

# Report on Government Services 2021

PART G, SECTION 19: RELEASED ON 20 JANUARY 2021

## 19 Homelessness services

### Impact of COVID-19 on data for the Homelessness services section

COVID-19 may affect data in this Report in a number of ways. This includes in respect of actual performance (that is, the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery in 2020 which is reflected in the data results), and the collection and processing of data (that is, the ability of data providers to undertake data collection and process results for inclusion in the Report).

For the Homelessness services section, there are no significant changes to the data as a result of COVID-19.

This section focuses on specialist homelessness services funded by government under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA). The NHHA came into effect from 1 July 2018, replacing the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the associated National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). Other non-specialist homelessness services are not included in this Report.

The **Indicator Results** tab uses data from the data tables to provide information on the performance for each indicator in the **Indicator Framework**. The same data are also available in CSV format.

## Context

### Objectives for specialist homelessness services

The specialist homelessness services system aims to promote wellbeing and independence for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, by providing assistance that supports them to achieve and maintain housing and social and economic participation. Governments seek to achieve these aims through funding specialist homelessness services to deliver 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.

### 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.

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## 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 19.1](#) in the Homelessness services interpretative material 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 NHHA aims to contribute to an effective homelessness service that responds to and supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve and maintain housing, and addresses the incidence and prevalence of homelessness (COAG 2018).

State and Territory governments are responsible for day to day delivery of services.

Government funded specialist homelessness services are jointly funded by the Australian Government and State and Territory governments, via NHHA funding (Homelessness component — 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 2019-20 was \$1.1 billion (or \$41.34 per person in the population; [table 19A.1](#)) — 97.1 per cent of which was provided to agencies to deliver specialist homelessness services. The remaining 2.9 per cent was attributed to State/Territory government administration costs ([table 19A.1](#)).

## Size and scope

### Population

Data on the prevalence of homelessness are sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2018).

- Nationally in 2016, approximately 49.8 Australians per 10 000 people in the population were homeless on Census night — an increase of 4.6 per cent from 2011 (table 19A.2).

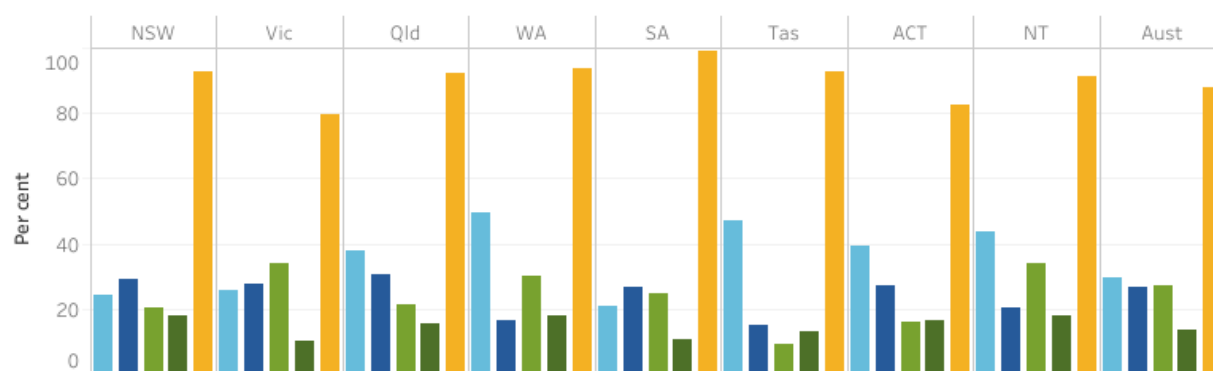
Under the ABS definition for homelessness, there are six homeless operational groups (rates are provided in table 19A.2). The proportion of the homeless population in each group varies. In 2016, people living in supported accommodation provided by specialist homelessness service providers comprised approximately 18.2 per cent of the homeless population. The majority of homeless people were 'persons living in severely crowded dwellings' (43.9 per cent) (see sub-section 19.4 for what constitutes 'severely crowded'). Similar proportions of homeless people were staying temporarily in other households (15.2 per cent) and in boarding houses (15.0 per cent). Only 7.0 per cent of homeless people were in improvised dwellings, tents or sleepers out and 0.6 per cent were in other temporary lodgings on Census night 2016 (ABS unpublished).

