



**Australian Government**

**Department of Families, Community Services  
and Indigenous Affairs**

# **Indigenous Homelessness within Australia**

## **May 2006**

**Prepared by:**  
The Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness  
and the  
Australian Government Department of Families,  
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs  
and supported by the  
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Homelessness Consultations

**Improving the lives of Australians**

© Commonwealth of Australia 2006

This work is copyright. It may be reproduced in whole or part subject to the inclusion of an acknowledgment of the source and no commercial usage or sale. Reproduction for purposes other than those indicated above, require the prior written permission from the Commonwealth available from the Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Attorney-General's Department. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Attorney-General's Department, Robert Garran Offices, National Circuit, Canberra ACT 2600 or posted at <http://www.ag.gov.au/cca>

ISBN: 1921130474

# Minister's Message



I congratulate the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (CACH) on the very informative paper, *Indigenous Homelessness within Australia*. The paper, bringing together academic research, factual information and the views and opinions of Indigenous Australians touched by homelessness, provides a well rounded document for governments and community organisations to advance work on this important issue.

Since assuming responsibility for Indigenous Affairs, I have visited many Indigenous communities across rural and remote Australia. I am very aware of the issues being faced by these communities, including homelessness.

The most effective way to tackle homelessness is to prevent it. This will be done by strengthening families and building resilient communities. I am implementing a range of new programmes which will help Indigenous Australians to have the same choices and opportunities in life as other Australians.

The Federal Budget announced on 9 May 2006 provided for the biggest investment in Indigenous affairs on record, a total of \$3.3 billion in 2006–07. This includes new spending of \$500 million over five years, with 24 new initiatives across six portfolios.

As well as these new initiatives, I am determined to see that existing programmes operate as efficiently and effectively as possible. To this end, my department has undertaken a review of the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP). This review aims to provide:

- a robust and up-to-date evidence base on the current situation facing Indigenous Australians with regard to housing and housing related infrastructure
- advice on a strategic and operational framework for the future delivery of housing and related infrastructure to Indigenous Australians within a whole of government approach to Indigenous affairs.

The CHIP Review has now been completed and its findings will be used as a basis for future policy and programmes in Indigenous housing.

In developing its report, CACH has identified four theme areas which the Committee views as essential to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness. I am pleased to be able to report that all are receiving active attention from the Australian Government.

1. *That responses reflect the knowledge gained through evaluation and research in policy development and service delivery processes and practices:*

Response: All programmes delivered by the Australian Government are subject to evaluation to inform decisions about directions for future policy and programmes. My Department has an active research arm, providing funding to organisations such as the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute and the Social Policy Research Centre, for research on social issues.

Long term trends are tracked through major data sets such as the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey and the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children. My Department is in an excellent position to deliver evidence-based policy and programmes.

2. *Recruit and upskill the workforce to ensure more effective service provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homeless clients:*

Response: A number of the measures announced in the Budget are aimed at improving the skills of workers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. While not targeted specifically at homelessness, improving training of workers in areas such as mental health and community leadership will do much to prevent homelessness among the most vulnerable members of the community.

I also encourage Indigenous Australians to use and to work in mainstream services. As workers and clients, they can influence these services to be sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

3. *Deepen housing options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homeless clients through partnerships between support services and primary providers of housing:*

Response: Housing is a critical issue across rural and remote Australia. I am pursuing it by working cooperatively with relevant state and territory governments, by developing new and innovative responses and by ensuring we get the very best value for money from our existing programmes.

The current CHIP Review to which I referred earlier is providing us with a fresh impetus in this area. It is assisting us to develop the directions that will allow us to make progress through efficient use of our investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing.

4. *Build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness organisations to be stable and sustainable:*

Response: Stable and effective governance is critical to effective service delivery in remote Australia. The Budget included measures to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leadership and to improve the delivery capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations.

Many of the other Budget measures are being implemented through community agencies whose Indigenous staff are being supported to develop skills in agency management and service delivery.

I thank the members of the Committee for their work on this paper and all those who took the time to participate in the consultation process. I commend it to anyone working in the field of Indigenous affairs.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mal Brough". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MAL BROUGH

# Contents

<b>Minister's Message</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Use of language</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Disclaimer</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>Part 1. Context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population of Australia	1
1.2 Housing Status	1
1.3 Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Data	2
1.4 The Keys Young Report	3
1.5 Victorian Indigenous Homelessness Study	4
1.6 National Indigenous Homelessness Forum	5
<b>Part 2. Defining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 SAAP Definition of Homelessness	7
2.2 Cultural Definition of Homelessness	7
2.3 Definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness	8
2.4 Categories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'Homeless' People	10
<b>Part 3. Current Service Delivery Responses and Directions</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing	13
3.2 Mental Health	14
3.3 Disability	14
3.4 Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)	14
3.5 Reconnect	15
3.6 National Homelessness Strategy	16
3.7 Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program	17
3.8 Council of Australian Governments (COAG)	18
3.9 New Approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	18
<b>Part 4. Towards a Culturally Competent Homelessness Service Delivery Framework</b>	<b>19</b>
4.1 Towards a Definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness	19
4.1.1 Overcrowding	21
4.1.2 Transience	21
4.1.3 Public Space as Home	22
4.2 Identified Good Practice	22
4.2.1 Case Management	22
4.2.2 Action Research	24
4.2.3 Outreach and Brokerage	25
4.2.4 Remote Service Delivery Issues	26

4.3	Principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service Delivery	27
4.3.1	Self determination	29
4.4	Barriers to effective translation of the principles into practice	30
4.4.1	Racism as a barrier	30
4.4.2	Inadequate investment as a barrier	33
4.4.3	Bureaucracy as a barrier	35
4.5	Examples of Good Practice from the National Consultations	39
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>41</b>
	<b>Attachments</b>	<b>43</b>
	Attachment 1: Terms of Reference	43
	Attachment 2: Indigenous SAAP Clients (Data update)	45
	Attachment 3: Response Strategies to Identified Categories of Indigenous Homelessness	48
	Attachment 4: Building a Better Future Outcomes Report 2002/03	49
	Attachment 5: SAAP Indigenous Agencies by Primary Target Group and Service Delivery Model	50
	Attachment 6: Reconnect Good Practice Principles	51
	Attachment 7: NHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Demonstration Projects	53
	Attachment 8: Characteristics of Culturally Appropriate Programs for Indigenous People	57
	Attachment 9: A New Approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	58
	Attachment 10: Indigenous Coordination Centres	60
	Attachment 11: National Consultation Study Team, Consultation Process and Stakeholders Consulted	64

## Abbreviations

AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AMS	Aboriginal Medical Service
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CACH	Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CSHA	Commonwealth State Housing Agreement
FaCS	Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services
FaCSIA	Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
HMAC	Housing Ministers' Advisory Committee
HMC	Housing Ministers' Conference
HOME	Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NHS	National Homelessness Strategy
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

## Use of language

The phrase 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' is preferred terminology throughout this report as the word 'Indigenous' can be used to refer to any group of First People, and denies the specific identity of Aboriginal people as Australia's First People. The term 'Indigenous' is only used in combination with the words 'Australia' or 'Australians', in quotations or in references to other documents/publications that use the term.

## Acknowledgements

The Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness and the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs wish to acknowledge the contribution of the participants in the National Consultations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness, the Urbis Keys Young consultation team and the principle author of the paper, Mr Rex Direen, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

## Disclaimer

The opinions, findings and proposals contained in this report represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the attitudes or opinions of the Commonwealth, state or territory governments.





# Foreword

Indigenous Australians are significantly over-represented in the homeless population. The Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (CACH) is pleased to have supported the drawing together of the current thinking and subsequent national consultation and refinement of the key themes about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness. It is our hope that this paper will serve a number of functions. Firstly, that it will highlight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness as an issue requiring urgent and sustained attention; secondly, that it will lead to a deeper understanding of the cultural context in which all Australians must respond to Indigenous social issues; and, thirdly, that it will result in improved service delivery to those Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders who are vulnerable to and experiencing homelessness.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to this paper, *Indigenous Homelessness within Australia*.

Across the country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and consumers were prepared generously to sit down with us and help us to understand how to meet their needs. I would like to particularly thank those people who have experienced homelessness who were prepared to share their experiences in the interests of trying to improve service delivery for others.

I especially make mention of the two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of CACH, Pat Brahim and Gerry Moore. They have guided CACH throughout the process of the development of this paper. They argued strongly for a national consultation process to allow as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as possible to have their say on Indigenous homelessness. They also participated in many of the consultation sessions.

I acknowledge the consultants, Urbis Keys Young, for their input to this project and the principle author of the paper, Mr Rex Direen, from FaCSIA.

The impetus for this paper came from the former Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Kay Patterson who referred the issue of best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness services to CACH for advice. Most of the work on this project was completed while she was Minister in 2005, and the paper reflects administrative structures at the time consultations were undertaken. CACH looks forward to working with the new Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough MP, and the new Minister for Community Services, John Cobb MP to further assist in the development of government responses to homelessness in Australia.

**Mary Wooldridge**

Chair, CACH

February 2006



# Executive Summary

Indigenous Australians make up 2.4 per cent of the total population but comprise 18 per cent of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) clients.<sup>1</sup>

There is a commonly held view in parts of Australia that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness has cultural origins and may be a matter of choice rather than a personally devastating experience. This myth has no substance and its existence underlines the urgency of developing and disseminating a better understanding of the unique nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness. This paper is intended to contribute to that process and to help ensure culturally appropriate services are supported and developed to further alleviate and prevent Indigenous homelessness within Australia.

This paper builds upon a number of previous studies,<sup>2</sup> the findings of the National Indigenous Homelessness Forum held in Melbourne during March 2003 and, especially, the findings of a national consultation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness conducted by the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (CACH) as part of the National Homelessness Strategy (NHS) during 2005.

## Defining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness

Based upon extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and individuals during 1998, Keys Young identified five distinct types of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness:

- spiritual homelessness (separation from traditional land or from family);
- overcrowding (a hidden form of homelessness)
- relocation and transient homelessness
- escaping from an unsafe or unstable home (mainly women and young people)
- lack of access to any stable shelter i.e., “nowhere to go”.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) research report, *Categories of Indigenous ‘Homeless’ People and Good Practice Responses to their Needs*, complements the findings of the Keys Young Report with a particular focus on the most public face of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness, ‘public place dwellers’.

The development of a specific definition of homelessness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was endorsed throughout the national consultations for two main reasons:

- to dispel the myth mentioned above that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness is often a manifestation of cultural values
- for its utility. People reported that a definition that captures the essential elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness would be a practical tool in their work.

## Current Service Delivery Responses and Directions

The new approach of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the Australian Government to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service delivery places an emphasis on the development of whole of government partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to address the most pressing issues identified by specific communities.

---

1 SAAP, May 2004.

2 The Keys Young Report, *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Context and its possible implications for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program* (1998); the *Victorian Indigenous Homelessness Study* (2001); and *Categories of Indigenous ‘Homeless’ People and Good Practice Responses to Their Needs* (2003) by Paul Memmott et al.

The following service delivery mechanisms were strongly endorsed by the national consultation participants as culturally appropriate and effective:

### *Case Management*

Case management, case coordination or a support planning approach was identified in all locations as central to effective practice.

### *Action Research*

Action research aims to improve practice and service delivery through a process where action, client consultation and reflection inform further action. This methodology is particularly useful when taking a prevention and early intervention approach. Participatory action research assists service delivery organisations both to gain a better understanding of local community and family needs and to adapt their practices using this knowledge.

### *Outreach and Brokerage*

The flexibility provided through outreach and brokerage models was universally valued by the national consultation participants and was reported to be consistent with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's help seeking patterns and also culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people providing the support services.

## **Principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service Delivery**

Positive outcomes are more likely if general guiding principles such as the following are acknowledged and accepted:

- a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the first Australians, with unique cultures, languages and spiritual relationships to the land and seas.
- b) There is diversity and differences both within and between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- c) The history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people includes the effects of colonisation and dispossession on communities, families and individuals and these effects can be intergenerational and continue to impair the emotional and social wellbeing of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- d) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family relationships are strong and kinship obligations are an interwoven part of Indigenous people's cultural identity.
- e) Respect for Elders is an important aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and Traditional Elders play a significant role within Aboriginal communities.
- f) An understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local protocols is essential in the delivery and acceptance of a service program and culturally valid understandings must shape the provision of services.
- g) Valid service delivery accurately reflects the preferences, obligations and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and therefore self-determination is central to service provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- h) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seek and expect a holistic approach to service delivery.
- i) Effective service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will seek to meet their most pressing need for assistance in a timely and practical manner.

These principles suggest a number of appropriate service delivery strategies:

- a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations with a mix of male and female Indigenous and non Indigenous workers are generally best placed to deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals.

- b) Full consultation and the development of equal partnerships are important components of successful service delivery planning.
- c) Employment, appropriate ongoing support and training opportunity for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander workers are important components of capacity building in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- d) Local cultural awareness training is essential for non Indigenous workers providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or individuals.
- e) Training for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in understanding the complexity of another culture's health concerns and the difficulty of belonging and adjusting to two different cultural contexts and how this has led to particular mental health concerns for some.
- f) Flexible service delivery, addressing the immediate needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients should be the norm.
- g) A well resourced, whole of government, cross program approach to service delivery in partnership with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community organisations and employing local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people is the preferred model of service delivery to Indigenous Australians.

The national consultation found that these principles were welcomed as a relevant and valuable reflection of people's own experience of effective ways of working.

### **Barriers to effective translation of the principles into practice**

The national consultation primarily focused on the significant gaps experienced between the expression of good practice in various documents and guidelines and the daily reality of service consumers and the frustrations experienced by service providers and by people in policy and planning roles. The barriers most commonly identified were individual and systemic racism; inadequate resources and investment; and bureaucracy.

#### *1. Racism as a barrier*

Stakeholders reported 'service segregation', racism in the private rental market, and racist people in some services as key blocks to accessing homelessness services and support.

The term 'service segregation' was used to describe a practice in some mainstream agencies of automatically referring people only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and not facilitating access to mainstream services.

In all locations the private rental market was identified as a significant contributor to the homelessness problems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban areas. Stakeholders reported that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are consistently discriminated against, directly and indirectly.

The issue of fair allocation of properties, both in public and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations was raised throughout the consultation. The consultative approach taken in Tasmania, however, stood out positively from other States and Territories.

#### *2. Inadequate investment as a barrier*

The current level of investment response to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness was consistently raised as a key barrier to effective service delivery.

Funding arrangements were consistently reported to be inadequate to resource services to work in the ways described in the principles and strategies.

The needs of homeless families with young children were highlighted in the consultations, with particular reference to the large amount of resources required to respond to the needs of homeless families, who may be in unsuitable accommodation, living in public space, or have been housed and then require a great deal of follow-on support.

All States and Territories reported that demand for public housing continues to rise and was not being matched by the level of investment required to increase supply. The emphasis on rent assistance rather than funds directed at increasing the supply side was also identified as problematic, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have less access to the private rental market.

### *3. Bureaucracy as a barrier*

'The bureaucracy' was the most consistently identified barrier to translating agreed standards into practice across all consultation sites and stakeholder groups. Four specific aspects of 'bureaucracy' were highlighted as follows.

#### *Competitive tendering and related procurement processes*

The observation was made in all locations that the theme of cooperation that runs through the good practice elements and principles is in direct contradiction to the reality of the competitive tendering environment currently in place in all States and Territories. It was strongly felt that this environment reduces motivation to work collaboratively, setting services 'against each other', leading to further gaps in the service system or to a lack of interest in addressing gaps.

The annual funding cycles of many government agencies, including for long term programs, create a constant state of uncertainty that impact negatively on the recruitment and retention of skilled staff and exert pressure to have funding expended in unrealistic timeframes. Additionally, funding projects on a pilot basis has detrimental impacts when pilot projects that are evaluated as effective do not receive ongoing funding.

#### *Accountability and reporting: methods and burdens*

Accountability and compliance reporting was raised throughout the consultation as an ongoing cause of frustration because the time spent on these tasks equals time lost to service delivery, especially in small organisations, and because of a perceived lack of visible connection between reporting requirements and actual improvements to service delivery. In addition, standard reporting is often done by non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander officials who try to present the 'best story' which may set the agency up for failure since it can take many years for the goals of a service to be realised.

#### *Program design and guidelines*

There were many examples provided of the ways in which program design and guidelines become barriers to providing services that reflect the good practice principles. For example, guidelines which may not allow for the payment of Elders who support SAAP services through the provision of cultural advice and direct support to women and children in accommodation.

Government officers in all locations described how it was 'hard to work differently', citing accountability and the requirements around funding agreements with services as some of the barriers.

#### *Governance issues*

A number of people identified the governance of some Aboriginal owned organisations as a barrier to meeting the needs of local communities. The tension that was most commonly identified was that between kinship obligations and obligations to a broader community of people. Support in developing good governance was seen as central to growing effective organisations.

# Introduction

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over seven times more likely than non-Indigenous people to access the services of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), Australia's primary service delivery response to homelessness. The total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SAAP clients for 2002–03 was 16,465 people. These clients comprised 11 per cent of SAAP clients in urban areas; 22 per cent in rural areas; and 68 per cent in remote areas.

The former Minister for the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), Senator Kay Patterson, identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness as a priority issue for discussion and advice by the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (CACH). The CACH Terms of Reference and a current membership list are at Attachment 1.

Consequently, CACH conducted a national consultation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness as part of the National Homelessness Strategy (NHS) during 2005. The NHS Consultation Paper, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness: National Homelessness Strategy Consultation Paper*, provided a snapshot of data, research, practice principles and knowledge in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness, as well as current Australian Government policy directions and arrangements regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in a post-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) environment.

Urbis Keys Young was engaged to undertake the national consultation and to provide a report to CACH. The objective of the consultation was to obtain stakeholder feedback on the NHS Consultation Paper and to report on the key considerations in the development of a holistic approach to addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness. Details of the consultation team, consultation process and stakeholders consulted are provided at Attachment 11.

During the national consultation, participants expressed a consistently high level of support for the key elements of the NHS Consultation Paper and it was perceived as a useful summary of current data and responses to homelessness. The vast majority of the concerns of stakeholders related to barriers to the identified principles and strategies being applied in practice and the conditions required for these barriers to be resolved.

A definition of homelessness that is specific to the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was strongly endorsed. For people directly affected by homelessness it was welcomed as a reflection of the particular causes and impacts of homelessness and the differences in this experience from other groups. For service providers and people responsible for policy and planning, it was welcomed as a practical tool in promoting the issues and the impacts.

The service delivery principles were assessed as highly relevant to building and delivering effective services. There was no contention in relation to the principles themselves, but there was a direct call for effective mechanisms for translating them into reality.

The good practice strategies were found to be equally relevant and valuable, and resonated with stakeholders' own experience of effective ways of working. There was no opposition to the documented good practice approaches. The call was for the implementation of these ways of working across service systems.

The challenge that has been clearly identified in this study is that of driving into the mainstream the very principles and good practice elements that have already been evaluated as effective. The critical elements to achieve this translation were consistently identified as:

- adequate resourcing to deliver services in the ways that have been established as effective
- leadership at senior levels of government to focus attention and resources that generates momentum over a sustained period of time.

This paper merges the findings of the national consultation with the NHS Consultation Paper. The voices of the people consulted (presented in italics) are provided wherever possible. The Paper is divided into four parts. Eleven attachments provide additional information.

Part 1 sets out quantitative population, housing and homelessness data for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia. Qualitative information is also provided, drawn from two major research studies and the National Indigenous Homelessness Forum held in Melbourne in March 2003. This information provides an overview of the main issues raised by past consultation with, and discussions by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on their experience of homelessness.

Part 2 sets out various definitions of homelessness developed in Australia with emphasis on attempts to capture the nature of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience of homelessness.

Part 3 consists of a brief overview of major national service delivery and policy responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness.

