–17 years in Tasmania to \$117.83 per child aged 0–17 years in Victoria (excluding SA and the NT, which were unable to separate child protection and out-of-home care expenditure) (table 15A.1).

Interpretation of data

Differences should be interpreted with care because they may relate to variations in the scope and allocation of expenditure items (see table 15A.2).

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

Using client surveys

Client views can be used to report on service delivery and to learn important information about how to improve services. National client surveys are used in a number of service areas in the Report, including vocational education and training, police services and housing. A national client satisfaction survey in disability services was reported in the 2000 Report for the first time (SCRCSSP 2000).

Applying client survey 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 goal of the Victorian Child Protection Client and Family Survey is to establish client and family feedback processes as an integral part of child protection case practice and planning. The survey will address several broad issues including the client's perspective of the outcomes of the child protection service, how well the service is being delivered, and how best to integrate feedback into child protection practice.

Stage one of the Victorian project — the development of the method — was completed in June 1999. This stage involved a series of consultations with clients, family members, external stakeholders, child protection workers and managers to assess their views about how best to conduct the survey and what questions to ask. This was particularly important because there are few prior examples of client and family surveys in this field.

Stage two — the finalisation and testing of the survey instrument and method through a major pilot was completed in 2000. Stage two involved a survey of 47 clients (young people over the age of 11 years) and 97 families from four regions. The major finding of the pilot was that the consultation tool was psychometrically sound. It also confirmed that one of the more complex issues for the full scale survey to address will be how to achieve a satisfactory rate of participation by clients and their families. Participation rates are a difficult issue in child protection because the client group is highly mobile and because child protection service is of an involuntary nature. A number of recommendations were made in the report to address this issue for the full scale survey, which is expected to commence in early 2001.

A similar child protection survey is planned for Queensland and there has been a high level of cooperation between the two State departments.

Improving the comparability of data

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, on behalf of the National Child Protection and Support Services data group, under the auspice of the Community Services Ministers' Council, commissioned a consultancy in July 1998 on the comparability of child protection service data (AIHW 1999b). The report was publicly released in early 2000 and maps the commonalities and differences across jurisdictions of key output categories for child protection services, such as notifications, investigations and substantiations. Commonalities and differences in care and protection orders were also examined. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the data group are now working towards an improved national framework which, where feasible, will improve comparability across jurisdictions in the national child protection data.

Reporting on family preservation services

Jurisdictions provide a range of services to families and children where there are child protection concerns. This chapter reports on child protection and out-of-home care services only but it is expected in future Reports to report on other services aimed at protecting children (including casework services and family preservation services). This year jurisdictions have provided descriptive information relating to children and families using family preservation services, which appears in the supporting tables (table 15A.19). The nature of these services is further described in box 15.3. Work will be done over the next two years to explore ways of collecting outcome information on a comparable national basis, to study how well this kind of service achieves the long term and short term safety objectives of child protection and out-of-home care services.

Family support services

There are strong links between child protection, crisis accommodation and family support services. Family support services are those that seek to benefit families by improving their capacity to care for children and/or strengthening family relationships. 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, under the auspices of the CSMAC to undertake a scoping study

of family support services. This will include scoping the current family support data collections and examining options for a national minimum data set.

15.6 Profile of supported accommodation and assistance

Service overview

Supported accommodation and assistance services aim to assist people who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless as a result of a crisis, including women and children escaping domestic violence. Sections 15.6–15.10 report on services provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).

The primary focus of SAAP is to use a case management approach to support homeless people and victims of domestic violence. Through this process, clients are offered a range of services, including supported accommodation; counselling; advocacy; links to housing, health, education and employment services; outreach support brokerage; and meals services. Housing and accommodation services were provided in 73 per cent of support periods in 1999-2000. General support and advocacy (70 per cent of support periods), counselling (39 per cent), financial and employment assistance (32 per cent) and specialist services (22 per cent) were also commonly provided (figure 15.11).

Size and scope

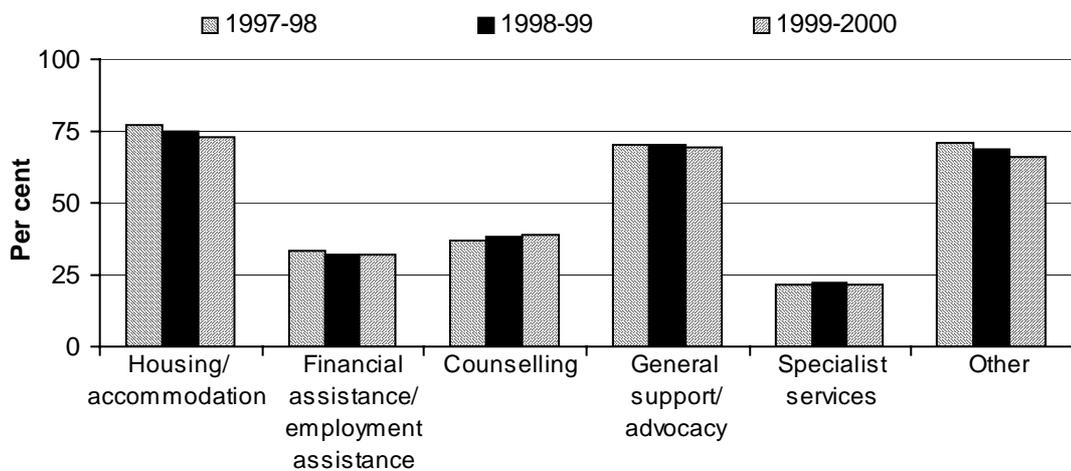
SAAP funds support services provided by agencies to a range of groups, such as homeless families, single men, single women, young people, and women and children escaping domestic violence. Around 1200 agencies are funded under the program, and most principally target one client group. SAAP services were delivered in 1999-2000 by agencies targeting:

- young people (38 per cent of agencies);
- women escaping domestic violence (22 per cent);
- single men (9 per cent);
- families (9 per cent); and
- single women (4 per cent).

Agencies targeting multiple client groups or providing general support accounted for 18 per cent of service providers in 1999-2000 (table 15A.150).

Agencies also vary in their service delivery model. The most common models in 1999-2000 were those providing medium to long term supported accommodation (40 per cent of agencies), followed by those providing crisis or short term supported accommodation (34 per cent). 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 (1 per cent). A further 13 per cent of agencies provided multiple services (table 15A.151).

Figure 15.11 **Composition of SAAP support periods^{a, b}**



^a Agencies may provide more than one type of service as a part of a single support period so services provided do not sum to 100 per cent. ^b Data for 1999-2000 are preliminary.

Source: table 15A.149.

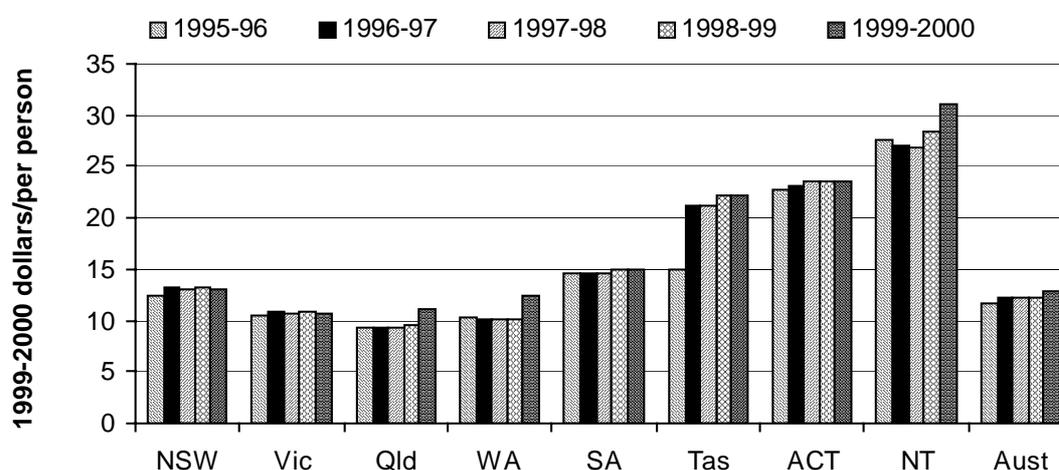
Roles and responsibilities

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

Funding

Recurrent funding of SAAP services was \$246 million in 1999-2000, of which the Commonwealth Government contributed 56 per cent and the States and Territories contributed 44 per cent (table 15A.152). Combined Commonwealth, State and Territory government funding for the period 1998-99 to 1999-2000 remained relatively stable (in real terms) in all jurisdictions, except Queensland, WA and the NT (which increased as a result of the provision of additional award related funding) (table 15A.152). Funding per person in the total population ranged from \$10.78 in Victoria to \$31.04 in the NT in 1999-2000 (figure 15.12 and table 15A.154).

Figure 15.12 Recurrent SAAP funding per person^{a, b}



^a Includes total recurrent allocations (including State and Territory level allocations for program administration).

^b The total population figure is not indicative of the demand for these services.

Source: table 15A.154.

15.7 Policy developments in supported accommodation and assistance

The SAAP IV Agreement between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories commenced on 1 July 2000 and will conclude on 30 June 2005. SAAP IV is underpinned by:

- the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994*;
- a memorandum of understanding, which sets out high level principles, strategic themes, a commitment to develop outcomes and measures of outcomes, roles and responsibilities, and arrangements for implementation. All signatories endorsed this memorandum on 8 April 1999; and

-
- bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and each State and Territory government. These bilateral agreements establish State/Territory priorities within a multilateral policy and administrative framework, and establish outcomes for funding. At the beginning of January 2001, all jurisdictions except WA had signed bilateral agreements with the Commonwealth Government.

Box 15.5 Evaluation and reporting under SAAP IV

The Memorandum of Understanding requires the development of a National Strategic Plan which identifies the key principles, priorities, strategies, data, research and other project commitments of SAAP IV. The National Strategic Plan sets out a national evaluation and reporting framework that will comprise:

- an annual national program report which provides:
 - an analysis of achievements, including analysis against program outcomes and performance indicators; and
 - a commentary on, and identification of, areas for further development and attention in subsequent years;
- a mid-term review; and
- a final evaluation report to be completed 12 months before the end of the SAAP IV agreement.

Outcomes and performance indicators form the accountability framework in bilateral agreements, and are the basis for review, evaluation and national annual reporting.