### Services

Figure 19.1 Composition of support provided, 2019-20

The estimated number of people provided with support by specialist homelessness services across jurisdictions was:

Unit	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
no.	70,372	115,306	43,094	24,956	19,218	6,444	4,143	10,277	290,462



Source: table 19A.3

Data tables are referenced above by a '19A' prefix and all data (footnotes and data sources) are available for download from the supporting material below (both in Excel and CSV format).


- Accommodation/accommodation related assistance
- Assistance to sustain housing tenure
- Domestic/family violence services
- Other specialist services
- General services

Select year:  
2019-20

## References

ABS 2012, Information Paper: *A Statistical Definition of Homelessness*, Cat. no. 4922.0, Canberra.

— 2018, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016*, Cat. no. 20492.0, Canberra.

COAG (Council of Australian Governments) 2018, *National Housing and Homelessness Agreement*, [www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/national\\_agreements.aspx](http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/national_agreements.aspx)  (accessed 1 October 2020).

## Indicator Framework

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

The performance indicator framework shows which data are complete and comparable in this report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. [Section 1](#) discusses data comparability and completeness from a Report-wide perspective. In addition to the service area's Profile information, the Report's statistical context ([Section 2](#)) contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this section.

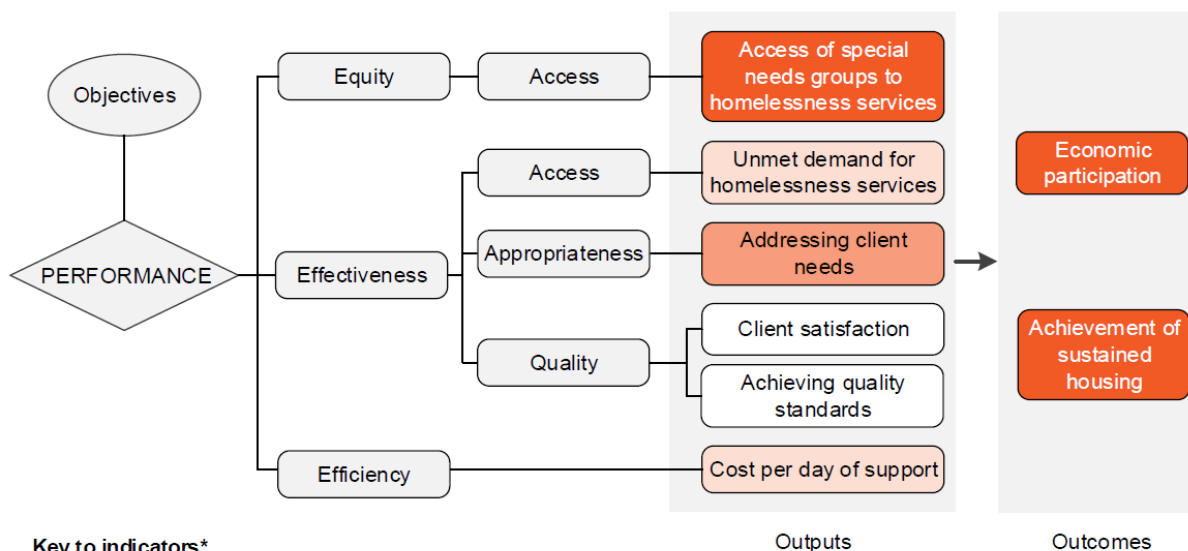
Improvements to performance reporting for specialist homelessness services are ongoing and include identifying data sources to fill gaps in reporting for performance indicators and measures, and improving the comparability and completeness of data.

## Outputs

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

## Outcomes

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



### Key to indicators\*

- Text Most recent data for all measures are comparable and complete
- Text Most recent data for at least one measure are comparable and complete
- Text Most recent data for all measures are either not comparable and/or not complete
- Text No data reported and/or no measures yet developed

\* A description of the comparability and completeness of each measure is provided in indicator interpretation boxes within the section

## Indicator Results

An overview of the Homelessness services performance indicator results are presented. Different delivery contexts, locations and types of clients can affect the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of homelessness services.

