19 Homelessness services

CONTENTS

19.1 Profile of homelessness services 19.1

19.2 Framework of performance indicators 19.5

19.3 Key performance indicator results 19.6

19.4 Definitions of key terms 19.23

19.5 References 19.27

|  |
| --- |
| Attachment tables |
| Attachment tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by a ‘19A’ prefix  (for example, table 19A.1) and are available from the website at www.pc.gov.au/rogs/2018. |
|  |
|  |

This chapter reports on the performance of specialist homelessness services funded by government under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) *National Affordable Housing Agreement* (NAHA) and the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* (NPAH)[[1]](#footnote-1).

Further information on the Report on Government Services including other reported service areas, the glossary and list of abbreviations is available at www.pc.gov.au/rogs/2018.

## 19.1 Profile of homelessness services

### Service overview

Government and non‑government specialist homelessness service providers deliver a range of services to clients — including supported accommodation, counselling, advocacy, links to housing, health, education and employment services, outreach support, brokerage and meals services, and financial and employment assistance.

#### Accessing homelessness services in Australia

Systems for the assessment, intake, referral and ongoing case management of specialist homelessness services clients vary across states and territories, ranging from agency‑based to centralised management models. This variation may affect data for specific performance indicators. Three broad summary categories are identified here — table 19A.38 summarises the intake and referral systems used in each jurisdiction and identifies the category with which they most closely align.

* *Community sector funding and support* — Assessment of client needs and intake into services is managed by individual specialist homelessness service providers in line with State or Territory policies. Referral to other service providers is made if clients’ needs are not able to be met by the initial provider. These systems may be supported by a coordinating service that links clients to local specialist homelessness service providers. Coordinating services may also make an initial assessment of clients’ needs (but do not provide homelessness services directly).
* *Central information management* — Assessment of client needs, intake and referral is managed by any specialist homelessness service provider using State/Territory central information management tools. The central information management system supports the identification of appropriate services for the client and indicates the availability/vacancy of those services across specialist homelessness service providers. Client information may be shared between providers upon referral (with client consent).
* *Central intake* — Assessment of client needs, intake and referral is managed by one or more ‘central intake’ agencies. Central intake agencies prioritise client access to services and, for specialist homelessness services, only refer clients as services and/or vacancies are available. Central information management tools may be used to share information between central intake agencies and specialist homelessness service providers.

### Roles and responsibilities

The NAHA commenced on 1 January 2009. To support the NAHA, a series of one‑ to three‑year NPAHs have been negotiated between the Australian Government and each State and Territory government. The NPAH contributes to the NAHA outcome to help ‘people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion’ (COAG 2012, 2015). The NPAH aims to achieve the following outcomes:

* fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these people will sleep rough
* fewer people will become homeless more than once
* people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation
* people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing (COAG 2015).

As part of broader COAG reforms, the NPAH clarified that State and Territory governments are responsible for day to day delivery of services. It also established an agreed set of desired outcomes for homelessness services, focused on improving the delivery of services to prevent and respond to homelessness.

Government funded specialist homelessness services are jointly funded by the Australian Government and State and Territory governments, via the National Affordable Housing Specific Purpose Payment (for housing and homelessness services) and the NPAH (for housing and support services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness — matched equally between the Australian Government and State and Territory governments).

### Funding

Direct expenditure on specialist homelessness services is undertaken by State and Territory governments. Recurrent government expenditure on specialist homelessness services for 2016‑17 was $817.4 million (or $33.52 per person in the population; table 19A.1) — 95.9 per cent of which was provided to agencies to deliver specialist homelessness services. The remaining 4.1 per cent was attributed to State/Territory government administration costs (table 19A.1).

### Size and scope

#### Definition for population

Data on the prevalence of homelessness are sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2012a). The ABS definition states that when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

* is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
* has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
* does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for, social relations (ABS 2012b).

Nationally in 2011[[2]](#footnote-2), approximately 48.9 Australians per 10 000 people in the population were homeless on Census night — an increase of 8 per cent from 2006 (ABS 2012c; table 19A.2).

Under the ABS definition for homelessness, there are six homeless operational groups (table 19A.2). In 2011, people living in supported accommodation provided by specialist homelessness service providers comprised approximately 20 per cent of the homeless population. The majority of homeless people were ‘persons living in severely crowded dwellings’ (39 per cent) (see section 19.4 for what constitutes ‘severely crowded’). Similar proportions of homeless people were staying temporarily in other households (17 per cent) and in boarding houses (17 per cent). Only 6 per cent of homeless people were in improvised dwellings, tents or sleepers out and 1 per cent were in other temporary lodgings on Census night 2011.

