

Introduction

This publication presents the standards developed under the National Housing Data Agreement (NHDA), a subsidiary agreement to the 1999 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA). These standards have been developed by the National Housing Data Development Committee under the guidance and direction of the National Housing Data Agreement Management Group.

The NHDA aims to:

- ensure that nationally relevant housing data collected throughout Australia are consistent and compatible between different collections; and otherwise
- to improve the quality of and access to housing data at the national level and at the same time maintain and protect the confidentiality of the data for individuals and for signatories to the Agreement.

The achievement of these aims is guided by the three schedules to the Agreement:

Schedule 1: development and reporting of a minimum data set

Schedule 2: development and reporting of a set of national performance indicators and

Schedule 3: development and implementation of national data definitions and standards.

The papers included in this publication are part of the work completed under Schedule 3 of the NHDA. This work is supported by the *National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary* versions 1 and 2 (also under Schedule 3), the national reporting framework of 11 performance indicators (Schedule 2) and the national minimum data set (Schedule 1) which are detailed in the data manuals and individual collection reports. Copies can be found at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Housing Assistance Unit website at <<http://www.aihw.gov.au>>.

Since the development of these papers, Housing Ministers have signed a new five-year 2003 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. The NHDA has also been reviewed in line with the requirement that the 'management and implementation of the Agreement and the operation of its structures, particularly costs and benefits' be reviewed by its third year. The steering committee for the review has recommended to Housing Ministers that the NHDA be rolled over for the life of the new 2003 CSHA.

The impact of the new CSHA on the performance reporting framework will be determined when the framework is reviewed later this year. Regardless of the outcome of this review, it is expected these standards will continue to be improved, and additional standards will be developed.

Identifying Indigenous households in mainstream Commonwealth State Housing Agreement program data collections 2001–02

1 Introduction

This paper examines the coverage and quality of data about Indigenous households in the 2001–02 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) data collections. The paper identifies gaps in data coverage and highlights data quality issues in public housing, CSHA community housing, the Crisis Accommodation Program, home purchase assistance and private rent assistance. This paper was prepared by the National Housing Data Development Committee (NHDDC) and a summary and recommendations for consideration by the National Housing Data Agreement Management Group (NHDAMG) are listed in Section 4.

A previous version of this paper was released in November 2002 for the NHDAMG, which related to data from the 2000–01 CSHA data collections. The NHDAMG requested that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) update the paper for the 2001–02 collection to make it as useful as possible in a policy development sense. Furthermore, the new 2003 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement has been introduced, effective from 1 July 2003, which places greater emphasis on improving housing outcomes for Indigenous people. This includes improving access to mainstream CSHA programs, and improving the availability of nationally consistent and comparable data through the Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information (Commonwealth of Australia 2003).

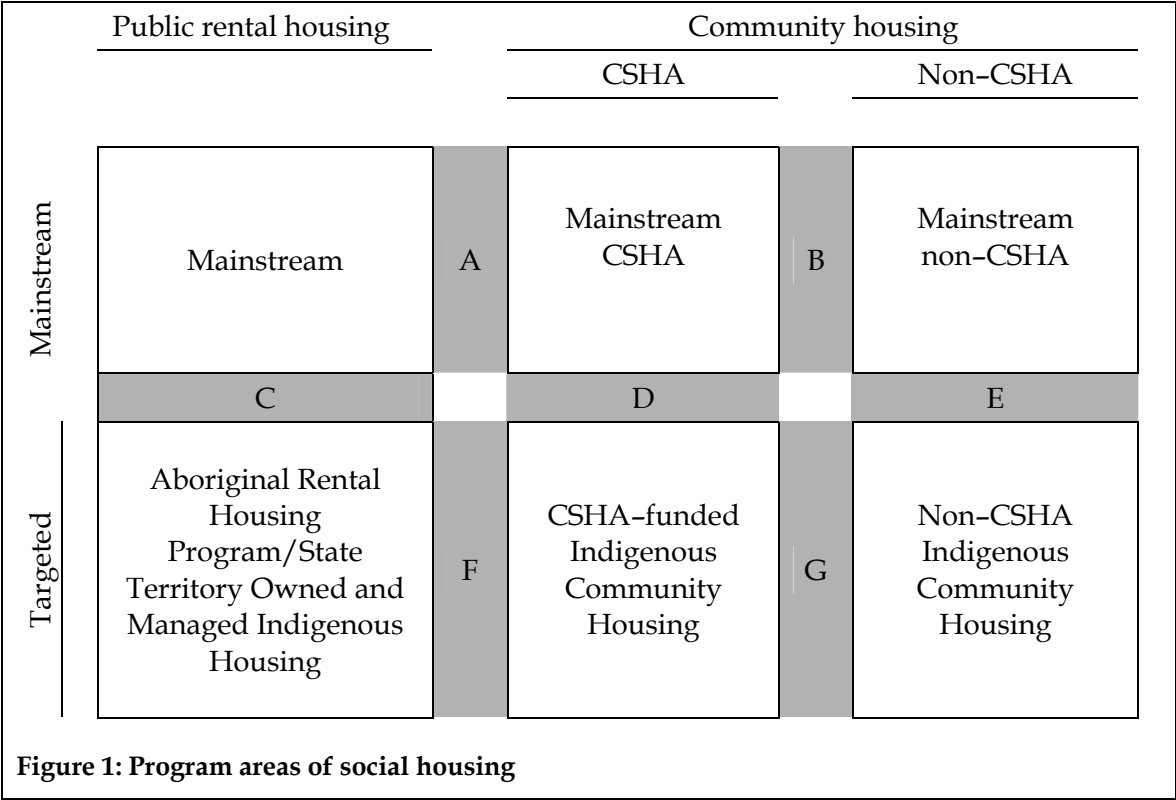
The identification of Indigenous households in CSHA programs also aligns with the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) commitment to measure and report Indigenous access to mainstream programs in the annual report on government services and the new COAG report on Indigenous disadvantage. Measuring access requires the development of data that identify Indigenous households using mainstream CSHA housing assistance programs.

Also, the Australian Housing Ministers' Ten Year Statement of New Directions for Indigenous Housing (HMAC 2001) includes implementation strategies about identifying and addressing unmet housing needs of Indigenous people and continuing to improve Indigenous access to mainstream public and community housing programs.

2 Improving counting rules

In the 2001–02 data collection there were a number of issues around counting rules that need further clarification for future collections to ensure all households are identified in the most relevant program area and are only counted once across the data collections. Further work will be undertaken by the NHDDC in examining the 2002–03 data and developing the 2003–04 data collections.

Figure 1 presents the main areas of social housing that may be classified as either mainstream or targeted to Indigenous households – for mainstream an Indigenous identifier is required to measure access while in targeted assistance some measure of use by non-Indigenous households may improve counting. The latter is a lower priority than improving mainstream data.



The 2001-02 collection identified the potential for certain tenancies to be classified a number of ways and while the definitions ensured consistency in data collection, this needs to be checked to ensure it is the best approach for users of these data. Similarly there are differences in administrative and Census and survey data that require further investigation. In particular the 2001-02 collections identified the need to further refine counting rules for:

- Boundary A and F between the public and community housing areas of the CSHA for the treatment of ‘direct’ tenancies. This is where community organisations assess and allocate people for tenancies in dwellings where the other tenancy and property management areas are the responsibility of the public housing agency. These tenants are public housing tenants (either mainstream or targeted) after the initial community allocation process.
- How consistently boundary D in Figure 1 is maintained to ensure targeted Indigenous community housing (which in general is considered as separate to the CSHA community housing program mainstream programs) is consistently counted outside mainstream CSHA community housing. For example the counting of 30 mainstream CSHA community housing providers with a primary target group being Indigenous Australians in the 2001-02 collection requires investigation and clarification.

Improved counting rules may avoid any double counting and consistently place these ‘borderline’ areas of assistance in the best place for policy and program measurement.

The implications are that there is the potential for some dwellings to be either missed or double counted in the administrative and survey data. The development of the national social housing survey across both mainstream and targeted housing makes it more important for these issues to be resolved as quickly as possible.

It is recommended that further program mapping be undertaken similar to that contained in the CSHA mainstream community housing data collection manual to tighten up counting rules. It may be necessary to develop a counting rule based on the principal funding/asset source for each dwelling to avoid double counting.

3 Status of Indigenous identification in mainstream CSHA programs for 2001–02 data collection

3.1 Mainstream public housing

Table 1 shows that all jurisdictions were able to report about the Indigenous status of both existing and new households in the 2001–02 public housing data collection. This analysis excludes 11,766 households that were living in Aboriginal Rental Housing Program/state-territory owned and managed Indigenous housing at 30 June 2002 (AIHW 2003c). ‘All Indigenous households at 30 June 2002’ refers to a count of all households that were residing in public rental housing on the date 30 June 2002. ‘New Indigenous households for year ending 30 June 2002’ is a count of the total number of Indigenous households that were newly allocated public housing tenancies during the financial year 2001–02. The term ‘existing households’ is used in this report to refer to households that were allocated tenancies prior to the 2001–02 financial year.

Table 1: Public housing data collection: total number of all and new Indigenous households assisted, 2001–02

	NSW	Vic	QLD	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
All Indigenous households assisted at 30 June 2002	8,700 ^(a)	771	2,311	2,098	812	463	142	1,377	16,674
New Indigenous households assisted for year ending 30 June 2002	888	218	830	750	233	163	28	382	3,492

(a) New South Wales data were derived using Census data to identify Indigenous households living in public housing. Indigenous identified household-level data are not available through the AIHW National Housing Data Repository.

Source: AIHW 2003a.

The quality and reliability of public housing Indigenous data are influenced by several factors, including the level at which data about the Indigenous status of household members is collected and reported and the extent of missing data in information management systems. In this report, ‘data collection’ refers to the information that is collected from respondents on jurisdictional data collection forms, and ‘data reporting’ refers to the information that is transmitted electronically to the AIHW National Housing Data Repository. Issues around data collection and reporting of Indigenous status are examined in the following sections. Information reported in these sections was compiled from correspondence with jurisdictions, and the AIHW National Housing Data Repository using CSHA 2001–02 housing data sets (AIHW 2002a).

National Housing Data Repository

The National Housing Data Repository (the Repository) is a database, housed at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, which contains records of households receiving housing assistance under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) and the Commonwealth's Rent Assistance Program. All jurisdictions provide data under the CSHA as an annual administrative by-product data collection. This data is used for annual reporting to the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) and the Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth State Service Provision. Data provided under the Commonwealth Rent Assistance Program is a subset of data collected by Centrelink and provided to FaCS.

3.1.1 Availability of 'person level' Indigenous status data

The *National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary* version 2 (AIHW 2003d) defines an Indigenous household as 'a household that contains one or more Indigenous people'. This definition requires information about the Indigenous status of all household members to be collected (i.e. at the person level). Variation exists between jurisdictions in regard to the level at which this information is collected. This influences a jurisdiction's ability to accurately report about the Indigenous status of households in CSHA reporting.