Information to assist the interpretation of these data can be found in the Homelessness services supporting interpretative material and data tables. Web references to the AIHW data quality statements for the specialist homelessness services collection are available in the relevant data table. Data tables are identified by a '19A' prefix (for example, table 19A.1).

All data are available for download as an excel spreadsheet and as a CSV dataset — refer to [Download supporting material](#). Specific data used in figures can be downloaded by clicking in the figure area, navigating to the bottom of the visualisation to the grey toolbar, clicking on the 'Download' icon and selecting 'Data' from the menu. Selecting 'PDF' or 'Powerpoint' from the 'Download' menu will download a static view of the performance indicator results.

**Access of special needs groups to homelessness services** is an indicator of governments' objective to provide specialist homelessness services in an equitable manner.

**Measure:** 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. 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.

**Guidance:** 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.

■ Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.

■ Data are complete for the current reporting period.

Select population group:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people  
 People born in non-main English speaking countries  
 People with disability

Select year(s):

(Multiple values) ▼

**Table 19.2 Proportion of clients who were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people among different client and population groups, by jurisdiction, by year**

			NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Clients with met demand for accommodation services	2019-20	%	31.3	12.7	37.8	62.4	27.9	15.7	18.5	84.4	31.4
	2018-19	%	30.6	12.6	37.1	58.8	27.0	14.7	18.8	83.2	30.8
	2015-16	%	29.5	11.8	35.0	52.5	31.5	14.5	20.0	78.9	29.7
Clients with met demand for services other than accommodation	2019-20	%	27.2	7.4	31.0	25.4	21.3	13.7	11.2	81.6	19.3
	2018-19	%	27.2	7.1	29.9	23.1	20.4	12.8	13.5	79.5	18.9
	2015-16	%	23.4	5.9	31.2	20.3	19.7	11.8	12.1	69.6	16.4
SHS clients	2019-20	%	30.4	10.3	36.2	49.0	28.1	15.6	15.7	86.3	26.7
	2018-19	%	30.0	10.1	35.8	44.5	27.1	14.9	17.0	84.8	26.0
	2015-16	%	28.2	9.0	35.6	42.3	26.5	14.4	16.7	79.1	24.5
Total population at 31 December 2019	2019-20	%	3.5	0.9	4.6	4.1	2.6	5.6	1.9	31.9	3.4
Total population at 31 December 2018	2018-19	%	3.5	0.9	4.6	4.1	2.6	5.6	1.9	31.4	3.3
Total population at 31 December 2015	2015-16	%	3.4	0.9	4.6	3.9	2.5	5.5	1.9	30.3	3.3

Source: table 19A.4

Nationally in 2019-20, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had a higher representation (26.7 per cent) amongst all people accessing specialist homelessness services compared with the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the total population (3.4 per cent).

Nationally in 2019-20, people with disability (table 19A.6) and people born in non-main English speaking countries (table 19A.5) had a lower representation amongst clients of specialist homelessness services than in their respective populations.

**Unmet demand for homelessness services** is an indicator of governments' objective to ensure that services are accessible to those who need them.

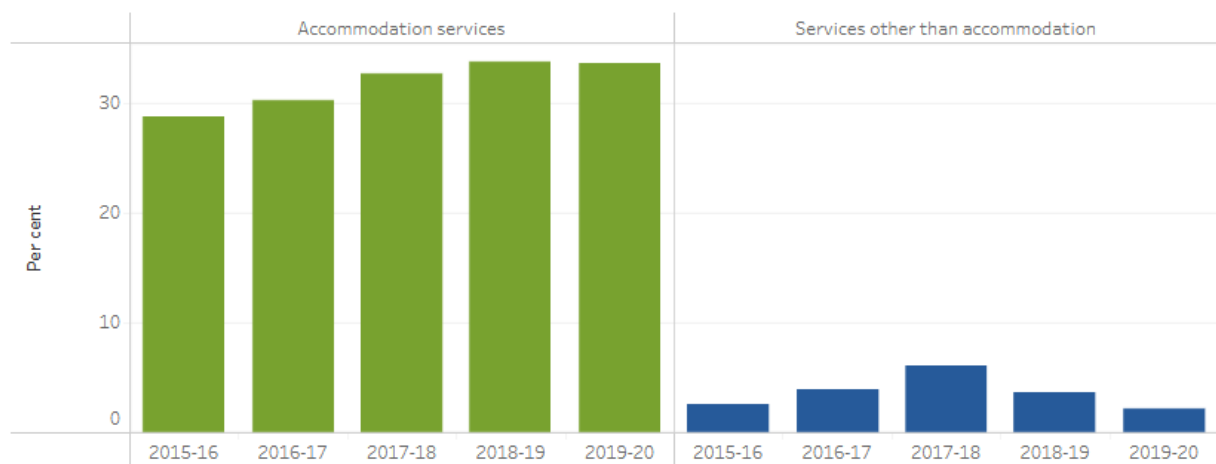
**Measure:** The proportion of people who do not receive specialist homelessness services that they need, reported for two broad service types — accommodation services and services other than accommodation. This is a proxy measure as it only captures people who are clients of specialist homelessness services with an identified need for service(s), rather than all those in the population who need services.

