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## 15 Protection and support services

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

The protection and support services chapter reports on:

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

### *Indigenous data in the protection and support chapter*

The protection and support services chapter in the *Report on Government Services 2005* (2005 Report) contains the following data items on Indigenous people:

- Indigenous children who were the subject of a substantiation, 2003-04.
- Indigenous children who were on care and protection orders, 30 June 2004.
- Indigenous children who were in out-of-home care, 30 June 2004.
- Proportion of children in out-of-home care placed with relatives/kin, by Indigenous status, 30 June.
- Proportion of children aged under 12 years in out-of-home care and in a home-based placement, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2004.
- Placement of Indigenous children in out-of-home care, 30 June 2004.
- Support periods, by existence of a support plan, by Indigenous status, 2003-04.
- Indigenous clients, by met and unmet support needs, 2003-04.

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- Accommodation type on exit from SAAP support, 2003-04.
  - Unemployed SAAP clients by labour force status after SAAP support and Indigenous status, 2003-04.
  - SAAP clients who exited from the service and who returned to SAAP agencies before the end of that year, 2003-04.
  - Indigenous people as a proportion of SAAP clients, and unmet requests for accommodation made by Indigenous SAAP clients as a proportion of total unmet requests for accommodation, 2003-04.
  - Proportion of clients who had no substantive change in income source after Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) support, by Indigenous status, 2003-04.

### *Supporting tables*

Supporting tables for data within the protection and support services chapter of the compendium are contained in the attachment to the compendium. These tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 15A.3 is table 3 in the protection and support services attachment to the compendium). As the data are directly sourced from the 2005 Report, the compendium also notes where the original table, figure or text in the 2005 Report can be found. For example, where the compendium refers to '2005 Report, p. 15.15' this is page 15 of chapter 15 of the 2005 Report, and '2005 Report, 15A.2' is attachment table 2 of attachment 15 of the 2005 Report.

## **Child protection system**

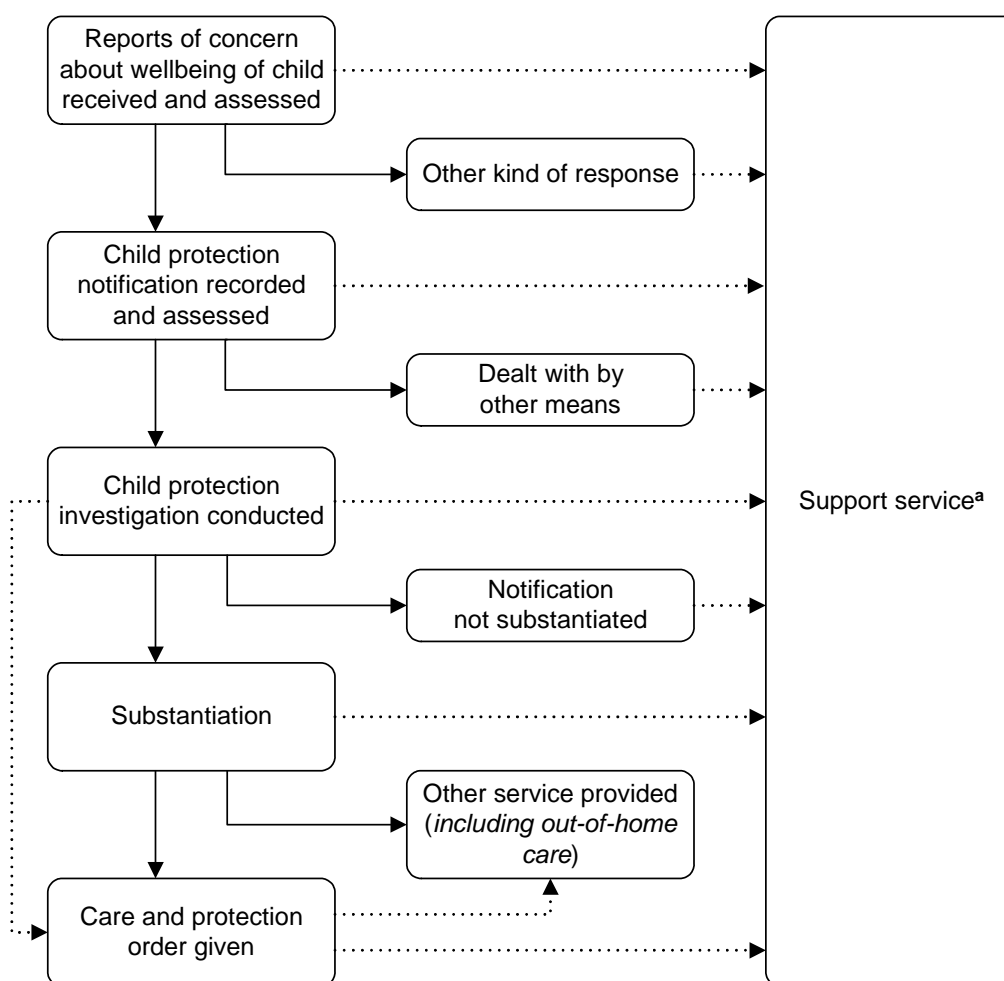
Child protection legislation, policies and practices vary among jurisdictions, but the broad processes in the child protection system are similar (figure 15.1).<sup>1</sup> State and Territory community services departments are advised of concerns about the wellbeing of children through reports to the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

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

neighbours (AIHW 2005). Jurisdictions count notifications at different points in the response to a report, ranging from the point of initial contact with the source of the report to the end of a screening and decision making process. This means the number of notifications is not strictly comparable across jurisdictions.