Part 4 seeks to establish a framework for addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness in the future. It commences with the beginnings of a definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness along with the results of the national consultation on the appropriateness of, and need for, a specific definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness. Part 4 also identifies good practice service delivery models and indicates the difficulties facing remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service delivery organisations. A list of principles to guide sensitive and effective engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and individuals (on any issue) is presented along with recommended service delivery strategies. The findings of CACH's national consultation are used extensively to inform Part 4 of this Paper.





# Part 1. Context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness

## 1.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population of Australia

Based on the 2001 Census, there were 458,287 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Australia comprising 2.4 per cent of the total Australian population. The Census also indicates that 35 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households live in major cities, 22 per cent in inner regional areas, 24 per cent in outer regional areas, 8 per cent in remote areas and 11 per cent in very remote areas.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1.1 Number of Indigenous people and proportion of the population by State and Territory, 2001**

State/Territory	No. Indigenous people	Indigenous population as % of total population	State/Territory % Indigenous population
New South Wales	134,888	2.1	29
Victoria	27,846	0.6	6
Queensland	125,910	3.5	27
Western Australia	65,931	3.5	14
South Australia	25,544	1.7	6
Tasmania	17,384	3.8	4
Australian Capital Territory	3,909	1.2	1
Northern Territory	56,875	29.0	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>458,287</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Census 2001.

## 1.2 Housing Status

The housing status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians differs markedly from that of the non-Indigenous population. In 2001, 32 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households owned or were purchasing their home, compared to 71 per cent of non-Indigenous households. Although home-ownership rates are lower in all locations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there are also variations in

<sup>3</sup> Sections 1.1 and 1.2 and tables 1.1 and 1.2 are drawn from *Building a Better Future Outcomes Report 2002/03*, pp. 7–8, the first annual report on the Australian Housing Ministers' Ten Year Statement of New Directions for Indigenous Housing, *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander home-ownership rates between States and Territories. As outlined in Table 1.2, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander home-ownership rates were highest in Tasmania (57 per cent) and lowest in the Northern Territory (14 per cent).

A large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in Australia also depend on private rental accommodation (29 per cent). This compares to a national average for non-Indigenous households of 18 per cent. In all States and Territories except the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, there are higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in private rental than social or government provided housing. The highest rate of private rental is in Queensland (37 per cent) followed by New South Wales (31 per cent). The lowest level of private rental is in the Northern Territory (14 per cent).

In Census 2001, one third (34 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in Australia lived in social or government-funded housing. The reliance on social housing was highest in the Northern Territory (62 per cent) and lowest in Tasmania (17 per cent). Table 1.2 below outlines the significant variation between States and Territories in reliance on social housing and other tenures by Indigenous Australians.

**Table 1.2 Tenure status of Indigenous Australians by State and Territory, 30 June 2001**

State/Territory	Homeowners/		Social housing	
	Purchasers (%)	Private renters (%)	tenants (%)	Other (%)
New South Wales	35.9	30.9	29.2	4.0
Victoria	42.4	29.3	23.3	5.0
Queensland	28.4	36.8	30.0	4.8
Western Australia	26.5	23.1	44.8	5.6
South Australia	29.0	23.3	43.4	4.3
Tasmania	56.8	23.8	16.7	2.7
Australian Capital Territory	41.0	29.8	26.2	3.0
Northern Territory	13.7	14.1	61.5	10.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.0</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>5.0</b>

Source: Census 2001

Differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous housing status are also highlighted on a range of housing need indicators. Census 2001 data indicates, for example, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are four times more likely to be homeless and six times more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation than non-Indigenous Australians.

Overcrowding is a significant contributor to poor health, family violence and poor educational outcomes. Overcrowding is experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in all locations but is more severe in remote and very remote areas. In Census 2001, 11,417 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households were overcrowded.

In addition, there were 15,013 low-income Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households paying more than 25 per cent of their income in rent, in Census 2001.

### 1.3 Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Data

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise 18 per cent of SAAP clients (SAAP, May 2004). **This figure indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over-represented in SAAP by over seven times their percentage of the Australian Population (2.4 per cent).** The total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SAAP clients for 2002–03 is 16,465 persons. They comprise 11 per cent of SAAP clients in urban areas; 22 per cent in rural areas; and 68 per cent in remote areas.

Females make up 63 per cent of SAAP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in urban areas; 69 per cent in rural areas; and 88 per cent in remote areas. See Attachment 2 for selected tables and charts from the *SAAP Monograph on Indigenous SAAP Clients (2001)* updated by SAAP data for 2002–03.

As presented in Attachment 2, SAAP data indicates that the main reason Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females seek assistance is due to escaping domestic violence (40 per cent as compared to 35.6 per cent for the general female SAAP population). The next most frequently given reasons are: usual accommodation is not available (9 per cent as compared to 7 per cent); and time out from family/other situation (8 per cent compared to 4 per cent).

The main reason given by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males seeking assistance is that their usual accommodation is not available (15 per cent, equal to 15 per cent in the general male SAAP population). The next most frequently given reason is drug/alcohol/substance abuse (13 per cent compared to 9 per cent).

With respect to accommodation type, SAAP data indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients were three times more likely than non-Indigenous clients to have rented public or community housing immediately before receiving support from SAAP agencies (23 per cent compared to 7 per cent). Conversely, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, especially those living in rural and remote areas, were less likely than non-Indigenous clients to have rented independently in the private rental market (10 per cent compared to 17 per cent).

## 1.4 The Keys Young Report

The Keys Young Report, *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Context and its possible implications for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program* (1998), identified lack of access to secure and affordable housing as the major factor that impacts upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness, including:

- limited access to the private rental market due to poverty and high levels of unemployment, discrimination, and in some areas, a lack of private rental housing stock
- shortage of public housing and community housing stock, resulting in severe overcrowding and other forms of homelessness
- problems with the administration of public housing, including:
  - lack of culturally sensitive policies and practices concerning extended family issues, temporary absences due to cultural obligations or illness
  - policies and practices concerning rental arrears and other debts
  - lack of culturally appropriate housing stock
  - lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in housing policy development and service delivery
  - lack of support available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to manage their tenancies
- lack of affordable temporary accommodation near services (apart from the 128 hostels run by Aboriginal Hostels Ltd).

In addition, Keys Young identified that the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family networks to provide support for individuals is at risk due to financial pressures, substance abuse, family breakdown, severe overcrowding and the impact of cultural transition issues – particularly on youth. Other areas of concern are a loss of parenting skills and a lack of living and budgeting skills.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Keys Young, *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Context and its possible implications for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program*, 1998, p v.

## 1.5 Victorian Indigenous Homelessness Study

This study identified seven themes that ‘summarise the key dimensions of homelessness as a lived experience for Indigenous communities’.<sup>5</sup> They are:

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture
  - Inappropriate frameworks, definitions, policy development processes and implementation strategies derive from systemic failure to acknowledge the historical dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
  - Lack of consultation in policy development processes.
  - Failure to recognise extended family strengths (and weaknesses).
  - Preference for Indigenous workers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
2. Poverty, Income and Employment Issues
  - Extended family obligations have a major impact on income and housing.
  - Private rental practices such as payment of a bond and rent in advance often create a barrier to access.
  - Residing on or near traditional lands may result in unemployment and lack of quality, affordable accommodation.
3. Complex Service Systems
  - The multiple layers of housing provision and support services are confusing and complex.
  - Categorising need negates the holistic response preferred by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.
4. Inadequate Housing Provision
  - There is a severe shortage of housing in both the public and private sectors.
  - Long waiting times exacerbate conditions of overcrowding.
  - Inappropriate housing design is an ongoing issue.
  - Housing is frequently unavailable in areas where people wish to live.
5. Disempowering Policies and Practices
  - Evictions through rent arrears.
  - Lack of support services for tenants (services preferably to be delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations).
6. Racism and Discrimination
  - Racism and discrimination are considered major factors in the lack of access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to private rental accommodation.
7. Rights and Entitlements
  - For people who have been subjected to dispossession, dislocation and discrimination, the introduction of culturally appropriate policies and practices, developed and implemented by the Indigenous community, is arguably an important premise for policy.<sup>6</sup>
  - There is a need to get away from a welfare model to a rights based model.

---

5 Berry, M, MacKenzie, D, Briskman, L & Ngwenya, T, *Victorian Indigenous Homelessness Study*, prepared for the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria, Melbourne, 2001.

6 Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria (AHBV), p 42.

## 1.6 National Indigenous Homelessness Forum

The National Indigenous Homelessness Forum was held in Melbourne over two days in March 2003. The Housing Ministers' Advisory Committee's (HMAC) Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing hosted the Forum and it was primarily funded under the National Homelessness Strategy. The theme of the conference was *Nugalngul biik Nugalngul willum (Our own land – Our Own Home)*. The former Minister for Family and Community Services opened the Forum by video and Dr Mick Dodson delivered the keynote address. Most of the Forum speakers were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people involved in various community projects and a large proportion of the approximately 250 participants were Indigenous Australians.

The following recommendations resulted from the Forum presentations and discussions:

1. States and Territories develop mechanisms to track Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific funds allocated to programs, and to develop accountability and reporting mechanisms that provide accountability for their use in addressing priority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social needs. The Western Australian Department of Community Development has a model for this work that should be considered by other jurisdictions.
2. That all tiers of government accept that living in public spaces constitutes a legitimate lifestyle choice for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that the planning and development of programs and policies should reflect this view.
3. That all tiers of government review, with a goal to repealing, discriminatory bi-laws and other statutory impediments to the free access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to public spaces.
4. That all tiers of government be held accountable for any discriminatory legislation that unreasonably prohibits access.
5. That States and Territories, with the assistance of the Commonwealth through SAAP, develop outreach models of intervention to homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, using brokerage and other methods that promote accessible and relevant services to support those living in public spaces.
6. That further work on defining culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons who are homeless be undertaken to inform the development of more 'culturally appropriate' service models, including a greater range of transitional models for families experiencing dislocation for cultural and other reasons.
7. That an identified portion of SAAP funds be allocated to the development of innovative/creative/culturally appropriate models of service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and families, including where required, more flexible program management policies that take account of cultural obligations and support the maintenance of extended and nuclear family ties.
8. That State and Territory housing providers, ATSIC and the Commonwealth reduce inconsistencies in policy requirements to facilitate better whole of government responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing needs.
9. That additional SAAP funds be provided to promote innovative models of service delivery and original thinking on service delivery methods in order to promote their adoption by other States and Territories.
10. That SAAP funds be targeted to innovative models for creating safe spaces for time out in crisis situations in rural and remote communities, to provide flexible alternatives for women and children leaving their family residence. This includes attention to the needs of both men and women with an overarching goal to promote longer-term behavioural change and maintenance of family relationships.





# Part 2. Defining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness

## 2.1 SAAP Definition of Homelessness

The official Australian definition of homelessness in the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994 (Cth)* states ‘... a person is homeless if, and only if, he or she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing’.<sup>7</sup>

The legislation outlines factors that affect access to safe and secure housing and contribute to the risk of homelessness.<sup>8</sup> These include situations where the only housing to which a person has access:

- damages, or is likely to damage, the person’s health
  - threatens the person’s safety
  - 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.

This legislated definition of homelessness identifies the client target group for these jointly funded services. However, it is not a suitable definition for use in enumerating homelessness because it does not clearly distinguish between persons who are homeless and persons at risk of homelessness. To enumerate the homeless population of Australia a cultural definition stated in terms of objective circumstances is required.

## 2.2 Cultural Definition of Homelessness

In October 2000, the SAAP National Coordination and Development Committee (CAD) sponsored the *Technical Forum on the Estimation of Homelessness in Australia* based upon two research projects estimating the extent of homelessness in Australia: *Estimating the Number of Homeless People in Australia, 1998*

---

7 s. 4(1).

8 s. 4(2).

(a joint CAD/CACH/Victorian government project); and *Counting the Homeless, Implications for Policy Development*, 1999 (a CACH sponsored project). The Forum participants were invited from non-government organisations (NGOs), service providers with specific expertise, government officials, statistical/data experts, academics, consultants and researchers.

The Forum Report recommended a national definition of homelessness based on the work of Chamberlain and McKenzie<sup>9</sup> as follows:

- Primary homelessness: People without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, in parks, squatting in derelict dwellings or using cars or railway carriages and makeshift dwellings.
- Secondary homelessness: People who move frequently from one form of transitional shelter to another. It covers people using emergency accommodation (hostels for the homeless or night shelters); young people staying in youth refuges; women and children escaping domestic violence (staying in women's refuges); and people residing temporarily with other families, acquaintances and friends (because they have no accommodation of their own).
- Tertiary homelessness: People whose living arrangements do not provide them with security of tenure as provided by a lease, or who are living in accommodation that is unsafe or harmful to their health. Such accommodation might include some boarding houses, caravan parks, rooming houses or special accommodation houses.

At its March 2001 meeting CAD endorsed the Forum Report and agreed to adopt the recommended definition but to use language that better reflected the different levels of homelessness, by including the following terminology:

- Sleeping rough (i.e., those without shelter): primary homelessness.
- Stop gap accommodation (i.e., those in crisis but temporarily sheltered): secondary homelessness.
- Marginal accommodation (i.e., insecure accommodation): tertiary homelessness.

It was acknowledged that in applying the definition there would need to be a cultural audit undertaken to ensure that it is inclusive and describes homelessness adequately in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other culturally diverse communities, where homelessness may be expressed as people living in grossly overcrowded situations and/or people living in improvised dwellings.

## 2.3 Definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness

To date, a cultural audit of the CAD endorsed version of the Chamberlain and McKenzie definition of homelessness has not been conducted. Lacking this, there are two useful national reports attempting to define Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness: the Keys Young report, *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context and its possible implications for Supported Accommodation Assistance Program*<sup>10</sup> and the more recent Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) research report, *Categories of Indigenous 'Homeless' People and Good Practice Responses to Their Needs* (November 2003).<sup>11</sup>

---

9 In *Counting the Homeless*, an Australian Census Analytic Program (ACAP) paper prepared by Chamberlain and McKenzie in 2001, the authors contend that the concepts of homelessness and inadequate housing are culturally determined and only make sense in a particular community at a particular time. They argue that the minimum community standard in Australia at present is a small rental flat consisting of a bedroom, living room, kitchen and bathroom with a degree of security of tenure. This standard led to the development of a three-tier (primary, secondary and tertiary) definition of homelessness for those three groups that fall below the minimum standard. This definition is used by the ABS to enumerate the homeless population of Australia.

10 The study was commissioned by CAD in 1997 and published in early 1999.

11 Memmott, P, et al.



Based upon extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and individuals, Keys Young identified five distinct types of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness:<sup>12</sup>

- spiritual homelessness (separation from traditional land or from family)
- overcrowding (a hidden form of homelessness)
- relocation and transient homelessness (which results in temporary, intermittent and often cyclical patterns of homelessness due to transient and mobile lifestyles, but also to the necessity of a larger proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population – relative to the non-Indigenous population – having to travel to obtain services)
- escaping from an unsafe or unstable home (mainly women and young people)
- lack of access to any stable shelter i.e., ‘nowhere to go’.

The Report emphasises that homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context cannot be understood without reference to the legacy of colonisation. This history of physical and cultural displacement is an antecedent to the conditions of disadvantage that have fractured communities and families and placed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at risk of homelessness.<sup>13</sup> The following explication of major values and beliefs of Indigenous Australians also provides some context for understanding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience of homelessness.

*The particular affiliation of Indigenous people to their land and ‘country’ is imbued with a religious, spiritual, physical and cultural significance that is unique to Indigenous Australians. Similarly, the ties to the family are particularly marked in Indigenous communities. Kinship networks comprise a complex web of mutual rights, obligations and responsibilities and constitute a central organisational plank of traditional Indigenous society ... this sense of kinship and mutual support is still very important today.*

*Indigenous attitudes to possessions and property are also important in understanding homelessness. There is still a strong cultural element about sharing possessions and property in Indigenous families. Not only is the sense of individual ‘ownership’ far less developed than in non-Indigenous society, but also the value placed upon physical dwellings is significantly less.<sup>14</sup>*

The question of the applicability of the Chamberlain and McKenzie cultural definition of homelessness to the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness was one of many issues canvassed on behalf of the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria during an Indigenous Homelessness Workshop and (limited) consultations with Aboriginal communities across Victoria in early 2001.<sup>15</sup> The researchers found that while different groups may experience homelessness in different ways and the range of issues and needs may vary, the meaning of homelessness did not emerge as a major controversy.

In short, it appears that Chamberlain and McKenzie’s three-tier definition of homelessness overlaps sufficiently well with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience of homelessness to remain the most useful national definition of homelessness within Australia. However, this sufficiency for enumeration purposes should not disguise the cultural reality that while there may appear to be similarities between certain forms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous homelessness, **the causes and contexts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s experience of homelessness are fundamentally different.**

12 See Keys Young, *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context and its possible implications for Supported Accommodation Assistance Program*, 1998, Sydney, NSW, pp 26–46 for discussion of these types of homelessness.

13 These impacts include poverty, low self-esteem, a poor sense of emotional and social wellbeing, welfare dependency, poor living skills, high levels of domestic violence and substance abuse, poor physical health and low levels of educational attainment. On the basis of comparison on a wide range of indicators, no other group in Australia experiences the same level of social, economic, health and educational disadvantage as Indigenous Australians [Keys Young, p iii].

14 Keys Young, *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context and its possible implications for Supported Accommodation Assistance Program*, 1998, Sydney, NSW, p iii.

15 Berry et al, *Indigenous Homelessness: A Discussion Paper on Indigenous Homelessness in Victoria*, prepared for the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria, May 2001.

According to the Keys Young Report:

*In comparison to non-Indigenous homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is considered to be:*

- *a bigger problem because a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are affected by it*
- *a broader issue, in that it is experienced not only by individuals, but also commonly by families, and even communities*
- *different in nature from some non-Indigenous concepts, as it encompasses physical, spiritual and cultural aspects and dimensions*
- *experientially different, due to the underlying causes and factors, compounded by Indigenous people's poor health, financial and social status*
- *often much less visible or obvious than non-Indigenous homelessness due to its 'hidden' nature<sup>16</sup> and also to the fact that being 'homeless' can cause major stigma and shame in Indigenous communities.<sup>17</sup>*

## 2.4 Categories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'Homeless' People

The AHURI research report, *Categories of Indigenous 'Homeless' People and Good Practice Responses to Their Needs*, builds upon the findings of the Keys Young Report and is, in part, a response to the Chamberlain and McKenzie definition of homelessness with a particular focus on the most public face of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness – 'public place dwellers'.

The Report identifies three broad categories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness: public place dwellers; those at risk of homelessness; and spiritually homeless people. The first two categories are broken down further into four sub-categories each and it is argued that each category (and sub-category) ...*generates a particular set of needs, such as accommodation, health, transport, security of identity, and alcohol counselling, which can in turn inform the design of service responses to Indigenous homelessness and public place dwelling.*<sup>18</sup>

Table 2 from the AHURI Report, setting out an analysis of different response strategies to the identified categories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness, is provided at Attachment 3.

The AHURI Report includes the following observations about the nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness:

- Given the significance of the concept of 'country', homelessness is not necessarily a lack of accommodation and public spaces may be considered home. **It follows that homelessness is loss of control of one's use of the public spaces considered home.**
- Crowded housing is a sub-category of the 'at risk' category. **The Report notes that 'crowding' should be defined as involving considerable stress rather than only being considered as a density issue.**

---

<sup>16</sup> An example of this is the relatively high incidence of overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.

<sup>17</sup> Keys Young, *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context and its possible implications for Supported Accommodation Assistance Program*, 1998, Sydney, NSW, p iv.

<sup>18</sup> Memmott et al, p i.

- Spiritual homelessness is considered to be either:
  - separation from traditional land
  - separation from family and kinship networks
  - or
  - a crisis of personal identity wherein one’s understanding or knowledge of how one relates to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused.<sup>19</sup>

Research gaps identified by the Report include:

- the construct of spiritually homeless people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crowding models
- residential mobility and household structure
- special needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentally disturbed public place dwellers
- special needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homeless youth (including the emerging problem of street gangs).