**Guidance:** A low or decreasing proportion of clients with unmet demand is desirable.

■ Data are not comparable across jurisdictions, but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.

■ Data are complete for the current reporting period.

**Figure 19.2a Proportion of clients with an identified need for services who did not have this need met, National**  
by broad service type, by year



Source: table 19A.7

Nationally in 2019-20, 33.6 per cent of clients with an identified need for accommodation did not have this need met, an increase from 28.7 per cent in 2015-16. Clients with unmet demand for services other than accommodation accounted for 2.1 per cent of the total demand for those services.

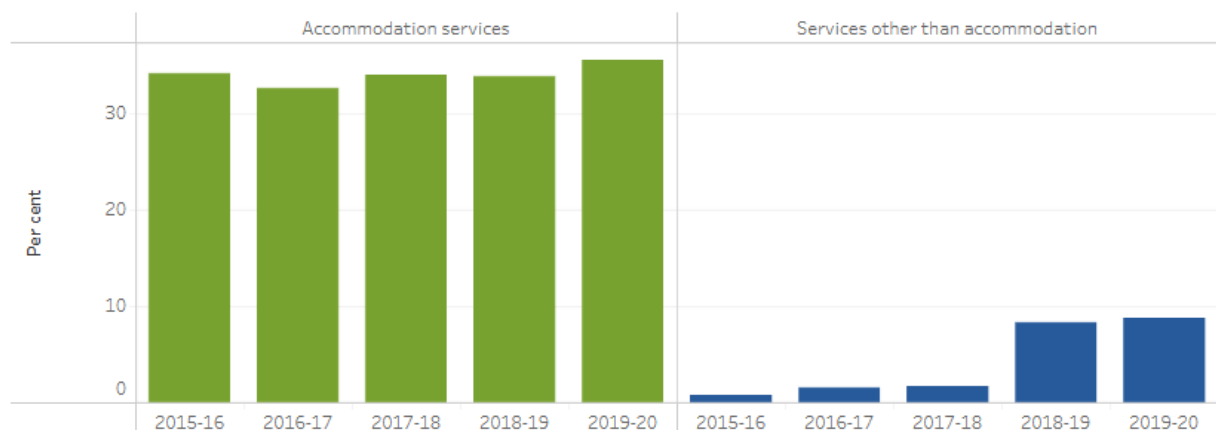
Select Jurisdiction (applies to figure 19.2b):

ACT

■ Accommodation services

■ Services other than accommodation

**Figure 19.2b Proportion of clients with an identified need for services who did not have this need met, ACT**  
by broad service type, by year



Source: table 19A.7



Addressing client needs is an indicator of governments' objective to identify and address individuals' needs as appropriate, and has two measures.

**Measure 1:** The proportion of closed support periods (for clients) with an agreed case management plan.

**Guidance:** Holding other factors constant, a high or increasing proportion of support periods where clients have an agreed case management plan is desirable.

- Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.
- Data are complete for the current reporting period.