**Figure 15.1 Child protection system**



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

<sup>a</sup> Support services include family support or family preservation services provided by community service departments and referrals to other agencies.

Source: 2005 Report, p. 15.7, figure 15.1.

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

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the incidence of child abuse and neglect within the Indigenous communities (Gordon Report 2002, box 15.1).

### **Box 15.1 Western Australian Gordon Inquiry**

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

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

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

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

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

- the urgent need to strengthen responses to abuse and violence in Aboriginal communities
- the need for long term strategies to address the endemic nature of abuse and violence in many communities

(Continued on next page)

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**Box 15.1 (Continued)**

- the needs of current and future generations of Aboriginal children through long term environmental, social and economic improvements leading to sustainable communities.

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

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

*Source:* Department for Community Development (unpublished); Gordon Report (2002); 2005 Report, pp. 15.3-15.4.

## Size and scope

### *Notification*

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

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

Although notifications are defined differently across jurisdictions, around 144 942 children aged 0–16 years were the subject of child protection notifications in 2003-04. Nationally, the rate of notifications per 1000 children in the population aged 0–16 years was 32.0 in

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2003-04. Across jurisdictions, the rate was highest in Tasmania (47.0) and lowest in WA (4.9) (table 15A.4).

### *Indigenous children*

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

### *Substantiation*

Across Australia, at least 23 862 children were the subject of a substantiation in 2003-04 (excluding NSW, which could not provide substantiation data for 2003-04). The rate of children who were the subject of a substantiation per 1000 children in the population aged 0–16 years was 7.9. Across jurisdictions, this rate ranged from 14.0 per 1000 in Queensland to 2.0 per 1000 in WA (table 15A.4).

### *Indigenous children*

Nationally in 2003-04, at least 3086 Indigenous children and 20 776 non-Indigenous children were the subject of a substantiation (excluding NSW, which could not provide substantiation data for 2003-04). The rate of children who were the subject of a substantiation per 1000 children in the population aged 0–16 years was 21.8 for Indigenous children and 7.2 for non-Indigenous children (table 15A.4).

### *Care and protection orders*

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

Across Australia, at least 14 627 children were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2004 (excluding NSW, which could not provide care and protection order data for 30 June 2004). The rate of children on care and protection orders per 1000 children in the population aged 0–17 years was 4.6. Across jurisdictions, this rate ranged from 5.8 per 1000 in the NT to 3.4 per 1000 in WA (table 15A.4).

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### *Indigenous children*

Nationally, at least 2944 Indigenous children and 11 683 non-Indigenous children were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2004 (excluding NSW, which could not provide care and protection order data for 30 June 2004). The rate of children on care and protection orders per 1000 children in the population aged 0–17 years was 19.6 for Indigenous children and 3.8 for non-Indigenous children (table 15A.4).

### *Out-of-home care*

Out-of-home care is one of a range of services provided to families and children where there is a need to provide safe care for a child. The current emphasis in policy and practice is to maintain the child within the family if possible and to place a child in out-of-home care only if this will improve the outcome for the child. If it is necessary to remove the child from his or her home, then placement with the wider family or community is sought where possible, particularly in the case of Indigenous children (AIHW 2005). Continued emphasis is being placed on improving case planning and case management processes, to facilitate the safe return home of children in out-of-home care and to maximise case workers' contact time with children and families.

### *Indigenous children*

Across Australia, 21 795 children were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2004. The rate of children in out-of-home care per 1000 children in the population aged 0–17 years was 4.5. Across jurisdictions, this ranged from 5.7 per 1000 in NSW to 3.5 per 1000 in SA and WA (table 15A.5).

Nationally, 5059 Indigenous children and 16 736 non-Indigenous children were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2004. The rate of children in out-of-home care per 1000 children in the population aged 0–17 years was 23.7 for Indigenous children and 3.7 for non-Indigenous children (table 15A.5).

## **Outputs**

### *Out-of-home care — placement with extended family*

The type of placement is one of the two indicators for the quality of child placement. The other indicator is the 'stability of placement'. Placing children with their relatives or kin is generally preferred for children in out-of-home care (box 15.2). The data for this indicator is provided on a comparable basis.

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**Box 15.2 Placement with extended families**

'Placement with extended families' is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments' objective to provide services that meet the needs of the recipients on the basis of relative need and available resources. Placing children with their relatives or kin is generally the preferred out-of-home care placement option. This option is generally associated with better long term outcomes due to increased continuity, familiarity and stability for the child. Relatives are more likely to have or form long term emotional bonds with the child. Placement with familiar people can help to overcome the loss of attachment and belonging that can occur when children are placed out-of-home.