#### Definition for services

All clients of specialist homelessness services are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Clients are considered ‘homeless’ if their housing situation was any of the following:

* improvised dwelling, or no shelter
* short‑term temporary or emergency accommodation
* ‘couch surfing’ in a house, townhouse or flat with no tenure.

Nationally in 2016‑17, specialist homelessness services provided support to an estimated 288 273 people (table 19A.3). Specialist homelessness services can provide a number of services to clients in a single support period — across a range of support areas including general services (89.6 per cent), accommodation (29.9 per cent), assistance to sustain housing (27.0 per cent), and domestic and family violence services (25.2 per cent) (figure 19.1).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.1 Composition of support provided, all clients, 2016‑17**a** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |
| a See table 19A.3 for detailed footnotes and caveats. See definitions of key terms (section 19.4) for further details on the types of specialist homelessness services provided. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, Australia; table 19A.3. |

## 19.2 Framework of performance indicators

The performance indicator framework is based on shared government objectives for homelessness services delivered under the NAHA and NPAH (box 19.1).

|  |
| --- |
| Box 19.1 Objectives for specialist homelessness services |
| The specialist homelessness services system aims to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve sustainable housing, social inclusion and greater economic participation — re‑establishing their capacity to live independently — through the delivery of transitional supported accommodation and a range of related support services that:   * are accessible * identify and address individuals’ needs as appropriate * are of high quality, provided by qualified staff in a safe environment.   Governments aim for specialist homelessness services to meet these objectives in an equitable and efficient manner. |
|  |
|  |

The performance indicator framework provides information on equity, efficiency and effectiveness, and distinguishes the outputs and outcomes of homelessness services (figure 19.2).

The performance indicator framework shows which data are complete and comparable in the 2018 Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. Chapter 1 discusses data comparability and completeness from a Report‑wide perspective. In addition to section 19.1, the Report’s statistical context chapter (chapter 2) contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. Chapters 1 and 2 are available from the website at www.pc.gov.au/rogs/2018.

Improvements to performance reporting for specialist homelessness services are ongoing and include identifying data sources to fill gaps in reporting for performance indicators and measures, and improving the comparability and completeness of data.

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.2 Government funded specialist homelessness services performance indicator framework |
| |  | | --- | | More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
|  |
|  |

## 19.3 Key performance indicator results

Different delivery contexts, locations and types of clients can affect the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of homelessness services.

### Outputs

Outputs are the actual services delivered (while outcomes are the impact of these services on the status of an individual or group) (see chapter 1). Output information is also critical for equitable, efficient and effective management of government services.

### Equity

#### Access of special needs groups to homelessness services

‘Access of special needs groups to homelessness services’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide specialist homelessness services in an equitable manner (box 19.2).

|  |
| --- |
| Box 19.2 Access of special needs groups to homelessness services |
| ‘Access of special needs groups to homelessness services’ is defined as the proportion of all clients whose need for accommodation or services other than accommodation was met and who are in each of three population groups:   * Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people * people born in non‑main English speaking countries (non‑MESC) * people with disability.   Disability is defined for this indicator as people who identify to the service provider as having a long‑term health condition or disability and needing assistance with self‑care, mobility or communication (core activities) – this may underestimate the number of clients with disability who need support to access and maintain housing.  This is a proxy measure as it only captures people who are clients of specialist homelessness services with an identified need for service(s), rather than all those in the population who need services. In addition, relative need among each population group for specialist homelessness accommodation and other services is unknown.  In general, the special needs groups’ representation in the group of clients whose needs are met should be broadly similar to or higher than their representation in the population. Several factors need to be considered in interpreting the data — in particular, cultural differences can influence the extent to which each of the three population groups’ access specialist homelessness services.  Data reported for this indicator are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time * complete for the current reporting period. All required 2016‑17 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
|  |
|  |