Select year(s)  
 (applies to all figures):  
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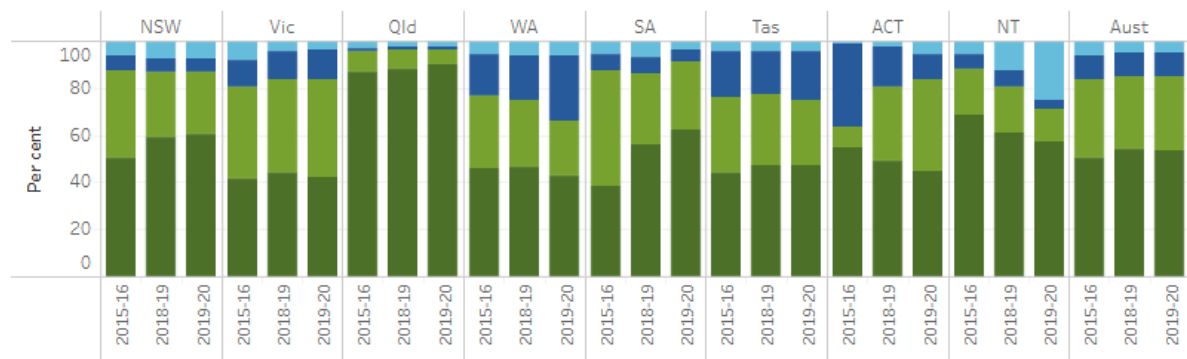
■ No - Client did not agree to one

■ No - Other

■ No - Support period too short

■ Yes - Case management plan

**Figure 19.3a Proportion of closed support periods with an agreed case management plan**  
 All clients, by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 19A.9

Nationally in 2019-20, an agreed case management plan was in place for clients in 53.3 per cent of closed support periods, an increase from 50.1 per cent in 2015-16.

**Measure 2:** 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.

**Guidance:** Holding other factors constant, a high or increasing proportion is desirable.

■ Data are not comparable across jurisdictions, but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.

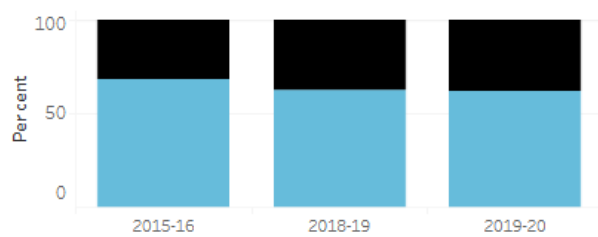
■ Data are complete for the current reporting period.

Select assistance sought (applies to both figures 19.3b & 19.3c):

■ Not provided or referred  
 ■ Provided and/or referred

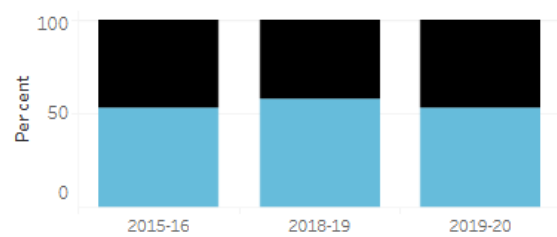
Select Jurisdiction (applies to figure 19.3c):

**Figure 19.3b Addressing client needs for Accommodation/accommodation related assistance, National, by year**



Source: table 19A.12

**Figure 19.3c Addressing client needs for Accommodation/accommodation related assistance, ACT, by year**



Source: table 19A.12

Nationally in 2019-20, over half (120 701, or 54.2 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, 62.2 per cent were directly provided with and/or referred for a service. Data for 'provided only' and 'referred only' are available in table 19A.12.

Client satisfaction is an indicator of governments' objective to provide high quality specialist homelessness services.

*Measure:* Measures for this indicator are under development.

**Achieving quality standards** is an indicator of governments' objective to provide services that are of high quality, provided by qualified staff in a safe environment.

**Measure:** The proportion of specialist homelessness services that meet nationally agreed quality standards.

Data are not yet available for reporting against this indicator as there are currently no nationally agreed quality standards for specialist homelessness services.

**Cost per day of support** is an indicator of governments' objective to provide specialist homelessness services in an efficient manner.

**Measure:** Total government recurrent expenditure on homelessness services divided by the number of days of support for clients receiving support and/or supported accommodation.

**Guidance:** 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 are not comparable across jurisdictions, but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.

■ Data are complete for the current reporting period.