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

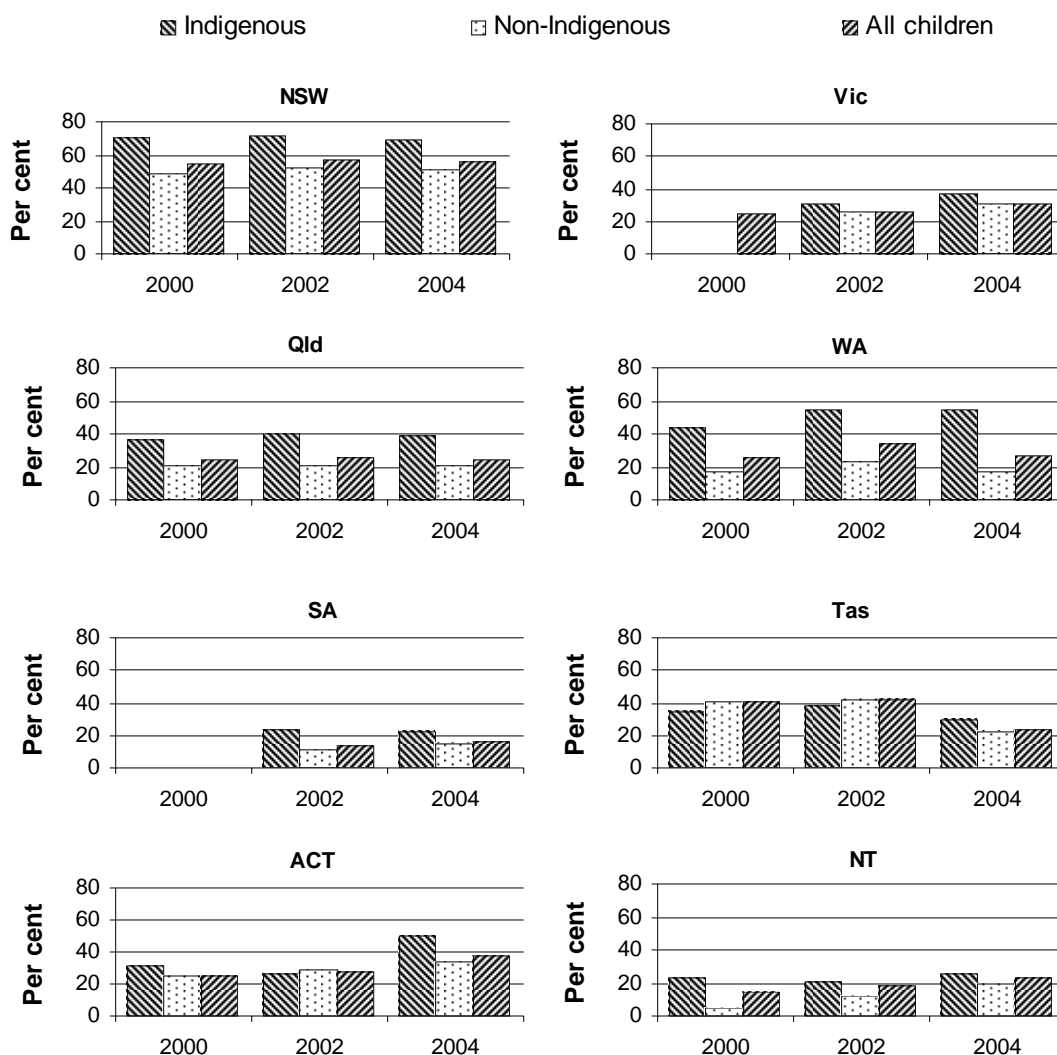
A reasonably high rate for this indicator is considered desirable, but this is one factor among many that must be considered in the placement decision.

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

The proportion of children placed with relatives or kin at 30 June 2004 ranged from 55.5 per cent in NSW to 16.1 per cent in SA. The proportion was greater for Indigenous children than for non-Indigenous children in all jurisdictions (figure 15.2).



Figure 15.2 Proportion of children in out-of-home care placed with relatives/kin, by Indigenous status, 30 June<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Victoria could not provide data by Indigenous status before 2001. SA could not provide data for 2000.

Sources: AIHW (unpublished) *Children in out-of-home care, Australia* data collection; table 15A.10; 2005 Report, p. 15.21, figure 15.7.

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

Placing children in home-based care is generally considered to be in their best interests, particularly for younger children (box 15.3). The data for this indicator is provided on a comparable basis.

### Box 15.3 Children aged under 12 years in home-based care

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

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

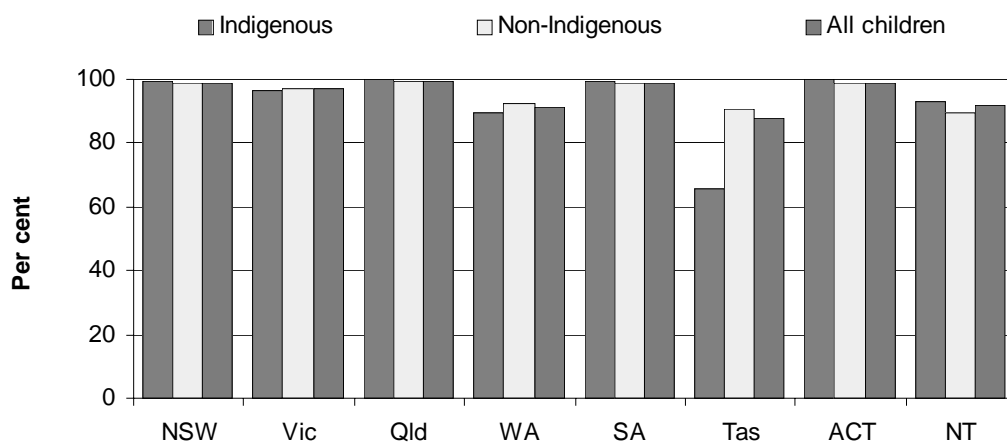
This indicator is defined as the proportion of children less than 12 years of age placed in home-based care divided by the total number of children under 12 years in out-of-home care.