In relation to each jurisdiction, Table 2 shows that:

- New South Wales started collecting information on the Indigenous status of applicants when the Integrated Housing System (IHS) was introduced in October 1999. The collection is at the person level. However the completeness of the data on Indigenous status is low (around 33%), with only 2,900 households being identified in IHS as Indigenous, whereas the Census indicates a figure of 8,700. Due to these quality issues, the data were not reported to the AIHW National Housing Data Repository, but rather the Census estimate was reported. There are two reasons for the lack of completeness and poor data quality:
 - Over 60% of current tenants were housed before IHS was introduced, and hence there is no information about their Indigenous status on the system.
 - It is not compulsory to ask clients their Indigenous status at application, nor is it compulsory to enter Indigenous status information into IHS.

New South Wales has been working to improve the completeness and data quality of the Indigenous status item. It is in the process of making changes to the application process so that client service officers ask all clients the question about Indigenous status. Changes are being introduced to IHS that will make it compulsory to enter the Indigenous status for each applicant (at the person level). Options to capture Indigenous information from existing tenants are also under investigation.

- For the 2001-02 public housing data collection report (AIHW 2003a), New South Wales reported an aggregate total for all existing Indigenous households, which was calculated using Census data to assist in identifying Indigenous households. New South Wales experiences difficulty in reporting the number of Indigenous households according to the national standard definition, as it is not able to supply household unit record data with a reliable Indigenous identifier.
- South Australia started collecting data on the Indigenous status of the tenant/applicant in 1995. In 2000 this was expanded to include all members of the household. These

records are used to derive and report the Indigenous status of households. The question on Indigenous status is non-compulsory.

- Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory collect and report information about the Indigenous status of household members at the person level.
- Western Australia and the Northern Territory collect information about the Indigenous status of household members at the household level only. However, both jurisdictions include a question on the application form that asks about the Indigenous status of all household members when assessing a household's Indigenous status. Despite recording data in information management systems at the household level, both Western Australia and the Northern Territory implement the Indigenous household definition as the question is asked in relation to all household members.

Table 2: CSHA 2001–02 public housing: person-level Indigenous status data in information management systems

NSW	Vic	QLD	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
(a)	✓	✓	(b)	(c)	✓	✓	(b)

- (a) Only for applicants who applied after the introduction of the Integrated Housing System in October 1999 and have been housed.
- (b) Data are collected and recorded in information management systems at the household level however any household member can be Indigenous for the household to be classified as Indigenous.
- (c) Data are recorded in the information management system at the person level however strip file data for the National Housing Data Repository provides the data at the head tenant level only (person level in 2002–03).
- ✓ Indicates the data are recorded at the person level in information management systems.

Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory all collect and report Indigenous status at the person level. Western Australia and the Northern Territory do not collect the Indigenous status for each person within a household, however the definition of whether a household is Indigenous is based on the status of all household members. South Australia collects Indigenous status at the person level, and uses this information to derive household-level Indigenous status, but does not supply all person-level records to the AIHW. New South Wales collects Indigenous status at the person-level, however these data are not currently reported, and are considered unreliable for deriving household-level Indigenous status.

3.1.2 The extent of missing and unknown Indigenous status data

The terms 'missing' and 'unknown' Indigenous status are used interchangeably in this report to mean that a response to the Indigenous status question was either not stated, inadequately described, or the question was not asked. The method in which missing/unknown data are recorded in information systems varies. Some system administrators leave an electronic field blank, to indicate data are missing, and others assign a value (such as '9'). Other administrators collapse together the values of 'non-Indigenous' and 'unknown', which means that the number of missing/unknown responses cannot be calculated.

Missing and unknown Indigenous status data can lead to under-reporting of Indigenous households receiving CSHA assistance. Table 3 examines the extent of missing Indigenous status data in each jurisdiction's information management system.

- For New South Wales, analysis of the extent of missing Indigenous status data relates to the head tenant only. The New South Wales Department of Housing considers the coverage of the Indigenous status of new households as inadequate and, as described in Section 3.1.1, is in the process of addressing this problem.

- In Victoria and Queensland both 'non-Indigenous' and 'unknown' Indigenous status are recorded as 'no' in information management systems.
- In Western Australia and the Northern Territory both 'non-Indigenous' and 'unknown' Indigenous status are recorded as 'unknown' in information management systems.
- For South Australia, analysis of the extent of missing Indigenous status data relates to the head tenant only. The coverage of data about the Indigenous status of new households is good, but a large proportion of data (48%) are missing for all households.
- It is not possible therefore to accurately identify the extent of unknown Indigenous status data for Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.
- Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory uniquely identify whether a household's Indigenous status is 'yes', 'no', or 'unknown' in information systems. This allows the extent of missing (or unknown) Indigenous status data to be reported. The proportion of missing data about the Indigenous status of new households is 14% in Tasmania and 17% in the Australian Capital Territory. The extent of missing data for all households is 53% in Tasmania and 10% in the Australian Capital Territory.

Table 3: Public housing data collection: all and new households where Indigenous status is missing or unknown (per cent) at 30 June 2002

	NSW ^(a)	Vic	QLD	WA ^(b)	SA ^(a)	Tas	ACT	NT ^(b)
All households	75	n.a.	n.a.	93	48	53	10	76
New households	1	n.a.	n.a.	84	4	14	17	61

(a) Number of 'unknown' is based on Indigenous identification at the head tenant level only.

(b) This figure may be an over representation of unknown Indigenous status as both 'no' and 'unknown' Indigenous status are recorded as 'unknown' in information management systems.

n.a. Not available—both 'no' and 'unknown' are recorded as 'no'.

Source: AIHW 2002a.

To allow the integrity of data about Indigenous households to be understood, the NHDAMG recommended at its November 2001 meeting that unknown Indigenous status be uniquely identified in information management systems. The Northern Territory is considering this issue during the current redevelopment of its information management system.

3.1.3 Systems for updating Indigenous status data

An issue related to the extent of missing Indigenous status data is the length of time jurisdictions have been collecting data about Indigenous status, and systems they have in place for updating these data. Table 4 shows when the collection of data about the Indigenous status of households was introduced. The length of time Indigenous status data have been collected in jurisdictions ranges from 3 years in South Australia to 13 years in Victoria.

Table 4: Introduction of methods for collecting data about the Indigenous status of households

NSW	Vic	QLD	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Oct. 1999	1989	Oct. 1997	1997	Mar. 2000 ^(a)	1993 ^(b)	1997	1993

(a) Collected at tenant/applicant level from 1995 and expanded to person level in March 2000.

(b) Data collected for this time but only recorded electronically for 6 years.

An important factor in reducing the extent of missing data about the Indigenous status of households is the implementation of processes for updating these data. This allows changes in household composition to be recorded and also allows data about households assisted prior to the date that Indigenous status data was collected, to be updated. Most jurisdictions do not undertake regular audits of the Indigenous status of household members (Table 5).

- New South Wales is modifying its IHS so that the information on Indigenous status can be updated. It is also considering options to collect the information from existing tenants.
- Victoria conducts seasonal rent reviews of all household attributes for rebated households, and Indigenous status is dependent on self-identification by tenants.
- The other six jurisdictions do not have review processes in place.

Table 5: CSHA public housing: review processes for updating data about the Indigenous status of households

NSW	Vic	QLD	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Client service visit ^(a)	Seasonal rent review ^(b)	No review process	No review process	No review process	No review process ^(c)	No review process	No review process
Other—not defined ^(a)							

(a) Unsatisfactory results (as reported by NSW).

(b) Conducted for rebated households, dependant on self-identification by tenants.

(c) Currently developing processes to ensure that household details (including Aboriginality) are reviewed and updated annually.

As shown in Table 3, for those jurisdictions where missing or unknown Indigenous status data are separately identified, the proportions of missing data for all households range from 75% in New South Wales to 10% in the Australian Capital Territory. It is therefore likely that Indigenous households that have held tenancies in public rental housing prior to the introduction of collection and reporting methods for Indigenous status, are not identified. A formal review process in each jurisdiction of household information for all households that entered public housing prior to the introduction of collection and reporting methods for Indigenous status would improve the quality of these data.

3.2 CSHA community housing program

CSHA community housing data are collected from two sources – administrative data held by state and territory housing authorities who oversee the management and funding of community housing programs, and survey data collected from community housing providers who undertake tenancy management responsibilities.

Generally, state housing authorities hold data about dwellings owned and head-leased to community housing providers, financial information about grants and administration, and information about the number and target group categories of community housing providers.

For the CSHA community housing data collection there are two methods of identifying Indigenous households. Households living in communities managed by Indigenous community housing organisations are automatically identified as Indigenous for the purposes of the CSHA community housing data collection. For households living in communities managed by providers with multiple target groups or providers that are non-targeted, Indigenous households can be identified as an aggregate total on the survey data collection form.

Information about households residing in community housing (including the Indigenous status of households) is held by the community housing providers, but not necessarily in electronic form. This information is collected by state housing authorities via a community housing provider survey. The reliability of household data therefore is affected by a range of factors such as:

- the quality of raw records held by community housing providers;
- the quality of the survey instrument;
- the accuracy with which surveys are completed;
- survey response rates; and
- the accuracy with which survey responses are collated by state housing authorities.

Table 6 outlines the survey response rates for all jurisdictions for the 2001–02 community housing data collection.

- All jurisdictions, except the Northern Territory, surveyed community housing providers and the survey response rates varied from 100% in the Australian Capital Territory to 30% in Victoria.
- Victoria’s low response rate may have been due to the fact that 2001–02 was the first year it had conducted a community housing survey.
- While the Australian Capital Territory achieved a 100% response rate, it only sent surveys to 11 of the 20 providers. These providers managed approximately 85% of all dwellings, and smaller providers were not included in the data collection.
- The Northern Territory did not conduct a survey for this data collection and reported about administrative data only.

Table 6: CSHA 2001–02 community housing data collection: survey response rates (per cent)

NSW	Vic	QLD	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
86	30	60	56	88	46	100	..

.. Not applicable (NT did not conduct a survey).

Source: AIHW 2003b.

Survey response rates are an important issue to consider when interpreting data about the reported number of Indigenous households in community housing (Table 7). Data reported only represents the segment of the CSHA-funded sector for which surveys were completed and returned.

The total number of new Indigenous households for the year ending 30 June 2002 was 3,066, while the total number of Indigenous households at 30 June 2002 was 2,198, which indicates that 868 Indigenous households exited community housing before the end of the financial year.

In relation to each jurisdiction’s reporting of the number of Indigenous households:

- New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory reported about the Indigenous status of households in the 2001–02 data collection.
- Victoria did not report about the Indigenous status of households in community housing, as ‘Indigenous is not applicable to the community housing program as these households access accommodation through the General Rental Program and housing managed by the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria’.

- The Northern Territory did not report any information about households assisted as it did not undertake a survey of community housing providers.