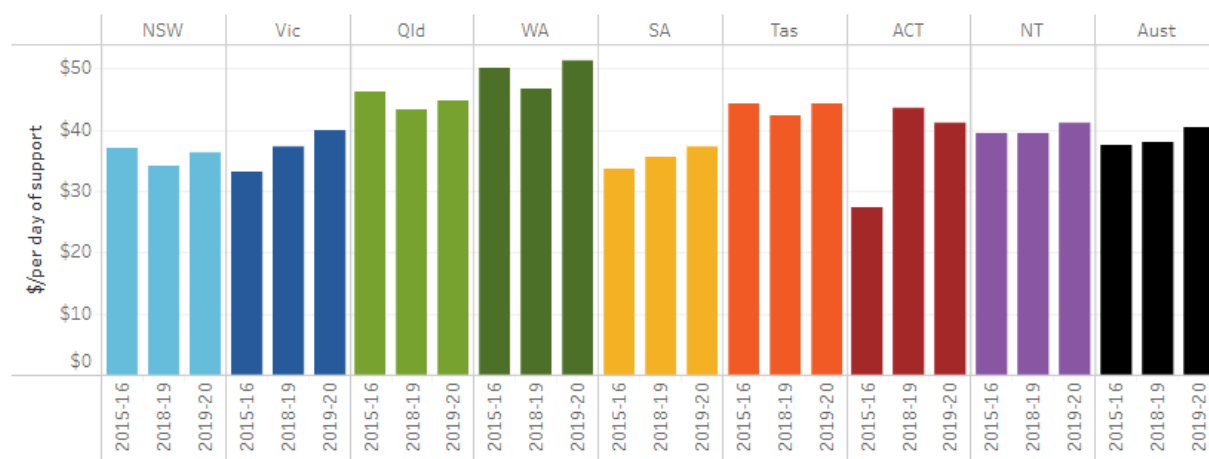
Select year(s):

(Multiple values) ▼

Jurisdiction:

■ NSW ■ Vic ■ Qld ■ WA ■ SA ■ Tas ■ ACT ■ NT ■ Aust

Figure 19.4 Recurrent expenditure, Cost per support day  
2019-20 dollars, by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 19A.16

Nationally in 2019-20, the cost per day of support for clients averaged \$40.37 — an increase in real terms of 7.6 per cent from 2015-16. Costs can also be measured per completed support periods or per client accessing homelessness services. Nationally in 2019-20, the cost per completed support period was \$2393 (table 19A.17) and the cost per client accessing homelessness services was \$3632 (table 19A.18).

**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. It 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.

**Measure 1:** 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.

**Measure 2:** Achievement of income on exit — the change in the proportion of clients who have an income source.

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.

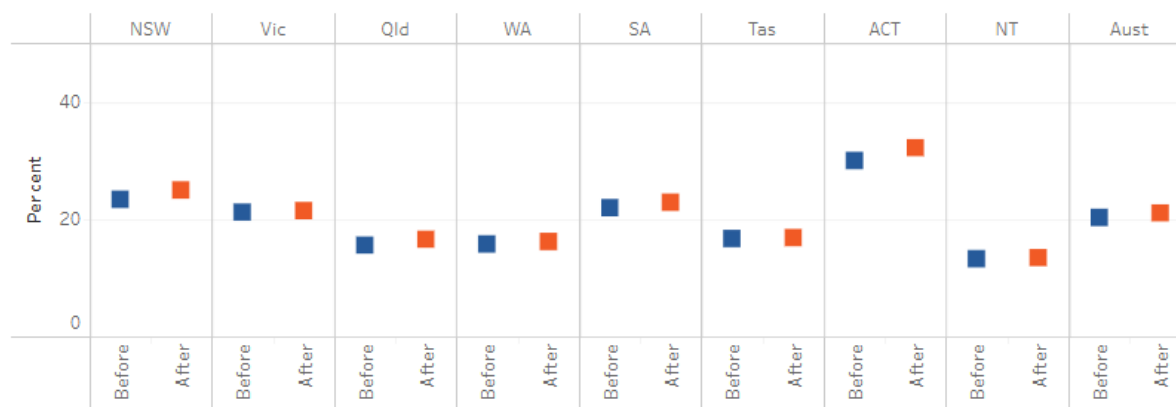
**Guidance:** Holding other factors constant, an increase in the proportion from start to end of support is desirable for clients who are employed and/or enrolled in education/training and clients who have an income source.

- Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.
- Data are complete for the current reporting period.

Select year (applies to both figures):  

■ Before support  
■ After support

Figure 19.5a Measure 1, Labour force status 'employed' and/or enrolled in formal education/training, 2019-20 before and after support, by jurisdiction

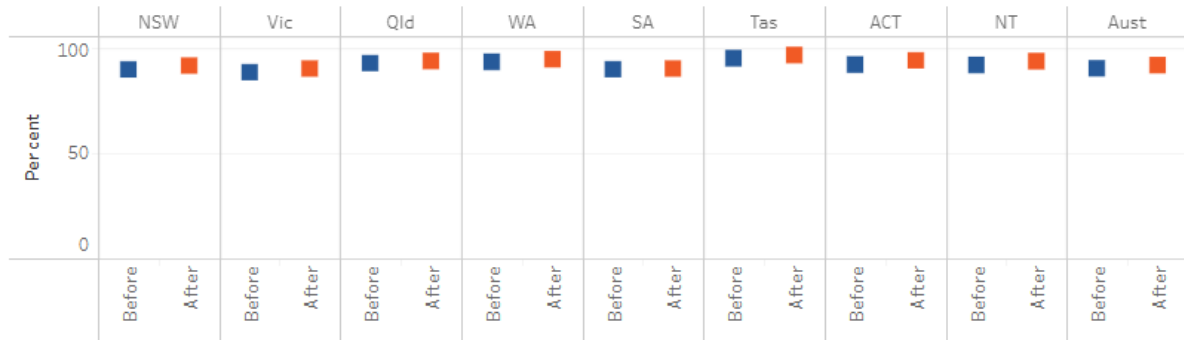


Source: table 19A.19

Nationally in 2019-20, 21.1 per cent of clients were employed and/or enrolled in education and/or training after support, compared with 20.3 per cent before support.

■ Before support  
 ■ After support

Figure 19.5b Measure 2, Clients With an income source, 2019-20  
 before and after support, by jurisdiction



Source: table 19A.27

Nationally in 2019-20, 91.6 per cent of clients had an income source after support, compared with 90.1 per cent before support.

**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. It is defined as the proportion of clients living in and sustaining independent housing following support. Two proxy measures are reported.

**Measure 1:** 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.

**Measure 2:** Repeat homelessness — the proportion of clients who change status from 'homeless' to 'not homeless' and back to 'homeless' in the reporting period.

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.

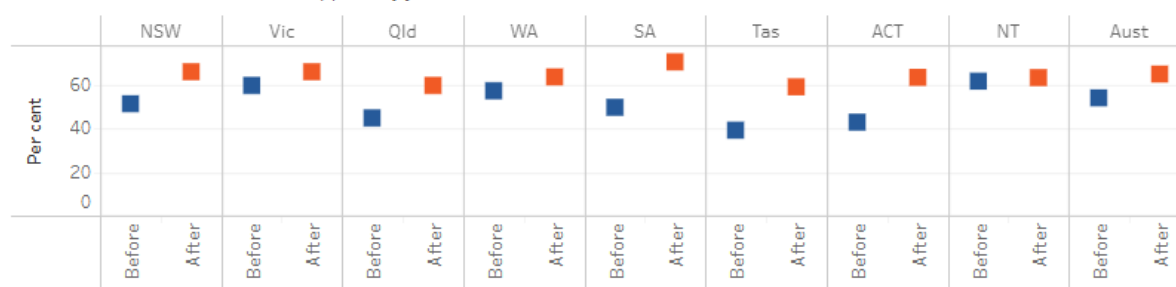
**Guidance:** Holding other factors constant, a high or increasing proportion of clients who achieved independent housing in closed support periods and a low or decreasing proportion of clients who experienced repeat homelessness is desirable.

- Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.
- Data are complete for the current reporting period.