An evaluation framework has been cooperatively developed as part of the National Strategic Plan, and focuses on:

- client outcomes, particularly the extent to which SAAP demonstrates capacity to:
 - resolve crisis;
 - re-establish family links where appropriate; and
 - re-establish a capacity of clients to live independently of SAAP;
- client satisfaction with aspects of service delivery, including quality, accessibility, appropriateness and achievement of outcomes;
- the extent to which the strategic themes, directions and administrative framework for SAAP IV are addressed and implemented; and
- measures of performance in relation to appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness.

Source: SAAP IV Memorandum of Understanding.

A National Strategic Plan for SAAP IV has been developed, approved and widely distributed. This National Strategic Plan is based on the memorandum of understanding and bilateral agreements, and represents the basis for national reporting on SAAP IV (box 15.5). The plan will be reflected in State and Territory

planning, which will also respond to the needs and priorities of individual jurisdictions.

15.8 Framework of supported accommodation and assistance performance indicators

Framework of performance indicators

The framework of performance indicators for supported accommodation and assistance is based on SAAP objectives (box 15.6).

Box 15.6 Objectives for SAAP services

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

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

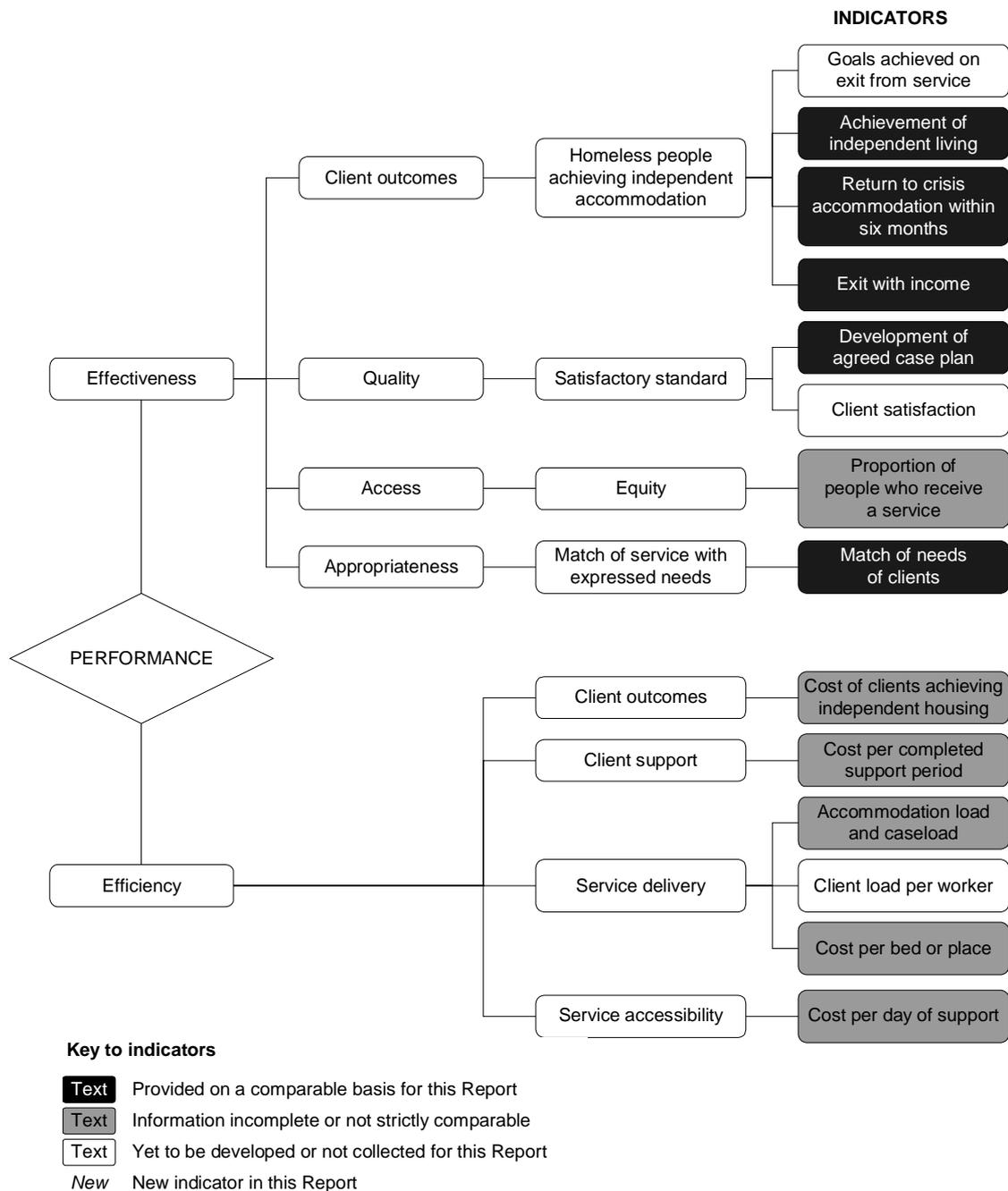
These services should be provided in an equitable and efficient manner.

The reporting framework for SAAP is shown in figure 15.13. Ongoing work to provide a more comprehensive set of performance indicators, and to improve existing indicators and the data, is discussed in section 15.10.

15.9 Key supported accommodation and assistance performance indicator results

Different delivery contexts, locations and types of client may affect the cost of supported accommodation and assistance services or the outcomes achieved. 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.

Figure 15.13 Performance indicators for SAAP services



Outcomes

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

In all jurisdictions in 1999-2000, most clients had 'no substantive change' in income source between entering and exiting the program (table 15.1). The majority of clients entering SAAP were receiving government benefits and were still receiving them when they exited SAAP support.

Table 15.1 Change in client's income source after SAAP support, 1999-2000 (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	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.3	2.7	2.2	1.9	2.6	2.6
Obtained own benefit/extra benefit/wages	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.6	2.2	0.6	1.2	2.9	1.8
Had no substantive change	86.7	89.0	85.8	90.9	89.9	93.6	87.0	87.8	88.3
Had no income before or after support	7.9	5.0	8.6	3.9	4.0	3.3	9.2	5.3	6.2
Moved from wage to government payments/some income to no income	0.8	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.3	0.4	0.7	1.5	1.1
Total^c	100.0								

^a Excludes high volume records (data collected from SAAP agencies with 50 or more new clients on a daily basis) because income source after support was not collected. ^b Preliminary data. ^c Total may not equal 100 as a result of rounding errors.

Source: table 15A.155.

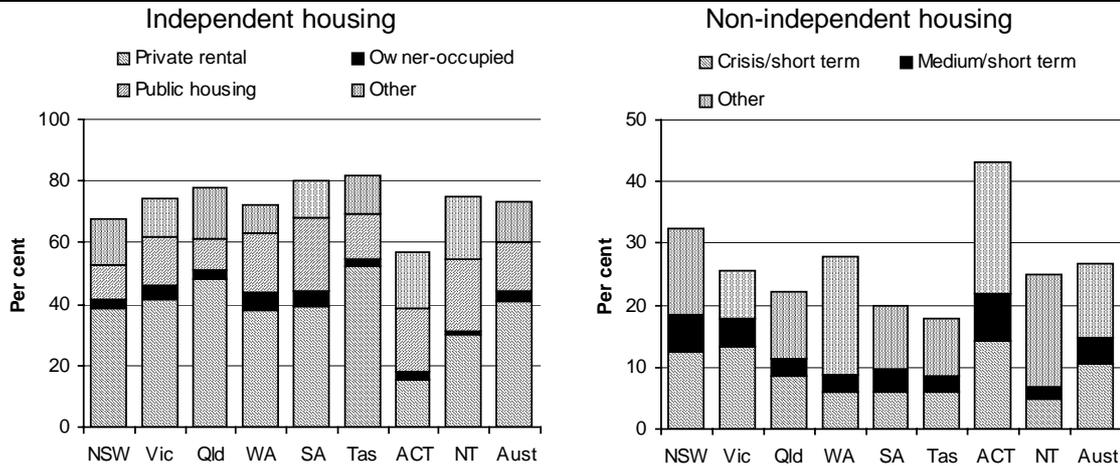
The proportion of clients in 1999-2000 who had 'no substantive change' in income source ranged from about 86 per cent in Queensland to 94 per cent in Tasmania. Moving from having no income before receiving services, to obtaining some income or obtaining their own benefit, an extra benefit or a wage, indicates greater client independence. The proportion of clients who moved from having no income support to obtaining some income was between 2 and 3 per cent in all jurisdictions except the ACT, where it was less than 2 per cent. The proportion of clients who obtained their own benefit or a wage ranged from 0.6 per cent in Tasmania to 3 per cent in the NT.

The proportion of clients in 1999-2000 who had no income before or after support ranged from just over 3 per cent in Tasmania to about 9 per cent in the ACT. Nationally, just over 1 per cent of clients exiting the program moved from having a wage to having a government payment, or from having some income to having no income.

The proportion of clients achieving independent living at the end of a support period indicates the independence of clients after program support. Nationally, 73.5 per cent of clients achieved independent housing at the end of a support period in 1999-2000 (figure 15.14). The proportion ranged from 56.9 per cent in the ACT to 82.1 per cent in Tasmania. It is important to note that data are available for only one third of

completed support periods, so may not be representative of the total SAAP population.

Figure 15.14 Accommodation type on exit from SAAP support, 1999-2000^{a, b, c}



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

Source: table 15A.156.