Table 7 also shows that there were 801 Indigenous households assisted by a total of 30 Indigenous targeted providers at 30 June 2002. There were also 243 Indigenous households assisted by non-targeted providers at 30 June 2002, which indicates that the remaining proportion of Indigenous households at 30 June 2002 (1,154) may have been assisted by providers with multiple target groups or providers targeted at other groups.

Table 7: CSHA 2001–02 community housing data collection: selected characteristics

	NSW	Vic	QLD	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total ^(a)
Year ending 30 June 2002:									
New Indigenous households assisted	175	n.a.	327	2,536	13	n.a.	15	n.a.	3,066
At 30 June 2002:									
All Indigenous households assisted	537	n.a.	445	1,165	33	n.a.	18	n.a.	2,198
Indigenous households assisted by targeted providers	320	0	274	190	13	0	4	n.a.	801
Indigenous households assisted by non-targeted providers	217	n.a.	0	0	14	n.a.	12	n.a.	243
Targeted providers with primary target group of Indigenous Australians	11	0	5	11	1	0	1	1	30

(a) May not represent national total due to data not being available for all jurisdictions.

n.a. Not available.

Source: AIHW 2003b.

Improving the reliability of community housing data about the Indigenous status of households is dependant upon the quality of the survey instrument, the accuracy with which surveys are completed, improving survey response rates and the accuracy with which survey data are collated by state housing authorities. A strategy needs to be developed to address these issues. This is in line with the more general NHDAMG strategy to improve CSHA community housing data, as well as the emphasis on improving Indigenous housing outcomes and data in the 2003 CSHA.

3.3 Other CSHA programs

CSHA data about the Indigenous status of households are also collected for the Crisis Accommodation Program, and home purchase assistance and private rent assistance data collections. Table 8 outlines the data for these collections and indicates that coverage of data is variable between jurisdictions and programs. In relation to each jurisdiction, the following is a summary of its ability to report Indigenous status information for these programs.

With regard to the Crisis Accommodation Program:

- Western Australia was the only jurisdiction able to report about the Indigenous status of households accessing the Crisis Accommodation Program.

Table 8: CSHA 2001–02 data collections: total number of new and all Indigenous households assisted for year ending 30 June, by program type and jurisdiction (number)

	Crisis Accommodation Program							
	NSW	Vic	QLD	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
All Indigenous households assisted	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,479	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
New Indigenous households assisted	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,468	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

n.a. Not available.

Source: AIHW 2002b.

In regard to home purchase assistance and private rent assistance, the following jurisdictions were able to provide data about the Indigenous status of households:

- Queensland reported about the Indigenous status of households receiving home purchase assistance.
- South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory reported about the Indigenous status of households receiving private rent assistance.

Only partial data were available about the Indigenous status of households for the following programs:

- Western Australia was able to report about the Indigenous status of new households receiving all types of home purchase assistance. For all households, it was able to report about the Indigenous status of those receiving home purchase assistance, except those receiving home purchase and advisory and counselling services.
- The Northern Territory was able to report about the Indigenous status of both all and new households who had commenced receiving home purchase assistance, except new households receiving deposit assistance.

In regard to home purchase assistance and private rent assistance, the following jurisdictions were not able to provide data for the following programs:

- New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory did not report about the Indigenous status of households receiving home purchase assistance or private rent assistance.
- Queensland and Western Australia were not able to report about the Indigenous status of clients receiving private rent assistance.
- South Australia and Tasmania were not able to report about the Indigenous status of clients receiving home purchase assistance.

Tables 8, 9 and 10 show there is variable coverage of data about the Indigenous status of households receiving assistance through the Crisis Accommodation Program, home purchase assistance and private rent assistance. The improved identification of Indigenous households in these programs would require the development of strategies in line with the emphasis on improving Indigenous housing outcomes and data in the new 2003 CSHA.

Table 9: CSHA 2001–02 data collections: total number of new and all Indigenous households assisted for year ending 30 June, by program type and jurisdiction (number)

	Home purchase assistance								Total ^(a)
	NSW	Vic	QLD	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	
All Indigenous households assisted by ^(a):									
Direct lending	..	n.a.	..	..	n.a.	..	..	..	n.a.
Interest rate assistance	..	..	2	16	n.a.	..	..	23	41
Mortgage relief	n.a.	n.a.	..	..	n.a.	..	n.a.	..	n.a.
Home purchase advisory and counselling services	..	..	..	n.a.	..	..	..	..	n.a.
New Indigenous households assisted by:									
Direct lending	0	..	2	46	..	n.a.	..	12	60
Deposit assistance	..	..	1	..	..	n.a.	..	n.a.	1
Interest rate assistance	..	..	2	16	n.a.	..	..	10	28
Mortgage relief	n.a.	n.a.	1	..	n.a.	..	n.a.	..	1
Home purchase advisory and counselling services	n.a.	..	..	46	..	..	..	..	46
Other	..	n.a.	1	11	..	..	..	..	12

(a) Total may not represent national total due to data not being available for all jurisdictions.

Note: Types of one-off assistance under each category for the 2001–02 collection are reported for new households, but are not reported for all households, to avoid duplication of information.

.. Not applicable—indicates that the assistance type is not provided in the jurisdiction.

n.a. Not available.

Source: AIHW 2002c.

Table 10: CSHA 2001–02 data collections: total number of new and all Indigenous households assisted for year ending 30 June, by program type and jurisdiction (number)

	Private rent assistance								Total ^(a)
	NSW	Vic	QLD	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	
All Indigenous households assisted by:									
Rental grants/subsidies	n.a.	..	n.a.	..	40	4	..	..	44
Other one-off grants	..	..	..	..	..	8	..	..	8
New Indigenous households assisted by:									
Bond loans	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	529	299	n.a.	80	908
Rental grants/subsidies	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	..	620	70	..	..	690
Relocation expenses	n.a.	n.a.	..	..	..	16	..	..	16
Other one-off grants	n.a.	n.a.	..	..	..	289	..	..	289

.. Not applicable—indicates that the assistance type is not provided in the jurisdiction.

n.a. Not available.

(a) May not represent national total due to data not being available for all jurisdictions.

Note: Types of one-off assistance under each category for the 2001–02 collection are reported for new households, but are not reported for all households, to avoid duplication of information.

Source: AIHW2002d.

4 Summary and recommendations

The new 2003 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, effective from 1 July 2003, builds further on existing initiatives that aim to improve housing outcomes for Indigenous people (HMAC 2001). This includes improving Indigenous access to mainstream CSHA programs, and improving the availability of nationally consistent and comparable data through the Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information (Commonwealth of Australia 2003). Listed below are a summary and recommendations that support these initiatives in relation to the mainstream CSHA programs.

4.1 CSHA mainstream public housing

For 2001–02, all jurisdictions were able to report about the Indigenous status of households in mainstream public housing. The quality and coverage of these data is varied. The quality of Indigenous identification is higher for new households than for existing households, as compulsory collection and reporting methods for Indigenous households have only been introduced in recent years.

Reporting Indigenous status according to the national standard

All jurisdictions except New South Wales currently report information that satisfies the national standard definition of an Indigenous household. There are two ways that jurisdictions can meet the national standard for reporting household Indigenous status:

1. Supply person-level data, with a reliable Indigenous flag, to the AIHW National Housing Data Repository, to allow the derivation of household Indigenous status.

2. Supply household-level data, with a reliable Indigenous flag, which has been derived from person-level data.
- **Recommendation 1:** All jurisdictions report according to methods 1 or 2, in order to supply data that meet the national standard for Indigenous identification at the household level.

Missing/unknown data

Not all jurisdictions include a value of 'missing/unknown' in their information systems. Information about the number of missing and unknown fields would allow a greater understanding of the integrity of Indigenous identification in mainstream public housing.

- **Recommendation 2:** 'Unknown' Indigenous status should be uniquely identified in information management systems (as recommended by the NHDAMG at its November 2001 meeting).

For those jurisdictions where information about the number of missing records in relation to Indigenous identification is available, the proportions missing for all households (including old and new tenancies) ranged from 10% to 75%. The proportion of missing data for new households (where missing information is available) ranged from 1% to 17%. The highest proportions of missing data relate to tenancies that existed prior to the introduction of compulsory collection methods for Indigenous status. Most jurisdictions do not currently have effective review processes in place for updating household characteristics.

- **Recommendation 3:** New households entering public housing: Jurisdictions develop or continue to reinforce strategies that encourage the asking of the Indigenous status question at the time of application.

4.2 CSHA community housing data

The CSHA community housing data collection relies on survey data collected from community housing organisations to identify Indigenous households. Recent surveys have resulted in low response rates for some jurisdictions and the number of Indigenous households identified in the program is probably under-counted. The NDHAMG has previously recognised the need to improve CSHA community housing data.

- **Recommendation 4:** A strategy needs to be developed with a view to reviewing and/or improving the quality of the community housing survey instrument in each jurisdiction, the accuracy with which surveys are completed, survey response rates and the accuracy with which survey response rates are collated by state housing authorities.

4.3 Other CSHA program data

There is low coverage of data about the Indigenous status of households receiving assistance through the Crisis Accommodation Program, home purchase assistance and private rent assistance. Given the increased significance of Indigenous access to mainstream housing assistance in the 2003 CSHA, improved identification of Indigenous households in these programs requires the development of strategies to achieve this.

- **Recommendation 5:** Appropriate strategies need to be developed by the NHDAMG (in line with the 2003 CSHA) for the identification of Indigenous households in the Crisis Accommodation Program, the private rent assistance and home purchase assistance

collections, for example the implementation of a regular survey to collect the Indigenous status of clients accessing these programs.

5 References

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Measuring Special Need Groups (P5) in Commonwealth State Housing Agreement programs

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this paper

This paper has been developed to stimulate discussion with Commonwealth, state and territory governments and explore issues in measuring special need groups in Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) programs. The paper examines current policies and relevant issues in this measure and proposes a national standard for measuring this indicator. It is expected that the national standard will be incorporated into the *National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary* and used in CSHA data collections from 2000-01.

The purpose of the national standard is to capture CSHA data for consistent reporting between jurisdictions. The national standard identifies groups of the population that may experience difficulty accessing accommodation in the private rental market. The focus of the national standard is on groups of the population whose housing needs are sufficiently different from most of the population at large, resulting in the identification of a relatively uniform group of persons with special needs (e.g. persons most disadvantaged in the private rental market). This approach allows a 'baseline' to be established for consistent data reporting between jurisdictions. It does not however capture the diverse spectrum of all special need groups present in the community. Some public housing and community housing target groups may not be included in the national standard, a limitation of the approach adopted.