---

<sup>19</sup> Memmott et al, p iii.





# Part 3. Current Service Delivery Responses and Directions

## 3.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing

The Housing Ministers' Conference (HMC) of May 2001 agreed to focus efforts on helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing organisations improve their housing management and maintenance capacity and released the report *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*. The seven outcome areas of the Report are:

1. *Better housing*: housing meets agreed standards, is appropriate to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and contributes to their health and wellbeing.
2. *Better housing services*: services are well managed and sustainable.
3. *More housing*: growth in the number of houses to address both the backlog of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing need and emerging needs of a growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.
4. *Improved partnerships*: ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are fully involved in planning, decision-making and delivery of services.
5. *Greater effectiveness and efficiency*: ensuring that assistance is properly directed to meeting objectives, and that resources are being used to best advantage.
6. *Improved performance linked to accountability*: program performance reporting based on national data collection systems and good information management.
7. *Coordination of services*: a whole of government approach that ensures greater coordination of housing and housing-related services linked to improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

An overview of significant themes and findings of the first annual '*Building a Better Future*' Outcomes Report 2002/03 is provided at Attachment 4.

After housing stock issues, the most important services identified by the Keys Young Report to help address the problems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness are the availability of, and access to, mental health services and disability services.

## 3.2 Mental Health

Apart from mainstream mental health service delivery, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health issues are addressed by social and emotional wellbeing services within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. Table 3.1 shows *Frequency of access to a mental-health worker* for 252 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

**Table 3.1 Frequency of access to a mental health worker**

Frequency	Number of communities
Daily	3
Weekly or fortnightly	15
Monthly	18
Three monthly	20
Less than 3 monthly	53
No access in community	143

n=252 Data courtesy of ATSIC

## 3.3 Disability

The Australian Government provides financial assistance to people with disability and their carers and those in crisis via the Disability Support Pension, Carer Payment and Crisis Payments. The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing supports people with disability through the Home and Community Care Program (HACC). The main forms of assistance available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability who are seeking to return to work are through the Australian Government Department of Employment and Work Place Relations' Personal Support Programme (PSP) and Disability Employment Services.

The PSP provides support to Centrelink customers who face multiple or major barriers to getting a job, whereas Disability Employment Services consist of:

- Open Employment Services: funded to assist people with disabilities to find and maintain work with employers in the open labour market.
- Supported Employment Services: also known as Business Services and formerly known as sheltered workshops.

Both service types employ the person with disability and provide support to that person.

The HACC Program is a joint Australian, State and Territory Government initiative. The Program is a key provider of community care services to frail aged people, younger people with disability, and their carers in their own homes. However, responsibility for national policy development concerning disability issues lies with the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA). This separation of policy development and service delivery may result in service delivery overlaps and gaps. Another growing concern is the poorly understood disability, Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). A study of the incidence of this difficult to identify disability within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homeless population would yield useful information to assist service provision and policy development.

## 3.4 Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

There are 157 SAAP Agencies with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific target group out of a total of 1,282 SAAP funded agencies (as at December 2003). Attachment 5 consists of two tables providing a breakdown of SAAP Administrative Data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies by primary target group and service delivery model. It is important to keep in mind that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also access mainstream SAAP services.

In terms of improving the accessibility of SAAP services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, the Keys Young Report identified the need for an increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander – managed services, an increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in SAAP Services generally and an increased level of liaison and networking between SAAP services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and services.

A number of strategies were identified to improve SAAP service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients including:

- increasing the level of management support and training opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander – managed SAAP services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SAAP workers generally
- increasing service linkages between SAAP agencies and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services
- expanding and further developing cross cultural training for non-Indigenous SAAP workers
- developing more appropriate service delivery models, including more outreach activity and a more holistic, preventative approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness.

A case management approach to SAAP service delivery was introduced nationally in 1997. A *Case Management Resource Kit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SAAP Services* was distributed in 1999 to all SAAP Services where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up more than 20 per cent of client numbers.

## 3.5 Reconnect

Established in 1999, the Australian Government’s Reconnect Program seeks to reconnect young people (aged 12–18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, with their families, education, employment and community. There are 98 Reconnect services located in disadvantaged communities throughout Australia including 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services. In addition, many of the mainstream services are located in areas where there are significant numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Reconnect services that target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are engaging communities and adapting Reconnect to their specific cultural needs. Culturally appropriate approaches adopted by these Reconnect services include the employment of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff, building good relationships with respected people in the community and a willingness to be guided by the community.<sup>20</sup>

Overall, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people comprise 13 per cent of all Reconnect clients and make up a disproportionate number of the highly complex cases.

The *Reconnect Good Practice Guide: Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clients and Communities*, gives an overview of what the Reconnect model looks like in services specifically targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and communities including how mainstream services can work more effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and communities. The guide draws on the Reconnect Evaluation and the experience of workers from 20 Reconnect services across urban, rural and remote Australia brought together in November 2003 for the Reconnect Indigenous Good Practice Forum.

The Guide should be read in conjunction with the Reconnect Framework developed through action research into what helps prevent early home leaving related to family conflict. The key elements of the framework involve:<sup>21</sup>

- a focus on **early intervention** into family conflict situations which could lead to early home leaving
- a set of **Good Practice Principles** that underpins the approaches used by individual services

<sup>20</sup> RPR Consulting, *Reconnect Evaluation Report*, October 2003, p13.

<sup>21</sup> RPR Consulting, *Reconnect Good Practice Guide: The Reconnect Framework*, April 2004.

- an expectation that services will use **action research** as a tool to develop local responses to local issues
- an expectation that services will engage in broader **community capacity building** work around early intervention into youth homelessness.

Reconnect services specifically targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have adapted the framework and developed effective ways of engaging young people from these communities. The most successful services have strong common approaches, despite the challenges posed by their differing contexts and communities, which include:<sup>22</sup>

- strong teams of Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers with relevant experience, knowledge and skills, including a gender mix within the staff
- an emphasis on capacity building and on building comprehensive linkages to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community leaders
- capacity for adapting the Reconnect model to the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including a strong focus on community development approaches and an emphasis on flexible casework and practical support approaches.

For example, in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, maintaining purely an early intervention focus presents particular challenges because the range of other services does not exist. Reconnect is often the only youth and family – focused service in the community. For these services, early intervention has to focus on community capacity building projects.

The Reconnect Good Practice Principles are:

- Accessibility of services
- Client driven service delivery
- Holistic approaches to service delivery
- Working collaboratively
- Culturally and contextually appropriate service delivery
- Ongoing review and evaluation
- Building sustainability

A full account of the Reconnect Good Practice Principles is provided at Attachment 6.

## 3.6 National Homelessness Strategy

From May 2000, the National Homelessness Strategy (NHS) has been the focus of the Australian Government's response to the problem of homelessness by setting the framework for future policy and program development in this area. The Strategy provides a strategic approach to the **prevention and reduction of homelessness across Australia** through means of prevention and early intervention.

The *NHS Discussion Paper* (May 2000) identified the following objectives to help achieve this outcome:

- to provide a strategic framework that will improve collaboration and linkages between existing programs and services, to improve outcomes for clients and reduce the incidence of homelessness
- to identify best practice models, which can be promoted and replicated, that will enhance existing homelessness policies and programs

---

<sup>22</sup> RPR Consulting, *Reconnect Good Practice Guide: Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clients and Communities*, April 2004.



- to build the capacity of the community sector to improve linkages and networks
- to raise awareness of the issue of homelessness throughout all areas and levels of government and in the community.

Elements of the Strategy include:

- specific initiatives directed at building the knowledge base on homelessness and funded under NHS:
  - **Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (CACH)** – appointed by the Minister for Family and Community Services to provide advice on issues related to homelessness
  - **Demonstration Projects** – developing new and innovative ways to prevent and respond to homelessness
  - **HOME Advice Program** – preventing families from becoming homeless
- targeted homeless programs, for example, SAAP, Reconnect and the Job Placement Education and Training Program (JPET)
- liaison with various Australian government programs that provide services and support to people who are disadvantaged including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, for example: Personal Support Program; Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged; and Partnerships Against Domestic Violence.

The NHS has funded 37 Demonstration Projects over the past four years. These innovative projects are helping to build the knowledge base on homelessness in Australia. Brief outlines of relevant findings, recommendations or application of good practice by the five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific NHS Demonstration Projects are provided at Attachment 7.

### 3.7 Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program

The Family Homelessness Prevention Pilots (FHPP) were trialled in eight sites across Australia from July 2002 to June 2004. The FHPPs have been extended for four years and have been renamed the Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program. The service locations are Wyong (NSW), Dandenong (VIC), Beenleigh (QLD), Salisbury (SA), Mandurah (WA), Launceston (TAS), Darwin (NT), and Belconnen (ACT). The service in Salisbury (SA) is Indigenous-specific.

The HOME Advice Program has an early intervention focus and offers assistance to about 400 families a year. The Program aims to:

- stabilise families' economic, housing, employment, education, social and health circumstances
- develop families' capabilities and linkages with social support and the community
- provide access to flexible brokerage funds to allow interventions to be tailored to the needs of families.

Families can seek assistance from HOME Advice Services themselves or a Centrelink social worker can refer them. HOME Advice Services have access to a designated social worker in their local Centrelink offices to assist clients with their Centrelink requirements. There is no cost to families for using HOME Advice Services and services will be provided for as long as is required to stabilise the families' housing circumstances.

The Program is assisting a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients (23 per cent). The services have found that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families assisted have multiple and complex issues. Clear differences are emerging between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous families in relation to their circumstances, their support and outcomes of intervention. The high usage by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients may be due to the outreach nature of the Program and the inherent flexibility of its brokerage and action research approach to service delivery. Both Reconnect and HOME Advice Program publications have referred to a New Zealand document, *Characteristics of Culturally Appropriate Programs for Indigenous People*, provided at Attachment 8.

### **3.8 Council of Australian Governments (COAG)**

COAG is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia. COAG comprises the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The role of COAG is to initiate, develop and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that are of national significance and which require cooperative action by Australian governments.

COAG acknowledges the unique status of Indigenous Australians and the need for recognition, respect and understanding in the wider community. Drawing on the lessons of the mixed success of past efforts to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage, the Council committed itself to an approach based on partnerships and shared responsibilities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, programme flexibility and coordination between government agencies, with a focus on local communities and outcomes. At the November 2000 meeting, COAG agreed a number of priority actions including reviewing and re-engineering programs and services to ensure they deliver practical measures that support families, children and young people.

Consequently, in April 2002, COAG agreed to trial working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in up to ten regions to provide more flexible programs and services based on priorities agreed with communities. The current eight trial sites are Cape York (Qld), Wadeye (NT), Anangu Pitjantjatjara (SA), Shepparton (Vic), East Kimberly (WA), Murdi Paaki (NSW), North Eastern Tasmania and ACT.

### **3.9 New Approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs**

The Australian Government's new approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service delivery (see Attachment 9) places an emphasis on the development of whole of government partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to address the most pressing issues identified by specific communities.

The approach presents an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, families and individuals to work together at the 'grassroots' or regional level to develop or further develop local organisations to directly engage with national, state and territory and local governments to negotiate formal agreements on what resources can be provided and how they are to be applied, to address pressing local issues.

Local or regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations will need to liaise with their regional Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC) – see Attachment 10 for contact details. Assistance may also be sought to help with the development of a locally appropriate engagement organisation. Organisations responsible for delivering services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or individuals need to ensure they are regularly liaising with their regional ICC. This ongoing contact is necessary to ensure each service's participation in the development and implementation of any agreed multi-agency cooperative effort with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, families and organisations.



# Part 4. Towards a Culturally Competent Homelessness Service Delivery Framework

## 4.1 Towards a Definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness

Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context cannot be understood without reference to the legacy of colonisation. This history of physical and cultural displacement is an antecedent to the conditions of disadvantage that have placed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at risk of homelessness.

Keys Young identified five distinct types of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness:

- spiritual homelessness
- overcrowding
- relocation and transient homelessness
- escaping from an unsafe or unstable home
- lack of access to any stable shelter.

Memmott, Long, and Chambers,<sup>23</sup> have provided the following additional observations about the nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness:

- Homelessness is not necessarily a lack of accommodation and public spaces may be considered home. It follows that homelessness is loss of control of one's use of the public spaces considered home.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Memmott, P, Long, S & Chambers, C, A National Analysis of Strategies Used to Respond to Indigenous Itinerants and Public Place Dwellers, AHURI, April 2000, p 15.

<sup>24</sup> The Indigenous Homelessness Forum (March 2003) strongly recommended the following: That all tiers of government accept that living in public spaces constitutes a legitimate lifestyle choice for some Indigenous people and that the planning and development of programs and policies should reflect this view.

- ▶ ‘Crowding’ should be defined as involving considerable stress rather than only being considered as a density issue.
  - ▶ Spiritual homelessness is considered to be either:<sup>25</sup>
    - separation from traditional land
    - separation from family and kinship networks
- or
- a crisis of personal identity wherein one’s understanding or knowledge of how one relates to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused.

Consequently, government policies that aim to maintain, protect or help restore traditional connection to country through Land Rights, Native Title or Cultural Heritage legislation will help address spiritual homelessness as will all efforts to assist the ‘stolen generations’ who wish to reconnect with their families and culture.

A specific definition of homelessness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was endorsed throughout the national consultation. The reasons for this support were twofold. Firstly, it addresses the common misconception that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness may be a manifestation of cultural choices rather than the devastating experience it truly represents:

*Society has claimed Aboriginal homelessness as acceptable and culturally appropriate, people are not seen as deserving. (WA service provider)*

It was strongly believed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in particular that a specific definition is an acknowledgement of the importance of the issue, and recognition of the particular impact of homelessness on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The inclusion of spiritual homelessness in any definition was universally identified as critical and reflective of the key point of difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people’s connection to land and country, and the particular impact that disconnection has on individual, family and community wellbeing.

*Most of us – the houses we live in now – are housing commission, we’re thankful for that. I came out of hessian bag for blanket and rations. These houses are a temporary thing – its not where we want to be – I want to have a place I can go and have the spirituality of where you are – its basic to my existence. Happy Valley in Townsville we can go there and feel the freedom or our spirituality – our spirits connecting with the land. (Qld community member)*

Secondly, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness definition was supported for its utility. People reported that a definition that captures each of the elements described above would be a practical tool in their work. For example, the experience of homelessness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people was widely believed to differ in many respects; a specific definition was valued as a way of reflecting these differences. Further, these differences directly link to the level of resources generally required in responding to homelessness in each group. A definition that reflects the differing and diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and implies the increased intensity of the response was also welcomed.

From the perspective of government stakeholders with policy and planning responsibilities, a specific definition was also highly valued. The view of many is captured in a comment from one participant about the importance of having an agreed definition to refer to in her work:

*Without a definition the risk is it’s seen as just me going on again – without reference to people’s own experience. (Qld State Government participant)*

---

<sup>25</sup> See Berry, M, MacKenzie, D, Briskman, L & Ngwenya, T, Victorian Indigenous Homelessness Study, prepared for the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria, Melbourne, 2001, p 34.

Practical examples of the utility of such a definition were also offered:

- In Queensland it was reported that a definition which recognises spiritual homelessness and the impact of the disconnection from land would lend weight to the need for ‘return to land’ assistance as part of the response to homelessness.
- In Victoria where training is being rolled out for Aboriginal Early Childhood Workers about homelessness and its impact on children, such a definition was seen as a valuable training tool.

A great deal of the discussion of a definition centred upon the following three elements: overcrowding, transience and recognition of people living in public spaces.

#### 4.1.1 Overcrowding

Recognition of overcrowding as both a density issue and more importantly, the stress generated by living in overcrowded conditions,<sup>26</sup> was strongly supported in the national consultation and agreed to be an aspect of homelessness that is inherently different from non-Indigenous people’s experience. There was also a strong view that mainstream Australia is indifferent to the issue of overcrowding and it is perceived as a lifestyle or cultural choice linked to cultural obligations to family, rather than a symptom of homelessness.

The link between overcrowding and unsafe housing was also made. Several participants reported that people living in private and public housing are often reluctant to expose their situation by asking for repairs to be undertaken, for fear of an unaffordable repair bill and/or eviction. This can also lead to unsafe houses where maintenance is not attended to, placing residents at risk of injury, particularly when overcrowding is already a factor.

A community member in the Northern Territory described it this way: *‘people feel like they have to choose between their family and their housing’*, however, this was in fact not a real choice, as for many people, obligations to family necessarily override tenancy agreements.

The tension for people between maintaining their tenancy obligations and meeting family expectations was well understood by mainstream housing providers. While this is seen as a positive development, the question was raised as to whether this meant a cultural context was being used to obscure a significant problem, rather than to address major gaps in the service system. A Queensland service provider put it this way:

*You shouldn’t use people’s cultural obligations to not supply appropriate services when people come from the Cape [Cape York] for health treatment. [They’re here] because there’s no services in the Cape.*

#### 4.1.2 Transience

The same concern was raised in relation to the definitional element of transience. Again, recognition of the issue was seen as having a double edge; it is important to recognise that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do live transiently, but on the other hand, many more people are ‘in transit’, whether to attend to family obligations, sorry business, or seek health services which are only available at a distant location.

If transience were to be recognised through a definition, it would need to influence the service criteria that currently exclude people ‘in transit’. For example, people moving to a city because of their need for dialysis are not always accommodated as part of their health treatment and family members moving with them are not eligible for homelessness accommodation. The implications of this are self-evident – people are at risk of being isolated in a new environment without appropriate supports and are vulnerable to ongoing cycles of homelessness.

---

<sup>26</sup> Memmott, P, Long, S & Chambers, C, *A National Analysis of Strategies Used to Respond to Indigenous Itinerants and Public Place Dwellers*, AHURI, April 2000, p 15.

### 4.1.3 Public Space as Home

Living in public space was also welcomed into a definition of homelessness, with the caveat that whether or not such people think of themselves as being homeless remains a complex issue.

The key tension was identified as being between people who do live this way (whether by choice or through circumstances) and the priority of the wider community to move people on or at least out of sight. In most locations visited for the consultations, people living in public space is a contentious issue, with ‘move on’ powers being exercised by police in ways that homeless people reported to be ‘bordering on harassment’ and which other stakeholders described as deeply concerning. Western Australian stakeholders described police as racist towards Aboriginal people and felt that the Aboriginal liaison officers let them down because they let the police ‘wage a war’ against Aboriginal people. Stakeholders described the ‘move on’ laws as leaving people feeling harassed and vulnerable.

This issue is a good example of the complexities of homelessness, in that there is no one reason or story for why people are living in public spaces. If the right of people to live in public spaces is acknowledged, implications arise for the service system. An example given from the Northern Territory was about people living in the ‘long grass’, where there are over 30 camps of people from different groups, with different community make-ups and protocols to be followed. The question for Darwin service providers is how to get services and information to people who prefer to live in these areas in this way. This would seem to mark a shift away from trying to determine whether or not people are homeless, to a far more constructive and practical discussion about people’s basic needs for and entitlement to services, and how to design services to reach people living in a range of situations.

In terms of access to services, including health, income support, and children’s services, the use of ‘move on’ laws and vagrancy offences were reported to be having a negative impact, in that people are being moved ‘*further and further away*’ from town centres and the services that provide health and wellbeing support. In Cairns the example was given of the breaking up of five fairly settled ‘camps’, leading to people being dispersed and health and other critical outreach services not being able to locate people needing support. In an environment where people reported ‘*we can’t even have a conversation with Council about public space*’, a community member asked ‘*where is far enough away?*’ Tourism was also identified as a key factor, in Far North Queensland in particular, in local government’s response to public homelessness, which is seen as focusing on and addressing symptoms rather than causal factors.

If living in public space is going to be recognised as a self-determined choice of some people, particularly when it is with family in a camp, for example, around Darwin or Cairns, then the infrastructure to support this choice is the next obvious step. Stakeholders in this discussion also made a distinction between the right of adults to choose to live in public spaces, and the health and safety implications for children and young people. This point is addressed further below in relation to translating principles into practice.