In 2016‑17, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had a higher representation amongst all people accessing specialist homelessness services (24.7 per cent) than their representation in the population (3.1 per cent) — and made up29.7 per cent of clients whose needs for accommodation were met and 17.7 per cent of clients whose needs for services other than accommodation were met (figure 19.3).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.3 Proportion of clients who were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, 2016‑17**a** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |
| a See box 19.2 and table 19A.4 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection; ABS (2016) *Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2016*, Cat. no. 3101.0; ABS (2014) *Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2001 to 2026*, Cat. no. 3238.0; tables 2A.1, 2A.13 and 19A.4. |
|  |
|  |

In 2016‑17, people born in non‑main English speaking countries had a lower representation amongst clients of specialist homelessness services (11.0 per cent) than in the population (17.9 per cent) — and made up 9.7 per cent of clients whose needs for accommodation were met and 9.4 per cent of clients whose needs for services other than accommodation were met (table 19A.5). These results varied across jurisdictions.

In 2016‑17, people with disability had a lower representation amongst clients of specialist homelessness services (4.4 per cent) than in the population in June 2015 (5.8 per cent) — 4.9 per cent of all clients whose needs for accommodation were met and 3.2 per cent of all clients whose needs for services other than accommodation were met (table 19A.6).

### Effectiveness

#### Access — Unmet demand for homelessness services

‘Unmet demand for homelessness services’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that services are accessible to those who need them (box 19.3).

|  |
| --- |
| Box 19.3 Unmet demand for homelessness services |
| Unmet demand for homelessness services is defined as the proportion of people who do not receive specialist homelessness services that they need. It is reported using a proxy measure for two broad service types — accommodation services and services other than accommodation.   * Unmet need for accommodation is measured by: * the number of clients with an identified need for short‑term or emergency accommodation or medium‑term/transitional housing or long‑term housing who were not provided with or referred for these services (although they may have received other types of services), divided by the number of clients who had a need for short term or emergency accommodation or medium‑term/transitional housing or long‑term housing * Unmet need for services other than accommodation is measured by: * the number of clients with an identified need for at least one service other than accommodation (and no need for accommodation services) who were not provided with or referred for a service other than accommodation, divided by the number of clients who had a need for at least one service other than accommodation (and no need for accommodation services).   This is a proxy measure as it only captures people who are clients of specialist homelessness services with an identified need for service(s), rather than all those in the population who need services.  A low or decreasing proportion of clients with unmet demand is desirable.  Jurisdictions with some central intake models may record high unmet demand.  Data reported for these measures are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time but are not comparable across jurisdictions * complete for the current reporting period. All required 2016‑17 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
|  |
|  |

Nationally in 2016‑17, 30.2 per cent of clients with an identified need for accommodation did not have this need met (figure 19.4), an increase from 22.1 per cent in 2012‑13 (table 19A.7). A further 179.1 unassisted requests a day for accommodation services were made on average nationally in 2016‑17, maintaining an annual decrease from 296.7 in 2012‑13 (table 19A.8).

Nationally in 2016‑17, clients with unmet demand for services other than accommodation accounted for 3.9 per cent of the total demand for those services (table 19A.7). A further 69.9 unassisted requests a day for services other than accommodation were made on average nationally (table 19A.8).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.4 Proportion of clients with unmet need for accommodation services**a** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |
| a See box 19.3 and table 19A.7 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection*;* table 19A.7. |
|  |
|  |

#### Appropriateness — Addressing client needs

‘Addressing client needs’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to identify and address individuals’ needs as appropriate (box 19.4).

| Box 19.4 Addressing client needs |
| --- |
| ‘Addressing client needs’ is defined as the proportion of clients whose needs are identified and who receive services matching those needs as appropriate, and is measured in two parts:   * the identification of client needs and how they can be appropriately addressed is measured as the proportion of closed support periods (for clients) with an agreed case management plan * the provision of services to address clients’ needs is measured as the proportion of clients (with closed support periods) with an identified need for particular service types who are provided with (and/or referred for) at least one service of that type.   Holding other factors constant, a high or increasing proportion is desirable for:   * support periods where clients have an agreed case management plan * clients who received services that matched their needs and/ or were referred to another agency for that purpose.   (continued next page) |
|  |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| Box 19.4 (continued) |
| In some instances, a case management plan may be judged to be inappropriate (such as when a support period is short term — for example 24 hours). Jurisdictions with some central intake models may record a relatively low number of closed support periods where clients have an agreed case management plan and a relatively high number of clients with unmet need for services because, while all eligible clients receive an assessment, the provision of or referral for service is determined by their level of need relative to other clients.  Data reported for this indicator are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time for case management plans * comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time but not comparable across jurisdictions for match of client needs * complete for the current reporting period. All required 2016‑17 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
|  |
|  |