Select year (applies to figure 19.6a):  

■ Before support  
■ After support

Figure 19.6a Measure 1, Clients with independent housing, 2019-20  
before and after support, by jurisdiction



Source: table 19A.30

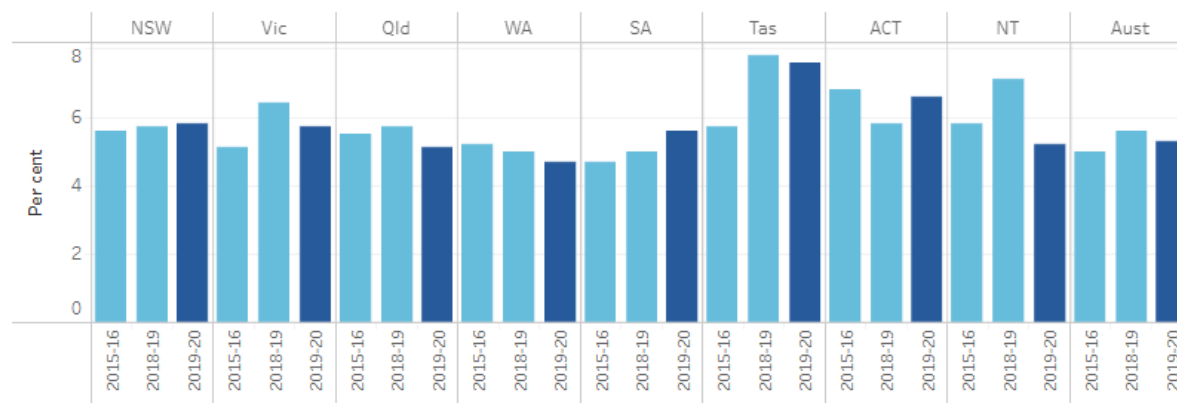
Nationally in 2019-20, 64.8 per cent of clients (with closed support periods) achieved independent housing following support, an increase from 53.9 per cent before support. Data on specific client groups in need of assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing are available in table 19A.31.



Select year(s) (applies to figure 19.6b):

(Multiple values) ▼

Figure 19.6b Measure 2, Clients experiencing homelessness who had repeat periods of homelessness by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 19A.36

Nationally, of all clients who experienced homelessness in 2019-20, 5.3 per cent experienced it more than once in the reporting year. Data on specific client groups in need of assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing are available in tables 19A.36-37.

[Refer to the interpretative material for detailed indicator interpretation, definitions and caveats. www.pc.gov.au/rogs](http://www.pc.gov.au/rogs)

Data tables are referenced above by a '19A' prefix and all data (footnotes and data sources) are available for download from the supporting material below (both in Excel and CSV format).

## Indigenous Data

Performance indicator data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this section are available in the data tables listed below. Further supporting information can be found in the interpretative material and data tables.

### Homelessness services data disaggregated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Table number	Table title
Table 19A.4	Proportion of clients — with accommodation and services other than accommodation needs that were met — who were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients
Table 19A.10	Proportion of closed support periods with an agreed case management plan, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients
Table 19A.11	Support needs of clients, summary (closed support periods)
Table 19A.13	Support needs of clients, by service assistance type, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients (closed support periods)
Table 19A.19	Economic participation, before and after support, clients aged 15 years or over (closed support periods)
Table 19A.20	Labour force status, before and after support, clients aged 15 years or over (closed support periods)
Table 19A.22	Labour force status, before and after support, as a proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients who needed employment and/or training assistance (closed support periods)
Table 19A.27	Income status, before and after support, clients aged 15 years or over (closed support periods)
Table 19A.29	Income status, before and after support, as a proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients who needed income assistance (closed support periods)

Table 19A.30	Independent housing, before and after support (closed support periods)
Table 19A.32	Housing tenure type, before and after support, as a proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients who needed assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing (closed support periods)
Table 19A.35	The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients who needed assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing and achieved it at the end of support, who did not present again with a need for accommodation assistance in the reporting period
Table 19A.36	Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients experiencing homelessness, who had repeat periods of homelessness

## Download supporting material

[19 Homelessness services interpretative material \(PDF - 318 Kb\)](#)

[19 Homelessness services interpretative material \(Word - 96 Kb\)](#)

[19 Homelessness data tables \(XLSX - 832 Kb\)](#)

[19 Homelessness services dataset \(CSV - 924 Kb\)](#)

See the interpretative material and corresponding table number in the data tables for detailed definitions, caveats, footnotes and data source(s).