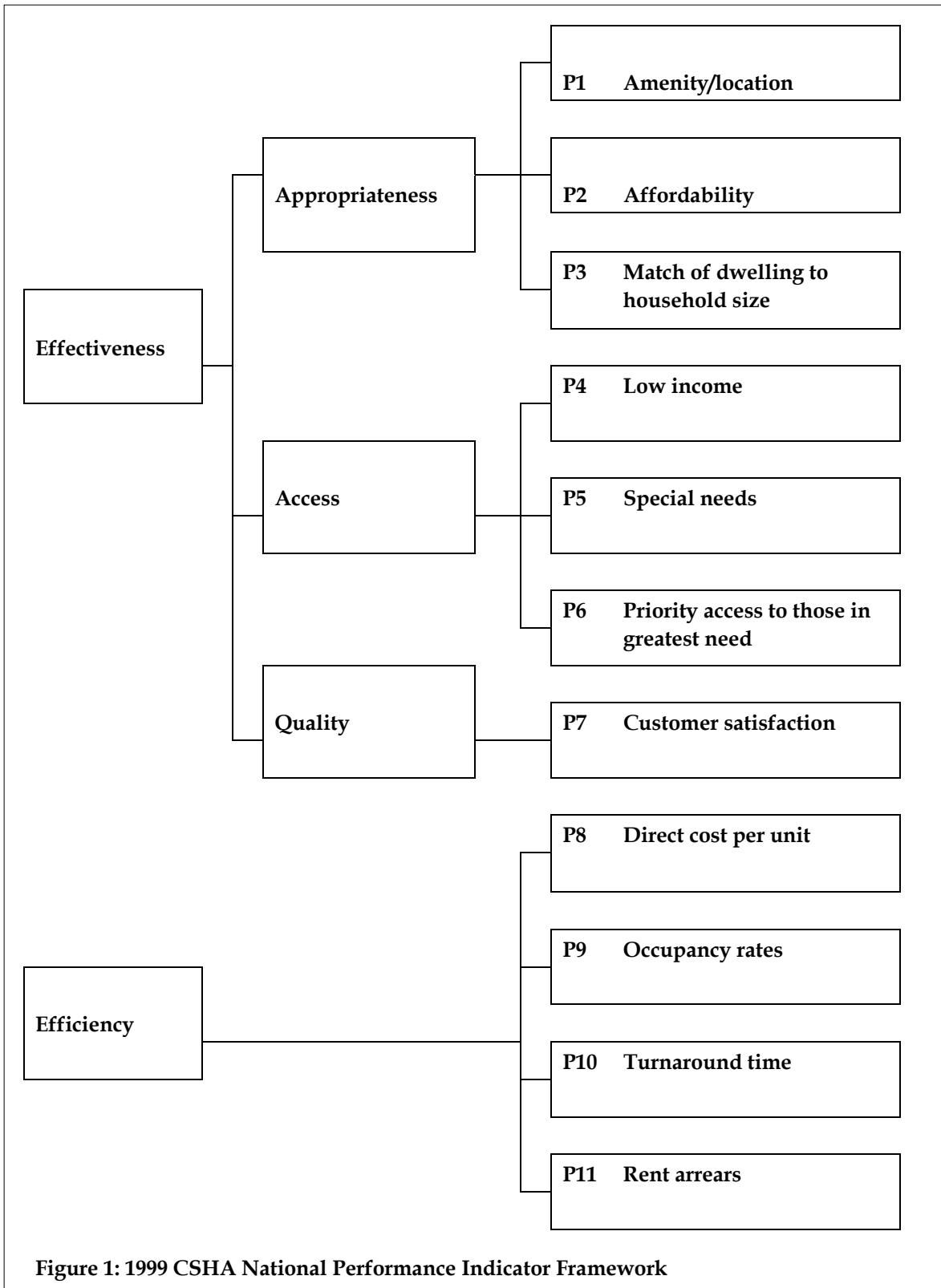
It is emphasised that the national standard is being developed for CSHA data collection purposes and not as a platform for policy development. It is also emphasised that this paper is not intended to imply that all persons with a national standard characteristic are disadvantaged in the private rental market. (For example not all Indigenous, disabled, young or older people experience difficulty accessing accommodation in the private rental market. These groups however, are generally considered to be more disadvantaged in regard to accessing housing in the private rental market than the general population.)

1.2 Background

The 1999 CSHA aims to facilitate access to affordable, appropriate and secure housing for people on low incomes and people with special needs. Under this CSHA a new national performance indicator framework was developed. Figure 1 outlines the 11 indicators under the new framework. Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) have collaboratively developed the specifications for the new performance indicator framework.

On 8–9 March 2000 a CSHA National Housing Data Development Committee (NHDDC) ‘performance indicator public and community housing’ workshop was held in Canberra. At this meeting, specifications for the CSHA 1999–2000 data collection were discussed and public rental housing and community housing data manuals were developed.

It was agreed at this workshop that there was a need to explore the issues involved in measuring special need groups in CSHA programs. The AIHW agreed to undertake mapping work and propose some national standards for consideration by Commonwealth, state and territory governments. This discussion paper explores the issues associated with measuring special need groups in CSHA programs and with developing a national standard. It also proposes a draft national measure of special need groups.



2 Special need measure

2.1 Special need specifications

The 1999 CSHA requires housing authorities to provide assistance to ‘those whose needs for appropriate housing cannot be met by the private market, for the duration of their needs’ (Commonwealth of Australia 1999). It also stipulates that housing assistance ‘should provide priority of assistance to those with the highest needs’ (Commonwealth of Australia 1999).

The special need indicator (P5) measures the special need profile of new tenants in CSHA programs. The specifications for the indicator count the total number of new households housed in the financial year that had a special need status (e.g. the total number of people housed with a special need status is not collected). This allows the percentage of allocations to households with a special need status to be identified. It facilitates planning for the targeting of housing assistance to persons who may experience difficulty accessing appropriate housing in the private rental market.

The indicator could examine the special need profile of all tenants in CSHA programs, however this would provide only an historical analysis of housing allocation policies, as the majority of jurisdictions provide lifetime tenure. Lifetime tenure allows tenants to live indefinitely in public housing providing they fulfil the conditions of their lease. Breach of a lease could result in the tenancy agreement being terminated.

The specifications for the special need indicator therefore measure the special need profile of applicants housed in the preceding financial year only. To measure this indicator a national standard for identifying special need groups is required.

2.2 Distinguishing between special need (P5) and priority access (P6) indicators

The 1999 CSHA has three indicators that measure access to public and community housing: low income (P4); special need (P5) and priority access to those in greatest need (P6).

The priority access to those in greatest need indicator measures the proportion of new allocations to those in greatest need, in time to allocation groups. The NHDDC will develop a national standard for identifying public and community housing applicants who require priority access to housing. To avoid duplication of reporting on both this indicator and the special need indicator, it is recommended that a distinction be made between ‘special need groups’ and ‘applicants requiring priority access to housing’. For the purpose of the CSHA collection it is recommended that the following distinction be made between these two groups:

- Priority access to those in greatest need indicator (P6) will focus on identifying environmental conditions or circumstances that indicate an applicant has a need for immediate allocation of housing (e.g. homelessness, escaping a life-threatening situation, people residing in inadequate or unsuitable accommodation). It will be assumed that allocating housing to an applicant in need of priority housing may assist, in the first instance, with alleviating the person’s condition/situation (e.g. allocating a homeless person social housing will provide them with the opportunity to address their homelessness status).

- The special need indicator (P5) will focus on an individual's personal status or condition (e.g. disability, Indigenous, age). It is not suggested that allocating housing to special need applicants will alleviate their special need. Housing allocation however may assist a person with a special need status to be appropriately housed (e.g. allocating social housing to a disabled person may allow them to live in a modified dwelling that is not available in the private rental market).

It is also recommended that the special need national standard identify groups of the population that experience 'special' difficulty accessing accommodation in the private rental market. When identifying these groups, it is recommended that only particular groups in the population whose housing needs are sufficiently different from most of the population at large should be identified as a CSHA special need group.

The following section will examine relevant Commonwealth, state and territory government housing policies and also examine literature about groups of people who experience difficulty accessing accommodation in the private rental market.

3 Special need groups: measurement issues

3.1 State and territory policies

CSHA programs are administered by state and territory governments, and jurisdictions have identified groups of the population for whom housing programs are targeted. The target groups are considered to experience difficulty accessing private rental accommodation.

Table 1 outlines state and territory policies for the targeting of CSHA public and community housing programs and indicates that policies vary between both jurisdictions and also between programs within a jurisdiction (e.g. public rental housing and community housing programs).

In regard to public housing, the majority of jurisdictions target public housing programs to low income groups. Only a couple of jurisdictions have identified a number of groups for whom accommodation is targeted. These target groups include Indigenous, youth, disabled, aged and families.

The target groups for community housing programs vary as different providers and provider models target different special need groups. Some target groups for community housing programs include aged, youth, disabled, families or Indigenous. Other target groups are also identified for the community housing sector, such as homelessness, women experiencing domestic violence. The later target groups however are not captured in the special need national standard as they represent an environmental condition or circumstance (the focus for measuring priority access P6) as opposed to an individual's personal status or condition (the focus for measuring special need P5).

Table 1: State and territory policies–CSHA target groups

Target group	NSW		Vic		QLD		WA		SA		Tas		ACT		NT	
	Public housing	Community housing	Public housing	Community housing	Public housing	Community housing	Public housing	Community housing	Public housing	Community housing	Public housing	Community housing	Public housing	Community housing	Public housing	Community housing
Women & children escaping DV	..	yes	yes	..	..	yes	..	yes	yes	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Indigenous	..	yes	..	..	..	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	..	yes	..	..	yes	..
Youth	..	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	..	yes	..	..	..	..
Disadvantaged singles ^(a)	..	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	..	yes	..	yes	..	yes	..	..	yes	..
Disabled	..	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	..	..	yes	..
Low income ^(b)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	..	..	yes	yes	..	yes	..
Homeless or at risk of homelessness	..	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	..	yes	yes	..	..	yes	yes	..	yes	..
Unable to access private rental market	..	yes	..	..	..	yes	..	yes	yes	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Aged ^(c)	yes	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	..	yes	..	..	yes	..
Families ^(d)	..	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	yes	yes	..	yes	..	yes	..	..	..	..
Refugees	..	yes	..	..	..	..	..	yes	..	yes	..	yes	..	..	..	..
Chronic illness ^(e)	..	yes	yes	..	..	..	..	yes	yes	..	..	yes	..	..	yes	..
NESB	..	yes	..	..	..	..	yes	yes	..	..	..	yes	..	..	..	..
Residents with support needs	..	yes	..	..	..	..	..	yes	yes	..	..	yes	..	..	..	..

.. Not applicable.

(a) Includes women.

(b) Includes moderate incomes.

(c) Includes frail aged.

(d) Includes single-parent families, women and children.

(e) Includes chronic/terminal illness, chronic mental illness.

Note: Table1 summarises target groups for public housing and community housing programs only. Other CSHA funded programs (e.g. Aboriginal Rental Housing Program, private rent assistance, home purchase program, Crisis Accommodation Program) may target assistance to some groups outlined in Table 1. Table 1 does not report about the targeting of all social housing programs as information about the later programs is not reported.

3.2 Commonwealth policies—Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

The Commonwealth, state and territory governments fund the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) which provides transition supported accommodation and related services to assist homeless people achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence. Target groups have been identified for SAAP and include the following categories:

Primary SAAP target groups:

- young people
- single men only
- single women only
- families
- women escaping domestic violence and
- cross target/multiple/general.