Nationally in 2016‑17, an agreed case management plan was in place for clients in 51.2 per cent of closed support periods, a rise from 45.7 per cent in 2012‑13. There was a similar increase for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients across this period (from   
54.2 per cent in 2012‑13 to 60.0 per cent in 2016‑17). These proportions varied across jurisdictions (figure 19.5 and tables 19A.9–10).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.5 Proportion of closed support periods with an agreed case management plan, all clients**a** |
| |  | | --- | | More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a See box 19.4 and table 19A.9 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*:AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection*;* table 19A.9. |
|  |

Nationally in 2016‑17, over half (117 922, or 52.3 per cent) of all clients with closed support periods who needed homelessness services needed accommodation or accommodation related assistance (table 19A.12). Of these clients, 66.7 per cent were directly provided with and/or referred for a service (36.5 per cent were provided with, 13.2 per cent both provided with and referred for, and 17.0 per cent referred only, for a service) (figure 19.6). Of clients seeking domestic and family violence related assistance, 88.8 per cent were directly provided with and/or referred for assistance, as were 83.0 per cent of clients seeking to sustain tenure (figure 19.6). Data for these and other service needs are provided in tables 19A.11–12.

Nationally in 2016‑17, agencies directly provided and/or referred a larger proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients with a need for accommodation or accommodation related assistance (74.2 per cent) to services than all clients (table 19A.13).

Data for clients born in non‑main English speaking countries are in table 19A.14. Time series data from 2012‑13 are included in tables 19A.12–14.

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.6 Addressing client needs (closed support periods), 2016‑17**a** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |
| Accom: Accommodation/accommodation related assistance. **Sustain:** Assistance to sustain tenure. **FDV**: Family/ Domestic and family violence assistance.  a See box 19.4 and table 19A.12 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection; table 19A.12. |
|  |
|  |

Prioritisation of client needs and identification of goals for clients to work toward during support is a key aspect of case management and is commonly part of agreed case management plans. Nationally in 2016‑17, at least half of all case management goals were achieved at the end of support for 69.2 per cent of closed support periods with individual case management plans (figure 19.7).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.7 Case management goals achieved (closed support periods)**a, b** |
| |  | | --- | | More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a See table 19A.15 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. b SA 2013‑14 case management goals achieved data are not available. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection*;* table 19A.15. |
|  |

#### Quality — Client satisfaction

‘Client satisfaction’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide high quality specialist homelessness services (box 19.5).

|  |
| --- |
| Box 19.5 Client satisfaction |
| ‘Client satisfaction’ is defined as the extent to which clients find homelessness services and programs to be helpful and of a high standard.  Measures for this indicator are under development. |
|  |
|  |

#### Quality — Achieving quality standards

‘Achieving quality standards’ is an indicator of government’s objective to provide services that are of high quality, provided by qualified staff in a safe environment (box 19.6).

|  |
| --- |
| Box 19.6 Achieving quality standards |
| ‘Achieving quality standards’ is defined as the proportion of specialist homelessness services that meet nationally agreed quality standards.  A high or increasing proportion is desirable.  Data are not yet available for reporting against this indicator as there are currently no nationally agreed quality standards for specialist homelessness services. |
|  |

### Efficiency

Across jurisdictions, there may be varying treatments of expenditure items (for example, superannuation) and different counting and reporting rules for generating financial data. Differences in expenditure data across jurisdictions may reflect to some extent differences in the way these data are compiled rather than variations in costs.

#### Cost per day of support

‘Cost per day of support’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide specialist homelessness services in an efficient manner (box 19.7).

|  |
| --- |
| Box 19.7 Cost per day of support |
| ‘Cost per day of support’ is defined as total recurrent expenditure on homelessness services divided by the number of days of support for clients receiving support and/or supported accommodation.  A low or decreasing cost per day of support may represent an improvement in efficiency, but may also indicate lower service quality, less complex client needs or longer waiting times for services.  Data reported for this indicator are:   * comparable within jurisdictions over time but are not comparable across jurisdictions * complete for the current reporting period. All required 2016‑17 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
|  |
|  |

Nationally, the recurrent cost per day of support for clients averaged $34.89 in 2016‑17 (figure 19.8) — an increase in real terms of 13.4 per cent from 2012‑13 (table 19A.16). Recurrent costs can also be measured per completed support periods or per client accessing homelessness services. Nationally in 2016‑17, the recurrent cost per completed support period was $1897 (table 19A.17) and the recurrent cost per client accessing homelessness services was $2835 (table 19A.18).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.8 Real recurrent cost per day of support for clients (2016‑17 dollars)**a** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |
| a See box 19.7 and table 19A.16 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection; Australian, State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 19A.16. |
|  |
|  |

### Outcomes

Outcomes are the impact of services on the status of an individual or group (see chapter 1).