A high rate for this indicator is considered desirable.

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

The proportion of children aged under 12 years in care who were placed in home-based care (excluding family group homes) at 30 June 2004 ranged from 99.6 per cent in Queensland to 87.9 per cent in Tasmania. In all jurisdictions except WA, Tasmania and the NT, the proportion of Indigenous children aged under 12 years who were placed in home-based care was broadly similar to that of non-Indigenous children. In WA and Tasmania, a greater proportion of non-Indigenous children were placed in home-based care. In the NT, a greater proportion of Indigenous children were placed in home-based care (figure 15.3).

Figure 15.3 Proportion of children aged under 12 years in out-of-home care and in a home based placement, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2004<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Excluding family group homes.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Children in out-of-home care, Australia* data collection; table 15A.12; 2005 Report, p. 15.22, figure 15.8.

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

Placing Indigenous children in circumstances consistent with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle is generally considered to be in their best interests (box 15.4). The data for this indicator is provided on a comparable basis.

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

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

**Box 15.4 Placement in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle**

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

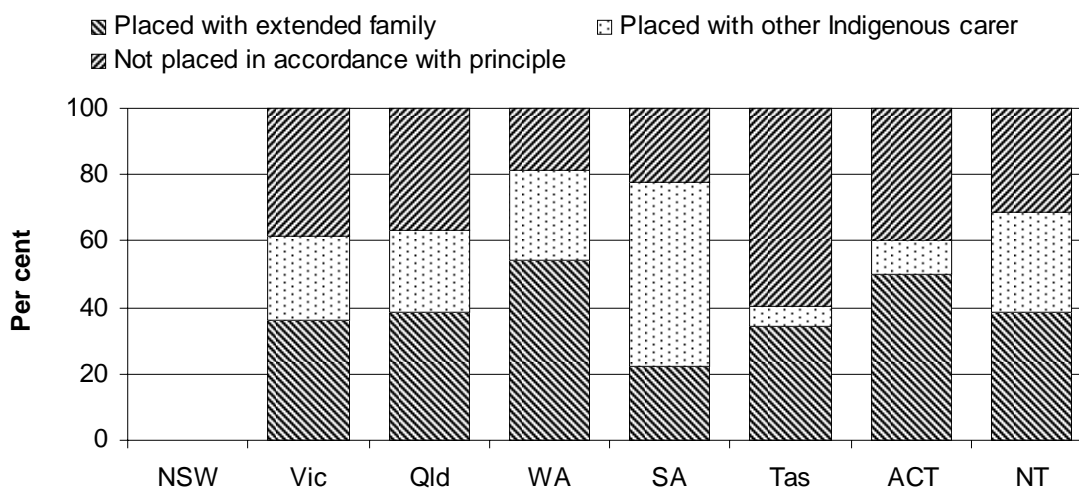
This indicator is defined as the number of Indigenous children placed with the child's extended family, Indigenous community or other Indigenous people, divided by the total number of Indigenous children in out-of-home care. Data are reported separately for children placed (i) with extended family, (ii)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

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

All jurisdictions have adopted this principle, either in legislation or policy. The proportion of Indigenous children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2004 who were placed in accordance with the principle ranged from 81.0 per cent in WA to 40.4 per cent in Tasmania (figure 15.4).

The proportion of Indigenous children in out-of-home care who were placed with extended family at 30 June 2004 ranged from 54.3 per cent in WA to 22.0 per cent in SA. Placement with other Indigenous care providers (the child's Indigenous community or other Indigenous people) also complies with the principle. The proportion placed with other Indigenous care providers ranged from 55.5 per cent in SA to 6.4 per cent in Tasmania (table 15A.11).

**Figure 15.4 Placement of Indigenous children in out-of-home care, 30 June 2004<sup>a, b, c, d</sup>**



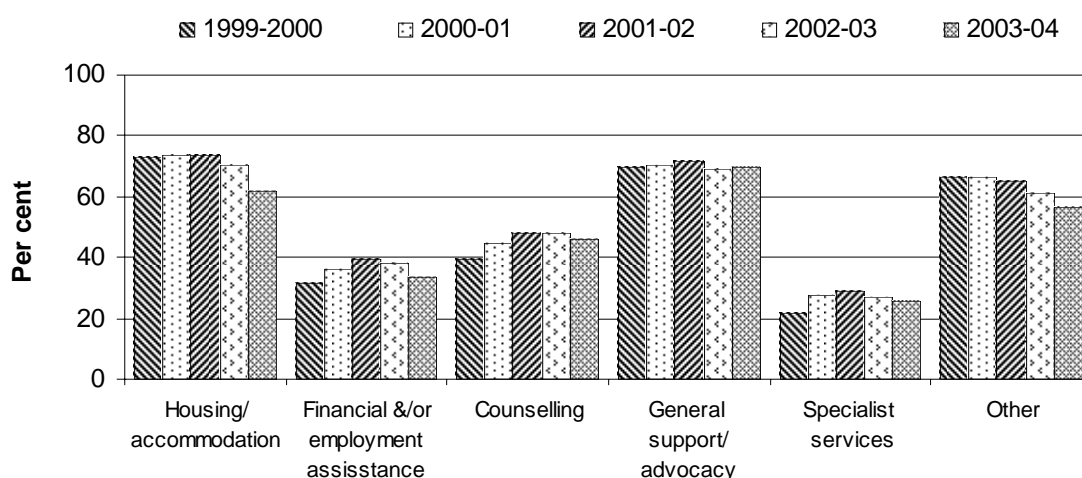
<sup>a</sup> Excludes Indigenous children living independently and those whose living arrangements were unknown. <sup>b</sup> 'Placed with another Indigenous carer' includes those living in Indigenous residential care. <sup>c</sup> Data for Tasmania and the ACT relate to a small number of Indigenous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

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Children in out-of-home care, Australia* data collection; table 15A.11; 2005 Report, p. 15.24, figure 15.9.

## Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP)

The primary focus of SAAP is to use a case management approach to support homeless people, and adults and children escaping domestic violence. Through this process, clients are offered a range of services, including supported accommodation; counselling; advocacy; links to housing, health, education and employment services; outreach support; brokerage; and meals services. Housing and accommodation services were provided in 62.0 per cent of support periods in 2003-04. General support and advocacy (provided in 69.9 per cent of support periods), counselling (46.2 per cent), financial and employment assistance (33.6 per cent) and specialist services (25.7 per cent) were also commonly provided (figure 15.5).

Figure 15.5 Services received during a SAAP support period<sup>a</sup>



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

Source: SAAP National Data Collection Agency (NDCA) (unpublished) Administrative Data and Client Collections; 2005 Report, table 15A.163., p. 15.39, figure 15.14.

The data collection for SAAP allows for the measurement of the number of clients and of the number and types of service provided to clients (box 15.5).

#### Box 15.5 Issues when analysing SAAP data

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

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

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## *Equity and access*

### *Proportion of people who receive a service*

Supported accommodation and assistance services target homeless people in general, but access by special needs groups (such as Indigenous people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds) is particularly important (box 15.6). The data for this indicator is not complete or not directly comparable.

#### **Box 15.6 Proportion of people who receive a service**

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

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

A higher proportion of valid requests receiving assistance is desirable.

Data for assessing access to SAAP services are available from the data collection on unmet demand and the data on clients. Assessing the experience of target groups using data from the unmet demand collection is, however, problematic. The client data and unmet demand data are not strictly comparable: the former count clients and each client's cultural status, whereas the latter are based on valid requests for services and record the cultural status of everyone in the group, making no distinction between adults and accompanying children. Also, the two week sample period over which data are collected may not be representative of the eventual success of clients accessing SAAP services over the full year (see notes to 2005 Report, tables 15A.181–15A.182).

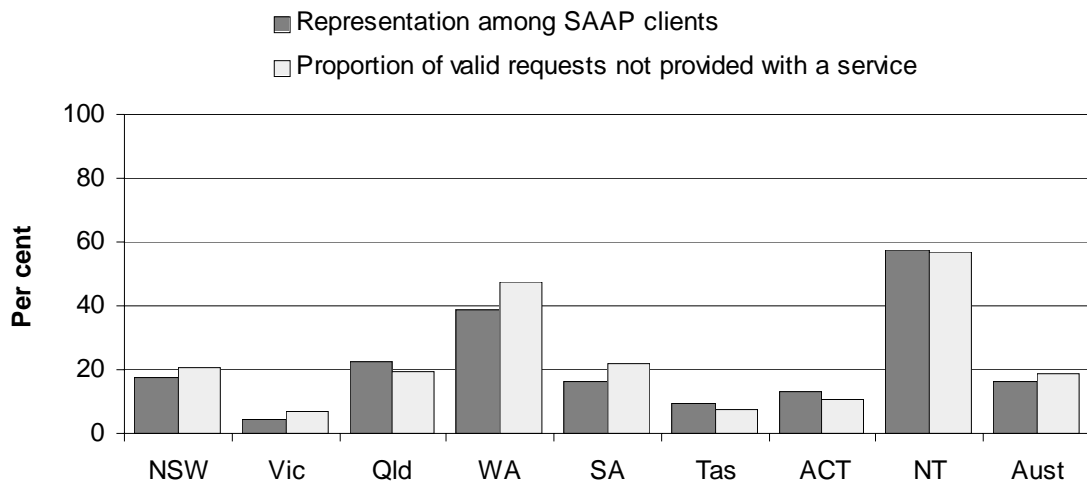
The available data suggest around 86.9 per cent of requests for SAAP services nationally were provided with the assistance requested in the data collection period in 2003-04 (one week in December 2003 and one week in May 2004). Across jurisdictions, the proportion of requests for services that were fulfilled ranged from 92.7 per cent in the NT to 80.1 per cent in Queensland (2005 Report, table 15A.181).

Requests for SAAP services were not met for a number of reasons in 2003-04, including a lack of available accommodation (the main reason that 65.6 per cent of potential clients

were not provided with services), no vacancies at the referral agency (20.4 per cent), and insufficient staff (1.8 per cent) (2005 Report, table 15A.181).

Nationally, 18.7 per cent of SAAP service requests by Indigenous people in the data collection period in 2003-04 did not result in the assistance requested — a proportion that was higher than the representation of Indigenous clients among SAAP clients. In NSW, Victoria, WA and SA, the proportion of valid requests by Indigenous people that did not result in the provision of a service was higher than the representation of Indigenous people among clients (figure 15.6).