## 4.2 Identified Good Practice

‘Good practice’ refers to processes or procedures that contribute to achieving the outcomes a service or program has established as its goal. It is not a static concept – good practice changes as insights into how to achieve good outcomes emerge from experience, research, reflection and evaluation. It is also not as prescriptive a concept as the alternative term ‘best practice’, for it acknowledges that there are likely to be different ways to achieve desired outcomes and that, in any field of endeavour, increasingly effective work practices are likely to develop over time.<sup>27</sup>

### 4.2.1 Case Management

A case management approach to SAAP service delivery was introduced nationally in 1997. It involves both direct client service, based on sound assessment and support planning, and coordination of access to and delivery of,

---

<sup>27</sup> RPR Consulting, *Reconnect Evaluation Report*, October 2003, p 6.

a range of other appropriate support services. In short, case management is a process of working with clients that focuses on their needs and goals and develops flexible strategies to assist them to achieve their goals. It places emphasis on:

- the client as an individual
- collaboration and partnership with the client
- multi-disciplinary and interagency planning
- long term solutions
- collaboration and co-ordination
- identification of barriers in service provision.

The benefits of case management for clients include increased:<sup>28</sup>

- quality of service and improved outcomes
- empowerment with clients measuring and evaluating their own progress and change
- involvement in decision making and service provision
- access to services.

Case management as practiced by SAAP Services has eight key elements:

1. Entry/screening
2. Assessment
3. Planning
4. Direct Service
5. Coordination
6. Monitoring and Review
7. Case Closure/Exit Planning and Follow-up
8. Evaluation

An Indigenous Case Management Resource Kit comprised of a case management manual, a video and a poster was distributed in 1999 to all SAAP Services where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up more than 20 per cent of client numbers. Development of the Resource Kit employed Indigenous people at all stages of the project, from consulting with services and producing the kit, to acting in and producing the video.

The existence of an agreed support plan is generally an indicator of service quality and quality in service delivery, but it may be inappropriate for some support periods (such as when a support period is short term). Nationally, there was an agreed support plan for 61 per cent of SAAP support periods in 2002–03 (59 per cent of support periods for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients). Across jurisdictions, the proportion for all clients ranged from 82 per cent in the ACT to 49 per cent in WA in 2002–03. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients during the same period, the proportion ranged from 83 per cent in the ACT to 47 per cent in WA.<sup>29</sup>

---

28 Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, *Case Management Resource Kit For Indigenous SAAP Services*, January 1999, p1.1.

29 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Homeless People in SAAP, SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report 2002–03* Australia AIHW cat no. HOU 9, Canberra (SAAP NDCA report Series 8).

National consultation participants across all locations identified a case management, case coordination or a support planning approach as central to effective practice. Frustration was, however, consistently expressed by Aboriginal organisations that report ongoing difficulties in participating in case management mechanisms, when large statutory government agencies were also involved with a person or family. The two most commonly reported experiences were:

1. The Aboriginal agency being called in late in the process to ‘support’ a person or family with very complex needs, without a defined role on the support plan, or a place at the planning table.
2. The Aboriginal agency that is very familiar with the person or family and has a well established relationship, is not recognised as a key support and resource and is not engaged in the support planning leading to parallel processes.

#### 4.2.2 Action Research

The National Homelessness Strategy and the Reconnect Program have implemented participatory action research as an essential service delivery process. Action research aims to improve practice and service delivery through a reflective process where action and reflection inform each other. This methodology is particularly useful when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, especially when taking a prevention and early intervention approach. Participatory action research assists service delivery organisations both to gain a better understanding of local community and family needs and to adapt their practices using this knowledge.

A participatory action research approach ensures:

- clients are included in the processes surrounding service improvement
- other local services and community members can play a role in developing local early intervention capacity
- use of cyclic phases made up of planning, action, observation, consultation and reflection
- processes are refined in response to the understanding gained.

Use of action research has been welcomed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander – specific Reconnect services because it gives them permission to look for the best way to meet needs within their individual communities. This is in strong contrast to rigid program guidelines that are often not appropriate to deal with community issues. Use of action research is also culturally respectful because it involves active participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in making decisions about their own services. The Reconnect program has demonstrated that action research provides the following benefits:<sup>30</sup>

- enhanced client outcomes
- improved coordination and collaboration
- improved service delivery
- effective local early intervention development and delivery
- a dynamic, change-oriented culture in organisations
- assists evaluation
- encourages good practice, and identifies service delivery barriers and gaps
- contributes to policy development by governments and agencies.

---

<sup>30</sup> Crane, P, & Richardson, L, *Reconnect Action Research Kit*, School of Human Services, Queensland University of Technology for the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, Commonwealth of Australia, 2002.



The *Community Linkages Program* in the ACT is an example of a community development program which includes the principles of participatory action research, providing project funds to address broad social objectives. The program has been reported as valuable to tenants and is resulting in real achievements against its aims, which include:

- safer living environments
- more sustainable tenancies
- enhanced social interaction within Housing communities
- enhanced social interaction between community and public housing tenants and the broader community
- linking community and public housing tenants to employment opportunities, community services and a range of support services
- decreased poverty for housing tenants.

Throughout the national consultation, stakeholders with experience in this way of working supported its effectiveness. It was reported, however, that the amount of time involved in implementing a participatory action research approach is not resourced through existing funding arrangements or reflected in outcome measures in funding agreements. For example, the quality of the relationship between an agency and a community is not reported against. A Northern Territory stakeholder called for an *'Aboriginal-specific action research model'* which was resourced to work in this way.

The irony of the need for such a model is that by definition, action research is about working collaboratively with communities but the *'short cut version funded by governments'* results in the integrity of the model being lost. (Victorian community member)

### 4.2.3 Outreach and Brokerage

The Indigenous Homelessness Forum (March 2003) recommended that:

*States and Territories, with the assistance of the Commonwealth through SAAP, develop outreach models of intervention to homeless Indigenous people, using brokerage and other methods that promote accessible and relevant services to support those living in public spaces.*

The NHS Demonstration Project, *National Family Homelessness Project*, a 15-month longitudinal study of the effects of homelessness on 61 Indigenous families, found outreach support to be extremely beneficial in helping most of the participant families to remain housed. What was most useful was the ability, through the participant alerts,<sup>31</sup> to visit the participant families when difficulties arose. The Project recommendations include:

- The availability of an outreach/advocacy service and well-developed relationships are both major requirements in addressing Aboriginal homelessness. The advocate role would provide appropriate information, crisis support and referrals.
- The HOME Advice Program has also indicated that the Program's high level of engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients is probably due to the outreach nature of the Program and the inherent flexibility of its brokerage and action research approach to service delivery.
- The flexibility provided through outreach and brokerage models was universally valued by the national consultation participants and was reported to be far more consistent with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's help seeking patterns and also culturally congruent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people providing the support services.

---

<sup>31</sup> Throughout the project, and with their ongoing consent, the target group's housing situation was monitored to enable documentation of support needs and provision. As a consequence of the interviews and the monitoring systems put in place, supports were offered when any participant experienced difficulties that might impact on their continued housing.

#### 4.2.4 Remote Service Delivery Issues

Service delivery issues in remote areas of Australia differ significantly from those of urban and regional areas. These differences (and some similarities) are demonstrated by the findings of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Safehouses Pilot: *Sustainable Service Responses to Family Violence in Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in North Queensland*.

The Project, conducted by the Queensland Department of Communities, was a 12-month action research Demonstration Project funded by the Australian Government under the NHS. It involved 12 SAAP funded services located at Aurukun, Mornington Island, Kowanyama, Doomadgee, Pormpuraaw, Bamaga, Thursday Island, Lockhart River, Hopevale, Yarrabah, Napranum and Palm Island.

The project aimed to:

- document the unique models of service delivery operating in remote communities
- explore the strengths and weaknesses of the existing service responses
- make recommendations around developing sustainable service responses for the future.

Research findings included the following:

##### *Training Issues*

- Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services need to be part of broader service system improvements and good practice developments. This needs to occur in ways that are relevant and appropriate for remote contexts. The need for **more and better training** was expressed frequently throughout the project.
- Service providers need **more locally developed resources and resources written in plain English** for use in community awareness and education activities around family violence and to assist them in the management and development of their services.
- Service providers were **very critical of ‘fly in, fly out’ style training** that was aimed at skill and educational levels inappropriate for their staff.
- Service providers found the **Skills Audit Manual** developed by the project’s Training Officer an invaluable tool for them to assess their staff and determine training needs accurately.
- The employment of a **Training Officer** was useful in developing resources, exploring training opportunities and liaising with training providers. This role appeared to meet a gap in the needs of services around training.
- **Video was an effective tool** for communicating community concerns to government and has potential as a medium for resources for community awareness activities and organisational development.
- The need for ‘safe house’ service staff and management to obtain **formal qualifications** is critical in terms of accountability to government and ability to meet standards and the requirements of Industrial Awards.

##### *Staffing and Industrial Relations*

- Industrial Awards do not reflect the knowledge, skills and abilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly elder clan women and their role as **‘cultural advisors’** in services. The funding allocation from government does not factor in the need for the employment of ‘cultural advisors’.
- It is difficult for the management committees of ‘safe houses’, with limited experience in industrial relations and human resource management, to find their own way in this area without some **guidance from industrial relations agencies**.
- **There are drawbacks with externally recruited staff**, but they can be successful where they give more than one or two years of service, and where they are well grounded in local cultural practices and protocols, and both

respect and enjoy the respect of the local community women. Where there are externally recruited staff, exit plans need to be put in place from their recruitment so that services do not suffer when they leave.<sup>32</sup>

- More flexible funding arrangements that allow for splitting positions (to meet the needs of multiple clans) and employment of ‘cultural advisors’ would benefit service providers.
- ‘Caring for the carers’ and addressing ‘burnout’ for staff and management committees are critical issues for services.
- Perceived or actual **nepotism** is an issue for ‘safe house’ services where key staff and management positions are seen as tied to particular families or clan groups. Despite the challenges, the commitment, determination and experience of many ‘safe house’ service providers are strengths that can be built on. They are a part of the capacity of their local communities that needs to be strengthened and supported.

### *Cultural Protocols*

- The **Elder Clan women** involved in these ‘safe houses’ are and have been the **keepers of the cultural knowledge and power**. They bring to the service the traditional cultural authority that demands respect from the men and has the power to influence the behaviour of the younger women using the service.
- There is a struggle to maintain **cultural protocols** and practices within ‘safe house’ services, especially when general service delivery practice requires that cultural protocols are broken. The research found that cultural protocols are broken and practices ignored in order to meet accountability requirements of government.
- **Case management** needs to be offered in a way that is culturally appropriate to each community and guided by cultural protocols. (Many services appear to offer very limited case management to clients.)

### *Access and Awareness Issues*

- Services need to **increase community awareness of their services** and they need to be engaged in activities during quiet periods that contribute to the effectiveness of their services during the busy times. These activities would include community awareness activities around family violence.
- The role of providing a safe place for women and children has broadened to a service and/or organisation that deals with all the social welfare needs for women and children. Many services are struggling with their level of staffing and funding to operate this expanded model of service.
- There were a significant number of respondents (37 per cent) to the project survey that indicated not all women requiring assistance were accessing services. The reasons for not accessing services included lack of confidentiality, fear of repercussions, shame, service practices, clan problems and broader community values.

## **4.3 Principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service Delivery**

The question of how to provide an effective service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is just as important as the outcome the proposed activity hopes to achieve. Positive outcomes are more likely if general guiding principles are in place and well known.

---

<sup>32</sup> Employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is a key strategy in providing culturally appropriate service. The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women’s Council in Central Australia follows the ‘Malpa system’ that requires any project or initiative in which a non-Indigenous worker is involved to have an Indigenous person as a co-worker. If there is no willing or appropriate person available, then the project does not proceed. This ensures an Indigenous perspective is central to the work and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers receive training that assists them to work well within ‘mainstream’ society and non-Indigenous workers receive training in cultural protocols.

The following list of principles for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has been drawn from a number of different agency and program guidelines<sup>33</sup> and the Indigenous Homelessness Forum. The list is not definitive and is intended as a guide only. While these action principles generally remain unspoken, they inform the respect and understanding required to effectively engage with Indigenous Australians.

### Principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service Delivery:

- a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the first Australians, with unique cultures, languages and spiritual relationships to the land and seas.
- b) There is diversity and differences both within and between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- c) The history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people includes the effects of colonisation and dispossession on communities, families and individuals. These effects can be intergenerational and continue to impair the emotional and social wellbeing of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- d) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family relationships are strong and kinship obligations are an interwoven part of Indigenous people's cultural identity.
- e) Respect for Elders is an important aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and Traditional Elders play a significant role within Aboriginal communities.
- f) An understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **local** protocols is essential in the delivery and acceptance of a service program and culturally valid understandings must shape the provision of services.
- g) Valid service delivery accurately reflects the preferences, obligations and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and therefore self-determination is central to service provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- h) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seek and expect a holistic approach to service delivery.
- i) Effective service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will seek to meet their most pressing need for assistance in a timely and practical manner.

These principles suggest a number of appropriate service delivery strategies:

- a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations with a mix of male and female Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers are generally best placed to deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals.
- b) Full consultation and the development of equal partnerships are important components of successful service delivery planning.
- c) Employment, appropriate ongoing support and training opportunities for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander workers are important components of capacity building in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- d) Local cultural awareness training is essential for non Indigenous workers providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or individuals.
- e) Training for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in understanding the complexity of another culture's health concerns and the difficulty of belonging and adjusting to two different cultural contexts and how this has led to particular mental health concerns for some.
- f) Flexible service delivery, addressing the immediate needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients should be the norm.

---

<sup>33</sup> Including Centrelink, Reconnect, HMC, Human Services Victoria, SAAP Indigenous Case Management Guide, NSW Aging and Disability Department, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria.

- g) A well resourced, whole of government, cross program approach to service delivery in partnership with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community organisations and employing local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people is the preferred model of service delivery to Indigenous Australians.

The national consultation found that these principles to guide service delivery were welcomed as a relevant and valuable reflection of people's own experience of effective ways of working. The COAG National Framework Principles<sup>34</sup> were raised by a number of people as being another example of this type of effort. While there was very little contention in relation to the material, some points did generate rich discussion and this is reported below.

The majority of stakeholder feedback focused on the significant gaps experienced between the expression of good practice in various documents and guidelines, the daily reality of service consumers and the frustrations experienced by service providers and people in policy and planning roles. Numerous barriers to translating such documents into practice were identified and are discussed at s. 4.4 below. Participants also provided examples of where the positive rhetoric had translated effectively into practice and an analysis of the conditions supporting this positive experience is discussed below.

#### 4.3.1 Self determination

The principle of self determination was a focus of discussion in most consultations and related to this, the representative voice of communities was raised as an increasingly complex issue. The point was also made that there is a need to focus on the obligations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to the communities they work for. These matters are discussed below in terms of governance issues.

The discussion about self determination focused on the range of things this can mean to communities in diverse settings, for example the needs, wants and desires of people coming in to urban centres from remote areas, as compared to people who have been living in urban areas for 30 years.

*Self determination – [it's a] very muddy term. It's about capacity – of a particular community to control funding; capacity of local regional authorities; specific Aboriginal electoral positions to Parliament; all sorts of different levels. (NT service provider)*

*[For a] working family with jobs, kids at school – their idea will be different to someone living on communities. (Qld State Government stakeholder)*

The tension between self determination and the mainstream communities' views was raised as a key factor. An example is a camp community in Cairns whose wish is to live in the open and who wants Council to provide a shower block. So far, Council have not responded positively to this request as a legitimate expression of self determination. It is important to note, therefore, that using 'self determination' as a principle may not mean translation into practice if the preference is not supported at senior levels or by the wider community.

Self determination by definition means a community determining what's important, which raises the issue of representation of that community. In the absence of ATSIC, the question asked across locations was whose voice is represented? This raises significant implications for the Australian Government's new approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. There was a strong theme across locations that people 'feel lost without a voice'. As one community member put it,

*'OIPC is the government's interest, who is putting forward the community's interest?'*

Stakeholders put it like this:

*'Locally appropriate representative organisation' – this assumes fundamental democratic processes can be put on communities, but if talking about acknowledging culture, this may not be possible.*

<sup>34</sup> Sharing responsibility; harnessing the mainstream; streamlining service delivery; establishing transparency and accountability; developing a learning framework; and focusing on priority areas.

*There are real pitfalls if people [in ICCs] don't understand how things work. If people [are] going in and assuming [someone is] representative – [there's a] danger in making [this] assumption. (Northern Territory service providers)*

*They may be 'brokers' but they don't know Aboriginal affairs, knowledge or people. Because we have to keep educating them, this delays service provision, policy and the framework. (Vic service provider)*

*Shared responsibility is the government's way out of their duty of care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – this is a cop out to not provide basic services to people that are our human rights. (ACT community member)*

The essence of these discussions was that getting to 'a representative view' was a lengthy process of identifying legitimate voices who bring the interest of all groups in a community to the discussion, including different families, women, children, elderly people, young people and so on. It may also be the case that this voice cannot be located in all communities and the efficiencies that a representative voice implies are simply not to be had. The key message from stakeholders was that this is a lengthy and resource intensive process, based on the building and maintenance of relationships between people – the **people** in communities and the **people** in government roles.

Another aspect of this discussion was a general sense of fatigue amongst community leaders, stemming from the amount of effort that goes into:

*'educating all these folks...How many times do we have to train them?' (Victorian community member)*

## **4.4 Barriers to effective translation of the principles into practice**

As mentioned above, the national consultation found very little contention about the principles or what these mean for appropriate service delivery strategies. The prevailing view was that the work done over recent years to better understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness has provided a sound basis for moving past this level of debate to implementation of the findings. In general, discussion focused on the barriers people encounter in translating this material into practice.

In discussing the barriers, it became evident that people were describing a number of 'filters' that effectively dilute and divert the original intent. The filters most commonly identified were individual and systemic racism; inadequate resources and investment; and bureaucracy. Discussion of bureaucracy as a barrier to good practice concerned competitive tendering; accountability and reporting; program design and governance issues. All these issues are discussed in detail below.

### **4.4.1 Racism as a barrier**

Discrimination based on race was reported to be a daily experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seeking services and support due to homelessness. Stakeholders reported 'service segregation', racism in the private rental market, and racist people in some services as key blocks to accessing homelessness services and support.

*Aboriginal people walk in the door with a big 'P' over their head – 'P' for problem; if there's a chance for the worker to opt out, they will. (Vic community member)*

*Every time I have to go into one of those places (government agencies) – I don't want to. We're nothing to them – it's in their eyes, their mouths, they don't want to look at us....don't even try and hide it. (ACT community member)*

*Where can I go to get help about who I am and where I fit in – people don't want to know about us if we don't own a house and everything material, but we struggle to have basics, pension, to live in a house that we have to pay enormous rent, if we want to live under stars, government stops us from doing that as well. (Qld community member)*

*Women don't always want to go in to Housing – [it's] scary and intimidating. Organised Housing to outreach, but manager changed and outreach doesn't happen anymore. (Qld service provider)*

Stakeholders who spoke about racism as a barrier also reported that 'racism is a dirty word' and that it was 'too easy' for people to ignore claims of racism as the charge of a single disgruntled person, rather than an inherent factor in the design of some parts of the service system and certainly in the values of some policy makers and service providers. In exploring the reasons for this sense of 'tuning out', it was suggested that overcoming racism amongst individuals is seen as simply too hard and not something government wishes to address through investment in workforce development, monitoring of service delivery quality and consequences for people continuing to be racist.

*You think government cares if that woman's evil? They can have all the posters they want but it doesn't make bad people good. (Qld community member)*

The unwillingness of government agencies to translate information into community languages was raised as an example of systemic racism. In Western Australia it was strongly felt that the lack of recognition of the diversity of languages was yet another way in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are invisible to government.

The term 'service segregation' was used in Victorian consultations to describe a practice in some mainstream agencies of automatically referring people only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and not facilitating access to mainstream services. In one example a worker in an Aboriginal organisation followed up one such referral by the Department of Housing, only to be told that the Housing Officer did not know everyone could access Public Housing and thought she could **only** refer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Aboriginal Housing.