#### Economic participation

‘Economic participation’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve social inclusion and greater economic participation — re‑establishing their capacity to live independently (box 19.8).

| Box 19.8 Economic participation |
| --- |
| ‘Economic participation’ is defined as the change in the proportion of clients with the capacity to actively participate in the economy between the start and end of support. Two proxy measures are reported for clients aged 15 years or over (with closed support periods):   * ‘achievement of employment, education and/or training on exit’ — the change in the proportion of clients who are employed and/or enrolled in formal education/training between the start and end of support * ‘achievement of income on exit’ — the change in the proportion of clients who have an income source between the start and end of support. |
| (continued next page) |
|  |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| Box 19.8 (continued) |
| These are proxy measures as they only capture people who are clients of specialist homelessness services, rather than all those in the population who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.  Data are reported for all clients and for clients with an identified need for services of that type.  Holding other factors constant, an increase in the proportion from start to end of support is desirable for clients who are employed and/or enrolled in education/training and clients who have an income source.  This is an indicator of outcomes in the short term. Longer term outcomes are important, but more difficult to measure.  Data reported for these measures are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time * complete for the current reporting period. All required 2016‑17 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
|  |
|  |

Nationally, in 2016‑17, the proportion of clients aged 15 years or over who were employed and/or enrolled in education and/or training after support was slightly higher than before support for all clients and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Of those in need of assistance to obtain or maintain employment or training, and/or education/training assistance, 37.6 per cent were employed and/or enrolled in education/training following support, compared with 32.0 per cent before support (for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients this was 27.7 per cent and 25.4 per cent, respectively) (table 19A.19).

When looking separately at employment and education/training the focus is on those seeking assistance for each, but it should be noted that whilst a decrease following support may indicate they did not achieve the individual employment or education/training outcome it does not mean that they did not achieve the alternative (for example, someone with an identified need for assistance in education may have found employment).

Nationally, in 2016‑17, for clients in need of assistance to obtain or maintain employment and training when entering homelessness services, 20.8 per cent were employed at the end of support compared with 11.9 per cent before support (for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients this was 15.0 per cent and 8.0 per cent, respectively) (figure 19.9 and table 19A.20). Further information on labour force status before and after support is provided for all clients and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in tables 19A.20 and 19A.21, respectively.

Amongst those clients who were unemployed before support and in need of this assistance in 2016‑17, 14.5 per cent were employed after support. Of clients who were not in the labour force before support, 12.7 per cent were employed after support (table 19A.23).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.9 Employment status of clients before and after support, clients in need of assistance to obtain or maintain employment and training (closed support periods), 2016‑17**a** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |
| a See box 19.8 and table 19A.21 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection; table 19A.21. |
|  |
|  |

Nationally in 2016‑17, there was little change in the proportion of clients aged 15 years or over in need of assistance with education/training who were enrolled in formal education and/or training following support (table 19A.24).

For people aged 12–18 years, engagement in education and/or training is associated with improved outcomes in later employment and income status and therefore in economic participation. Nationally in 2016‑17, for those identified as needing assistance to obtain or maintain education and/or training, 73.2 per cent were enrolled in formal study or training after support (figure 19.10) compared to 76.9 per cent before support (table 19A.26).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.10 Young clients (aged 12−18 years) who needed education and/or training assistance, by educational enrolment status before and after support (closed support periods), 2016‑17**a** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |
| a See table 19A.26 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection*;* table 19A.26. |
|  |
|  |

Nationally in 2016‑17, 91.5 per cent of clients had an income source after support, compared with 90.2 per cent before support (table 19A.27). For those who needed income assistance when entering homelessness services, 91.7 per cent had an income source after support, compared with 86.9 per cent before support (figure 19.11) — this 4.8 percentage point increase is higher than that in 2012‑13 (93.9 per cent and 89.6 per cent respectively; table 19A.28).