**Figure 15.6 Indigenous people as a proportion of SAAP clients, and unmet requests for accommodation made by Indigenous SAAP clients as a proportion of total unmet requests for accommodation, 2003-04<sup>a, b</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> The number of people unable to be provided with a SAAP service was the 'unmet demand'. See notes to table 15A.117 for more detail. <sup>b</sup> Excludes people who refused offered assistance; those who made a similar request at a SAAP funded agency within the collection period (to limit double counting); and those whose request was not met because either the referral was inappropriate (wrong target group) or the agency did not provide the type of service requested.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Client and Unmet Demand Collections; table 15A.117; 2005 Report, p. 15.45, figure 15.18.

### *Development of agreed support plan*

The existence of an agreed support plan is an indicator of service quality (box 15.7). The data for this indicator is provided on a comparable basis.

**Box 15.7 Development of an agreed support plan**

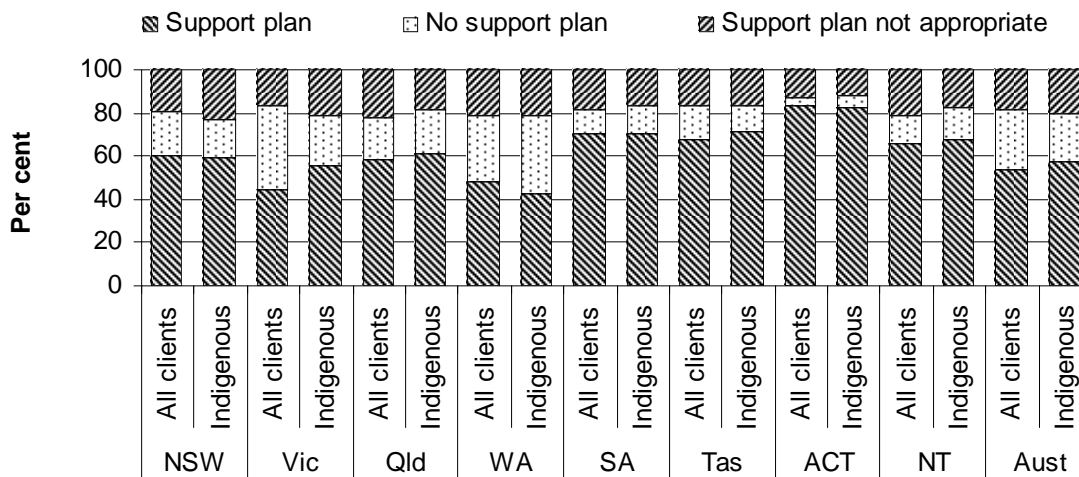
‘Development of an agreed support plan’ is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments’ objective to provide high quality services that are appropriately targeted to meet the needs of SAAP clients.

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

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

Nationally, there was an agreed support plan for 53.8 per cent of support periods for all clients in 2003-04 (compared with 57.7 per cent for Indigenous clients) (figure 15.7). Across jurisdictions, the proportion for all clients ranged from 83.0 per cent in the ACT to 44.6 per cent in Victoria in 2003-04; for Indigenous clients, the proportion ranged from 82.4 per cent in the ACT to 42.4 per cent in WA (figure 15.7).

**Figure 15.7 Support periods, by the existence of a support plan, 2003-04<sup>a, b</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Excludes high volume records because not all items are included on high volume forms. <sup>b</sup> See notes to 2005 Report, Table 15A.179 for more detail.

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.116 and 2005 Report, table 15A.179, p. 15.49, figure 15.20.



## Match of needs of clients

The proportion of clients receiving services that they need is an indicator of appropriateness (box 15.8). The data for this indicator is not complete or not directly comparable.

### Box 15.8 Match of needs of clients

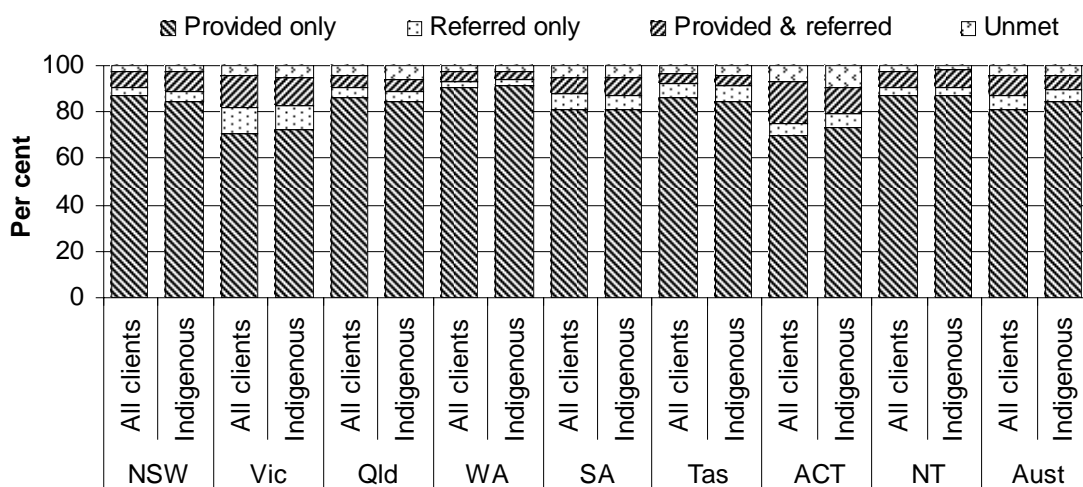
'Match of needs of clients' is included as an output (effectiveness) indicator of governments' objective to ensure that SAAP services which meet their client's individual needs. This is a measure of appropriateness. The range of needed services is broad (ranging from meals to laundry facilities to long-term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

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

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

Nationally, 96.1 per cent of Indigenous clients in 2003-04 either received needed SAAP services or were referred to another agency for these services — the same proportion as for all clients. Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 98.2 per cent in the NT to 90.5 per cent in the ACT (figure 15.8).