The same experience was reported in all locations with various examples given. In Brisbane it was described as people with the most complex needs being 'palmed off' by large NGOs onto small under-funded and over-stretched Aboriginal organisations, with no suggestion of joint working, a case management plan or other reflections of the '*partnership approach they probably talked about when they won the tender*'. Another stakeholder expressed a similar issue this way:

*Often with funding comes an abrogation of responsibility from mainstream services. This is a form of dumping. (Vic community member)*

A stakeholder from the Northern Territory said that if the system was working:

*... there would not only be Aboriginal services providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with support – everyone needs to respond to needs – otherwise there is a de facto culture of apartheid.*

The private rental market was identified as a significant contributor to the housing and therefore the homelessness problems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban areas. In all locations stakeholders reported that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are consistently discriminated against, directly and indirectly. An example provided by a stakeholder included a family being required to submit anywhere between two and six **written** references with their application, as well as a bond and proof of income. Another example provided in the ACT was a person whose experience was of private rental agents seeing her waiting at a property with an appointment to inspect and simply continuing to drive past. A Western Australian stakeholder said that non-Aboriginal people often make assumptions about Aboriginal people's skills and capacity; '*we are all painted with the same brush*'. This leads to the situation where people who can afford to and wish to, rent in the private market are prevented from doing so and remain in public or community housing.

The lack of access to the private rental market was reported to be contributing to 'bottlenecks' in social housing, with people choosing to stay in this system rather than renting privately or considering home ownership.



An important point was made that rather than blaming people, the reason for this needs to be understood. The experience of racism in the private market is very familiar to people and can make it an unappealing choice and home ownership is not necessarily a common experience:

*Plenty of Koories wouldn't know anyone who owns their house – why would they do that?*  
(Vic service provider)

People were described as *'reluctant to step away from the safety net of social housing'*. However, some organisations are finding ways to encourage this as the next step. For example, Warangu Women's Shelter (Queensland) has a three-month limit on the crisis accommodation they can provide and with a six-year wait, public housing is not a viable exit point. Their strategy is to enter into an agreement with each woman using the service to put away money each week into a savings plan so when it is time to leave the shelter she will have funds set aside for a bond or other accommodation options.

Stakeholders reported a strong belief that their State housing authorities consistently allocated the most dilapidated and undesirable properties to Aboriginal applicants. In the Northern Territory it was reported that tenants were now on a 'three-month probation' before their tenancy would be confirmed. The observation was made that if such a policy was required, it was a missed opportunity to be identifying tenancies that need support rather than taking what is seen as a highly punitive response to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were reported to be more vulnerable.

An example of systemic discrimination that was raised in a number of locations concerned the various tenancy information databases on which rent defaults, damage, etc can be recorded by agents and checked in relation to prospective tenants. It was strongly felt that Aboriginal people were far more vulnerable to being listed than non-Aboriginal people and far less likely to challenge the fairness of such a listing.

In general, the experiences people reported were of repeated conflicts and problems in securing suitable housing rather than 'one-off' bad experiences with a particular housing officer. This is illustrated by the experience of a Western Australian community member who had been homeless for some years. He reported that the flat allocated to him was known as the 'suicide flats'. Being housed amongst people with numerous social problems in accommodation he found culturally inappropriate was the cause of immense stress, however, his request for a move was responded to by criteria that he had to live there for six months before his request could be considered. When an alternative offer was made, it too was seen as inappropriate as it was located in a rural area commonly known to be racist, without employment prospects and not near any of his family.

This most recent experience came on top of other decisions by the housing authority which he found inexplicable, for example, he had originally been living in a Housing West home with his mother and disabled brother; his mother cared for the house with pride but after she died, the brothers were told by the housing authorities to move out. His disabled brother now moves from family member to family member.

The issue of fair allocation of properties, both in public and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations was raised throughout the consultation. The approach taken in Tasmania, however, stood out from other States and Territories. A community member described and endorsed the Tasmanian approach with this description:

*[It's] very important for Aboriginal people to be seen to have a say in their business – a good example is with State Government Housing where we have allocation committees; there's four, and they're elected each year to work with Housing Officers on allocations – it's a really important committee and gets the biggest meeting each year for voting.* (Tas community member)

The reportedly racist attitudes of individuals in key positions were also raised as a continuing barrier to the effective translation of good practice principles and strategies into reality. The primary group identified in examples was front-line staff in mainstream agencies, who were seen to wield a great deal of power in terms of access to the next level of information or service response.

*As soon as people put down the document they go back to their normal way of operating – it's up to the person themselves [and] up to management to make sure people understand the principles.*  
(Qld service provider)



*People [service providers] work hard to get the outcomes but haven't lived it, haven't experienced it, but frontline junior staff don't have the understanding'. (Vic community provider)*

The tension inherent in a dual or parallel service system, comprised of mainstream and Aboriginal-run services, was raised in a number of locations. A Victorian stakeholder described it as 'two policy directions in conflict', in that mainstream:

*...services are there for everyone, but we still need Aboriginal services because mainstream haven't worked for Aboriginal people. With supply never going to meet demand, where do Aboriginal agencies fit in relation to the mainstream? Not as equals. (Vic service provider)*

The other group of people with reportedly racist attitudes identified were non-Aboriginal people in services who positioned themselves as experts after 'living here for six months', and those who imposed their own priorities and values rather than responding to the expressed needs of people approaching their services. Attitudes of benevolence, 'parent-child' dynamics and a return to the 'mission-mentality', were reported as encountered regularly and the impact was expressed as further reducing people's sense of worth and agency or control over their life. The point was again made that the funding agreements such agencies had signed would probably include principles of service delivery such as those under discussion, but there was no accountability or audit that revealed the gap between the contracted way of working and the racist practice experienced by people needing to use such services.

#### **4.4.2 Inadequate investment as a barrier**

The current investment in the response to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness was consistently raised as a key barrier to effective service delivery. This was described in two ways, firstly in terms of the arrangements for existing investment and secondly, in terms of the adequacy of the overall investment.

Funding arrangements for existing investment, such as for SAAP, were consistently reported to be inadequate to resource services to work in the ways described in the principles and strategies, all of which require time and skill. A service provider from Tasmania was able to illustrate this point from recent experience. Colony 47, a non-government organisation, has convened an 'Aboriginal Gathering Group', which was described as a means of speaking with communities about needs and service delivery, with the aim of making their services relevant to all their community. The investment required was described in these terms:

*It takes a long time to build a relationship that allows non-Aboriginal people to have an understanding of how these principles can flow into their work. We've been doing this for three years ... in the last 12 months it's only just achieving results. (Tas service provider)*

This example illustrates what resources in terms of people, willingness and time are required from agencies and communities to build the relationships that will enable the principles to be translated into practice. This example also indicates that time is needed for mainstream agencies and staff to understand how to work effectively. This is an important point given that the need for long timeframes is often located with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's needs, rather than the time required within mainstream services and systems.

SAAP services generally reported being familiar with good practice principles and appropriate ways of working with communities, families and individuals in their service.

The reality, however, involves far more time spent on tasks than is generally required for non-Indigenous clients. There were several reasons put forward for this, including that far more advocacy is required on behalf of people to access other services and to secure resources. As one stakeholder said:

*I spend so much time ringing up and explaining what a woman has already done for herself – but when I ring, the other service will do what's needed – why can't they just listen to the woman in the first place – why does it take me to do it? (Vic service provider)*

Another reason for the greater intensity of work around 'good practice' is that it often means working with more than just the individual who presented for support or accommodation. A thorough assessment of need was reported to often generate more 'clients' – whether this be children or other family members who also

need assistance or are *'just other people who are central to [the presenting person's] wellbeing.'* A great deal of the work described by service providers, and the need described by service users, was about resuming the connections between people that contribute to a person's or a family's well being. In some instances this re-connection requires advocacy, for example, when care and protection of children is involved or facilitation is required such as when a person wishes to return to their community but needs assistance to make this happen.

The needs of homeless families with young children were highlighted in the consultations, with particular reference to the large amount of resources required to respond to the needs of homeless families who may be in unsuitable accommodation, living in public space, or have been housed and then require a great deal of follow-on support.

A number of community members shared their experiences of the impact of homelessness on their families and in particular, separation from their children. In Western Australia, a woman with two children in foster care explained that she does not have a home to see her children in for access visits; she knows that her homelessness has contributed to the loss of her children.

In Queensland a similar story was shared, of a woman who was being supported by many agencies and Elders to keep her baby after care and protection services became involved. This support was described as a 'Murrie safety net' by one Elder and illustrated the intensity of work stakeholders describe as commonly needed and provided by Aboriginal agencies. The 'safety net' involved home visits by a network of people every day to support this particular woman in her parenting. The other role played by this network was to maintain vigilance in regard to the care and protection service's intervention. Numerous examples were given where the Department was believed to have breached its own policy and was called to account by the Elders and agencies supporting the family. The key message from this example was the burden of this vigilance, where:

*... week in week out we're on them about something else – mess around with her access [sic], place the kids so far away she can't afford the bus trip, tell her she can't see them on their birthday 'cos it doesn't suit the foster family – and that was a set access day too.*

The role being played by the agencies and the Elders was not included in the care plan developed by the Department.

Supported accommodation services spoke of their frustration and distress at turning away people who need accommodation and their inability to respond to requests from other agencies to support people housed in other accommodation. The people dependent on supported accommodation shared their experience of the very real ways in which inadequate resources impact on them. A Western Australian woman in her mid 40s shared her story of living over the past few years in a women's night shelter. As inadequate as this would seem as long term accommodation, the limitation identified by the woman herself was that the shelter is only open five nights per week. In order to find accommodation on Sunday and Monday nights she said she needs to get drunk so that she can be housed in a detox unit. She does not regard herself as a drinker and knows that this makes her medical problems worse, which include depression, diabetes and arthritis.

It was acknowledged that SAAP funds have been invested in outreach programs in recent years to enable support to reach the individual, rather than the individual needing to be in SAAP accommodation to access support. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing providers, including Aboriginal Hostels, emphasized the need for greater investment in outreach support:

*Everyone says outreach is the way to go to help people stay where they are, to not become homeless, and our people are in our housing and hostels – but FaCS want us to focus on infrastructure only, when we can see these people – these families, need living skills, family violence help, the whole lot. Just because they're with us they don't get it [support] and we can't do it without more resources or other services to come in.*  
(Qld service provider)

The notion of 'providing services where people already are' was well known to stakeholders, but they reported little evidence of resources being invested to enable this to occur.

Aboriginal Hostels put this view strongly, making the point that many of the residents living in their transient hostels are in fact homeless and that in order to provide the support they needed, further resources are urgently required. Limitations in the services provided by Aboriginal Hostels were also identified by other stakeholders, who regarded them as a prime provider of accommodation to homeless people. Aboriginal Hostels were perceived to be under resourced to provide the support or develop the living skills that would help people move on to more independent options. Aboriginal Hostels made the point that in several ways they meet the good practice principles being discussed, in that they have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, provide training and encourage the attainment of qualifications. However, to provide the type and intensity of support needed by residents, further resources are required.

The overall quantum of investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness was also consistently reported to be inadequate. The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) was a prime focus of these discussions. Concerns in relation to the CSHA included the inadequacy of the overall investment as well as the structure of the investment. Overall, the investment was seen to be grossly inadequate to address the level of demand for housing, with the lack of supply exacerbating homelessness and directly impacting on the availability of accommodation in the homelessness service sector. The link between supply in the public housing sector and exit points from SAAP accommodation is well established and it was reported to be a great frustration to all stakeholders that inadequate supply was keeping people in SAAP accommodation for record periods of time and impacting negatively on the number of people to whom services could respond.

Community members also expressed anger and resentment at the lack of places to go and the demise of places they had depended on for many years. The observation was made by a community member that while the local hostel had closed down, local Aboriginal people can see there are numerous backpacker's accommodation and accommodation for migrants:

*The First Nation people have been forgotten and are neglected.* (WA community member)

All States and Territories reported that demand for public housing continues to rise and was not being matched by the level of investment required to increase supply. The emphasis on rent assistance rather than funds directed at increasing the supply side was also identified as problematic, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have less access to the private rental market, which is further exacerbated in very tight rental markets such as the ACT. The point at which rent assistance becomes available was raised as a problem in remote areas, where the rent itself may be a low proportion of a person's income and does not, therefore, attract rent assistance, however, the other costs of living are so high that basic expenses can often not be met.

#### **4.4.3 Bureaucracy as a barrier**

'The bureaucracy' was the most consistently identified barrier to translating agreed standards into practice across all consultation sites and stakeholder groups. This is a finding common to other studies, where people frequently identify the 'level above' as the barrier to flexible practice or innovation. This raises the question of whose leadership is needed to bring about change:

*Sometimes it's hard for [governments] to let go of the power – at the end of the day it's about trust, [and governments are] very risk averse, wanting to hold onto everything....if we're serious about self determination, we have to deal with the fact that it's outside the context of government structures – if it's hard for bureaucrats to take the risk, it's harder for politicians, and it's hard for the [mainstream] community.* (Vic State Government stakeholder)

Four specific aspects of 'bureaucracy' were particularly highlighted and each of these is discussed below: competitive tendering and related procurement processes; accountability and reporting burdens; program design and guidelines; and governance issues.

### *Competitive tendering and related procurement processes*

The observation was made in all locations that the theme of cooperation that runs through the good practice elements and principles is in direct contradiction to the reality of the competitive tendering environment currently in place in all states and territories. It was strongly felt that this environment reduces motivation to work collaboratively, setting services ‘against each other’, leading to further gaps in the service system or to a lack of interest in addressing gaps. A commonly expressed concern was that as a result of the demands of this environment, small Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies will cease to exist, reducing choice for people in the service they access for support and limiting the pathways through which community members can participate and contribute, for example, as volunteers, paid workers or Board members.

Two particular frustrations were described. Firstly, the resources required in terms of the skill and the time required to apply for government tenders:

*Aboriginal people can’t compete – we don’t have big bucks like Barnados or Mission Australia [to write submissions]; if government wants us to go forward, they’ll support us. (NSW service provider)*

The support needed includes changes to tender document criteria, for example, to include Aboriginal-specific criteria allowing organisations to showcase their expertise, even where the ‘demonstrated capacity’ may not be as strong as would be desired.<sup>35</sup>

Long lead times are required to engage providers in the tender process prior to the documentation being developed, to ensure the requirements are appropriate and clear and to receive compliant proposals. The more common experience of community members and providers was reflected, however, in this comment:

*Bureaucracy looks for quick fixes – [but they] don’t understand the whole issue. It’s a staged process that should achieve small things at each stage. (Qld service provider)*

Secondly, the experience of a number of small to medium sized Aboriginal organisations that frequently lost out to a large NGO in tendering processes, only to have that organisation:

*...turn to us for assistance without any, or only a bit, of the funds they just won. (Qld service provider)*

*Mainstream organisations get the contracts then work in so-called ‘partnership’ with a small Aboriginal organisation – and filter all the really hard issues to the small organisation. (NSW service provider)*

The following question was asked in the ACT:

*Who assesses these applications in government that these claims people [non-Aboriginal organisations] make are true...that the governance, financial management, track record and cultural practices are or aren’t in place?*

The point being made was that assessing proposals requires the ability to assess the strengths and limitations of proposals from both highly professional organisations, as well as those from Aboriginal organisations with genuine community connection and capacity.

In the ACT and Qld, similar examples were given of frustrations in the tendering process. In both examples local Aboriginal agencies supported an Aboriginal-owned agency to submit for state government funds, believing that one well supported tender was preferable to many in competition. In both cases the single proposal was not accepted by government and the reasons given were not considered valid by the communities, further contributing to the distrust of government and delays in resources reaching communities.

---

<sup>35</sup> Securing Aboriginal organisations as providers was identified by government stakeholders as problematic, particularly those from small jurisdictions. However, in larger jurisdictions, government stakeholders raised the point that the few large Aboriginal organisations were increasingly expected to provide services in distant locations, due to a lack of infrastructure in regional areas. The preference would clearly be to develop local infrastructure that can then receive funds to deliver services locally, generating local employment and skill development.

The annual funding cycles of many government agencies, including for long term programs, were described as *'fundamentally problematic'*, creating a constant state of uncertainty, impacting negatively on the recruitment and retention of skilled staff and creating pressure to have funding expended in unrealistic timeframes.

The funding of projects on a pilot basis continues to be the source of great frustration and fatigue amongst stakeholders, leading to the quip 'the number of pilot programs we Koori's have done – we should all have our pilot's license by now'. A Western Australian stakeholder described it as 'the goal posts keep shifting', with detrimental impacts when pilot projects that are evaluated as effective do not receive ongoing funding. Momentum is continually lost under this stop-start approach. Stakeholders described the political realities along these lines:

*...the commitments made, the priorities change, and the moneys gone.* (Vic service provider)

*Awareness gets brought up, money goes and we scrounge dollars to keep something happening...we learn how to be high flyers then they take the plane away. Aboriginal agencies aren't structured to say 'no' at the end of funding.* (Vic service provider)

### *Accountability and reporting: methods and burdens*

Accountability and compliance reporting was raised throughout the consultation as an ongoing cause of frustration among stakeholders for two key reasons: the time spent on these tasks equals time lost to service delivery, especially in small organisations; and the lack of visible connection between what a Queensland State Government stakeholder described as the *'phenomenal amount of paperwork and reports generated'* as a result of reporting requirements and actual improvements to service delivery.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies, particularly small community run agencies, reported a need for accountability measures that facilitate communication between the agency and the funding body. At present, stakeholders reported that requirements currently form a further barrier to communication. Northern Territory stakeholders proposed a range of more culturally appropriate methods where communities might make a 'day in the life of' video of their service. Another option would be an artistic presentation of the agency's work, with words to tell the stories of the people who have used the service. Examples of this form of reporting about service delivery were a feature of some of the Stronger Families Stronger Community Pilot projects.

Stakeholders concerns about standard reporting included that it is often done by non-Indigenous officials who try to present the 'best story' and in doing so may in fact set up the agency to fail, when in reality it may take many years for the goals of a service to be realised. This method also lacks any transfer of skills and was therefore seen to contradict the themes of the principles. Apart from skills in reporting on program activity, workers may also need training in the development of critical reflection skills, where questions are asked among the workers and community about what is working, what might be done differently and what this would mean for other areas of their work. These and other skills in evaluation were identified as needs across locations.

### *Program design and guidelines*

There were many examples provided of the ways in which program design and program guidelines become barriers to providing services that reflect the good practice elements and the principles.

One of the most common examples was the conflict between the expectations of the people using services and mainstream services' expectations of service users. At the risk of reducing the complexities too far, the tension was essentially that mainstream services are often designed to deal with aspects or components of a person's problems. By partialising the problems, the person is at risk of 'feeling' partialised and not being seen or treated as a whole person. The filters of mainstream agencies – target groups, priorities, and criteria – which all serve practical purposes, are not a match for a person who expects a holistic response to their issues and concerns.

*Bureaucrats come up with programs but they don't fit the need – may do in a political sense, but it's not reality to fit people into boxes of program this and program that.* (Qld service provider)

A number of SAAP services reported that the current guidelines disallow the payment of Elders who support SAAP services through the provision of cultural advice and direct support to women and children in accommodation. The role of Elders is well recognised in the principles, but was reported as not facilitated by funding guidelines and arrangements. Two examples of flexible responses by mainstream services illustrate the challenges of working ‘outside the boxes’.