The main source of income after support in 2016‑17 was a government pension/allowance (79.3 per cent, an increase from 71.7 per cent before support — though this varied across jurisdictions; figure 19.11).

Nationally, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients who needed income assistance when entering homelessness services in 2016 17, 93.1 per cent had an income source after support, compared to 89.2 per cent before support (table 19A.29).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.11 Income status before and after support, as a proportion of clients who needed income assistance (closed support periods), 2016‑17**a** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |
| a See box 19.8 and table 19A.28 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection; table 19A.28. |
|  |
|  |

#### Achievement of sustained housing

‘Achievement of sustained housing’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve sustainable housing and re‑establish their capacity to live independently (box 19.9).

| Box 19.9 Achievement of sustained housing |
| --- |
| ‘Achievement of sustained housing’ is defined as the proportion of clients living in and sustaining independent housing following support. Two proxy measures are reported:   * achievement of independent housing on exit — the change in the proportion of clients (with closed support periods) living in independent housing between the start and end of support, reported for all clients and for clients with an identified need for assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing including ‘to obtain long term housing’, ‘sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction’, or, ‘prevent foreclosures or for mortgage arrears’ * repeat homelessness — the number of specialist homelessness service clients who change status from ‘homeless’ to ‘not homeless’ and back to ‘homeless’ in the reporting period, divided by the number of clients who experienced homelessness at any time in the reporting period. (The definition of ‘homeless’ for specialist homelessness service clients is in section 19.4). |
| (continued next page) |
|  |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| Box 19.10 (continued) |
| These are proxy measures as they only capture people who are clients of specialist homelessness services, rather than all those in the population who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.  Holding other factors constant, a high or increasing proportion of clients who achieved independent housing in closed support periods and a low or decreasing proportion of clients who experienced repeat homelessness is desirable.  The reported data are for relatively short term outcomes achieved within a financial year. Longer term outcomes are also important, but more difficult to measure.  Data reported for these measures are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time * complete for the current reporting period. All required 2016‑17 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
|  |
|  |

##### Achievement of independent housing on exit

Nationally in 2016‑17, 63.8 per cent of clients (with closed support periods) achieved independent housing following support, an increase from 52.0 per cent before support (table 19A.30). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, 62.4 per cent achieved independent housing following support, an increase from 49.5 per cent before support.

Among clients who had an identified need for assistance with obtaining or maintaining independent housing, 63.9 per cent achieved independent housing after support (up from 50.1 per cent before support) in 2016‑17, compared with 61.2 per cent (up from 50.5 per cent before support) in 2012‑13. This included clients who moved or returned to private rental housing (40.2 per cent) and to public or community rental housing (20.4 per cent) (figure 19.12). For the 36.1 per cent of clients who did not achieve independent housing after support, data by type of tenure is available in table 19A.31.

Nationally, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients who had an identified need   
for assistance with obtaining or maintaining independent housing, 63.5 per cent achieved independent housing in 2016‑17. Compared to all clients, a lower proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients moved or returned to private   
rental housing (28.2 per cent compared to 40.2 per cent), but a higher proportion moved or   
returned to public or community rental housing (32.2 per cent compared to 20.4 per cent) (table 19A.32).

Data for clients living in non‑independent housing before support are available in table 19A.33.

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.12 Housing tenure type after support, as a proportion of clients who needed assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing (closed support periods)**a, b** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |
| a See box 19.9 and table 19A.31 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. b Other independent housing includes: ‘Purchasing/purchased own home’ and ‘Other rental’. |
| *Source*:AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection; table 19A.31. |
|  |
|  |

Achievement of housing may or may not be sustained after exiting support. Nationally in 2016‑17, 87.5 per cent of clients with an identified need for assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing who achieved independent housing at the end of support did not return during the reference year with this need. This proportion was 89.4 per cent in 2012‑13 (figure 19.13). Data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are presented in table 19A.35.

| Figure 19.13 Clients who did not re‑present needing housing/ accommodation assistance, as a proportion of clients who needed assistance to obtain or maintain — and achieved — independent housing**a** |
| --- |
| |  | | --- | |
| a See box 19.9 and table 19A.34 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection*;* table 19A.34. |
|  |
|  |

##### Proportion of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness

Nationally, of all clients who experienced homelessness in 2016‑17, 5.3 per cent experienced it more than once in the reporting year — an increase from 3.5 per cent in 2012‑13 (figure 19.14). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, the proportion who experienced repeat homelessness in 2016‑17 was 6.4 per cent (figure 19.14).