Secondary SAAP target groups:

- Indigenous Australians
- people from non-English-speaking backgrounds and
- other.

3.3 Findings from literature

In addition to government policies, literature also identifies groups of the population that experience difficulties accessing private rental accommodation.

The Department of Housing and Regional Development commissioned a study in 1991 that examined indicators of housing stress in Australia. The study identified groups of the population that experience difficulty accessing housing. The groups identified include:

- certain communities of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people;
- residents of rural and remote areas; and
- people with certain types of disabilities (Department of Housing and Regional Development 1994).

Other sources of literature have also identified groups of the population that have 'special' housing needs (National Housing Strategy 1992; FaCS 2001). When identifying groups of the population that experience difficulty accessing housing, it is recommended that only particular groups in the population whose housing needs are sufficiently different from most of the population at large be identified as a CSHA special need group.

3.3.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Literature reveals that the housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are poorly met due to many contributing factors. These factors include:

- the lower incomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (53% of this population receive income from social security payments and only one-third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed);

- the educational disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- different housing needs due to cultural differences (e.g. the requirement for larger dwellings and outdoor living areas with shared facilities) which are seldom met due to less diverse housing stock.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also disadvantaged in the private rental market due to discrimination. Studies have concluded that 'an overwhelming majority of Aboriginal people are unable to access the private rental market either because of low turnover in the area, discrimination or both'.

3.3.2 Residents of rural and remote areas

Trevor Budge and Associates (1992) found that many of the housing problems experienced in metropolitan areas are exacerbated in rural areas due to:

- less diverse housing stock (approximately 90% of dwellings are detached)
- lack of rental accommodation with a higher proportion of homes owned or being purchased
- higher unemployment
- lower incomes
- lower average levels of education and
- difficulty accessing services.

3.3.3 People with disabilities

Another group of the population that is disadvantaged in the private rental market is people with disabilities. As Australia has pursued policies of deinstitutionalisation, there has been an apparent increase in the number of people with physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities and mental health care needs being housed by social housing providers (HMAC 2000).

A national report (Ecumenical Housing Inc. 1999) described this group as representing people with 'complex needs' and defined the following two categories for this group:

- multiple intensive needs which compromise functioning but not ability to meet basic needs; and
- multiple intensive needs which compromise ability to meet basic needs and which manifest as one or more of the following behavioural clusters:
 - profound lack of living skills
 - disruptive behaviour
 - profound lack of social networks
 - violence of self
 - excessively demanding.

Typically the 'complex need' client group suffers from one or more of the following:

- mental illness
- substance disorders
- behavioural disorders

- intellectual disability
- chronic health disorders
- sexual abuse.

Housing for people with complex needs may be more difficult to access than housing for the general population as these people may require all or some of the following (HMAC 2000):

- building modifications for people with physical disabilities or mental health care needs
- ability to retain tenancy during hospitalisation
- manageable dwelling in terms of maintenance
- option to choose from a variety of dwellings
- location which allows access to carers, clinical or other services, public transport, shopping etc.
- an appropriate and affordable dwelling.

Incomes of people with complex needs are unlikely to be greater than a social security benefit and as such these tenants may require substantial rental subsidies (HMAC 2000).

3.3.4 Other disadvantaged groups:

Women with children and those experiencing domestic violence

Older singles and sole parents, the majority of whom are women, and couples with young children are another section of the population who are considered to experience difficulty accessing housing (National Housing Strategy 1992). Research has found that women with children experience discrimination from landlords and real estate agents (FaCS 2001).

Women experiencing domestic violence have a particular need for housing as they are usually placed in considerable social and economic disadvantage, especially if they have no social supports, no independent income and dependant children (FaCS 2001). One of the major unmet needs for women after they have left a violent relationship is practical assistance to obtain housing (FaCS 2001).

Older people

The changing demographics of Australia's population are seeing an ageing of the population. Older people with low incomes have been found to have a limited capacity to meet increasing costs in the private rental market. Older people have a number of specific housing-related needs including:

- accommodation which incorporates the provision of various levels of support and is adaptable to changing needs;
- capacity to move to smaller, more manageable or more conveniently located housing;
- a range of physical modifications in response to increasing frailty;
- proximity to facilities including public transport, shopping facilities and services;
- opportunities for social interaction to minimise isolation;
- sense of security and safety (FaCS 2001).

Youth

The National Housing Strategy (1992) identified youth (age 15 to 24 years) as a group which experience difficulty accessing the private rental market due to affordability issues and

discrimination. An AIHW study (Foard et al. 1994) found that 25% of single persons aged 15–24 years were living in after-housing poverty. Numerous factors are believed to contribute to the after-housing poverty of youth including:

- lower incomes earned by youth – in 1991 nearly 70% of 15–24 year olds earned less than \$16,000 per year (ABS Census 1991 cited in Maas 1995);
- high proportion (74%) of young people have to access the private rental market for housing (Maas 1995); and
- of the proportion of youth in the private rental market, 90% spend more than 25% of their income on housing costs and 44% spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs (Maas 1995).

National Housing Strategy studies (1992) have also found that young people commonly experience discrimination when trying to access private rental housing. Another study showed that young people sharing were the least preferred tenants of Melbourne real estate agents.

Newly arrived migrants

The National Housing Strategy (1992) stated that recently arrived migrants experience difficulty in the private rental market due to:

- affordability issues, as they are more likely to be in lower income groups and unlikely to have immediate access to affordable housing options;
- discrimination issues, including being charged excessive rents or being denied accommodation; and
- inability to access information due to language barriers.

As a consequence recently arrived migrants may experience difficulty accessing housing in the private rental market. The position for recent arrivals may be exacerbated by changes in income support entitlements for this group (FaCS 2001).

4 Proposed CSHA national standard: special need groups

Groups of the population that experience difficulty accessing the private rental market have been included in the CSHA special need (P5) national standard. Only particular groups in the population whose housing needs are sufficiently different from most of the population at large have been included in this national standard.

CSHA special need (P5) national standard

Low income households who:

- *satisfy the Indigenous household definition; or*
- *have a principle tenant aged 24 years and under; or*
- *have a principle tenant aged 75 years and more; or*
- *have a household member with a disability.*

The CSHA special need (P5) categories are defined below.

4.1 Indigenous household

An Indigenous household is one which contains one or more Indigenous people (AIHW 2001).

4.2 Head tenant aged 24 years and under

Households where the principal tenant is aged 15–24 years inclusive:

The principal tenant, or reference person, is defined in the *National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary* version 2 (NHADDv2) as the first person listed on the housing assistance application/tenancy form or the mortgage papers (AIHW 2003).

4.3 Head tenant aged 75 years and over

Households where the principal tenant is aged 75 years and over:

The principal tenant or reference person is defined in the NHADDv2 as the first person listed on the housing assistance application/tenancy form or mortgage papers (AIHW 2003).

For the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program data collection, households where the principal tenant is aged 50 years or more is the national standard. This age is selected as it is consistent with that used by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care for planning the provision of aged care services. It acknowledges that the need for aged care may begin at younger ages for Indigenous people than for their non-Indigenous counterparts due to the reduced life expectancy of Indigenous people and the higher burden of illness (ABS & AIHW 1999).

4.4 People with a disability

Households that contain a household member who has a disability.

Disability is defined in terms of three dimensions (WHO 1997):

- body structures and functions/impairments;
- activity/activity limitation; and
- participation/participation restriction.

Disability is the presence and nature of one, some or all of these dimensions associated with current or previous related health conditions, disease or injury. The three dimensions focus in turn on aspects of functioning and disability relevant to:

- the body
- the individual person
- the person in society.

The experience of disability is variable over time and affected by external environmental factors as well as internal personal factors.

Four groups of disability are defined below. These disability groupings are consistent with the *National Community Services Data Dictionary* 'Disability Grouping – International'. For the purpose of the CSHA data collection jurisdictions are not required to report on the total number of households by each disability group. Reporting about the number of households with a disability (in any group) will satisfy the reporting requirements for the CSHA special need (P5) national standard.

4.4.1 Physical/diverse

Physical/diverse disability is associated with the presence of a common impairment, which may have diverse effects within and among individuals, including effects on physical activities such as mobility. The range and extent of activity limitation and participation restriction will vary with the extent of impairment. Environmental factors and support needs are related to areas of activity limitation and participation restriction, and may be required for long periods. Level of support may vary with both life changes and extent of impairment. This grouping includes such groupings as, for example, physical, acquired brain injury, neurological and persons experiencing chronic medical conditions that impact on the ability to perform physical activities or may affect internal organs such as lung or liver.

4.4.2 Intellectual/learning

Intellectual/learning disability is associated with impairment of mental functions with limitations in a range of daily activities and restriction in participation in a range of likely areas. Support may be needed throughout life the level of support tends to be consistent over a period of time but may change in association with changes in life circumstances. This grouping will include such groupings as, for example, development delay, intellectual, specific learning/attention deficit disorder and autism.

4.4.3 Psychiatric

Psychiatric disability is associated with clinically recognisable symptoms and behaviour patterns associated with distress that may impair personal functioning in normal social activity. Impairments of global and specific mental functions are experienced with associated activity limitations and participation restrictions in a range of areas. Support needed may vary in range, and may be required with intermittent intensity during the course of the condition. Changes in level of support tend to be related to changes in the level of impairment. This grouping includes conditions such as schizophrenia, affective disorders, anxiety disorders, addictive behaviours, personality disorders, stress, psychosis, depression and adjustment disorders.

4.4.4 Sensory/speech disability

Sensory/speech disability is associated with impairment of the eye, ear and related structures. Extent of impairment, and activity limitation tend to remain consistent for long periods. Participation restrictions are in areas of communication primarily, but may include mobility. Availability of a specific range of environmental factors will affect the level of disability experienced by people in the sensory grouping. Once in place, the level of support tends to be relatively consistent. Sensory disability will include such groupings as, for example, deafblind, vision, and hearing and speech.

5 Disability groupings and complex needs

An attempt has been made to incorporate complex need characteristics into the CSHA special need (P5) and priority access to those in greatest need (P6) national standards (refer to section 3.3.3 of this paper). Two complex need characteristics however have not been included in the national standards: substance disorder and sexual abuse.

The special need (P5) national standard focuses on personal characteristics that suggest a person may experience difficulty obtaining accommodation in the private rental market, and priority access national standard (P6) focuses on housing situations that suggest there is a need for priority access to housing. It is proposed that not all persons who have complex need characteristics such as a substance disorder or sexual abuse experience a housing need. Exclusion of these characteristics from the national standards will not result in automatic exclusion of people with substance disorders or sexual abuse problems from being identified in the special need or priority access national standards.

For example, if persons with a substance disorder or sexual abuse situation have a disability or health condition, or housing situation such as homelessness, they will be identified in the special need or priority access national standards due to their housing need (that may or may not have resulted from a complex need characteristic). If such a housing need is not evident, these persons will not be included in the national standards. Table 2 compares the special need and priority access national standards with complex need characteristics.