The first example involved a service designed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in maintaining their housing. The service entered into an agreement with the relevant local office of the State Public Housing Authority for the team to make early referrals regarding tenancies that were in jeopardy. This early intervention approach enabled timely and respectful engagement with the tenant and increased the likelihood of their tenancy being maintained. The assistance was often practical, for example, the removal of rubbish, mowing of lawns and appropriate chats about any other issues that might be contributing to their housing being at risk. The worker reported that the agreement worked well for three months until the key person moved on. When the next person was approached:

*...suddenly any sort of MOU become a political decision, not an administrative one – they claimed the Area Offices don’t have delegation to make them, that is has to go up the chain. I still haven’t heard back.*

A second example involved innovative practices within Centrelink. In Far North Queensland a particular office had developed a model of working with a street-based health outreach service to ensure people living rough and in shelters had access to appropriate support to maintain their obligations and therefore their payments. This model was reported to have been working effectively for some 18 months, having achieved ‘*big wins with community*’ – a community with whom Centrelink had not traditionally communicated nor supported effectively. Recently, however, the worker’s activity, which has been supported to this point:

*...came to the notice of the hierarchy, and now I’m hearing ‘these are your parameters’. The ‘outcomes’ [KPIs] are too specific; this is not a settled community – we may never know the outcomes, meanwhile they get what they should – isn’t that an outcome?*

Government officers in all locations described how it was ‘hard to work differently’, citing accountability and the conditions of funding agreements with services as some of the barriers:

*The hierarchy still stops us...it’s about changing the attitudes and mindsets of the people above us.*  
(ACT Government stakeholder)

One person used the expression ‘*pockets of discretion*’ to capture the positive difference individuals can make, but for these practices to become systematised, management has to make the changes:

*[You can] have as much discretion as you like, but until a set of protocols is built into the system, it won’t happen.* (ACT service provider)

Barriers were also identified at the higher level of planning within government. The practice of ‘resources being dropped in from above’ was raised as a distinctly unhelpful practice. The example provided by a Victorian stakeholder related to funds from an Australian Government program coming into an area separate from local planning processes and protocols: ‘*Dropping resources into communities’ means the coming together and planning just doesn’t happen*’. This works against the principles promoted as supporting good practice. Cooperation between State and Australian Government programs to practice the principles was seen as a key challenge and one that would need to be addressed if the new holistic approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs was to be successful.

### *Governance issues*

A number of people identified the governance of some Aboriginal owned organisations as a barrier to meeting the needs of local communities. It was also described as:

*... a massive issue as far as capacity of services to stay alive.* (NT service provider)



The tension that was most commonly identified was that between kinship obligations and obligations to a broader community of people. For example, a housing organisation may come under great pressure to allocate houses to family members rather than in line with waiting lists and other prioritising mechanisms. Membership of organisation's boards or committees was also identified as part of the problem, where it was felt that appointment to these positions was also linked to family connections rather than representation of a community's interest.

Indeed, the whole question of democratic representation and the kinship obligations that run so strongly through many families was identified as a barrier to some services working effectively to address community need. Further to this, some people questioned the utility of overlaying concepts of democratic representation onto a community if it is one that continues to operate primarily along lines of kinship obligation.

Support in developing good governance was seen as central to growing effective organisations. A good example of this is an Aboriginal housing organisation that has 'returned to basics' after a period of near collapse. With assets worth \$90 million, the stakes were very high for the community and the government funding body. Elders from communities where the housing is located are being recruited onto a new Board and are being supported to develop contemporary governance skills, taking a 'stewardship' approach to the organisation with a long term view, rather than a day to day management role. An important aspect of this change coming about was for the intervention in the old ways to occur so that people had the chance to '*follow a new path*', without having to confront family members who had not served the organisation well.

A NSW stakeholder made the important point that Aboriginal organisations generally come about through the will and determination of the people – often people who are leaders in their community. Aboriginal community owned organisations have only a very short history of some 30 years and the expectations of skills and business acumen funding bodies place on people is seen as a key contributor to the collapse of many organisations.

*Funders expect organisations to have financial management skills when what people have is responsibility in their family or community; they need the skills employed or developed. (NSW government stakeholder)*

*[There] should be funding for infrastructure to allow people in the field to update their skills – fundamental issue. Government agencies don't have the will power to support agencies to develop. (NSW government stakeholder)*

Good governance of organisations was identified to be particularly difficult in 'melting pot communities':

*...where there may be conflicting cultural protocols, as well as drug issues and violence, where things you'd expect a community council to govern, they simply can't make decisions because of make up of community and claims within community. (NT service provider)*

## 4.5 Examples of Good Practice from the National Consultations

A number of examples were reported in the consultation where the principles and elements of good practice were reflected in the operation of services. The study did not seek to evaluate these services and they are provided here as they were reported in the consultation.

- ▶ A Reconnect Service in NT has invested resources in genuine engagement of community members in the development, design and the evaluation of the service. Recognising and valuing the role of community in the evaluation, on the basis that the community has the greatest stake in the services effectiveness, was particularly noteworthy. Another aspect of this services approach was the dedication to the often long and arduous process of locating family members and supporting reconnection. This approach was reported to be lacking in a number of mainstream services that were seen undertaking cursory assessments and reaching conclusions far too rapidly, to the detriment of the person concerned.
- ▶ A Safehouse in Qld is making inroads into the private rental market as an exit option. The service model focuses on living skills, including tenancy responsibilities and rights, maintenance issues and planning for

issues that may arise and threaten their tenancy, for example, people staying leading to overcrowding. As a result of this approach, women leaving the service have their bond and are able to demonstrate a savings capability. The service also provides ongoing support through an outreach component of their model.

- An NGO in Perth is successfully negotiating private rental accommodation for people referred by Housing West who are on the waiting list but whose particular needs are unlikely to be met through public housing stock. Through an intensive case management approach and a focus on developing people's own negotiation skills, positive results are being achieved.
- A Queensland Health street-based service in Cairns has included a focus on helping people who wish to return to their community to get there. This has achieved a significant reduction in the number of people living on the streets in Cairns and has been delivered through a partnership approach with several other agencies. Key elements of the approach include:
  - liaising with the community to ensure the person is welcome and assisting with resolving any tensions of issues that have been stopping the person from going home
  - establishing a regional airline as a 'payee' of Centrelink to enable the fare to be paid and then deducted from the person's payment over a period of time (fares are also provided at reduced rates)
  - an NGO provides clothing and food to enable the person to arrive home with food to share with family and community
  - most importantly, a person can access this support more than once.
- An Elder's Group in Queensland is being supported by a women's centre to focus on traditional healing. The group is made up of Elder women, each with a role in the areas of justice, poetry, story telling, traditional healing, dance and art, violence coordinators, bringing culture back, and regenerating land. They are seeking support from Greening Australia to revitalise a piece of traditional land for use by women to do their 'cultural work'.





# Bibliography

Aboriginal SAAP Advisory Group (ASAG), *Aboriginal Resource Guide for SAAP Case Management in South Australia*, Department of Family and Community Services, Department of Human Services (South Australia), 1998.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Homeless People in SAAP, SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report 2002–03* Australia AIHW cat no. HOU 9, Canberra (SAAP NDCA report Series 8).

Berry, M, MacKenzie, D, Briskman, L & Ngwenya, T, *Victorian Indigenous Homelessness Study*, prepared for the Aboriginal Housing Board of Vic, 2001.

Chamberlain, C, & MacKenzie, D, *Counting the Homeless*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001, Cat No. 2050.0.

Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness, *Indigenous Homelessness – National Homelessness Strategy Consultation Paper*, Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, 2005.

Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness, *Working Towards a National Homelessness Strategy Response to Consultations*, Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, 2003.

Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, *Case Management Resource Kit For Indigenous SAAP Services*, January 1999.

Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, *National Homelessness Strategy – A Discussion Paper*, May, 2000.

Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, *SAAP Monograph – Indigenous SAAP Clients*, Monograph Number 1, 2001.

Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, *Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – Indigenous Business is Everybody's Business*, 2003.

Crane, P, & Richardson, L, *Reconnect Action Research Kit*, School of Human Services, Queensland University of Technology for the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, Commonwealth of Australia, 2002. [http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/youth-reconnect\\_action\\_research\\_kit.htm](http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/youth-reconnect_action_research_kit.htm)

Department of Human Services (Vic), *Working With Koories: Resource Guide for SAAP Case Management with Clients from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Backgrounds*, 1998.

HMAC Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing, *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*, NSW Aboriginal Housing Office for HMAC, 2001, ISSN 1446-0416.

HMAC Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing, *nugalngul biik nugalngul willum (our own land – our own home) – Proceedings of the National Indigenous Homelessness Forum*, 4– 5 March, 2003, Melbourne, Vic. ISBN 0-646-42622-2.

HMAC Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing, Report to *HMAC Multi Measure Modelling of Indigenous Housing Need*, 2003.

HMAC Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing report to HMC, *Building a Better Future Outcomes Report 2002/03*, first annual report on the Australian Housing Ministers' Ten Year Statement of New Directions for Indigenous Housing, *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission Annual Report 2003–04, Chapter 6: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice*.

Keys Young, *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context and its possible implications for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program*, prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services, November 1998, Sydney, NSW.

Memcott, P, Long, S & Chambers, C, *A National Analysis of Strategies Used to Respond to Indigenous Itinerants and Public Place Dwellers*, prepared with a research grant from the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, Aboriginal Environments Research Centre, University of Queensland, St Lucia, April 2000.

Memcott, P, Long, S & Chambers, C, *Categories of Indigenous 'Homeless' People and Good Practice Responses to their Needs: Positioning Paper*, Brisbane: AHURI, 2003.

Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, *New Arrangements in Indigenous Affairs*, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, November 2004.

Parity, *Indigenous Homelessness Revisited*, Volume 12, Issue 3, April 1999.

Pearson, Noel, *Our Right to Take Responsibility*, Discussion Paper prepared for the Aboriginal leaders and community members of Cape York Peninsula, May 1999.

RPR Consulting, *Family Homelessness Prevention Pilot Interim Evaluation Report*, September 2003.

RPR Consulting, *'I'm looking at the future' Evaluation Report of Reconnect*, Commonwealth of Australia, August 2003.

RPR Consulting, *Reconnect Good Practice Guide: The Reconnect Framework*, April 2004.

RPR Consulting, *Reconnect Good Practice Guide: Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clients and Communities*, April 2004.

Smith, DE, *Researching Australian Indigenous Governance: A Methodological and Conceptual Framework*, ANU Centre for Aboriginal Economic Research, Working Paper No.29/2005, 2005.

Urbis KeysYoung, *National Consultations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness: Final Report*, prepared for Department of Family and Community Services, November 2005.



# Attachments

## Attachment 1

### **Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (SAAP IV – 2001/2005)**

#### **Terms of Reference**

##### **Role of Committee**

The Committee is an advisory body to the Commonwealth Minister for Family and Community Services on issues relating to homelessness. The role of the committee is to advise the Government, through the Minister, on initiatives to address homelessness and on the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and strategic policy directions and priorities for that program, consistent with the Terms of Reference set out below. The Committee provides a useful forum for the Minister to seek advice on progressing Government reforms.

The Committee was established under s.17 of the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994* and operates within its given Terms of Reference.

##### **Terms of Reference**

1. Formulate advice on homelessness issues taking into account, improved outcomes or implications for families and communities; and implications for government.
2. Advise the Minister on the development of strategic policy directions related to provision of services for people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, giving priority to developing early intervention strategies or pathways from homelessness/risk of homelessness to independent living.
3. Advise the Minister on strategies for continuing reform of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program in the context of the National Homelessness Strategy.

### **CACH Membership as at January 2006**

Mary Wooldridge (Chair)	Former Chief Executive Officer, The Foundation for Young Australians, Victoria
Patricia Brahim	General Manager, Julalikari Council, NT
Jennifer Fulcher	Director, Canefields Clubhouse Beenleigh Inc, Qld
Jeremy Gilchrist	Coordinator, Southern Area Brain Injury Service, NSW
Rev Chris Jones	Chief Executive Officer, Anglicare Tasmania, Tas
Robyn Martin	Department of Social Work and Social Policy, Curtin University, WA
Gerry Moore	Chief Executive Officer, South Eastern Aboriginal Legal Service, NSW
Tony Nicholson	Executive Director, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Vic
Jack Quinane	Executive Officer, Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations (AFHO), ACT
Clare Wall	Branch Manager, Housing Support Branch, Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

## Attachment 2

### Indigenous SAAP Clients (Data update)

Note: SAAP data shows that the total number of clients has increased from 90,025 to 97,560 from 1999–2000 to 2002–03. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients has also increased from 12,035 to 16,465 from 1999–2000 to 2002–03, perhaps outpacing the increase in the overall number of clients. This is partly due to the participation in the SAAP Data Collection of a large agency in Northern Queensland that provides most of its support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Since 2000–01, agencies funded under the Partnership Against Domestic Violence initiative have also been included in the SAAP program. Some of these agencies target their services at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Table 1. Comparison of Indigenous SAAP clients (2002–03) and the Indigenous population (2001) by State/Territory**

	Aust	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT
Estimated total population aged over 10 years	17.28m	5.81m	4.29m	3.28m	1.70m	1.34m	0.41m	0.28m	0.16m
No. of Indigenous Australians aged over 10 years	329,085	92,290	18,730	91,140	48,030	18,885	12,775	2,860	44,185
% of Indigenous people in the general population (over 10 years)	1.9	1.6	0.4	2.8	2.8	1.4	3.1	1.0	26.9
Total SAAP clients	97,560	25,445	30,500	18,895	9,275	9,420	4,260	1,780	3,125
No. of Indigenous SAAP clients	16,465	4,170	1,695	4,485	3,275	1,380	355	195	1,715
% of Indigenous SAAP clients	16.9	16.4	5.6	23.7	35.3	14.6	8.3	10.9	54.8
Over-representation of Indigenous people in SAAP compared with the population	8.9 times	10.3 times	12.7 times	8.6 times	12.5 times	10.4 times	2.7 times	10.7 times	2.0 times

Notes: Figures rounded to the nearest 5.

This table differs slightly from Table 1 of the Indigenous Monograph published in 2000 in that it uses the estimated population aged over 10 years for 2003.

**Table 5. Main reason for seeking assistance – Indigenous and non-Indigenous support periods by gender, 2002–03**

Main reason	Indigenous clients		Non-Indigenous clients	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Domestic violence	1.5	40.1	1.0	35.6
Financial difficulty	12.2	4.4	13.3	6.4
Relationship/family breakdown	8.5	7.5	10.9	11.2
Drug/alcohol/substance abuse	12.7	3.0	8.5	2.2
Usual accommodation not available	15.5	9.2	15.6	7.3
Eviction/previous accom. ended/asked to leave	11.0	6.1	13.6	10.8
Time out from family/other situation	8.3	8.2	5.9	4.4
Recent arrival in area	9.5	4.5	8.7	2.9
Itinerant	4.7	2.8	4.1	1.9
Physical/emotional/sexual abuse	1.2	5.5	1.2	5.7
Interpersonal conflict	2.1	2.2	3.2	2.7
Other	12.8	6.7	14.0	8.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	5,610 <sup>1</sup>	16,740 <sup>2</sup>	46,905 <sup>3</sup>	59,265 <sup>4</sup>

Notes: Figures rounded to the nearest 5.

- 1 Number excluded due to high-volume forms and non-response: 7,045.
- 2 Number excluded due to high-volume forms and non-response: 5,580.
- 3 Number excluded due to high-volume forms and non-response: 20,600.
- 4 Number excluded due to high-volume forms and non-response: 6,400.

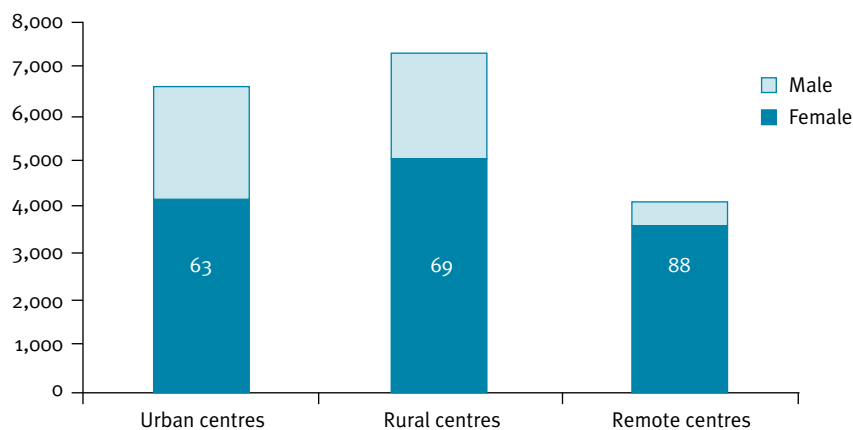
**Table 6. Main reason for seeking assistance – female Indigenous and non-Indigenous support periods by geographical location, 2002–03**

Main reason	Urban centres		Rural centres		Remote centres	
	Ind %	Non-Ind%	Ind %	Non-Ind%	Ind %	Non-Ind%
Domestic violence	31.5	34.2	40.3	39.1	47.5	25.5
Financial difficulty	4.6	6.1	7.0	6.8	1.4	6.8
Relationship/family breakdown	8.3	11.3	7.9	10.7	6.3	13.2
Drug/alcohol/substance abuse	4.4	2.7	2.0	1.2	2.8	1.2
Usual accommodation not available	10.8	7.4	9.6	7.1	7.3	8.0
Eviction/previous accom. ended/asked to leave	9.1	10.9	7.6	10.7	1.7	9.6
Time out from family/other situation	7.9	4.1	6.5	5.1	10.3	5.6
Recent arrival in area	4.9	2.4	4.2	3.5	4.5	11.0
Itinerant	3.9	2.4	1.7	1.0	2.9	1.1
Physical/emotional/sexual abuse	3.7	5.6	4.2	5.9	8.4	7.0
Interpersonal conflict	1.8	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.4	3.5
Other	9.2	10.4	6.5	5.9	4.6	7.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	5,195 <sup>1</sup>	39,075 <sup>2</sup>	5,845 <sup>3</sup>	19,115 <sup>4</sup>	5,700 <sup>5</sup>	1,070 <sup>6</sup>

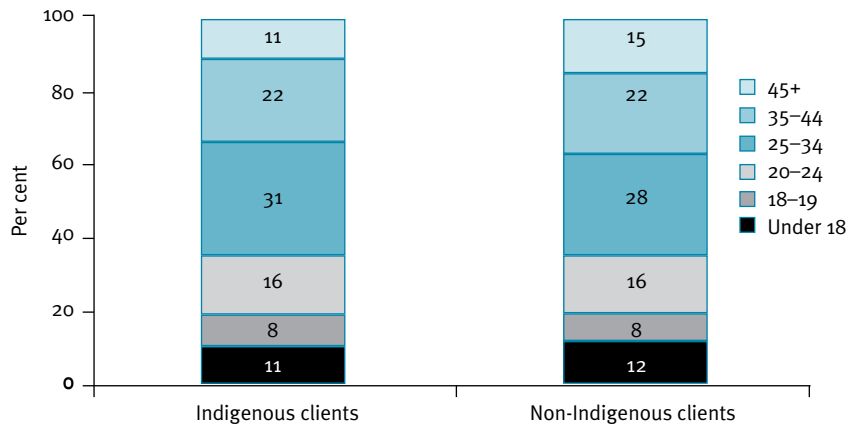
Notes: Figures rounded to the nearest 5.

- 1 Number excluded due to high-volume forms and non-response: 1,035.
- 2 Number excluded due to high-volume forms and non-response: 4,805.
- 3 Number excluded due to high-volume forms and non-response: 4,175.
- 4 Number excluded due to high-volume forms and non-response: 1,535.
- 5 Number excluded due to high-volume forms and non-response: 375.
- 6 Number excluded due to high-volume forms and non-response: 65.