Figure 15.8 Indigenous clients, by met and unmet support needs, 2003-04



Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.118 and 2005 Report, Table 15A.185, p. 15.50, figure 15.22.

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## Outcomes

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

### *Achievement of independent living*

'Achievement of independent living' is an important indicator of clients' self-reliance and independence. Data are reported separately for clients' success in achieving independent housing and employment (box 15.9). The data for this indicator is provided on a comparable basis.

#### **Box 15.9 Achievement of independent living**

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

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

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

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

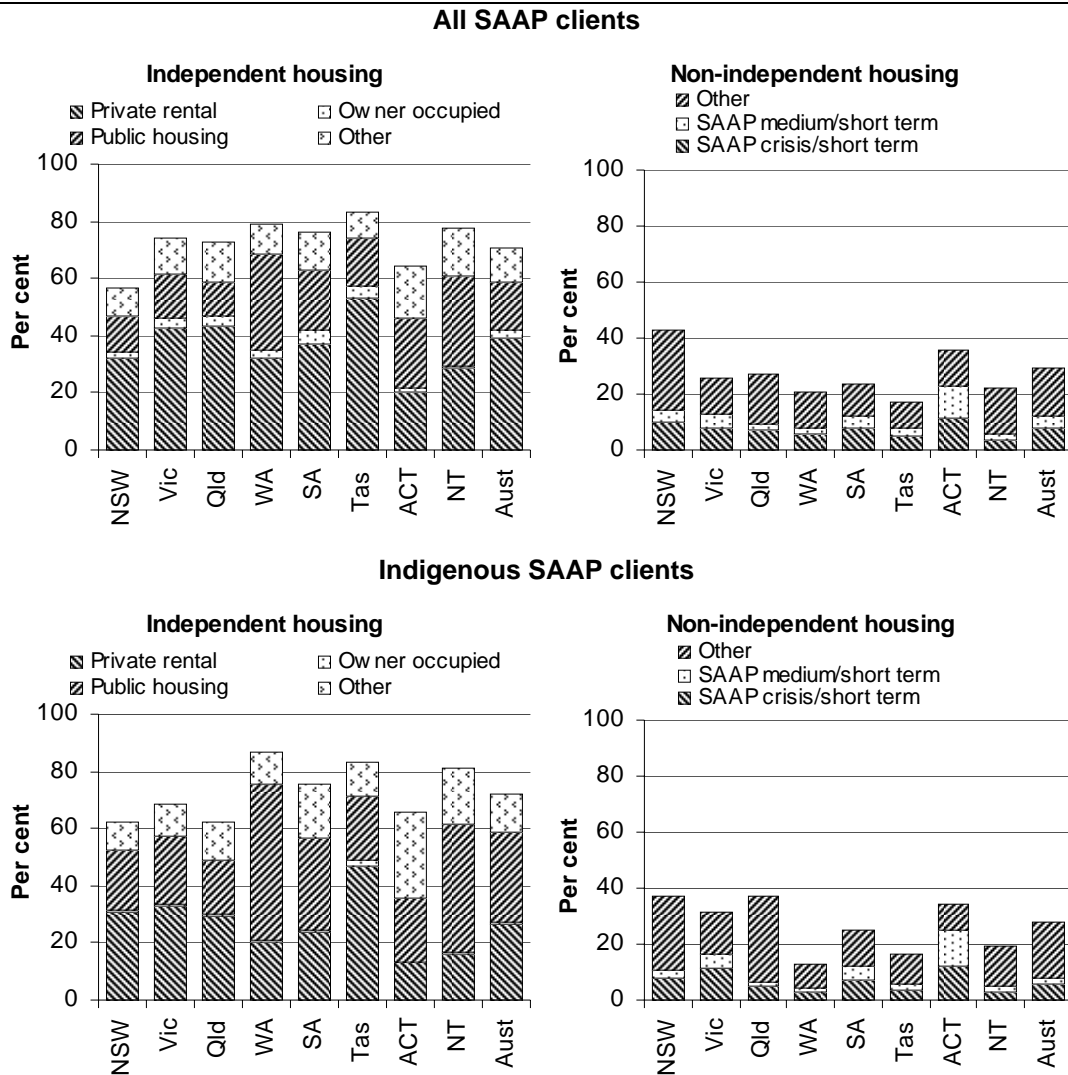
Data on the proportion of unemployed clients who achieved employment after support are available for only one third of completed support periods, so may not represent the total SAAP population.

### *Independent living — housing*

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

achieving independent housing at the end of a support period was 72.0 per cent in 2003-04 (figure 15.9).

Figure 15.9 Accommodation type on exit from SAAP support, 2003-04<sup>a, b</sup>



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

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.113 and 2005 Report, table 15A.171, p. 15.59, figure 15.28.