Nationally in the period from 2012‑13 to 2016‑17, there has been little difference in the rate of repeat homelessness between capital city clients and clients living in the rest of state/territory (table 19A.37).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 19.14 Clients who had more than one period of homelessness, all clients and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients**a** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |
| a See box 19.9 and tables 19A.36–37 or detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: AIHW (unpublished) Specialist Homelessness Services Collection;tables 19A.36–37. |
|  |

## 19.4 Definitions of key terms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Age** | Age is calculated as age of the client on the start date of their first support period of the reporting period or the first date of the reporting period, whichever of the two is the later date. |
| **Client** | A person who receives a specialist homelessness service.  To be a client, the person must directly receive a service and not just be a beneficiary of a service. Children who present with a parent or guardian and receive a service are considered to be a client. This includes a service that they share with their parent or guardian such as meals or accommodation.  Children who present with a parent or guardian but do not directly receive a service are not considered to be clients. This includes situations where the parent or guardian receives assistance to prevent tenancy failure or eviction.  Clients can be counted differently according to the data item that is being reported:   * Clients (demographic) — For clients with multiple support periods, reported data is determined based on the information at the start date of the client’s first support period in the reporting period or the first date of the reporting period, whichever is later * Clients (counted by support periods) — For each data item, clients are counted based on support periods with distinct client information. The same client can be counted more than once if they have multiple support periods with a different response for the data item. The result is that percentages do not add up to 100 * Clients (outcomes) – Clients are counted based on closed support periods where a valid response is recorded both when presenting to an agency and at the end of support. |
|  |
| **Closed support period** | A support period that had finished on or before the end of the reporting period. |
| **Comparability** | Data are considered comparable if (subject to caveats) they can be used to inform an assessment of comparative performance. Typically, data are considered comparable when they are collected in the same way and in accordance with the same definitions. For comparable indicators or measures, significant differences in reported results allow an assessment of differences in performance, rather than being the result of anomalies in the data. |
| **Completeness** | Data are considered complete if all required data are available for all jurisdictions that provide the service. |
| **Disability** | Specialist homelessness services clients who have identified as having a long‑term health condition or disability and needing assistance with core activities (self‑care, mobility and/or communication).  From July 2013, the specialist homelessness services collection collects information on whether, and to what extent, a long‑term health condition or disability restricts clients’ everyday activities across the following three life areas and they need help/supervision with these tasks:   * self‑care * mobility * communication.   The information is consistent with data collected in the 2011 Census and the 2014 and 2016 National Social Housing Survey. Questions are based on the Census ‘Core Activity Need for Assistance’ concept. |
| **Homeless definition for clients of specialist homelessness services** | Clients of specialist homelessness services are defined as being homeless in each month where at least one of the following describes their housing situation:   * dwelling type is caravan, tent, cabin, boat, improvised building/dwelling, no dwelling/street/park/in the open, motor vehicle, boarding/rooming house, emergency accommodation, hotel/motel/bed and breakfast * tenure type is renting or living rent free in transitional housing, caravan park, boarding/rooming house or emergency accommodation/night shelter/women’s refuge/youth shelter; OR if the client has no tenure * conditions of occupancy is couch surfer.   Regardless of tenure or conditions of occupancy, a client is not considered to be homeless if the dwelling type is reported as ‘Institution’ in one of these categories:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * hospital (excluding psychiatric) * psychiatric hospital/unit * disability support * rehabilitation * adult correctional facility | * youth/juvenile justice correctional centre * boarding school/residential college * aged care facility * immigration detention centre. | |
| **No tenure** | A type of housing tenure recorded for clients who are sleeping rough or do not have a legal right to occupy a dwelling and may be asked to leave at any time. It includes couch surfing, living in an institutional setting, living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting, using cars or railway carriages, improvised dwellings or living in long grass. |
| **Non‑ conventional accommodation** | Non‑conventional accommodation is defined as:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * living on the streets * sleeping in parks * squatting | * staying in cars or railway carriages * living in improvised dwellings * living in long grass. | |
| **Non‑main English speaking countries** | Non‑main English speaking countries (non‑MESC) are all countries except Australia, United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, United States of America and South Africa. |
| **Ongoing support period** | A support period is considered ongoing at the end of the reporting period if each of the following conditions is met:   * no support end‑date is provided * no after‑support information is provided * corresponding client data was received in the month following the end of the reporting period. |