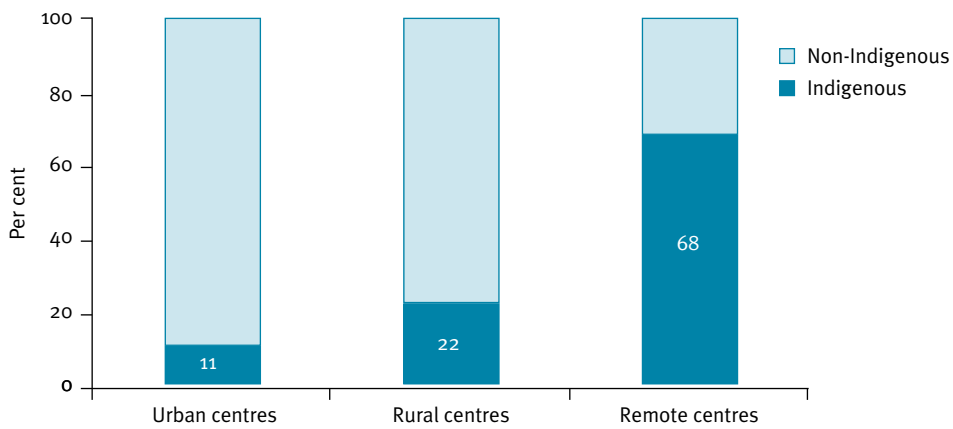
**Chart 3. Indigenous clients by gender and geographic region, 2002–03**



**Chart 4. Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients by age-group, 2002–03**



**Chart 5. Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients by geographic region, 2002–03**



## Attachment 3

# Response Strategies to Identified Categories of Indigenous Homelessness

**Table 2: Analysis of the Response Strategies in relation to the different categories of Indigenous Homeless and Public Place Dwelling People**

Response Strategies	Homeless and Public Place Dwelling Categories								
	1.0 Public Place Dwellers				2.0 At Risk Categories				3.0
	1.0 Public Place dwellers – short term	1.2 Public Place dwellers – medium term	1.3 Public Place dwellers – long term	1.4 Reluctant public Place dwellers	2.1 Insecurely housed	2.2 Substandard housed	2.3 Crowded housed	2.4 Dysfunctional mobile	3.0 Spiritually homeless
1. Legislative and Police Approaches [Only in conjunction with other strategies]	✓	✓	✓	✓					
2. Patrols and Outreach Services (Night Patrols, Aboriginal Wardens)	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
3. Diversionary Strategies (Detox Centres, Sobering Up Shelters)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	
4. Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour	✓	✓	✓	✓					
5. Philosophies of Client Interaction (Community Development Approach, Healing Framework)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Alcohol Strategies	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
7. Regional Strategies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. Accommodation Options									
8.1 Emergency or crisis accommodation (1–3 nights) (Women’s refuges, safe houses, sobering up shelters or hostels plus management support)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.2 Medium-term transitional housing (1–6 months) (hostels, boarding houses, large extended family housing, hospital hostel, managed town camp, plus management support)					✓	✓	✓		
8.3 Long-term housing with management support (houses, extended family houses, managed and serviced camps, flats and units, special housing for aged, men and women)					✓	✓	✓		
9. Service Centres and Gathering Places (Food Provision, Day Centre, Dedicated Space)	✓	✓	✓	✓					
10. The Physical Design of Public Spaces (Storage Shelves, Park Shelter, etc)	✓	✓	✓	✓					
11. Public Education Strategies	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
12. Phone in Information Services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13. Skills and Training for Outreach Workers (Effective use of Field Staff, Staff Training and Development, Information Sharing and Exchange)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	
14. Partnerships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15. Holistic Approaches	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



## Attachment 4

### Building a Better Future Outcomes Report 2002/03

Annual Report on Australian Housing Ministers' Ten Year Statement of New Directions for Indigenous Housing  
– *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*

The significant themes and findings of the Report are summarised as follows (page 6):

- ▶ **Recognising unmet housing need:** Unmet housing need among Indigenous Australians continues to be monitored and targeted with available resources. Addressing unmet need remains a huge challenge for governments:
  - 3,876 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are homeless
  - 11,417 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households are overcrowded
  - 15,013 low-income Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households pay more than 25 per cent of their income in rent
  - 5,812 Indigenous Community Housing Organisation (IHO) dwellings require major repairs or replacement
  - 147 IHO permanent dwellings are not connected to water supplies; 257 IHO permanent dwellings are not connected to electricity; and 301 IHO permanent dwellings are not connected to sewerage services.
- ▶ **Ensuring the effectiveness of assistance:** State and Territory governments are able to demonstrate that:
  - The social housing system is providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants with affordable housing and all newly acquired stock meets required standards.
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to all mainstream housing assistance is being provided in accordance with the current Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA).
  - Resources are being targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people according to need and engagement mechanisms are also enhancing the appropriateness of assistance.
  - Cross-portfolio coordination activities are being undertaken across jurisdictions to ensure that housing assistance contributes in an integrated way with other services to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and well being.
- ▶ **Enhancing sustainability:** State and Territory agencies are working to balance capital and recurrent expenditure to improve the sustainability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and improve the viability and management capacity of IHOs:
  - Over half of all 616 IHOs have now completed housing management plans.
  - An estimated 48 per cent of all IHOs are registered CentrePay organisations to enable rent deductions for tenants on Centrelink payments.
  - Most State and Territory agencies offer a range of resourcing, funding and other financial incentives to strengthen the management of IHOs.
- ▶ **Developing partnerships:** States and Territories have a range of strategies to provide and increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in construction, housing management and policy development roles.
- ▶ New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory all have Boards with all, or a majority of, members who are Indigenous, enabling real **participation in decision-making**. Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania also have planning structures that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) elected representatives.
- ▶ **Strengthening performance measurement:** State, Territory and Australian Governments have made real progress by agreeing on a National Reporting Framework (NRF) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and have resourced a national work plan for continued data development. Data in the *BBF Outcomes Report 2002–03* is based on agreed NRF performance indicators.

## Attachment 5

### SAAP Indigenous Agencies by Primary Target Group and Service Delivery Model

#### NDCA SAAP Administrative Data as at December 2003 – Agencies with Secondary Target Group: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – Sorted by State/Territory and by Service Delivery Model

Service Delivery Model	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	ACT	NT	AUST
Crisis/short Term Accommodation and Support	21	4	20	15	3	1	3	67
Medium/long Term Accommodation and Support	9	11	5	2	1	2		30
Day Support			1			1		2
Outreach Support	6		3	3	6		2	20
Telephone Information/Referral Agency Support		1						1
Multiple	9		4	2	1			16
Other	5		2	14				21
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>157</b>

#### NDCA SAAP Administrative Data as at December 2003 – Agencies with Secondary Target Group: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – Sorted by State/Territory and by Primary Target Group

Primary Target Group	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	ACT	NT	AUST
Young People	19	4	7	11	2	2		45
Single Men Only	3				1			4
Single Women Only	3							3
Families	4		1	2	1			8
Women and Women with Children Escaping Domestic Violence	16	6	19	13	7	2	3	66
Cross-target/ Multiple/General	5	6	8	10			2	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>157</b>

## Attachment 6

### Reconnect Good Practice Principles

Reconnect workers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities found the seven Good Practice Principles to be useful although they need to be understood in slightly different ways. The following has been drawn from the Good Practice Guide.

#### 1. Accessibility of services

A key aspect of accessibility is having Indigenous workers, although just being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is not enough. In some communities, particularly where there are different clans, family members or groups that do not mix, a non-Indigenous person can sometimes bridge gaps, or tackle issues that would be inappropriate for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander worker. There can also be pressure on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers to give preference to members of their families.

Identification of respected elders, who are consulted with and participate in the service on an ongoing basis, is crucial, as is working closely with the Community Council (whose membership often includes some of these elders or traditional elders). Agencies have found that they need to spend a good deal of time in both building relationships with the community and educating the community about their role.

The physical environment of the service needs to be welcoming and to signal cultural awareness and respect. It needs to be informal, without barriers such as glass partitions, and with outdoor space where people can sit down to talk. The frontline attitude of workers in the service on first contact with clients or community members can make or break its success. Some Reconnect services in remote communities don't provide services from an office at all. Rather the workers tend to 'walk around' the community and people stop them for a chat, which is how they learn about what needs to happen.

#### 2. Client driven service delivery

The importance of being flexible in dealing with the needs expressed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and communities cannot be stressed enough. Due to the long history of colonisation and subsequent loss of control over their own lives, self-determination is a highly valued concept. Services with rigid program guidelines will find it very difficult to gain the trust of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

#### 3. Holistic approaches to service delivery

This principle is very important as it matches the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people view the world. Trying to deal with people's issues within neat program boundaries does not work. Workers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need to be attuned to the complexities of family and community structures. 'Family' in this context could mean a very different set of people than what the worker may initially perceive.

One of the biggest challenges in working holistically is the lack of other services in many of the more remote communities. This involves trying to create resources where none exist. This principle also requires services to take the time to understand the past experiences and histories of individual communities. Moving forward may be a slow process, but has to involve empowering the community in the process.

#### 4. Working collaboratively

Collaboration needs to engage elders, community and family members and other agencies, particularly other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. This process takes time, including a lot of social contact to allow knowledge and trust to develop.

Many agencies report that in their work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, being a supporter or 'follower' was usually more important than being a 'leader'. They spoke of 'piggy-backing' on

other programs or taking advantage of other agencies' work to make contacts. The added bonus is that close collaboration with existing services provides 'soft entry points' for referrals, and means new services can draw on the expertise of more experienced ones – something most Reconnect agencies found very reassuring.

## 5. Culturally and contextually appropriate service delivery

Urban services are likely to have a wide range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous services to support youth and families that they can draw on. In remote communities, there may be no other services, or they may be 12 hours drive away on a rough dirt road. In urban communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people tend to be more disconnected from their traditional culture and language, whereas in remote communities language and lore are still strong and are often a primary aspect of reconnecting young people to community.

At the same time, in remote communities there is a strong external cultural influence and young people are often caught between old and new ways. This can pose a challenge for workers in relating appropriately with these young people. For example, tensions may arise when a family wants the young person to remain in the community, but the young person wishes to adopt a different lifestyle. Mediation and negotiation are important tools for Reconnect workers in these situations.

Some of the culturally appropriate approaches developed by agencies have included:

- a high level of practical support to address the immediate concerns of young people, for example, housing, health, education, income
- less use of clinically based counselling or formal mediation models
- connecting young people to adults within cultural activities, for example, bush camps, fishing expeditions, separate women's and men's groups.

Employing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff is a key strategy in providing culturally appropriate service. The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council in Central Australia follows the 'Malpa system' which requires any project or initiative in which a non-Indigenous worker is involved to have an Indigenous person as a co-worker. If there is no willing or appropriate person available, then the project does not proceed. This ensures an Indigenous perspective is central to the work and that Indigenous workers receive training that assists them to work well within 'mainstream' society and non-Indigenous workers receive training in cultural protocols.

## 6. Ongoing review and evaluation

A few strategies for successful ongoing review and evaluation are:

- actively listening to people and their concerns, knowing that it might take considerable time for people to tell you what they truly think or want
- using processes and tools which are oral and visual to overcome poor literacy skills
- using informal opportunities like sports and cultural events, home visits, and BBQs to gain greater access
- identifying key local community members as informants
- seeking the views of a range of stakeholder groups, for example, different family groups.

## 7. Building sustainability

The natural result of so many pilot or short-term programs being introduced into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is that there is a natural mistrust of any new service and people often complain about the lack of continuity of services. Reconnect workers have found that they need long lead times to build credibility and trust in communities.

Reconnect agencies have also recognised the importance of 'delivering' on something the community or client has indicated is important to them, no matter how small. This builds confidence in the agency and provides the stepping-stone to larger projects and outcomes.

## Attachment 7

### NHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Demonstration Projects

#### 1. National Analysis of Strategies used to Respond to Indigenous Itinerants and Public Place Dwellers

(Paul Memmott, Aboriginal Environments Research Centre)

This project provides an analysis of strategies used to respond to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander itinerants across Australia. Recommendations include:

- As a general principle, any movement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from their occupied public spaces due to conflicting public needs should be carried out in a process of negotiation, no matter how protracted, and accompanied by a planned set of alternate accommodation and servicing options that are acceptable to all parties.
- There is a need to recognise the right of public place dwellers to their outdoor lifestyle and provide forms of managed and serviced camps.
- Given the multiple complex needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public place dwellers, it is desirable to develop partnerships wherever possible to deliver mutually supportive services to such people, whether such partnerships involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community agencies, government departments, private sector groups or combinations of these entities. Such partnerships are essential to developing holistic responses to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander itinerants.

The Final Project Report can be found at:

[www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-iipd.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-iipd.htm)

#### 2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Safehouses Pilot

(Queensland Department of Communities)

This project aimed to develop and record sustainable service responses to family violence in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in North Queensland. The Project involved twelve remote communities with an intensive focus on six.

The following project methodology provides an example of good practice in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

- project commenced with a two-day workshop (December 2002) for 'safe house' service providers
- project reference group elected at the workshop:
  - representatives from communities, State Government (central & regional offices), and Australian Government
  - equal numbers of community and government representatives
  - includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander government officers wherever possible
  - significant decisions about the project cannot be taken unless at least three of the five community members are present
- recruitment of an Indigenous project officer with cultural knowledge and relationship with people in the communities
- in addition to an action research approach the project applies the Indigenous Research Agenda emphasising self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through a process of decolonisation, transformation, mobilisation and healing
- project officer works with the broad community (including individual and group interviews, community meetings and workshops) and liaises with Community Resource Officers from the Department of Communities

- project process aims to facilitate community capacity building through community representatives' participation in the workshops, the Reference Group and other initiatives that flow from the project.

Many of the findings of this project are provided at Section 4.2.4 above. The Final Project Report is available on the FaCSIA NHS internet site at:

[www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-safe\\_house\\_project.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-safe_house_project.htm)

### **3. Waarvah Project**

(Peirson Services and the Gurang Traditional Owner Company Bundaberg, Queensland)

Waarvah operates under an auspice arrangement with a non-Indigenous organisation, Peirson Services, providing the management structure and support for Waarvah while the Aboriginal organisation develops and provides information and education to Aboriginal young people in order to prevent homelessness.

The Project findings suggest that homelessness is often the result of systemic and underlying issues within a young Aboriginal person's life, for example, the influences within their family and school environment as well as their peer networks. The research identified the core drivers of homelessness as:

- lacking a sense of identity or belonging in terms of self, family or culture
- instability in the family/home environment
- being at odds with the education system
- lacking the bare necessities (food, shelter, love, protection, parenting boundaries)
- having no hope or direction for the future.

Conversely, these drivers can be considered as the core needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

Weekly camping trips of 2–3 days duration are a core aspect of the Waarvah Program. The field activities:

- remove the young person from the negative influences of the 'town street life'
- ensure the young people have a minimum number of days with good food
- teach basic practices of health, hygiene and social graces, such as table manners, caring for others and deferring to others out of respect
- encourage cooperation in making and breaking camp, cooking and cleaning
- teach Indigenous practices such as hunting and gathering in a traditional way
- impart knowledge and teach bush tucker and bush medicine skills
- allow the boys to become open and transparent (especially around the camp fire) about their life and the issues weighing upon them at the time
- provide an opportunity to sit with the Elders and have Aboriginal lore and dreaming stories imparted.

Effective elements of Waarvah's model of service delivery include the primary importance of traditional landowner input to, and approval of, the project. This involvement:

- legitimises the project for the Aboriginal community
- fosters positive relationships between communities and services
- empowers the community to seek their own self-determined solutions
- requires respect and compliance with traditional owner protocols
- requires engagement through appropriate communication processes to ensure meaningful interaction.

Another important element is the clear management structure and audit standard financial processes of the auspice body. This ensures Waarvah has a framework that provides the various funding bodies with their reporting and financial requirements.

Project evaluation indicates youth involved in the Waarvah Project are now at reduced risk of homelessness and generally exhibit improved living skills, a greatly improved sense of cultural identity and significantly improved self-confidence.

The Waarvah Project Evaluation can be found at:  
[www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-waarvah\\_project\\_evaluation.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-waarvah_project_evaluation.htm)

#### **4. Transitional Lifestyle Project**

(Adelaide Central Community Health Service)

This project aimed to increase the number of traditional living Aboriginal people who are able to sustain their housing tenancies by improving their knowledge and skills about living in an urban setting. Nine clients (eight females and one male) were recruited and their stories recorded. Findings include:

- It is important to engage an interpreter to work with Traditional living people.
- Overcrowding and inappropriate accommodation are major issues.
- Poor money management causes many individual and kinship group problems.
- Regular group activity by Traditional living people helps individuals to keep on coping with urban living.
- For cultural reasons, it is not appropriate for a female worker to expect to work with male Traditional living people.

The Final Project Report can be found at:  
[www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-malpa-kutjara.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-malpa-kutjara.htm)

#### **5. National Family Homelessness Project**

(Centrecare, Perth)

This 15-month longitudinal study of the effects of homelessness on 61 Aboriginal families (280 people including 198 accompanying children) identifies the effectiveness of existing support services and accommodation options.

Findings include:

- **Family violence** and conflict with family members are the highest contributors to Aboriginal family homelessness in WA.
- **Financial considerations**, particularly resulting from unforeseen events such as funerals, also have a significant effect on Aboriginal homelessness.
- **Limited knowledge of available housing support services** is the major factor inhibiting Aboriginal families in the ongoing maintenance of their housing.
- **Outreach support** was shown to be extremely beneficial in helping most of the participant families to remain housed. What was most useful was the ability, through the participant alerts, to visit the participant families when difficulties arose (see Section 4.2.3 above).
- **Location of properties** for Aboriginal families is a crucial factor in assisting them to maintain their housing.

Recommendations include:

- The availability of an outreach/advocacy service and well-developed relationships are both major requirements in addressing Aboriginal homelessness. The advocate role would provide appropriate information, crisis support and referrals.

- Provision of housing leases for Aboriginal family groups, particularly those who have experienced long-term cyclical homelessness.<sup>36</sup>

The Final Project Report can be found at:

[www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-national\\_family\\_homelessness\\_project.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-national_family_homelessness_project.htm)

---

<sup>36</sup> This recommendation would involve leasing properties to those family groups, with each family involved contributing to the lease costs. All members accessing the housing would pay part of the lease payments which could go towards the maintenance of the properties, and all would pay any tenant liability repairs to be completed on the properties. Support should be linked to the properties rather than the families, and the group would decide who is to live where. Due to the transient nature of Aboriginal families, each family could move from one to the other and make plans within the family about the living arrangements, and decide whether some properties should be left for emergency situations. If the properties 'belong' to those families, it is reasonable to expect that they are more likely to look after them. If the whole family is responsible for lease payments and repairs, then when particular individuals cause damage, other family members would be responsible for communicating to those individuals their discontent with having to pay for damages they have caused. Most importantly, members of the family would always have access to housing. No member of the family is to be denied this access. (National Family Homelessness Project, p16)



## Attachment 8

### Characteristics of Culturally Appropriate Programs for Indigenous People<sup>37</sup>

**Links to Indigenous development** – how does the program/service link to and/or build other initiatives within the community? This requires services/programs to consider and actively link with other initiatives within communities rather than to establish new programs in isolation.

**Utilisation of Indigenous resources** – what resources such as people, skills and environments are being used within the program/service? This places an obligation on services and programs to look at issues regarding employment of Indigenous staff as a central issue as well as how to ensure services utilise the strengths of the Indigenous community.

**Cultural affirmation** – how does this program affirm and support participants' identities as Indigenous? This principle challenges many current approaches to service delivery to Indigenous people, where the issue of cultural affirmation is ignored.

**Leadership endorsement** – is this program endorsed by respected people within the community? This principle requires mainstream services to develop understanding and relationships across the community in order to identify the range of people who are recognised as having cultural authority.

**Clarity of goals, quality of service and adequate resources** – does the program have clear goals to positively improve Indigenous peoples circumstances? Does the program deliver at the same quality levels as similar programs provided to non-Indigenous people and does the program have adequate resources for the task?

**Operating in Indigenous domains** – is the program operating in ways that are acceptable to this community such as venues and use of language? In more traditional communities this principle will require consideration of how to best deliver a service to differing age groups and genders for instance.

**Family/community focus** – does the program focus on wellbeing of the family/community, not just individuals? This principle leads programs and services to consider broader approaches than working with individual clients.

---

<sup>37</sup> Ratima, M, *Tipu Ora: A Maori centred approach to health promotion*, Health Promotion Forum Newsletter, 2000, 52, 2–3.

## Attachment 9

### A New Approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

From 1 July 2004 the Australian Government put in place new arrangements in Indigenous Affairs. These changes followed on from the Government's decision, announced on 15 April 2004, to abolish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the associated service-delivery agency, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS).