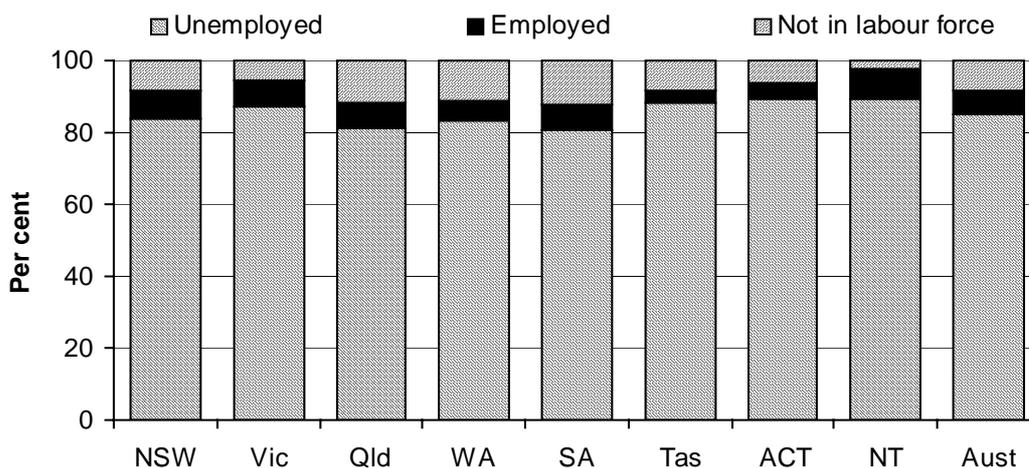
By type of independent housing, 40.8 per cent of all clients moved to private rental housing, 15.5 per cent entered public housing and 3.7 per cent moved to owner-occupied housing in 1999-2000. The proportion of clients moving to private rental housing was highest in Tasmania (52.1 per cent) and lowest in the ACT (15.1 per cent). The proportion of clients moving to public housing ranged from 10.3 per cent in Queensland to 24.2 per cent in SA (figure 15.14 and table 15A.156).

By type of non-independent housing, 14.8 per cent of all clients in 1999-2000 continued to live in SAAP accommodation — 10.5 per cent in crisis or short term accommodation and 4.3 per cent in medium to long term accommodation. The proportion of clients remaining in SAAP accommodation was highest in the ACT (22 per cent) and lowest in the NT (6.8 per cent) (figure 15.14 and table 15A.156).

Employment is another indicator of clients' achievement of self reliance and independence. Nationally, only 9.1 per cent of support periods in 1999-2000 involved clients who were participating in the workforce before support (while 34 per cent of support periods involved clients who were unemployed) (table 15A.157). Of the clients who were unemployed when entering the program, 6.9 per cent were employed at the end of the support period (2.7 per cent full time, 1.6 per cent part time and 2.6 per cent on a casual basis), 84.8 per cent remained unemployed and 8.3 per cent were not in the labour force (figure 15.15). Across jurisdictions, the

proportion of clients who achieved employment ranged from 3 per cent in Tasmania to 8.3 per cent in the NT (table 15A.158).

Figure 15.15 **Change in the labour force status of clients after SAAP support, 1999-2000^{a, b, c}**



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

Source: table 15A.158.

The performance information above relate to relatively short term outcomes — that is, 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 clients and the number and types of service provided to clients (box 15.7).

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 the program after their initial support period.

Box 15.7 Issues when analysing SAAP data

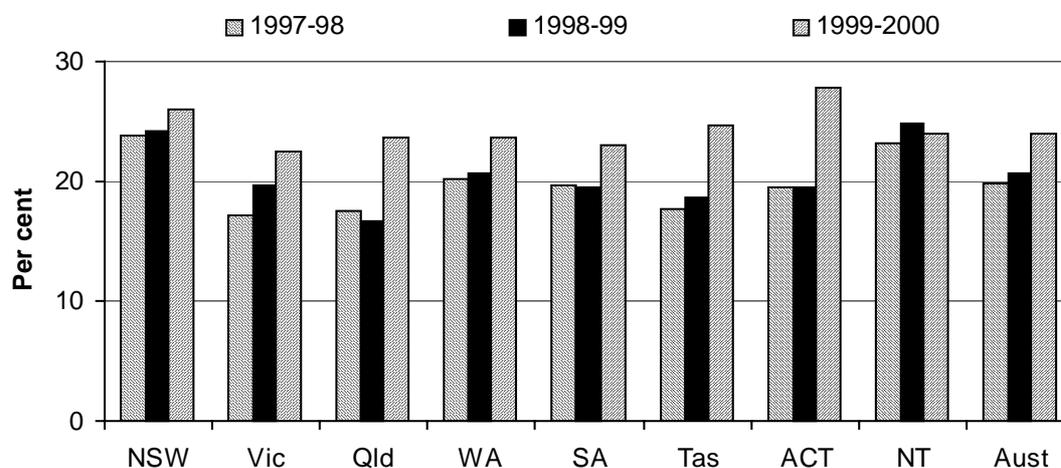
The following three important issues should be considered in analysis of SAAP data.

- Informed consent is an essential component of the integrity of the data. The principle of client/consumer rights (which underpins informed consent) recognises that clients do not receive services under a mandatory order. They have the right to accept or reject the services offered, as they have the right to provide or not provide information while receiving SAAP services.
- Comprehensive information cannot be collected for all clients, such as casual clients and clients of high volume agencies (those accommodating 50 or more clients per night, telephone referral agencies, day centres, and information and referral centres).
- Clients consented to provide personal details for the SAAP client collection for approximately 75 per cent of support periods in 1999-2000. A weighting system has been developed, however, to adjust for agency non-participation (93 per cent of agencies participated in the client collection) and non-consent. This is the first time the weighting system has been used to provide SAAP national data collection estimates in this Report.

Nationally, 24 per cent of clients who exited from the program in 1999-2000 returned within 12 months of exiting the program. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 22.5 per cent in Victoria to 27.8 per cent in the ACT (figure 15.16). However, it may be appropriate for some clients to receive more than one support period (moving from crisis to medium term accommodation, for example). One group that makes multiple use of SAAP comprises women and children escaping domestic violence. This is evident in the data for the NT, which has the highest return rate and also the highest number of Indigenous women clients who tend to use SAAP services for short respite periods to escape family violence and who then return to their community. There are also a number of SAAP clients with long term problems who may access SAAP services a number of times before being able to address their issues.

A further medium term indicator of the achievement of self reliance and independence is when the client exits to independent housing and does not return to SAAP within a specified period (in this case, six months). However, given the data issues discussed above, current estimates may not be representative of all clients; for example, nationally, only approximately 45 per cent of clients provided information on their accommodation after exiting at least one support period over the year (table 15.2).

Figure 15.16 Clients who exited from a SAAP service in 1999-2000 and who returned within 12 months of exiting the program^a



^a Data for 1999-2000 are preliminary.

Source: table 15A.159.

Table 15.2 Indicative estimates of clients exiting to independent housing and not returning within six months, 1999-2000^{a, b}

Unit	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Clients who provided information on accommodation after exit from support									
no.	9 200	14 400	5 500	4 400	2 800	1 700	1 100	1 500	40 700
As a proportion of total clients ^c									
%	37.5	52.7	36.6	53.9	40.3	50.9	58.3	53.4	45.1
Clients recorded as exiting to independent accommodation and not returning within six months									
no.	3 768	6 308	2 576	1 703	1 243	851	355	759	17 563
Indicative estimates of clients exiting to independent housing and not returning within six months ^d									
%	41.0	43.8	46.8	38.7	44.4	50.1	32.3	50.6	43.2

^a See notes to table 15A.160 for details of how the estimates were calculated. ^b Preliminary data. ^c Estimate based on estimated total number of clients for 1998-99. ^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 15A.160.

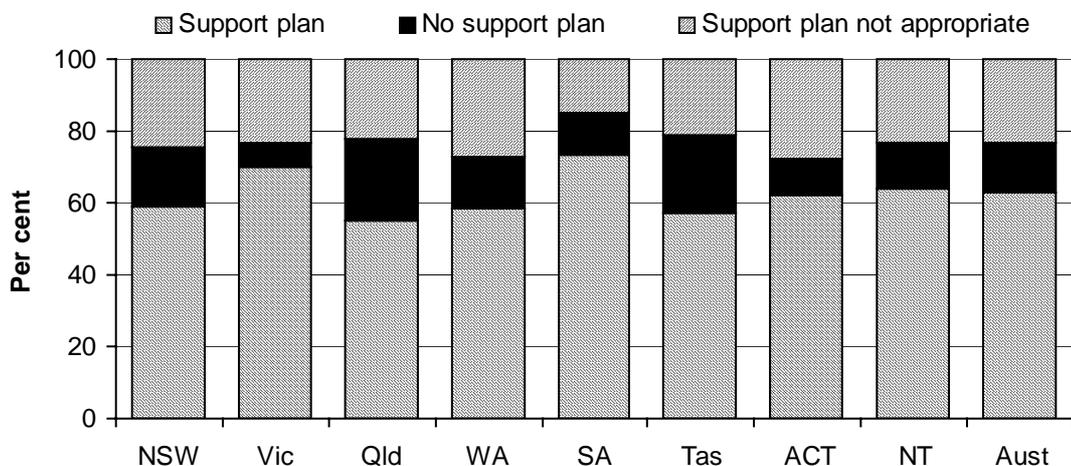
It is possible to estimate the proportion of clients who exit to independent housing and do not return to SAAP within six months (based on the subset of clients who provide information on accommodation after exiting support). However, given the potential for bias in the data, these estimates should not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

It is important to have data that are representative of all SAAP clients. Strategies are being implemented to improve the data quality progressively, including client consent rates and the collection 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 short term). Nationally, the case worker in 23.4 per cent of support periods in 1999-2000 judged that a support plan was not appropriate. This proportion ranged from 15.2 per cent in SA to 27.9 per cent in the ACT. There was an agreed support plan for 62.7 per cent of support periods nationally in 1999-2000. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 54.8 per cent in Queensland to 73.2 per cent in SA (figure 15.17).

Figure 15.17 **Support periods, by existence of a support plan, 1999-2000^{a, b, c}**



^a Excludes high volume records because not all items were included on high volume forms. ^b See notes to table 15A.161 for more detail. ^c Preliminary data.

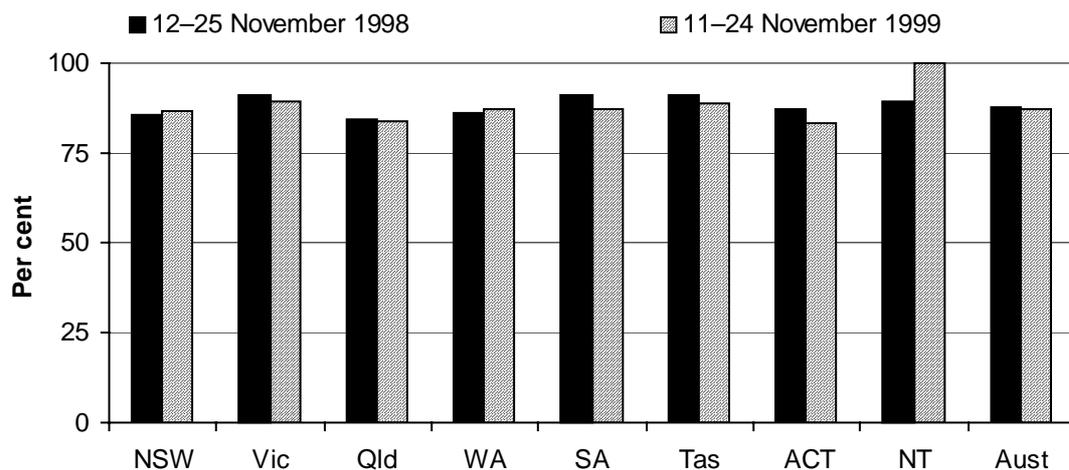
Source: table 15A.161.