| **Real expenditure** | Actual expenditure adjusted for changes in prices. Adjustments are made using the General Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GGFCE) chain price deflator (2016‑17=100). |
| **Referral** | A referral to another agency is provided only if that agency accepts the person concerned for an appointment or interview. |
| **Severely crowded dwelling** | The ABS categorises a dwelling as severely crowded if it requires four or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the number of people who usually live there, based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (ABS 2012b). |
| **Short‑term or emergency accommodation** | Short‑term or emergency accommodation includes: refuges; crisis shelter; couch surfing; living temporarily with friends and relatives; insecure accommodation on a short‑term basis; and, emergency accommodation arranged by a specialist homelessness agency (e.g. in hotels, motels etc.).  The following short‑term accommodation options are not included:   * hotels, motels, caravan parks and other temporary accommodation used when a person is on holiday or travelling * custodial and care arrangements, such as prisons and hospitals * temporary accommodation used by a person while renovating usual residence or building a new residence (e.g. weekenders, caravans). |
| **Specialist homelessness agency** | An organisation that receives government funding to deliver specialist homelessness services. Assistance is provided to clients aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. Agencies may also receive funding from other sources.  Inclusion of agencies in the specialist homelessness services collection is determined by the State and Territory departments responsible for administering the government response to homelessness. Not all funded agencies are required to participate in data collection. |
| **Specialist homelessness service(s)** | Assistance provided by a specialist homelessness agency to a client aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. The specialist homelessness services that are in scope for this collection and that may be provided during a support period are:  *Housing/accommodation services*:   * short‑term or emergency accommodation * medium‑term/transitional housing * long‑term housing * assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction * assistance to prevent foreclosures or for mortgage arrears.   *Specialised services*:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * child protection services * parenting skills education | * professional legal services * financial advice and counselling |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | * child‑specific specialist counselling services * psychological services * psychiatric services * mental health services * pregnancy assistance * family planning support * physical disability services * intellectual disability services * health/medical services | * counselling for problem gambling * drug/alcohol counselling * specialist counselling services * interpreter services * assistance with immigration services * culturally specific services * assistance to connect culturally * other specialised services. | |
| *General assistance and support services:*   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * assertive outreach * assistance to obtain/maintain government allowance * employment assistance * training assistance * educational assistance * financial information * material aid/brokerage * assistance for incest/sexual * assistance for domestic and family violence * family/relationship assistance * assistance for trauma * assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems * living skills/personal development * legal information | * court support * advice/information * retrieval/storage/removal of personal belongings * advocacy/liaison on behalf of client * school liaison * child care * structured play/skills development * child contact and residence arrangements * meals * laundry/shower facilities * recreation * transport * other basic assistance. | |
| **Support period** | The period of time a client receives services from an agency is referred to as a support period. A support period starts on the day the client first receives a service from an agency and ends when:   * the relationship between the client and the agency ends * the client has reached their maximum amount of support the agency can offer * a client has not received any services from the agency for a whole calendar month and does not have an appointment booked with the agency * there is no ongoing relationship. |
| **Unmet demand (or unmet need / unassisted request)** | Unmet demand for homelessness services occurs when an individual who approaches a specialist homelessness service provider does not receive, and is not referred elsewhere for, accommodation or other services that they need. For clients of specialist homelessness services, unmet demand is categorised as unmet need. For those who are not clients and do not receive any assessment, service or referral elsewhere for services, unmet demand is categorised as unassisted requests. |

## 19.5 References

ABS 2012a, Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing, Cat. no. 2049.0.55.001.

—— 2012b, Information Paper: A Statistical Definition of Homelessness, Cat. no. 4922.0, Canberra.

—— 2012c, Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, Cat. no. 2049.0, Canberra.

COAG (Council of Australian Governments) 2012, *National Affordable Housing Agreement*, viewed 26 August 2016, www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/ national\_agreements.aspx.

—— 2015 National Partnership Agreement On Homelessness — 2015–2017, viewed 18 August 2016, <www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/housing.aspx>.

1. The NAHA and NPAH are due to expire 1 July 2018. A new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement is currently under negotiation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Data for 2016 were not available in time for inclusion in this Report. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)