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

(20.5 per cent). The proportion moving or returning to public housing ranged from 33.3 per cent in WA to 11.8 per cent in Queensland (figure 15.9).

By type of non-independent housing on exiting from SAAP, 12.2 per cent of all clients in 2003-04 moved to or continued to live in SAAP accommodation, 7.9 per cent were in crisis or short term accommodation and 4.3 per cent were in medium term to short term accommodation. Among Indigenous clients, 8.2 per cent moved to or continued to live in SAAP accommodation, 5.9 per cent were in crisis or short term accommodation and 2.3 per cent were in medium term to short term accommodation. The proportion of all clients moving to or continuing to live in SAAP accommodation was highest in the ACT (22.6 per cent) and lowest in the NT (5.5 per cent) (figure 15.9).

### *Independent living — employment*

Nationally, 9.0 per cent of support periods in 2003-04 involved clients who were employed before support, while 28.2 per cent involved clients who were previously unemployed (2005 Report, table 15A.173). Of the clients who were unemployed when entering SAAP, about 8.2 per cent were employed at the end of the support period (2.8 per cent full time, 1.8 per cent part time and 3.7 per cent on a casual basis), 83.9 per cent remained unemployed and 7.9 per cent were not in the labour force (figure 15.10). Across jurisdictions, the proportion of clients who were previously unemployed and achieved employment at the end of the support period ranged from 10.5 per cent in SA to 6.3 per cent in Tasmania (2005 Report, Table 15A.174).

**Figure 15.10 Unemployed SAAP clients, by labour force status after SAAP support, and Indigenous status 2003-04<sup>a, b</sup>**



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

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Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.114 and 2005 Report, table 15A.174, p. 15.60, figure 15.29.

Among Indigenous clients who were unemployed when entering SAAP in 2003-04, about 3.9 per cent were employed at the end of the support period (1.4 per cent full time, 0.9 per cent part time and 1.6 per cent on a casual basis), 87.2 per cent remained unemployed and 8.9 per cent were not in the labour force (table 15A.114).

### *Not returning to SAAP service within the year or six months*

The proportion of clients exiting support to independent housing and not returning to SAAP is an important indicator of longer term self-reliance (box 15.10). The data for this indicator is provided on a comparable basis. Data on the proportion of clients who exited to independent housing and did not return within six months are available for only one third of completed support periods, so may not represent the total SAAP population.

#### **Box 15.10 Not returning to SAAP service within the year**

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

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

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

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

Nationally, 28.4 per cent of clients (28.5 per cent of Indigenous clients) returned to SAAP services during 2003-04 after having exited the program less than 12 months earlier (table 15A.115 and 2005 Report, table 15A.176). Across jurisdictions, the proportion ranged from 30.1 per cent in Victoria to 23.4 per cent in both Queensland and Tasmania (2005 Report, Figure 15.30). Among Indigenous clients, the proportion ranged from 32.1 per cent in WA to 23.4 per cent in NSW (table 15A.115).

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### *Exit with income*

The proportion of clients who experience a positive change in income source (from having no income support to obtaining some income, for example) is an indicator of independence and self-reliance (box 15.11). The data for this indicator is provided on a comparable basis. Data are available for only four fifths of completed support periods, so may not represent the total SAAP population.

#### **Box 15.11 Exit with income**

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

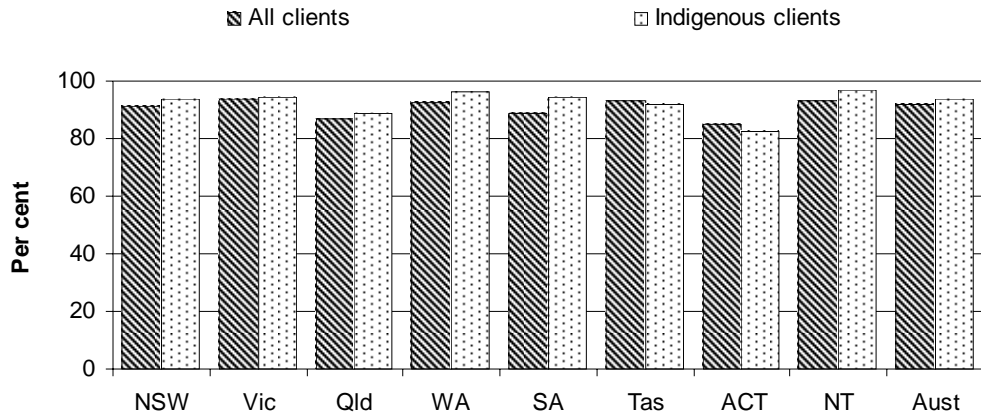
This indicator is defined as the proportion of clients who exited SAAP with an income source.

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

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

Nationally, 0.4 per cent of Indigenous clients exiting SAAP moved from having a wage to receiving a government payment, or from having some income to having no income (table 15A.112). The proportion who had no substantive change in income source ranged from about 97.1 per cent in the NT to 82.5 per cent in the ACT.

**Figure 15.11 Proportion of clients who had no substantive change in income source after SAAP support, by Indigenous status, 2003-04<sup>a</sup>**



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

Source: SAAP NDCA (unpublished), Administrative Data and Client Collections; table 15A.112 and 2005 Report, table 15A.169, p. 15.64, figure 15.31.

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## References

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