Access

The ability of services to assist those in need is an indicator of access. Data from a two-week sample period in November 1999 suggests that around 87.3 per cent of people seeking SAAP services received the assistance requested in that period. The proportion of potential SAAP clients who received support ranged from 83.3 per cent

in the ACT to 100 per cent in the NT. The estimates of unmet demand should be interpreted with care because the two-week sample period over which data were collected may not be representative of the eventual success of clients accessing SAAP services over the full year (figure 15.18).

Figure 15.18 SAAP support periods as a proportion of estimated total SAAP service requests^{a, b, c}



^a See table 15A.163 for an explanation of how the number of SAAP clients was estimated and for the definition of unmet demand. ^b Data on unmet demand should be interpreted with care for several reasons. First, a person can make a request on more than one occasion and to more than one SAAP agency. 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 always have been available to record. Therefore, the total numbers do not represent actual people. Second, a number of people may receive ongoing support or accommodation from a SAAP agency at a later time, quite possibly soon after their initial request. As a result, 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. 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. ^c November 1999 data are preliminary.

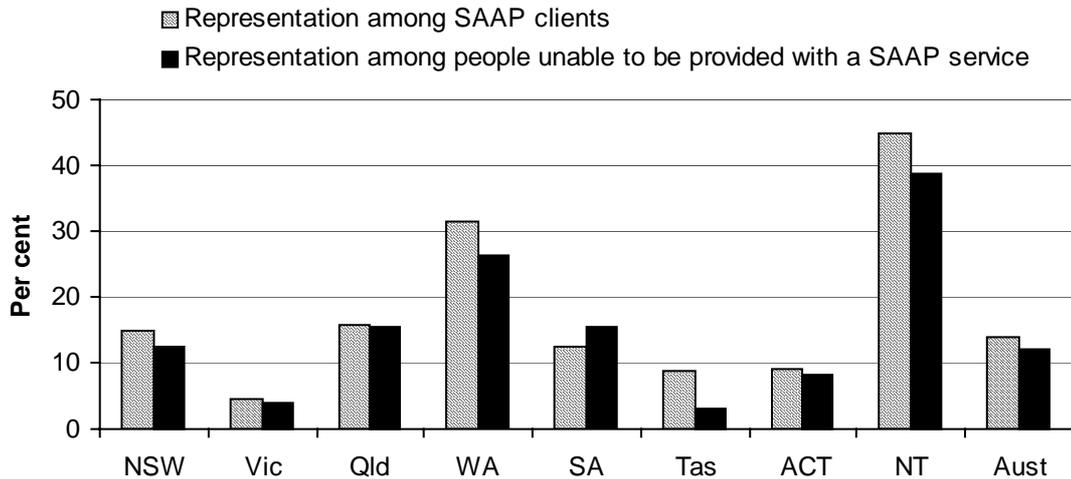
Source: table 15A.163.

Potential clients were not provided with services for a number of reasons, including lack of available accommodation (the main reason for 82 per cent of potential clients who were not provided with services), insufficient staff (6.4 per cent) and lack of facilities for special needs such as disability, culturally specific needs and other special needs (2.9 per cent) (table 15A.162).

SAAP services target homeless people in general, but access by special needs groups (such as Indigenous people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds) is particularly important. Nationally, 12 per cent of people unable to be provided with a service in 1999-2000 were Indigenous, compared with 13.8 per cent of clients who were Indigenous. In all jurisdictions except SA, the representation of Indigenous

people among people unable to be provided with a service was lower than the representation of Indigenous people among clients (figure 15.19).

Figure 15.19 Indigenous people among SAAP clients and among people unable to be provided with a SAAP service, 1999-2000^{a, b, c}



^a The number of people unable to be provided with a SAAP service was the 'unmet demand'. See notes to table 15A.164 for more detail. ^b Excludes people who refused offered 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.

Source: table 15A.164.

On average, the representation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds in people unable to be provided with a SAAP service (6.2 per cent) was lower than their representation among SAAP clients (11.2 per cent). Tasmania, the ACT and the NT were the only jurisdictions where the representation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds among people unable to be provided with a service was higher than their representation among SAAP clients (figure 15.20).

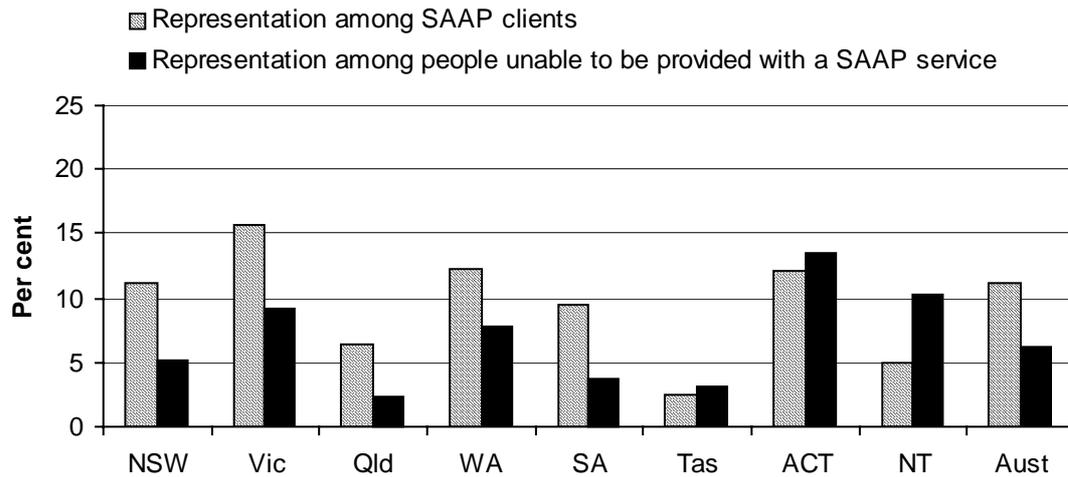
Appropriateness

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

The proportion of clients who received needed services or were referred to another agency for needed services was 91.5 per cent in 1999-2000. Across jurisdictions, the

proportion ranged from 86.9 per cent in Victoria to 94.4 per cent in Queensland (figure 15.21).

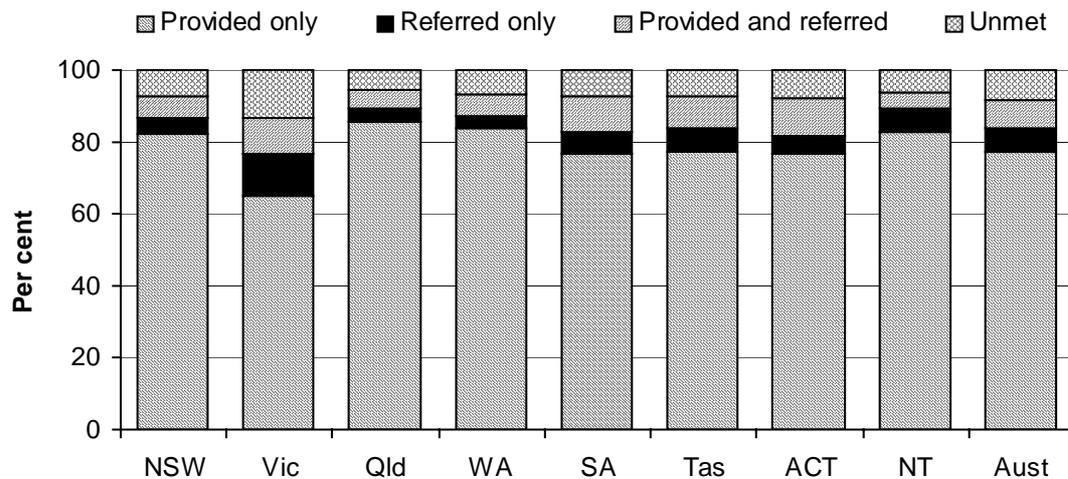
Figure 15.20 People from non-English speaking backgrounds among SAAP clients and among people unable to be provided with a SAAP service, 1999-2000^{a, b, c}



^a The number of people unable to be provided with a SAAP service was the 'unmet demand'. See notes to table 15A.165 for more detail. ^b Excludes people who refused offered 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.

Source: table 15A.165.

Figure 15.21 SAAP clients, by met and unmet support needs, 1999-2000^a

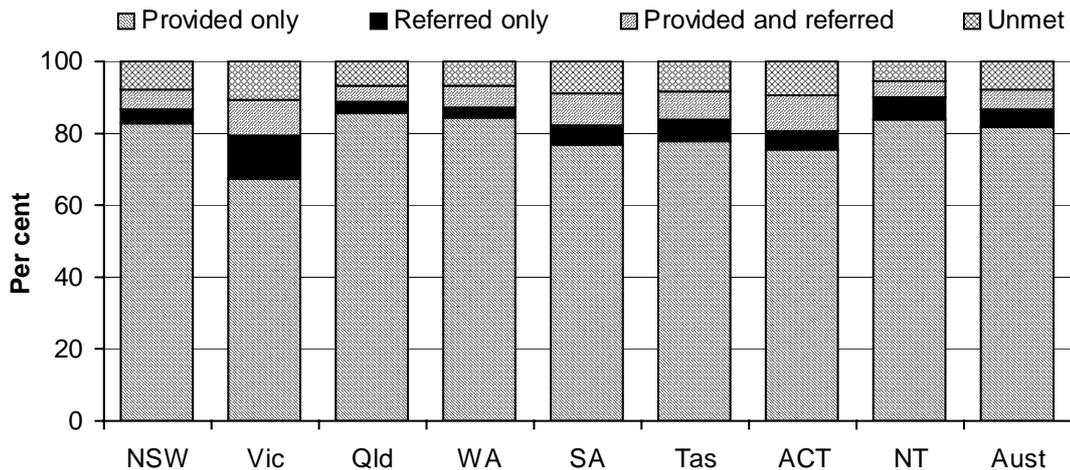


^a Preliminary data.