Table 2: Comparison of special need (P5) and priority access to those in greatest need (P6) national standards with complex need characteristics

	Complex need characteristics										
	Profound lack of living skills	Disruptive behaviour	Profound lack of social networks	Violence of self	Excessively demanding	Mental illness	Substance disorders	Behavioural disorders	Intellectual disability	Chronic health disorders	Sexual abuse
Special need (P5)											
Indigenous Australians
Physical, diverse disability	√	..
Intellectual, learning disability	√	√	√	√	√
Psychiatric disability	..	√	..	√	√	√	..	√
Sensory, speech disability
24 years & under
75 years & over
Priority access to those in greatest need (P6)											
Homeless	√
People whose life or safety is at risk in their current accommodation

(continued)

Table 2 (continued): Comparison of special need (P5) and priority access to those in greatest need (P6) national standards with complex need characteristics

	Complex need characteristics										
	Profound lack of living skills	Disruptive behaviour	Profound lack of social networks	Violence of self	Excessively demanding	Mental illness	Substance disorders	Behavioural disorders	Intellectual disability	Chronic health disorders	Sexual abuse
People whose health condition is aggravated by their current housing
People whose housing is inappropriate to their needs
People with very high housing costs

.. Not applicable.

√ Indicates the complex need variable may be collected in a national standard. It is not implied however that all persons with a complex need variable will be included in the national standard (e.g. not all persons with a profound lack of living skills have an intellectual/learning disorder. Table 2 however represents how persons with a complex need variable may be represented in the national standard). Alternatively, complex need variables may be represented in national standard categories and not indicated in Table 2 (e.g. persons with a profound lack of social networks may have a disability or live in inappropriate housing).

Notes

1. Any complex need variable will be collected for low income households who: satisfy the Indigenous household definition; or have a head tenant aged 24 years and under; or have a head tenant aged 75 years and more; or have a household member with a disability (CSHA special need P5 national standard).
2. Any complex need variable will be collected for households who display a housing situation in the P6 Priority access to those in greatest need national standard (e.g. person with substance disorder who is homeless, or person whose life or safety is at risk due to sexual abuse in their current accommodation).

6 Summary data

6.1 Public and community housing

To allow a broader understanding of the public and community housing sectors to be developed, additional information about special need categories will be collected via summary data.

6.1.1 Number of properties in metropolitan, rural and remote locations

Data about the number of dwellings in metropolitan, rural and remote locations will be collected for both public and community housing programs using the Rural Remote Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) classification.

The RRMA classification divides each of Australia's states and territories into three groups: metropolitan areas, rural zones and remote zones, and a total of seven categories is specified within these zones (DPIE & DSHS 1994). The statistical local area (SLA) is the building block for the categories and zones, allowing comparability with other statistical information about SLAs. Data about the number of public and community housing dwellings in all seven RRMA categories to be collected in the 1999–2000 CSHA data collection:

- metropolitan areas:
 - capital city (consists of state and territory capital city statistical divisions)
 - other metropolitan centre (consists of one or more statistical subdivisions which have an urban centre of population 100,000 or more in size);
- rural zone:
 - large rural centres (SLAs where most of the population reside in urban centres of population 25,000–99,000)
 - small rural centres (SLAs in rural zones containing urban centres of population 10,000–4,999)
 - other rural centres (the remaining SLAs within the rural zone – urban centres of population less than 10,000);
- remote zone:
 - remote centres (SLAs in the remote zone containing urban centres of population greater than 5,000)
 - other remote areas (remaining SLAs within the remote zone – urban centres of population less than 5,000).

The AIHW will provide each jurisdiction with a list of postcodes aggregated by RRMA categories. The Institute also has the capacity, for the public housing collection (via the data repository), to identify postcode or SLA and convert it to an RRMA classification.

6.2 Community housing

Due to the nature of community housing programs and the targeting of assistance to specific groups of the population, the following descriptor data items be collected for the community housing program for the 1999–2000 CSHA data collection:

- people from a non-English-speaking background;

- other target groups.

The issues with defining these categories are examined below.

6.2.1 People of non-English-speaking background

Total number of new households housed in the financial year with one or more members (including children) who identify as being from a non-English-speaking background. Persons from a non-English-speaking background are defined as:

‘persons born overseas and have a first language other than English, or one of their parents have those characteristics’ (ABS 1997).

While the use of the term ‘non-English-speaking background’ has been considered an unsuitable measure of cultural diversity since the mid-1990s (ABS 1997), it is proposed to use this term in the community housing collection as some providers target housing services to groups of the population whose main language spoken at home is not English. Simplifying the terminology for these groups to ‘non-English-speaking background’ allows the targeting of housing to this diverse group to be captured in this data item.

6.2.2 Other target groups

Community housing organisations can indicate the number of new households housed during the financial year in special need target groups not included in the national standard or summary data (e.g. non-English-speaking background). The category of special need will need to be exception reported with the data.

This data item provides flexibility in the reporting process and takes into account the diverse spectrum of special need target groups in the community housing sector.

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Measuring priority access to those in greatest need (P6) in Commonwealth State Housing Agreement programs

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this paper

This paper has been developed to stimulate discussion with Commonwealth, state and territory governments and explore issues in measuring priority access to those in greatest need in Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) programs. The paper examines current policies and relevant issues in this measure and proposes some national standards for measuring this indicator. It is expected that the national standard will be incorporated into the *National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary* (AIHW 2001) and will be trialled in the CSHA data collection in 2000–01.

The purpose of the national standard is to capture CSHA data for consistent reporting between jurisdictions. The national standard aims to identify circumstances that indicate an applicant requires immediate access to housing. The focus of the national standard is on circumstances that indicate there is a high need for immediate housing, thereby identifying a relatively small set of circumstances that could be described as the extreme end of the spectrum of housing need.

The national standard has not been developed to be all-inclusive or capture the diverse spectrum of circumstances that indicate an applicant may require priority access to housing. While this approach allows a 'baseline' to be established for consistent data reporting between jurisdictions, some public and community housing allocation policies for priority access to housing may not be included in the national standard. This is a limitation of the approach adopted in developing the national standard. It is emphasised that the national standard is being developed for CSHA data collection purposes and not as a platform for policy development.

1.2 Background

The 1999 CSHA aims to facilitate access to affordable, appropriate and secure housing for people on low incomes and people with special needs. Under this CSHA a new national performance indicator framework was developed. Figure 1 outlines the 11 indicators under the new framework. Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the AIHW have collaboratively developed the specifications for the new performance indicator framework.

On 8–9 March 2000 a CSHA National Housing Data Agreement (NHDA) workshop was held in Canberra to consider public and community housing indicators for the 1999 CSHA. At this

meeting the specifications for the CSHA 1999–2000 data collection were discussed and public rental housing and community housing data manuals were developed.

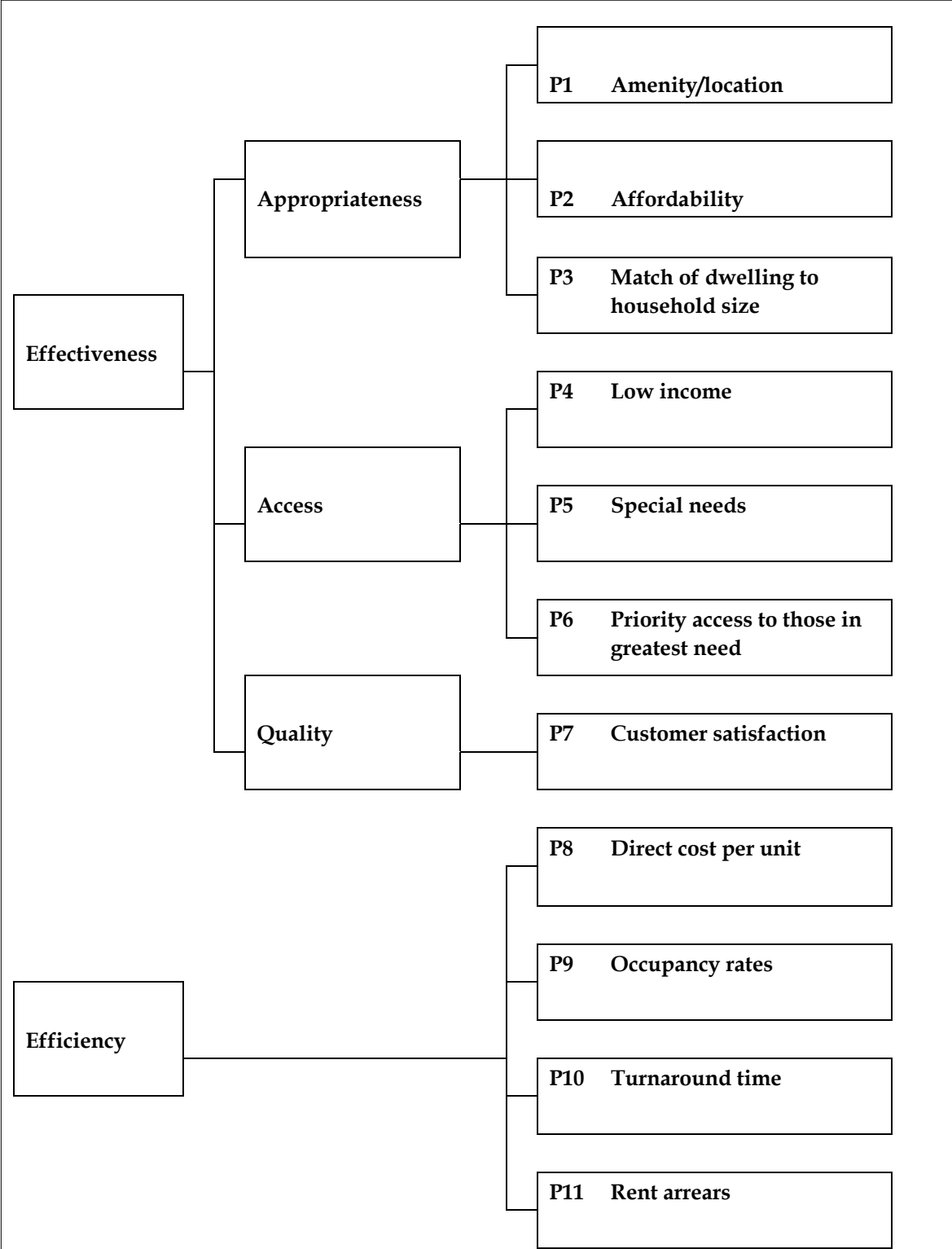


Figure 1: 1999 CSHA National Performance Indicator Framework

At the CSHA NHDA workshop it was agreed that there was a need to explore the issues involved in measuring priority access to those in greatest need in CSHA programs. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare agreed to undertake mapping work and propose some national standards for consideration by Commonwealth, state and territory

governments. This discussion paper explores the issues associated with measuring this indicator and with developing a national standard.