The arrangements are designed to achieve improvements in service delivery and outcomes for Indigenous Australians over the longer term. They provide a framework within which governments can share responsibility and work with each other and with Indigenous Australians, as well as with other partners in the private and non-government sectors.

The Government's Indigenous-specific programs are now administered by mainstream agencies, but under a 'whole-of-government' approach. The arrangements are also working to make mainstream programs (programs for all Australians) more accessible to Indigenous people, especially those living in urban and regional Australia.

#### Principles

The main principles informing the Indigenous Affairs arrangements are:

- **Collaboration** – Australian Government policies and programs are being coordinated and used more efficiently and strategically. Bilateral agreements negotiated with the States and Territories help to ensure coordination across governments.
- **Sharing responsibility** – Both government and Indigenous people have rights and obligations and must share responsibility for better outcomes.
- **Partnership** – With government and communities, other important partners in Indigenous advancement include non-government organisations and the private sector.
- **Regional and local need** – Government is talking directly with Indigenous communities and groups about their priorities and needs, and their longer term vision for the future.
- **Flexibility** – Funding is being made more flexible to respond to the particular needs of each community or region.
- **Accountability** – The success of programs, services and agreements is being measured on the results produced for Indigenous people.

#### Top-level structures

To achieve a cross-government focus, a unique governance structure is in place the national level comprising:

- the Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs, chaired by the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, which sets national policy and priorities and produces a single Indigenous Budget
- the National Indigenous Council, appointed to advise the Ministerial Taskforce
- the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs, which assists the Ministerial Taskforce in implementing its priorities and provides an annual report on progress with the arrangements.

With input from the National Indigenous Council, the Ministerial Taskforce has identified three areas for priority attention:

- early childhood intervention, a key focus of which will be improved mental and physical health, in particular primary health, and early educational outcomes

- safer communities (which includes issues of authority, law and order, but necessarily also focuses on dealing with issues of governance to ensure communities are functional and effective)
- building Indigenous wealth, employment and entrepreneurial culture, as these are integral to boosting economic development and reducing poverty and dependence on passive welfare.

### **Indigenous Coordination Centres**

Around Australia a network of Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) is in place, managed by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA).

ICCs are the main vehicle for coordination of Indigenous-specific programs at the regional and local levels and for direct engagement with Indigenous people. In rural and remote areas, ICCs are multi-agency units housing staff from most departments administering Indigenous programs and combining coordination, planning and service functions. In capital city ICCs, coordination and planning functions are generally located together. A number of ICCs also house State Government staff.

ICCs manage funding for most of the Australian Government's Indigenous programs through a single application process. They also broker innovative and flexible solutions to Indigenous needs using both Indigenous-specific and mainstream funding. These solutions may involve commitments by Indigenous families, communities or regions to work with government (and in some cases other parties) towards agreed goals. These commitments and the contribution to be made by government and others are set out in an agreement. Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) are made at the local level and Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs) at the regional level.

RPAs are also a primary mechanism for government to fund regional Indigenous engagement arrangements. These arrangements are evolving to help Indigenous people talk to government and participate in program and service delivery. The Australian Government does not want to impose structures but will support and work with arrangements that are designed locally or regionally and accepted by Indigenous people as their way to engage with government.

### **FaCSIA**

FaCSIA manages ICCs and supports national implementation of the Indigenous Affair arrangements. The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) within FaCSIA collaborates with other agencies in developing national Indigenous policy, supports the Ministerial Taskforce, National Indigenous Council and Secretaries' Group, coordinates the single Indigenous Budget, leads bilateral negotiations with State and Territory Governments, and monitors and evaluates outcomes from whole-of-government processes.

FaCSIA also administers a number of Indigenous programs.

## Attachment 10

### Indigenous Coordination Centres

<p><b>NEW SOUTH WALES</b>  <b>FaCSIA State Office</b>            Manager: Sue Finnigan            Levels 5 &amp; 6, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst,            Sydney NSW 2010            GPO Box 9820, Sydney NSW 2001            Tel: 02 8255 1715            Fax: 02 8255 1090</p>	<p><b>Sydney – Urban ICC</b>            Manager: Leon Donovan            Level 9, 300 Elizabeth Street, Sydney NSW 2000            PO Box K1176, Haymarket NSW 1240            Tel: 02 8255 7610            Fax: 02 8255 7660            Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>Regional and Remote ICCs</b>  <b>Bourke</b>            Manager: Tom Warren            26 Mertin Street, Bourke NSW 2840            PO Box 29, Bourke NSW 2840            Tel: 02 6872 1911            Fax: 02 6872 1906            Free call: 1800 079 098</p>	<p><b>Coffs Harbour</b>            Manager: Kerry Johnston            17 Duke Street, Coffs Harbour NSW 2450            PO Box 1335, Coffs Harbour NSW 2450            Tel: 02 6648 5800            Fax: 02 6648 5888            Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>Queanbeyan</b>            Manager: Helen Board            1 Monaro Street, Queanbeyan NSW 2620            PO Box 172, Queanbeyan NSW 2620            Tel: 02 6200 5150            Fax: 02 6200 5156            Free call: 1800 079 098</p>	<p><b>Tamworth</b>            Manager: Anthony Slater            468–470 Peel Street, Tamworth NSW 2340            PO Box 684, Tamworth NSW 2340            Tel: 02 6701 9000            Fax: 02 6701 9014            Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>Wagga Wagga</b>            Manager: Richard Morris            Level 1, 2 O'Reilly Street, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650            PO Box 144, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650            Tel: 02 6937 3040            Fax: 02 6937 3055            Free call: 1800 079 098</p>	<p><b>Dubbo</b>            Manager: James McCormack            128 Erskine Street, Dubbo NSW 2830            Tel: 02 6841 3100            Fax: 02 6841 3120            Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>NORTHERN TERRITORY</b>  <b>FaCSIA State Office</b>            Manager: Brian Stacey            Level 2 / 13 Scaturchio Street,            Casuarina NT 0810            GPO Box 9820, Darwin NT 0801            Tel: 08 8920 8900            Fax: 08 8920 8999</p>	<p><b>Darwin – Urban ICC</b>            Manager: Gayle de la Cruz            Building 2, 13 Scaturchio Street,            Casuarina NT 0810            PO Box 40670, Casuarina NT 0811            Tel: 08 8936 6401            Fax: 08 8936 6399            Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>Regional and Remote ICCs</b>  <b>Alice Springs</b>            Manager: Ross McDougall            Level 2, Jock Nelson Building, 16 Hartley St.,            Alice Springs NT 0870            PO Box 2255, Alice Springs NT 0871            Tel: 08 8959 4211            Fax: 08 8952 1937            Free call: 1800 079 098</p>	<p><b>Katherine</b>            Manager: Joy Lobo            1st Floor Randazzo Building, 14 Katherine Terrace            Katherine NT 0851            PO Box 84, Katherine NT 0851            Tel: 08 8973 2000            Fax: 08 8973 2029            Free call: 1800 079 098</p>

<p><b>Nhulunbuy</b>  Manager: Jo Ward  Government Offices, Endeavour Square,  Nhulunbuy NT 0880  PO Box 246, Nhulunbuy NT 0881  Tel: 08 8987 8596  Fax: 08 8987 8439  Free call: 1800 089 148</p>	<p><b>Tennant Creek</b>  Manager: Trish Spark  1–9 Paterson St, Tennant Creek NT 0861  PO Box 321, Tennant Creek NT 0861  Tel: 08 8962 1999  Fax: 08 8973 1988  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>QUEENSLAND</b>  <b>FaCSIA State Office</b>  Manager: Dianne Hawgood  Levels 5 &amp; 6, 200 Adelaide Street (cnr Edward Street),  Brisbane QLD 4000  GPO Box 9820, Brisbane QLD 4001  Tel: 07 3005 6038  Fax: 07 3005 6097</p>	<p><b>Brisbane – Urban ICC</b>  Manager: Tricia Button  Level 13, AXA Building, 144 Edward Street,  Brisbane QLD 4000  PO Box 2472, Brisbane QLD 4001  Tel: 07 3006 4936  Fax: 07 3221 4112  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>Regional and Remote ICCs</b>  <b>Cairns/Cape York</b>  Manager: Mike Fordham  Level 2, 111 Grafton Street, Cairns QLD 4870  PO Box 1599, Cairns QLD 4870  Tel: 07 4048 8600  Fax: 07 4048 8633  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>	<p><b>Mt Isa</b>  Manager: Tba  42–44 Simpson Street, Mt Isa QLD 4825  PO Box 2416, Mt Isa QLD 4825  Tel: 07 4747 3055  Fax: 07 4747 3077  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
	<p><b>Rockhampton</b>  Manager: Noelene McCormick  Level 1, Central Queensland University Building, Cnr  Fitzroy &amp; East St, Rockhampton QLD 4700  PO Box 550, Rockhampton QLD 4700  Tel: 07 4924 0066  Fax: 07 4922 5941  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>Roma</b>  Manager: Judith Cross  101–107 McDowall Street, Roma QLD 4455  PO Box 524, Roma QLD 4455  Tel: 07 4622 8877  Fax: 07 4622 3591  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>	<p><b>Townsville</b>  Manager: Anne-Marie Roberts  Level 2, 21 Stokes Street, Townsville QLD 4810  PO Box 2018, Townsville QLD 4810  Tel: 07 4760 1099  Fax: 07 4772 4436  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>SOUTH AUSTRALIA</b>  <b>FaCSIA State Office</b>  Manager: Vicki Toovey  55 Currie Street, Level 10, Eastern Lifts  Adelaide SA 5000  PO Box 9820, Adelaide SA 5001  Tel: 08 8400 2100  Fax: 08 8400 2197</p>	<p><b>Adelaide – Urban ICC</b>  Manager: Susan Corbisiero  Level 5, CPS Building, 44 Waymouth Street,  Adelaide SA 5000  PO Box 1672, Adelaide SA 5001  Tel: 08 8403 7277  Fax: 08 8403 7272  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>

<p><b>Regional and Remote ICCs</b>  <b>Ceduna</b>  Manager: Maree McColm  22B East Terrace, Ceduna SA 5690  PO Box 396, Ceduna SA 5690  Tel: 08 8624 4050  Fax: 08 8624 4055  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>	<p><b>Port Augusta</b>  Manager: Richard Trevena  38–40 Stirling Road, Port Augusta SA 5700  PO Box 2214, Port Augusta SA 5700  Tel: 08 8647 1500  Fax: 08 8641 0684  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>TASMANIA</b>  <b>FaCSIA State Office</b>  Manager: Wendi Key  21 Kirksway Place, Montpellier Building  Hobart TAS 7004  GPO Box 9820, Hobart TAS 7001  Tel: 03 6211 9300  Fax: 03 6211 9399</p>	<p><b>Hobart – Urban ICC</b>  Manager: Wendi Key  Level 5, 25 Argyle Street, Hobart TAS 7001  PO Box 8, Hobart TAS 7001  Tel: 03 6211 3900  Fax: 03 6211 3904  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>VICTORIA</b>  <b>FaCSIA State Office</b>  Manager: Frances Davies  Level 3, Casselden Place, 2 Lonsdale Street,  Melbourne VIC 3001  GPO Box 9820, Melbourne VIC 3001  Tel: 03 8626 1109  Fax: 03 8626 1161</p>	<p><b>Melbourne – Urban ICC</b>  Manager: Margaret Rasa  Level 26, Casselden Place, 2 Lonsdale Street,  Melbourne VIC 3000  Tel: 03 8620 3252  Fax: 03 8620 3282  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>WESTERN AUSTRALIA</b>  <b>FaCSIA State Office</b>  Manager: Andrew Jagers  Level 12, Central Park Building,  152–158 St George’s Terrace, Perth WA 6000  PO Box 9820, Perth WA 6848  Tel: 08 9229 1500  Fax: 08 9229 1597</p>	<p><b>Perth – Urban ICC</b>  Manager: Peter Bass  Level 14, 256 Adelaide Terrace, East Perth WA 6000  PO Box 6117, East Perth WA 6000  Tel: 08 9237 7750  Fax: 08 9237 7780  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>Regional and Remote ICCs</b>  <b>Broome</b>  Manager: Richard Aspinall  1 Short Street, Broome WA 6725  PO Box 613, Broome WA 6725  Tel: 08 9192 7855  Fax: 08 9193 5958  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>	<p><b>Derby</b>  Manager: Doug Clements  37 Rowan Street, Derby WA 6728  PO Box 1009, Derby WA 6728  Tel: 08 9193 2600  Fax: 08 9193 1103  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>
<p><b>Geraldton</b>  Manager: Tba  17 Lester Avenue, Geraldton WA 6530  PO Box 146, Geraldton WA 6531  Tel: 08 9921 9500  Fax: 08 9964 3166  Free call: 1800 079 098</p>	<p><b>Kalgoorlie</b>  Manager: Adrian Brahim  39–43 Boulder Road, Kalgoorlie WA 6430  PO Box 490, Kalgoorlie WA 6430  Tel: 08 9024 1100  Fax: 08 9024 1199  Free call: 1800 193 357</p>

---

**Kununurra**

Manager: Alistair Sherwin  
2250 Coolibah Drive, Kununurra WA 6743  
PO Box 260, Kununurra WA 6743  
Tel: 08 9168 2350  
Fax: 08 9168 3317  
Free call: 1800 193 348

**South Hedland**

Manager: Mark Hewitt  
Level 1, Commonwealth Building, 3 Brand Street,  
South Hedland WA 6722  
PO Box 2628, South Hedland WA 6722  
Tel: 08 9140 2163  
Fax: 08 9140 1321  
Free call: 1800 079 098

---

## Attachment 11

### National Consultation Study Team, Consultation Process and Stakeholders Consulted

#### Study Team

Claire Grealy	Senior Research Consultant
Kerry Reed Gilbert	Aboriginal Consultant, Kuracca Consultancy
Joanna Zubrzycki	Research Consultant
Lucy Greig	Research Assistant
Joanne Rutherford	Research Assistant

#### Project objective

The objective of the project was to obtain stakeholder feedback on the *Indigenous Homelessness: National Homelessness Strategy Consultation Paper* and to report on the key considerations in the development of a holistic approach to addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness. The report will inform the policy advice that the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (CACH) provides to the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and specifically addresses:

- the responses from stakeholders to the definitions, principles and strategies outlined in the paper
- the issues, potential solutions and innovative practices identified through the consultations.

The project involved extensive consultation with numerous and diverse stakeholders in six locations including:

- agencies providing a service to homeless Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using these services
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations that work with SAAP agencies
- other agencies providing services to homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- agencies relevant to the issue of homelessness and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs
- Commonwealth, State and Territory representatives
- Local Government representatives.

#### Scope of the consultations

The study sought to engage with people with an interest in addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness, as well as people directly affected by homelessness. The study included consultations with stakeholders from communities, the service provider sector and government officers across all levels of government. Consultations were undertaken in a range of metropolitan and regional centres around the country during September and October 2005.

Face to face consultations were conducted in Melbourne, Brisbane, Cairns, Alice Springs, Perth, Sydney and Canberra. Telephone conferences were also held with stakeholders in Darwin, Townsville and Tasmania. It is noteworthy that the ACT, Darwin, Townsville and Tasmania were not included as fieldwork locations in the original scope of the study. However, interest from stakeholders in these locations led to the investment of further resources by the former FaCS, enabling their contribution to be included in the study.

Over the study period, in excess of 200 people participated in the consultations; half of all participants were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. Participants often described themselves as 'wearing two hats', as both a service provider/government officer and an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. Generally people



indicated which ‘hat’ they were wearing when contributing comments and issues and this is reflected in the by-line for any quotes used in the Report.

In each location visited, three meetings were pre-arranged, targeting:

- government stakeholders with responsibility for planning and policy in relation to homelessness and related portfolios
- targeted and mainstream service providers of homelessness as well as related services, for example, mental health, health, advocacy and street outreach, etc
- community members affected by homelessness.

The Study Team spent the second day in each location following up opportunities that flowed from the formal sessions. This technique of scheduled and un-scheduled time proved to be highly effective.

The follow-up activity involved meeting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and consumers and attending network meetings and meetings with community Elders and leaders. These meetings were unlikely to have been possible without the entrée of key people who attended the formal sessions. Leaving room for responding to these opportunities was an important part of the approach.

### Participants in the National Indigenous Homelessness Consultations

#### **Brisbane 13/9/05**

Queensland Health PB MHV  
Queensland Health – Southern Zone (2)  
Centre for Indigenous Health (2)  
Department of Housing (3)  
Department of Communities (3)  
Aboriginal Hostels  
Brisbane City Council  
Corrective Services  
Nth Qld Regional Indigenous Housing Ltd  
Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (DATSIP) (2)

#### **Alice Springs 20/9/05**

Wiltja Tjutanku Palapayi Corporation  
Alice Springs Youth Accommodation  
Gap Youth Centre  
Aboriginal Housing  
NPY Women’s Council  
Department of Local Government  
Housing, and Sport  
Aboriginal Hostels Ltd (2)  
Julalikari Council (3)  
Mental Health Worker  
NT State Government  
FaCSIA Regional Office  
Salvation Army (2)  
Tangentyere Council (2)  
Tangentyere Safe Families  
Tangentyere Job Shop  
Artepe Aboriginal Corporation  
Office for Central Australia

#### **Cairns 15/9/05**

The Salvation Army  
Shelter Housing Action of Cairns  
Westcourt Community Health Centre (3)  
Indigenous Housing Services Ltd  
Warrangu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation  
Aboriginal and Islanders Alcohol Relief Service Ltd (2)  
Anglicare, Cairns  
Wuchopperen Health Service  
Department of Communities (5)  
Aboriginal Hostels Ltd  
Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC)  
FaCSIA Team ICC  
Tenants’ Union of Queensland Inc  
The Women’s Centre, Townsville (3)  
Centrelink

#### **Perth 22/9/05**

Wesley Mission  
Victoria Park Youth Accommodation  
Ruah Community Centre (2)  
Centrelink (2)  
FaCSIA (2)  
Centrelink (2)  
Department of Health – Mental Health  
Curtin University  
Department of Housing and Works  
(Aboriginal Housing Department)  
Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC)  
Department for Community Development  
Department of Indigenous Affairs

NT Shelter/NTCOSS (2)  
Western Desert Dialysis  
Department of the Chief Minister, Darwin  
Territory Housing, Darwin (3)  
Northern Territory Department of Health  
and Community Services, Family and  
Children's Services, Darwin  
Yillireung Housing Service, Darwin

**Sydney 27/9/05**

Centrelink  
Department of Housing (2)  
Aboriginal Hostels Ltd (3)  
ACT Dept of Disability, Housing and  
Community Services  
Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) (2)  
FaCS – Social Housing  
ACT Health  
Aboriginal Housing Office (2)  
Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination  
(OIPC)/ICC  
TGO  
Centrecare  
Youth Accommodation Association (YAA)  
Homelessness NSW/ACT  
City of Sydney Council  
Shelter NSW  
Homeless Persons Legal Service

**Canberra 14/10/05**

Chief Minister's Department  
Consultative Council/NSW Department of  
Housing  
FaCSIA  
Coalition of Community Housing  
Organisations of ACT  
ACT Department of Disability, Housing  
and Community Services (3)  
ALO@TCH  
Beryl Women's Refuge  
ACT Shelter  
ACT Corrective Services  
ACTCOSS (2)

Anglicare WA

**Melbourne 8/9/05 & 7/10/05**

Aboriginal Housing Board  
Victorian Aboriginal Community Service Assoc.  
Ngwala Willumbang  
Council of Homeless Persons (2)  
NHW Homelessness Network  
VIC Aboriginal Child Care  
FaCSIA  
Department of Human Services (10)  
Elizabeth Hoffman House  
Thornbury Aborigines Advancement League (2)

**Tasmania (Teleconference) 18/10/05**

Colony 47  
Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination  
Centrelink  
FaCSIA (2)

**Townsville (Teleconference) 22/09/05**

The Women's Centre (1)  
Elder's Group (3)

**Darwin (Teleconference) 20/09/05**

Homelessness Taskforce (6)