Source: table 15A.166.

Nationally, 92.5 per cent of Indigenous clients either received needed SAAP services or were referred to another agency for these services in 1999-2000 — 1 percentage point higher than the proportion for all clients. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 89.6 per cent in Victoria to 94.6 per cent in the NT (figure 15.22).

Figure 15.22 Indigenous clients, by met and unmet support needs, 1999-2000^a



^a Preliminary data.

Source: table 15A.167.

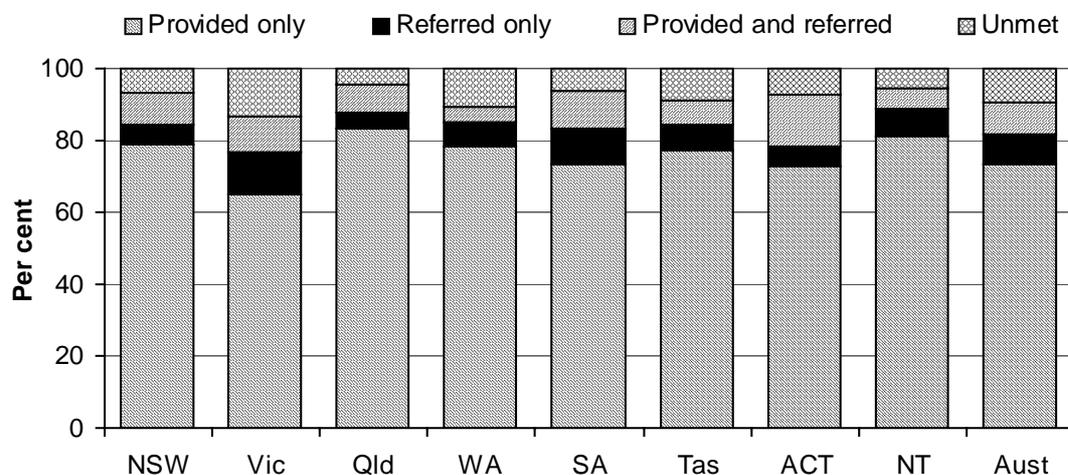
Just under 91 per cent of clients from a non-English speaking background either received needed services or were referred to another agency in 1999-2000. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 86.5 per cent in Victoria to 95.7 per cent in Queensland (figure 15.23).

Efficiency

A proxy indicator of efficiency is the level of 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. Unit cost data do not yet contain capital costs.

Figure 15.23 Clients from non-English speaking backgrounds, by met and unmet support needs, 1999-2000^a

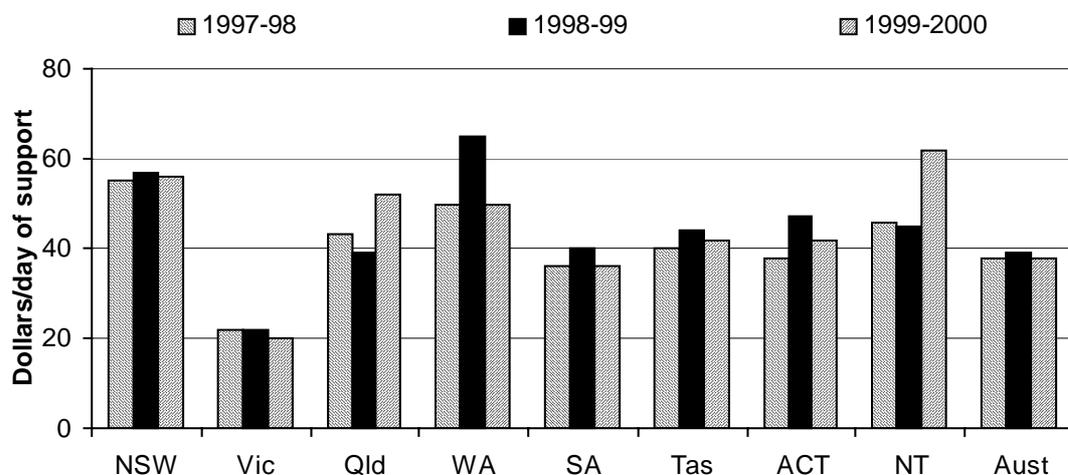


^a Preliminary data.

Source: table 15A.168.

The recurrent cost per day of support for SAAP clients receiving support and/or supported accommodation (excluding casual and potential clients, and accompanying children who receive services as clients in their own right) averaged \$38 in 1999-2000. Across jurisdictions, it ranged from \$20 in Victoria to \$62 in the NT (figure 15.24).

Figure 15.24 Recurrent cost per day of support for homeless clients, 1999-2000^{a, b}

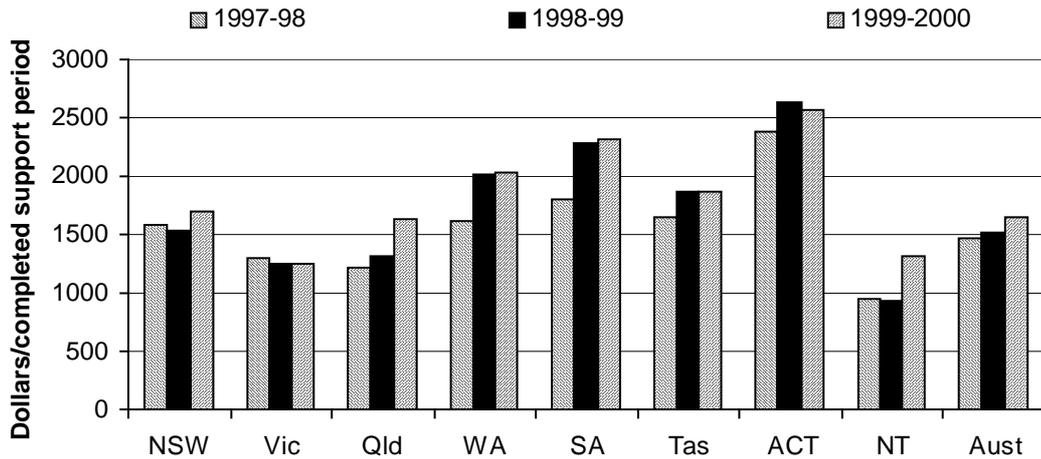


^a See notes to table 15A.169 for a description of the analysis. ^b Preliminary data.

Source: table 15A.169.

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 \$1650 in 1999-2000. Across jurisdictions, it ranged from \$1250 in Victoria to \$2560 in the ACT (figure 15.25).

Figure 15.25 Recurrent cost per completed support period, 1999-2000^{a, b}

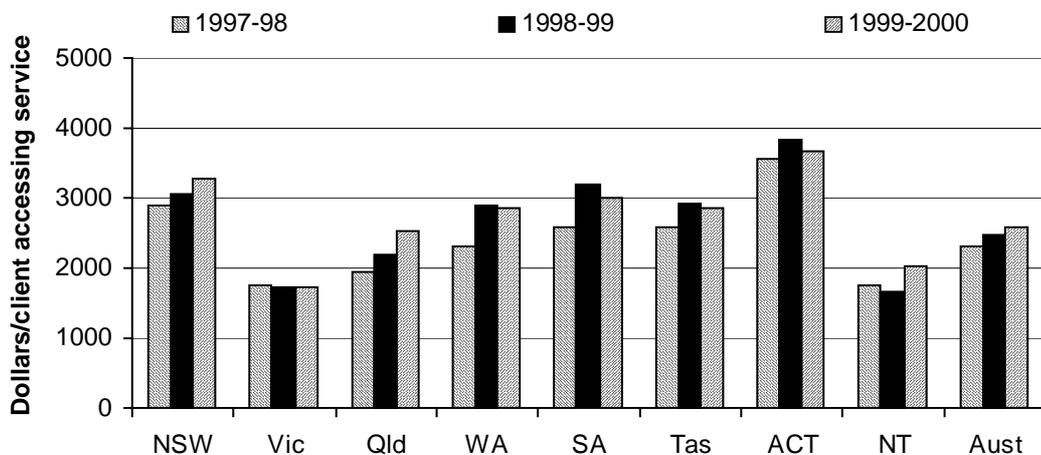


^a See notes to table 15A.170 for a description of the analysis. ^b Preliminary data.

Source: table 15A.170.

Nationally, the recurrent cost per client accessing SAAP services was \$2570 in 1999-2000. This varied across jurisdictions, from \$1710 in Victoria to \$3680 in the ACT (figure 15.26).

Figure 15.26 Recurrent cost per client accessing services, 1999-2000 dollars^{a, b}

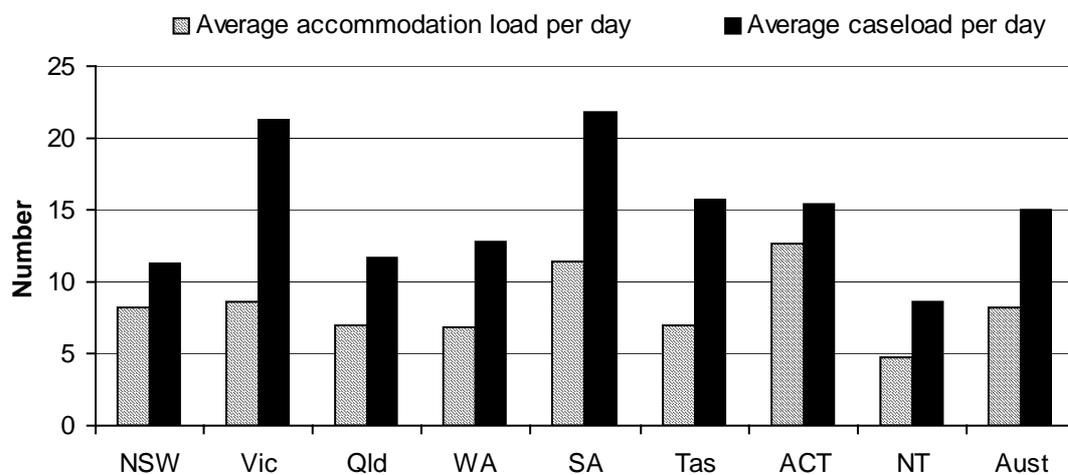


^a See notes to table 15A.171 for a description of the analysis. ^b Preliminary data.