2 Priority access to those in greatest need indicator

2.1 Background

The 1996 CSHA National Performance Indicator Framework reported about:

- Level of provision (P1) by examining the proportion of households provided with housing assistance in the year relative to the bilaterally agreed level of provision. The household type (relationship status, gender and age) and household characteristics (Indigenous, non-English-speaking and disability) were reported in this indicator.
- Timeliness of placement (P6) by examining the proportion of the total number of households on the waiting list in specific waiting time categories (e.g. less than six months, six months to one year, one year to two years, etc.).

These indicators failed to inform about whether applicants in urgent need of housing were allocated housing ahead of those with lower housing needs. Changes to the 1999 CSHA National Performance Indicator Framework are intended to overcome this issue.

2.2 1999 CSHA

The 1999 CSHA requires housing authorities to provide assistance to 'those whose needs for appropriate housing cannot be met by the private market, for the duration of their needs'. It also stipulates that housing assistance 'should provide priority of assistance to those with the highest needs' (Commonwealth of Australia 1999).

The priority access to those in greatest need measure (P6) aims to inform whether housing authorities allocate housing to applicants who require immediate access to housing ahead of applicants with less housing needs. The indicator measures the time it takes applicants requiring priority access to housing to be allocated housing as a proportion of all applicants allocated housing for the current financial year. To effectively report about this measure it is necessary to develop a national standard that identifies applicants in need of immediate housing.

Assessing an applicant's need for housing is both an objective and a subjective process and the assessor's attitudes and opinions can influence the assessment process. Different housing authority staff may assess and categorise an applicant's need for housing differently. This paper does not explore the influence this variable has in measuring priority access to housing.

This paper has a propensity to refer to 1999 CSHA collection issues and policies in the public housing sector only. The 1999 CSHA community housing collection reported limited data about the priority access to those in greatest need indicator. It is anticipated that the national standard proposed in this paper will apply to both the public housing and community housing sectors.

2.3 Distinguishing between priority access to those in greatest need (P6) and special need (P5) indicators

The 1999 CSHA has three indicators that measure access to public and community housing – low income (P4); special need (P5) and priority access to those in greatest need (P6). A complication in developing a national standard for the priority access to those in greatest need indicator is the similarity between this indicator and the special need (P5) indicator.

The special need indicator measures the proportion of new tenancies that are allocated to households with special needs. The NHDDC will develop a national standard for identifying special need groups in public and community housing programs (AIHW 2000b). To avoid duplication of reporting on both this indicator and the priority access to those in greatest need indicator, it is recommended that a distinction be made between ‘special need groups’ and ‘applicants requiring priority access to housing’.

For the purpose of the CSHA collection it is recommended that the following distinction be made between these two groups:

- The priority access to those in greatest need indicator (P6) will focus on identifying environmental conditions or circumstances that indicate an applicant has a need for immediate allocation of housing (e.g. homelessness, escaping a life-threatening situation, people residing in inadequate accommodation). It will be assumed that allocating housing to an applicant in need of priority housing may assist, in the first instance, with alleviating the person’s condition/situation (e.g. allocating a homeless person housing may provide them with the opportunity to address their homelessness status).
- The special need indicator (P5) will focus on an individual’s personal status or condition (e.g. disability, Indigenous, age). It is not suggested that allocating housing to special need applicants will alleviate their special need. Housing allocation however may assist a person with a special need status to be appropriately housed (e.g. allow a disabled person to live in a modified dwelling that is not available in the private rental market).

The following section will examine data sources available for measuring priority access to those in greatest need.

3 Priority access to those in greatest need: measurement issues

3.1 State and territory policies: waiting list categories

CSHA programs are administered by state and territory governments and most jurisdictions aim to give priority access to those in greatest need via the implementation of segmented waiting lists. When a person applies for housing assistance their housing need is assessed and they are placed on the waiting list on a specific category of need (e.g. priority, wait turn, transfer and special need). This is intended to allow applicants in urgent need of housing to be identified and allocated housing ahead of applicants with a lower need for housing.

Table 1: State and territory government waiting list categories: public housing

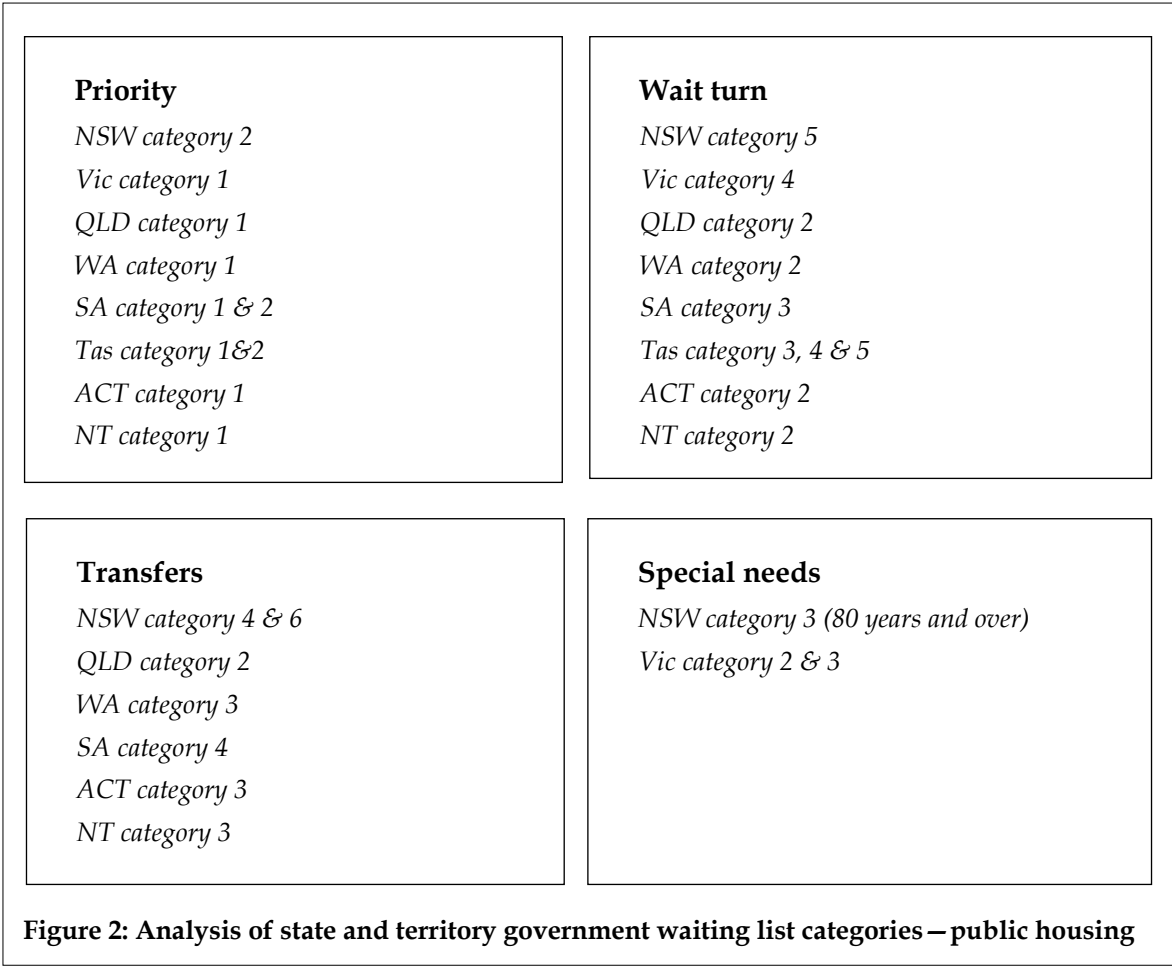
Jurisdiction	Number of categories	Category types
NSW	6	1: emergency temporary accommodation 2: priority housing 3: applicants aged 80 years and over 4: transfers 5: wait turn applicants 6: over/under occupancy transfers
Vic	4	1: recurring homelessness 2: supported housing 3: special housing needs 4: wait turn applicants
QLD	2	1: priority housing 2: wait list applicants (including transfers)
WA	3	1: priority 2: wait turn 3: transfer
SA	4	1: applicants in urgent need 2: applicants for whom the private rental market/other housing options are not suitable or accessible as a long-term option and who are not in urgent need, and Trust tenants who need to transfer because their current housing is unsuitable because of overcrowding, medical or other reasons 3: applicants who meet the income and assets test who do not meet needs criteria for categories 1 or 2 4: Trust tenants who wish to transfer to another Trust house because of personal preference reasons and who have been tenants for a minimum of 3 years
Tas	5	1: exceptional need 2 to 5 (category 2 being most in need and category 5 being least in need)
ACT	3	1: priority 2: wait turn 3: transfer
NT	3	1: priority 2: wait turn (segmented for single aged/invalid pensioners) 3: transfer

Table 1 outlines the waiting list categories for state and territory governments and indicates that there is variation between jurisdictions. For example, Queensland has only two wait list categories; Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have three wait list categories; Victoria and South Australia have four wait list categories; Tasmania has five categories; and New South Wales has six categories.

Figure 2 analyses the waiting list categories for all jurisdictions according to four broad categories: priority, wait turn, transfer and special need applicants. The diagram illustrates the extent of variation and inconsistency in the way waiting list categories are described, and how they might be grouped under a four-category classification. For example:

- Priority status is comprised of category 1 in all jurisdictions except New South Wales, and category 2 in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania.
- Wait turn is comprised of category 2 for Queensland, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory; category 3 for South Australia and Tasmania; category 4 for Victoria and Tasmania; and category 5 for New South Wales and Tasmania.

- Transfers is comprised of category 2 for Queensland; category 3 for Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory; category 4 for New South Wales and South Australia; and category 6 for New South Wales
- Special needs is comprised of category 2 for Victoria; and category 3 for New South Wales and Victoria.



Variation in each jurisdiction’s waiting list categories also extends to the distribution of applicants on waiting lists. Table 2 outlines the number of applicants in the four broad category classifications for each jurisdiction at 30 June 2000. It indicates there is variation between jurisdictions in regard to the percentage of applicants listed on the priority wait list category. Queensland had only a two-category waiting list and had a very low proportion of applicants in the priority category (0.4%). Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory however had a three-category waiting list and had 7.2% and 7.7% of applicants respectively in the priority category and Tasmania had a five-category waiting list and had 8.7% of applicants in the priority category.

Table 2: Percentage of public rental housing applicants in priority wait list categories at 30 June 2000

Waiting list categories	NSW	Vic	QLD	WA	Tas	ACT	NT
Priority	1.8 ^(a)	4.3 ^(b)	0.4 ^(c)	7.2 ^(d)	8.7 ^(e)	7.7	..
Wait turn	98.3	..	99	..	90.9	..	..
Transfers	0.5	..	..	..	..	..	..
Special needs	0.3	..	..	..	..	..	..

.. Not applicable.

(a) Greatest need applicants are those with priority approval but do not include applicants for temporary emergency accommodation.

(b) Greatest need categories are 'Recurring homeless' and 'Supported housing'.

(c) The Queensland definition is those who are Priority A on the wait list.

(d) Greatest need categories are domestic violence, harassment (e.g. racial) and medical condition.