Source: table 15A.171.

The average accommodation load is an indicator of the average number of people accommodated per day per agency. The average accommodation load ranged from 4.7 in the NT to 12.7 in the ACT in 1999-2000. The average caseload is an indicator of the average number of people being supported per day per agency. The average caseload ranged from 8.6 in the NT to 21.8 in SA in 1999-2000 (figure 15.27). Differences in the average accommodation load and caseload may reflect differences in the average size of agencies across jurisdictions.

Figure 15.27 **Average accommodation load and caseload per day, 1999-2000^{a, b}**



^a See notes to table 15A.172 for a description of how accommodation and caseload were estimated.

^b Preliminary data.

Source: table 15A.172.

15.10 Future directions in supported accommodation and assistance performance reporting

Measuring client satisfaction

Client satisfaction is an important indicator of quality. The national SAAP evaluation involved some work on assessing client satisfaction. Further work is planned as part of the new SAAP agreement to develop appropriate client satisfaction measures.

Improving data and information collection

Improved data and information will occur through a comprehensive review of the information needs of SAAP government and non-government stakeholders during the

period July–December 2000. An objective of the review is to ensure the SAAP data collection is able to deliver the data required for the SAAP IV Agreement, which commenced on 1 July 2000. This is likely to lead to changes to the SAAP data collection and to changes in performance reporting from 1 July 2001.

A computer software package (SAAP Management and Reporting Tool — SMART) has been developed for agencies to collect client information electronically, which will improve the quality and usefulness of the data. SMART is a data storage and reporting application designed to:

- enable SAAP agencies to effectively and efficiently capture, maintain and transfer data required by the SAAP National Data Collection;
- help agencies to maintain client details and service delivery data;
- meet agency-specific reporting requirements via tailored reports and *ad hoc* queries on services, clients and activities;
- support the business operations of SAAP agencies; and
- maintain the confidentiality of the SAAP client records.

This package has been progressively implemented over the past two years with SAAP agencies (approximately a third of agencies are now using the package to report their data to the SAAP National Data Collection Agency). It has been designed to enable data to be extracted periodically for input to the Program's 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 additional data for special purposes. A small number of agencies have had difficulties with the package (largely because of system difficulties and some errors in the program). The software is currently being refined and it is planned to review SMART to determine how it might be enhanced and made more useful to agencies.

15.11 Jurisdictions' comments

This section provides comments from each jurisdiction on the three services covered in this chapter (child protection, out-of-home care, 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. The information covers aspects such as age profile, geographic distribution of the population, income levels, education levels, tenure of dwellings and cultural heritage (such as Indigenous and ethnic status).

Commonwealth Government comments

“ 2000 has been a very significant year for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). It has marked the completion of the third set of Commonwealth/State SAAP Agreements and with them the completion of a reform process, which has increased the efficiency and effectiveness of SAAP. The reforms have included substantial advances in approaches to assisting homeless clients, particularly through improved case management, and a much greater understanding of SAAP and SAAP clients through a substantial improvement in research and data collection activities. During the course of the SAAP III agreements there was also continuous improvements in performance reporting. The achievements in the data, research and performance areas are documented in the publication: *Homelessness Information in Australia — Data and Research Activities in SAAP III 1994 to 2000*.

The year has also been significant because of the start of SAAP IV on 1 July 2000. This has involved a Commonwealth/State Memorandum of Understanding for the period 2000 to 2005 and promulgation of a National Strategic Plan for the same period. The Plan provides information on:

- the annual reporting process;
- the mid term review;
- the final evaluation;
- the national outcomes;
- the national strategies; and
- the strategic framework that underpins the program.

The Commonwealth has announced that it will provide over \$800 million for SAAP IV. This represents an increase of over \$160 million or some 30 per cent over total Commonwealth funding for SAAP III Agreements. If superannuation funds and indexation are excluded the real annual increase is 18 per cent for new and expanded services and program improvements.

During the year the Commonwealth also launched the National Homelessness Strategy, with the release of a discussion paper by the Commonwealth Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator the Hon Jocelyn Newman. The Strategy has four key themes: working together in social coalition, prevention, early intervention and crisis and support. The Strategy will provide a holistic framework around which to design programs and policies that will lead to the prevention and amelioration of homelessness. A series of forums are planned on specific issues, with a focus on practical solutions. A number of action research projects will be funded under the Strategy, The Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness, renewed during the year with a new membership, will play a key role in developing the Strategy.

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New South Wales Government comments

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Child protection and supported placements

The new Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 is expected to be proclaimed in December 2000. The Act creates new responsibilities for the Department of Community Services (DoCS) and other Government agencies in the prevention of child abuse and providing appropriate care and support to children, young persons and families. All agencies are expected to seek ways of empowering children, young persons and families through their participation in all decisions which affect their lives. The new Act also provides for greater involvement by Aboriginal families and communities in decision-making regarding the care of Aboriginal children and young persons.

In order to support the new legislation a number of initiatives have been undertaken throughout the child and family services system:

- The establishment of the DoCS Helpline will ensure a consistent response to callers wishing to report a concern for a child or young person. The Helpline will receive and manage initial contacts with DoCS from all over NSW.
- New risk assessment tools and procedural guidelines have been developed to support DoCS staff working with children, young people and families.
- To assist in preparation for the implementation of the new Act, DoCS has taken a lead role in the dissemination of information to the relevant agencies across the human services sector.

The NSW government has introduced public awareness campaigns to enhance the safety of children — the ‘Never Shake a Baby’ campaign, and provided parents with information to enhance parenting skills. Families First has continued to be implemented with a statewide plan and a new funding agreement developed.

Supported accommodation and assistance

NSW welcomes the commencement of the SAAP IV Agreement and the opportunities it presents to strategically focus all SAAP services in NSW on the needs of its clients, and in positioning SAAP as a support program (for homeless people and women and children escaping domestic violence) within a coordinated whole of government strategy.

NSW has already aligned the planning by individual SAAP agencies to the national aims of SAAP and is currently reviewing service specifications to describe client outcomes and outputs in a way that is consistent with the SAAP IV Strategic Themes. A key focus will be on improving the flexibility of the current service system to offer a broader range of support choices for clients and to improve access to SAAP for clients with complex support needs. Through Partnership Against Homelessness, NSW will continue to develop a holistic approach to working with homeless people through improved coordination and integration of the range of services provided by 10 NSW government agencies.

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Victorian Government comments

Child protection and supported placements

Child Protection and Placement and Support Services work to ensure the safety and well being of children and young people at risk of harm, abuse and neglect. The major policy direction of Community Services in Victoria is to work in partnership with local communities, local government and community services organisations to achieve these outcomes. These developments are underpinned by three key themes:

- Developing Stronger Families
- Intervening Earlier with Vulnerable Families
- Enhancing Child Protection and Care Services

Significant work is continuing to fully implement the Victorian Risk Framework, a statewide approach to risk assessment of children and young people notified to Child Protection. Major tasks include redevelopment of the primary client information system, and intensive support and training for supervisors and managers.

The pilot of the Child Protection Client and Family Survey tool and methodology has been completed, and will inform a statewide survey of client and families about the perception of the Child Protection service. The resulting qualitative and quantitative data will inform system and practice enhancement.

The Kinship Care Review Project will review all aspects of this program, which over the past seven years has become an increasingly important care option for Victoria's children and young people. Kinship care places children and young people with their relatives and has increased by over 50% as the preferred care option from 1994 to 2000.

Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP)

A review was undertaken of the Support Accommodation Assistance Program Quality Improvement Tool which was developed early in 1999 and aimed to consolidate case management as part of a broader service quality and practice development strategy.

Management of the SAAP program was transferred to the Office of Housing to improve links between accommodation and support services and to streamline the service system response to homelessness through joint planning and development processes.

In May 2000 Victoria established the Victorian Homelessness Strategy to develop a whole of government response to the prevention and early intervention of homelessness. This strategy will provide the framework for Victoria's ongoing development of its homelessness service system.

Queensland Government comments

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Child protection and supported placements

Substantial reform of child protection service delivery has continued with the proclamation of the *Child Protection Act 1999* in March 2000 and implementation of the recommendations of the Forde Inquiry into abuse of children in institutional care. Additional funds of \$100 million over four years, through to 2002–2003, will ensure new programs are well planned and implemented with involvement from community sector partners. Initiatives include:

- An additional 77 front line staff in 2000–2001, on top of the 77 front line staff and 15 support staff and senior practitioners employed in 1999–2000
- Greater access to community services with expanded prevention, early intervention, family support and placement services, including enhanced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family welfare services
- Strengthening alternative care through improved financial assistance to foster carers
- Improving the life chances of children in care by assisting young people who are leaving care and making the transition to adulthood with education, employment, and skills and resources for independent living
- Implementing the Statement of Commitment with Carers, and the Statement of Standards and Charter of Rights for Children in Care in the *Act*
- Reviewing the service system, including a risk and needs assessment model for children and families, flexible funding that links children's needs to resources, and an alignment of professional and business processes

Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP)

New funds will be prioritised to establish new services in high need areas and to maintain service viability, particularly for extended hours services experiencing difficulty with the full implementation costs of the Crisis Assistance and Supported Housing Award.

Findings from the Renewing SAAP Initiative will inform policy directions, service delivery developments and funding benchmarks. The interface between the Crisis Accommodation Program and SAAP will be explored to improve coordination of homelessness programs. Sub-regional service integration projects will be implemented in four locations to improve client outcomes through effective crisis and post-crisis responses.

An Access and Equity Strategy, including policy and practice guidelines, will be published in 2000–2001 and implemented during the life of the SAAP IV Agreement. Guidelines for supporting young people under sixteen years in SAAP services have been developed.

A homelessness conference in 2001 will focus on improved integration of responses to homelessness across all levels of Government and the community.

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Western Australian Government comments

Child Protection

To improve services and outcomes for children, Family and Children's Services and the WA Police Service have continued to implement a joint response initiative to the investigation of child abuse through the development of joint protocols and the conduct of joint training. A co-location pilot of Family and Children's Services and Police officers has also commenced joint response work. Discussions have commenced with the Health Department to extend the initiative and to further increase the co-ordination of services in child abuse cases.

Supported Placements

Family and Children's Services is currently evaluating the Looking After Children pilot with a view to a state wide implementation of the program. The tool will be computerised and it is hoped will provide some data in the area of outcome measurements for children in supported placements.

A Children in Care project has been initiated which is looking at developing support strategies for foster carers and to identify barriers to relative carer placement and to develop/promote strategies to overcome these barriers.

In 1999 the department implemented a pilot project which aimed to provide email facilities and access to the Internet for fifteen foster carers, the children in their care and the Foster Care Association. This also included developing a web site for the Foster Care Association and providing a computer for the carers. The evaluation found that the project has greatly enhanced the support available to those carers involved in the project.

SAAP

During 1999/2000, SAAP in Western Australia continued to be impacted by the introduction of the Crisis Assistance, Supported Housing (CASH) Award which came into effect on 1 January 1998. Family and Children's Services continued to receive and assess applications from SAAP services, giving priority to 24 hour and extended hours services. During 1999/2000 a further 17 SAAP services received increased funding to meet additional costs associated with the CASH Award.

The completion of SAAP III reform projects was a major focus during the year with projects funded which focus on supporting Aboriginal staff and service providers. Work commenced on reviewing the SAAP Service Standards. The major project for WA in 1999/2000 was the ongoing Interdepartmental Protocols Project which has seen the development of protocols between SAAP services and the Ministry of Housing, the Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office, the Health Department of Western Australia, Mental Health Division and the Family and Children's Services Crisis Care Unit. Protocols are currently being developed with Centrelink and Family and Children's Services service delivery.

Funds were approved through the Partnerships in Domestic Violence Rural and Remote Initiative and Family and Children's Services for services in six remote Aboriginal communities to address family safety.

South Australian Government comments

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Child Protection

South Australia's child protection reform is further consolidated with the validation of the Risk Assessment instrument. The validation study found that the instrument effectively classifies those families at very high, high and moderate risk of further harming their children. Some minor adjustments have been made, and the revised instrument is being used to support the decision to continue intervention with these children and their families.

SA Police, Family and Youth Services and the hospital-based Child Protection Services have developed an Interagency Code of Practice for the Interviewing of Children and their Caregivers. It provides a best practice model for the investigation of allegations of child abuse and neglect, with a particular focus on the interviewing of children when sexual abuse has been alleged. A joint training program will commence early in 2001.

Supported Placements

Supported placement provision in SA is designed to ensure a continuum of placement outcomes from primary support to families (family preservation and reunification services); supplementing the care provided by birth families (respite and short term care provision) to providing care outside of the family for children and young people who can no longer remain with their birth family (long-term placements).

A joint venture project involving the Department of Human Services, existing contracted agencies and other non-government providers is designing a model of care options for adolescents unsuited to family based placements. The project is exploring opportunities to purpose build facilities, options for country and Aboriginal care arrangements and linkages to education, training and pre-employment opportunities.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

A Human Services Plan for Strategic Response to Homelessness has been developed, building on the opportunity in SA for integrated cross-portfolio responses. Key strategies include intervention to prevent homelessness; increased availability and sustainability of exit-points from SAAP; and diversified, flexible responses (eg. outreach, brokerage, and multi-agency service delivery).

A new Planning Framework for Vulnerable adults in the inner city will guide the redevelopment of this service system. A similar framework for family homelessness will be developed in 2001. Research projects are currently exploring Aboriginal youth homelessness; and homelessness amongst women exiting prison. Findings will directly inform service development.

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Tasmanian Government comments

Child protection – care and protection services

The new *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act* was proclaimed on 1 July 2000. This Act replaces the *Tasmanian Child protection Act 1974*, the *Child Welfare Act 1960* and the *Domestic Assistance Act 1947*. This legislation maximizes opportunities for children to grow 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. This Act involves the wider family and community in making decision about children and introduces family group conferencing. The legislation also provides a sound platform from which to invest resources in preventative services which enhance the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at risk and their families.

Supported Placements – out of home care

The out-of-home care services for children and young people is in the process of being reviewed. The objective of this review is to refocus the out-of-home care system to ensure it is:

- viable, cost effective and sustainable;
- complimentary to other services such as family support services; and
- outcome focussed, delivering measurable benefits to children and young people in care, and their families.

The Commissioner for Children has been appointed. *Under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* the Commissioner is required to establish a range of advisory mechanism to ensure the views of children and children in care are represented.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Services

SAAP Services in Tasmania have commenced a major restructure. This restructure aims to improve the outcomes for homeless people through an increased emphasis on early intervention; increased diversity and flexibility of assistance available; the development of more effective pathways to stable accommodation through better linked services; and enhanced management and administration arrangements. This will be achieved in partnership with community-based service providers. The Tasmanian Government will coordinate the provision and planning of services for homeless people through the establishment of an Integrated Continuum of Support (ICS). The ICS model allows for the development of comprehensive responses to the diverse needs of homeless families and individuals at a local and regional level. This will involve the redirection of funds between service types and geographic locations and the establishment of regional networks. The ICS features an increased involvement of local and regional communities in the planning and the ongoing coordination of services.

Australian Capital Territory Government comments

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Child Protection and Supported Placements

The new ACT *Children and Young People Act* 1999 commenced on 10 May 2000. The objects of the Act reflect an increased emphasis on family support and prevention services to assist children, young people and their families.

The Act introduces new terminology, replacing the concept of ‘access’ with ‘contact’ and ‘custody/guardianship’ with parental responsibility. In child protection the term “appraisal” replaces ‘investigation’. The concept of ‘in need of care and protection’ has been extended to include children and young persons who have been exposed to domestic violence, causing significant harm to wellbeing or development.

In recognition of the importance of keeping children and young people within families and in stable and continuous relationships, Family Group Conferencing has been introduced and a dedicated Indigenous Unit has been formed. Furthermore an Indigenous Services Plan has been developed which will form the basis for consultation with the Indigenous Community in 2000-2001.

The new Act recognises for the first time in ACT law the importance of foster carers. Reform of substitute care has begun with the non government sector now responsible for the delivery of all foster care programs and a decision to implement the Looking After Children (LAC) Program in the ACT during 2000–2001. Education plans for children in care have already commenced.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

The ACT is further progressing the implementation of a service purchasing environment, as part of the public sector reform program.

During 1999–2000 a unique sector support service, the SAAP Adviser on Diverse Cultures, continued to operate. As the service provides a resource and support role to service providers, it does not have a client case load and is thus not directly reflected in the National Data Collection. Another service which is a direct client service is also not reflected in this collection, as it will be participating in a more specific national data collection for sexual assault counselling services.

The ACT also continues to be utilised as a regional centre for service provision, with 13 per cent of men in SAAP services citing recent arrival from interstate with no means of support, as their main reason for seeking assistance.

The ACT private rental market has the lowest vacancy rate in Australia. This is impacting on the SAAP sector, with clients thus forced to stay longer in SAAP accommodation services.

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Northern Territory Government comments

“ The Family and Children’s Services Program (FACS) of Territory Health Services is responsible for child protection and out of home care services, and the administration of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

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

Child Protection and Supported Placements

Mandatory reporting applies and all allegations accepted as notifications must be investigated by way of a home visit. All investigations whether substantiated or not are independently reviewed by Child Protection Teams which may recommend further action in relation to the management of the case.

Where children are placed, foster care is the primary placement option. Comparatively few children are in group home care which is provided by both FACS and a non government organisation.

This year is the first full year of reporting by way of the new client information system (CCIS), which went online in October 1998. CCIS will provide for the future development of FACS reporting capacity.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program service outlets are located in the five main population centres, and provide services to a range of clients, including a significant proportion of Aboriginal clients, many of whom are from rural and remote areas. Many outlets have very large geographic service areas.

The SAAP data for the NT reflects an emphasis in service delivery on crisis accommodation with limited availability of medium term and transitional accommodation or outreach support.

Initiatives planned under the new 5 year Agreement for the program will focus on better access for rural and remote clients and more flexible models of service delivery including outreach and early intervention.

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15.12 Definitions

Child protection services

Table 15.3 **Child protection terms**

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Care and protection orders	<p>Legal orders or administrative/voluntary arrangements involving the community services department, issued in respect of an individual child who is deemed to be in need of care and/or protection. Community services department involvement may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total responsibility for the welfare of the child (for example, guardianship); • responsibility to oversee the actions of the person or authority caring for the child; and • responsibility to provide or arrange accommodation or to report or give consideration to the child's welfare. <p>The order may have been from a court, children's panel, Minister of the Crown, authorised community services department officer or similar tribunal or officer.</p> <p>Care and protection orders are categorised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finalised guardianship and finalised custody orders sought through a court; • finalised supervision and other finalised court orders which give the department some responsibility for the child's welfare (excluding interim orders); • interim and temporary orders (including orders that are not finalised); and • administrative or voluntary arrangements with the community services department, for the purpose of child protection. <p>Children are counted only once, even if they are on more than one care and protection order.</p>
Child	A person aged 0–17 years.
Child at risk	A child for whom no abuse or neglect could be substantiated but there were reasonable grounds to suspect the possibility of prior or future abuse or neglect, and it is considered that continued departmental involvement is warranted.
Child concern reports	Reports to community services departments regarding concerns about a child, as distinct from notifications of child abuse and neglect. The distinction between the two differs across and within jurisdictions.

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Table 15.3 (Continued)

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Indigenous person	Person of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community with which they are associated.
Investigation	An investigation of child abuse and neglect involves identifying harm or risk of harm to the child, determining an outcome and assessing protective needs. An investigation includes the interviewing or sighting of the subject child where it is practicable to do so.
Investigation finalised	Where an investigation is completed and an outcome is recorded by 31 August.
Investigation not finalised	Where an investigation is commenced but an outcome is not recorded by 31 August.
Notification	Contact with an authorised department by persons or other bodies making allegations of child abuse or neglect or harm to the child.
Substantiation	Notification for which an investigation concludes that there is reasonable cause to believe that the child had been, was being, or was likely to be abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. It does not necessarily require sufficient evidence for a successful prosecution and did not imply that treatment or case management is, or is to be, provided.

Out-of-home care

Table 15.4 Out-of-home care terms

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Child	A person aged 0–17 years.
Exited out-of-home care	Where a child does not return to care within two months.
Family based care	Home based care (see placement types).
Family group homes	Residential child care single dwelling establishments which have as their main purpose the provision of substitute care to children. They are typically run like family homes, with a limited number of children who eat together as a family group and are cared for around-the-clock by resident substitute parents.
Foster care	Care of a child who is living apart from his or her natural or adoptive parents in a private household, by one or more adults who act as 'foster parents' and are paid a regular allowance for the child's support by a government authority or non-government organisation. The authorised department or non-government organisation provides continuing supervision or support while the child remains in the care of 'foster parents'.
Foster parent	Any person who is being paid a foster allowance (or such a person's spouse) by a government or non-government organisation for the care of a child (excluding children in family group homes).
Guardian	Any person who has the legal and ongoing care and responsibility for the protection of a child.

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Table 15.4 (Continued)

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Indigenous person	Person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community with which they are associated. If Indigenous status is unknown, a person is considered non-Indigenous.
Nonrespite care	Out-of-home care for children for child protection reasons.
Other relative	Grandparent, aunt, uncle or cousin, whether the relationship is half, full, step or through adoption and can be traced through or to a person whose parents were not married to each other at the time of his or her birth. This category includes members of Aboriginal communities who are accepted by that community as being related to the child.
Out-of-home care	Overnight care, including placement with relatives (other than parents) where government makes a financial payment. Includes children in legal and voluntary placements (that is, children on and not on a legal order) but excludes placements made in disability services, psychiatric services, juvenile justice facilities or overnight child care services.
Placement types	There are four main categories for placement type: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facility based care (placement in a residential building whose purpose is to provide placement for children and where there are paid staff, including placements in family group homes); • home based care (placement in the home of a carer who is reimbursed for expenses for the care of the child). There are three subcategories of home based care — foster care/community care, relative/kinship care and other; • independent living (including private board); and • other (including unknown).
Relatives/kin	Family members other than parents or a person well known to the child and/or family (based on a pre-existing relationship).
Respite care	Out-of-home care on a temporary basis for reasons other than child protection — for example, when parents are ill. Excludes emergency care provided to children who are removed from their homes for protective reasons.

Table 15.5 Out-of-home care descriptors

<i>Descriptor</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Children in out-of-home care during the year	The total number of children who are in at least one out-of-home care placement at any time during the year. A child who is in more than one placement is only counted once.
Length of time in continuous out-of-home care	The length of time for which a child is in out-of-home care on a continuous basis. A return home of less than seven days is not considered to break the continuity of placement.

Table 15.6 Out-of-home care effectiveness indicators

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Safety in out-of-home care	The proportion of children in out-of-home care who were the subject of a child protection substantiation and the person believed responsible was living in the household (or was a worker in a residential care facility).
Stability of placement	Numbers of placements for children who had exited out-of-home care and did not return within two months. Placements did not include respite or temporary placements lasting less than seven days. Placements are counted separately where there is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a change in the placement type — for example, from a home based to a facility based placement; or• within placement type, a change in venue, for example, and a change from one home based placement to a different home based placement. A particular placement is only counted once so that a return to a previous placement is another placement.

Supported accommodation and assistance

Table 15.7 Supported accommodation and assistance terms

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Accommodation	Crisis or short term accommodation, medium to long term accommodation, and other SAAP funded accommodation (which comprise accommodation at hostels, motels and hotels, accommodation in caravans, community placements and other SAAP funded arrangements).
Agency	The body or establishment with which the State or Territory government or its representative agrees to provide a SAAP service. The legal entity has to be incorporated. Funding from the State or Territory government could be allocated directly (that is, from the government department) or indirectly (that is, from the auspice of the agency). The SAAP service could be provided at the agency's location or through an outlet at a different location.
Casual client	A person who is in contact with a SAAP agency and received one-off assistance for a period of generally not more than one hour, and who does not establish an ongoing relationship with an agency.
Client	A person who receives supported accommodation or support
Crisis or short term supported accommodation	Supported accommodation for periods of generally not more than three months (short term) and for persons needing immediate short term accommodation (crisis).
Cross-target/multiple/general services	SAAP services targeted at more than one primary client group category — for example, SAAP services for single persons regardless of their gender.
Day support	Support only on a walk-in basis — for example, an agency which provides a drop-in centre, showering facilities and a meals service at the location of the SAAP agency.

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Table 15.7 (Continued)

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Homeless person	<p>A person who does not have access to safe, secure and adequate housing. A person is considered to not have access to such housing if the only housing to which the person has access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is damaged, or is likely to damage, the person's health; or • threatens the person's safety; or • marginalises the person through failing to provide access to adequate personal amenities or the economic and social supports that a home normally affords; or • places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing; or • is of unsecured tenure. <p>A person is also considered homeless if he or she is living in accommodation provided by a SAAP agency or some other form of emergency accommodation.</p>
Indigenous person	<p>Person who was of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island descent, who identified as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and who was accepted as such by the community with which they were associated.</p>
Medium to long term supported accommodation	<p>Supported accommodation for periods over three months. Medium term is around three to six months and long term is longer than six months.</p>
Multiple service delivery model	<p>SAAP agencies which use more than one service delivery model to provide SAAP services — for example, crisis or short term accommodation and support, as well as day support (that is, the provision of meals).</p>
Non-English speaking background services	<p>Services that are targeted at persons whose first language is not English.</p>
Non-recurrent funds	<p>SAAP funds received for non-recurrent purposes, such as funds for research, a special one-off project or replacement of capital items (for example, furniture, motor vehicles, etc.)</p>
Non-SAAP accommodation places	<p>Accommodation places in the form of permanent beds (owned or managed by the agency) that use funds other than SAAP funds.</p>
One-off assistance	<p>Assistance provided to a person who is not a client, such as the provision of a meal, a shower, transport, money, clothing, telephone advice, information or a referral.</p>
Ongoing support period	<p>A support period for which, at the end of the reporting period, no support end-date and no after-support information are provided.</p>
Other special characteristics	<p>Primary or secondary characteristics that are not included in those of a service's primary client or group or in other categories of the secondary client group — for example, a service specifically targeted at homeless persons with a disability.</p>
Outlet	<p>A premise owned/managed/leased by an agency at which SAAP services are delivered. Excludes accommodation purchased using SAAP funds (for example, at a motel).</p>

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Table 15.7 (Continued)

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Outreach support services	Services which exist to provide support and other related assistance specifically to homeless people. These people may be isolated and able to receive services and support from a range of options that enhance flexibility for the client (for example, advocacy, life skills, counselling). Generalist support and accommodation services may also provide outreach support in the form of follow-up to clients where they are housed. In this context, support is provided 'off site'.
Providers	Agencies that supply support and accommodation services
Real expenditure	Actual expenditure adjusted for changes in prices. Adjustments are made using the GDP(E) price deflator and expressed in terms of final year prices.
Recurrent funding	Funding provided by the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments to cover operating costs, salaries and rent.
Referral	When a SAAP agency contacts another agency and that agency accepts the person concerned for an appointment or interview. A referral is not provided if the person is not accepted for an appointment or interview.
SAAP service	Supported accommodation, support or one-off assistance, which is provided by a SAAP agency and intended to be used by homeless persons.
Service delivery model	The mode or manner in which a service is provided through an agency. The modes of service delivery could be described as crisis or short term accommodation and support; medium to long term accommodation and support; day support; outreach support; telephone information and referral or agency support. An agency may deliver its services through one or more of these means of delivery.
Service provider	Workers or volunteers employed and/or engaged by a SAAP agency, who either directly provide a SAAP service or in some way contribute to the provision of a SAAP service. Includes persons such as administrative staff of an agency, whether paid or not paid.
Single men services	Services provided for males who present to the SAAP agency without a partner or children.
Single women services	Services provided for females who presented to the SAAP agency without a partner or children.
Support	SAAP services, other than supported accommodation, which are provided to assist homeless people or persons at imminent risk of becoming a homeless person, to achieve the maximum possible degree of self reliance and independence. Support is ongoing and provided as part of a client relationship between the SAAP agency and the homeless person.
Support period	The period that commences when a SAAP client establishes or re-establishes (after the cessation of a previous support period) an ongoing relationship with a SAAP agency. The support period ends when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support ceases because the SAAP client terminates the relationship with the SAAP agency; or • support ceases because the SAAP agency terminates the relationship with the SAAP client; or • no support is provided to the SAAP client for a period of three months. A support period is only relevant to the provision of supported accommodation or support, not the provision of one-off assistance.

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Table 15.7 (Continued)

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Supported accommodation	Accommodation provided by a SAAP agency in conjunction with support. The accommodation component of supported accommodation is provided in the form of beds in particular locations or accommodation purchased using SAAP funds (for example, at a motel). Agencies that provided accommodation without providing support are considered to provide supported accommodation.
Telephone information and referral	Support delivered via telephone without face-to-face contact. Support provided may include information and/or referral.
Total funding	Funding for allocation to agencies (not available at the individual client group level) for training, equipment and other administration costs.
Unmet demand	A homeless person who seeks supported accommodation or support, but is not provided with that supported accommodation or support. The person may receive one-off assistance.
Women escaping domestic violence services	Services specifically designed to assist women and women accompanied by their children, who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless as a result of violence and/or abuse.
Youth/young people services	Services provided for persons who are independent, and above the school leaving age for the State or Territory concerned, and who present to the SAAP agency unaccompanied by a parent/guardian.

Table 15.8 Supported accommodation and assistance indicators

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Accommodation load (of agencies)	Calculated by dividing the number of accommodation days by the number of days the agency is operational during the reporting period, where the number of accommodation days equals the sum of accommodation days for all clients of an agency who are supported during the reporting period. The average accommodation load is the mean value of all agencies' accommodation loads. Support periods without valid accommodation dates are assigned the inter-quartile modal duration of accommodation for agencies of the same service delivery model in the same jurisdiction.
Caseload (of agencies)	Calculated by dividing the number of support days by the number of days the agency is operational during the reporting period, where the number of support days equals the sum of support days for all clients of the agency who are supported during the reporting period. The average caseload is the mean value of all agencies' caseloads. Support periods without valid support dates are assigned the inter-quartile modal duration of support for agencies of the same service delivery model in the same jurisdiction.