(e) Excludes transfers, police housing, suspended, incomplete and unprocessed applications.

Source: AIHW 2000e.

Variation between jurisdictions in regard to the number and description of categories on the waiting list, and in the distribution of applicants between wait list categories, especially priority wait list categories, suggests that waiting list categories are not an effective data source for measuring priority access to those in greatest need. An alternative data source for measuring this indicator could examine the circumstances that indicate an applicant is in urgent need of housing.

Adopting this approach may facilitate the national standard being implemented in community housing CSHA reporting. There is very limited requirement in most jurisdictions for community housing organisations to implement segmented waiting lists. Using waiting list categories therefore could limit the community housing sector's ability to use the national standard for CSHA reporting. Collecting information about applicants' circumstances may be more readily available in the community housing sector and hence facilitate reporting against this standard.

3.2 State and territory policies: priority housing circumstances

Jurisdictions aim to give priority access to those in greatest need by assessing an applicant's need for housing. When assessing an applicant's need for housing, housing authorities investigate a range of circumstances that are considered to indicate that an applicant is in need of priority housing.

Table 3 outlines the circumstances that jurisdictions take into account when considering the extent of need for urgent or priority allocation. Generally these circumstances include:

- homeless, pending homeless or exiting Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) type accommodation;
- life-threatening situation at home such as domestic violence, sexual/emotional abuse, child abuse or at risk of violence;
- inadequate or unsuitable accommodation;
- health or disability issues;
- appropriate and affordable accommodation not available in the private sector; and
- persistent discrimination or harassment.

There is considerable consistency between jurisdictions in the inclusion of these circumstances. This indicates that an appropriate grouping of these circumstances could be used to classify greatest need categories.

Table 3: State and territory waiting list priority categories – special circumstances

Housing type	NSW		Vic		QLD		WA		SA		Tas		ACT		NT	
	PH	CH	PH	CH	PH	CH	PH	CH	PH	CH	PH	CH	PH	CH	PH	CH
Special circumstances																
Homeless, pending homelessness (eviction) or exiting SAAP type	1	..	1	1	1	..	1	..	1	1	1	..	1	..	1	1
Appropriate & affordable accommodation not available in private sector	1	..	3	3	1	..	2	..	2	..	1 to 5	..	..	..	..	..
Inadequate or unsuitable	1	..	2	2	..	..	1	..	1 & 2	1	1 to 5	..	1	..	1	1
Life-threatening situation at home	..	..	1	..	1	..	1	..	1	1	1 to 5	..	1	..	1	1
Substance abuse	..	..	1 or 3	1 or	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Natural disaster (flood, fire)	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Severe financial difficulties	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	..
Victim of major crime	..	..	..	..	1	..	2	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Health or disability issues	1	..	2	2	1	..	1	..	1 & 2	1 &	1 to 5	..	1	..	1	..
Persistent discrimination or	..	..	3	3	1	..	2	..	1 & 2	1 &	..	..	..	..	1	..
Exiting institution care (include prison)	..	..	1 or 3	3	1 or	..	2	..	1 & 2	2	1 &	..	..	..	..	..
Lack financial, cultural, social skills	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	1 & 2	1 &	..	..	..	..	..	..
Neighbourhood or tenancy disputes	..	..	3	3	1 ⁵	..	2	..	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..
Witness protection	..	..	..	..	1	..	2	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Family support	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..
Recent refugee or new to area	..	..	3	3	..	..	2	..	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..
Child returned to care	..	..	..	..	1	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

.. Not applicable.

PH Public housing

CH Community housing

Note:

1. 1 includes transitional or crisis type accommodation; 2 includes PH/CH will significantly resolve the circumstances prompting the application; location disadvantage; 3 includes severe medical condition or disability which is affected by current housing; present accommodation is dangerous, substandard or severely overcrowded; underoccupancy or overcrowding as defined by the trust; living conditions and insecurity of tenure; 4 includes 'at risk' in current accommodation, domestic violence, sexual/emotional abuse, child abuse, at risk of violence; 5 in extreme circumstances an existing tenant may be urgently transferred.
2. In jurisdictions where segmented waiting lists are not implemented in the community housing sector, organisations are usually required to house applicants in accordance with need and this necessitates prioritisation against urgency or needs criteria which are similar to those in public housing. Categories may include factors such as unsafe housing environment, insecure housing situation and inappropriate housing. This situation is not reported in Table 3 as information for this table was compiled from segmented waiting list information sources.

3.3 Findings from literature

The Department of Housing and Regional Development commissioned a study into homelessness and inadequate housing in 1985 and defined three broad categories of people in housing need:

- the homeless;
- the inadequately housed; and
- those paying a high proportion of their income for housing (Housing and Regional Development 1985, cited in Department of Housing and Regional Development 1994).

Other sources of literature (FaCS 2001) have also identified factors that indicate a housing need in addition to affordability problems, including:

- people whose safety is at risk/without housing;
- people whose condition is aggravated by their housing;
- people who have a severe housing need because of the condition of their housing and their housing cost;
- people whose housing is inappropriate to their needs; and
- people with very high housing costs and/or overcrowding.

This section will explore the findings in literature about housing need and also examine Indigenous housing issues.

3.3.1 Homelessness

Homelessness is seen as the most acute form of housing stress, yet it is an area beset with difficulties of definitions and data (Department of Housing and Regional Development 1994). Chamberlain and McKenzie (1992) argue that 'homelessness' and 'inadequate housing' are socially constructed, cultural concepts that can only make sense in a particular community at a given historical period. In order to define homelessness, it is necessary to identify shared community standards about the minimum housing that people have the right to expect in order to live according to the conventions and expectations of a particular culture (Chamberlain 1999).

Literature has revealed that housing and homelessness constitute a continuum of circumstances (Chamberlain & McKenzie 1992). A model of homelessness based on shared community standards embodied in current housing practices incorporates the following elements:

- culturally recognised exceptions where it is inappropriate to apply the minimum standard – e.g. seminaries, gaols, student halls of residence;
- marginally housed people in housing situations close to the minimum standard, being equivalent to a small rented flat with a bedroom, living room, kitchen and bathroom;
- tertiary homelessness: people living in single rooms in private boarding houses – without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure;
- secondary homelessness: people moving between various forms of temporary shelter, including: friends, emergency accommodation, youth refuges, hostels and boarding houses;
- primary homelessness: people without conventional accommodation (living on the streets, in deserted buildings, impoverished dwellings, under bridges, in parks, etc.).

Some definitions of homelessness are couched in broader terms than Table 3 and highlight that certain sections of the population are needy:

‘A homeless person is without a conventional home...she/he is often cut-off from the support of relatives and friends, she/he has few independent resources and often has no immediate means and in some cases, little future prospect of self-support’ (Chamberlain 1999).

Some definitions of homelessness also take into account the perceptions of those being studied. For example, people living in conventional accommodation are considered homeless if they do not find their accommodation satisfactory. Examining an individual’s subjective assessment of their situation as the criterion by which to establish whether or not they are homeless can be unworkable as it can result in people living in similar situations being classified differently if their perceptions are dissimilar (Chamberlain & McKenzie 1992).

A dilemma in identifying a shared Australian community standard for minimum housing is the culturally diverse nature of Australia’s society. There is no minimum community standard specified in any formal regulations. Any standard established for the CSHA collection would need to be sensitive to cultural meaning systems.

Indigenous homelessness

A recent study about Indigenous homelessness (FaCS 1998) identified that the Indigenous concept of homelessness differs from the non-Indigenous concept of homelessness, although there are some similarities between the two concepts. Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context is a multi-layered, multi-dimensional concept with multiple causes (FaCS 1998).

In addition to the usual concepts of homelessness which encompass circumstances such as escaping an unsafe or unstable home, or lack of access to stable housing, Indigenous definitions of homelessness also include concepts such as:

- spiritual or psychological homelessness which relates to separation from traditional land or from family;
- transient homelessness which is due to transient and mobile lifestyles and also due to the necessity of having to travel to obtain services; and
- possible overcrowding (FaCS 1998).

Indigenous homelessness is also commonly experienced at the level of the community, the family and the individual (FaCS 1998). The emotional pain and distress brought about by separation from home and family is the most fundamental form of homelessness identified in the study (FaCS 1998).

3.3.2 People whose safety is at risk

People who experience incidents of domestic violence and whose safety is at risk are generally considered to have housing needs in addition to affordability issues. Risk to personal safety is one of the highest ranking factors indicating additional housing need (FaCS 2001).

The lack of alternative accommodation and funds to secure alternative accommodation are significant barriers to women or men leaving a violent relationship, who otherwise would do so (FaCS 2001). A recent report has found that a significant proportion of women in the two lowest quintiles are unable to leave a violent partner because of either no money or financial

support (26%) or nowhere to go (36%). Access to accommodation would enable many of these women to remove themselves from violent situations (FaCS 2001).

Indigenous issues

A national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survey (FaCS 1998) found that approximately 45% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 13 years and over see family violence to be a common problem in the local area. In certain remote regions this figure was higher than 68%. Indigenous women are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence, particularly fatal assaults, by a partner. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women represent approximately 2% of the Australian female population, but comprise 16% of all female victims of homicide (FaCS 1998).

3.3.3 People whose housing is inappropriate to their needs

It is difficult to define what is meant by 'inappropriate or inadequate housing', though it can include a range of factors, for example:

- insecure tenure, or where a tenant is subject to harassment or discrimination;
- a medical condition urgently requiring treatment not available in the area where the applicant currently resides or where there is no reasonable access to public transport;
- poor housing location which results in isolation from community or health services, employment, social networks, support systems and public transport;
- severe overcrowding; and
- housing design or condition which is unsuitable for the needs and lifestyles of occupants, for example housing which:
 - is inappropriate for use by people with disabilities;
 - is causing or aggravating a medical condition; or
 - has structural or other maintenance problems such as dampness (FaCS 2001; Department of Housing and Regional Development 1994).

Indigenous housing issues

Research and studies have established that the standard of housing available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is significantly lower than for other Australians (FaCS 1998). For example:

- Severe overcrowding has been found to be a problem in Indigenous households. The average number of Indigenous people living in a household is 4.1, and in certain parts of Australia this figure is 6 or more, compared with a national average of 2.6 for the non-Indigenous population (FaCS 1998). The issue of overcrowding in Indigenous households is seen as a concept of 'hidden homelessness' (FaCS 1998). It was also found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were eight times more likely than other Australians to live in multi-family households (12.5% compared to 1.6%), and twice as likely to be living in after-housing poverty (FaCS 1998).
- Poor standard of housing is also a problem for Indigenous households. Around 7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in rural and remote communities have no running water connected and around 10% have no shower or bath (AIHW 1996). Jones also found that while Indigenous families represented just 1.4% of all families in

Australia they accounted for 38% of families living in impoverished dwellings (FaCS 1998).

4 Proposed CSHA national standard: priority access to those in greatest need target groups

Applicants who were homeless or who did not have access to safe, secure and affordable housing at the time of housing allocation are identified in the CSHA priority access to those in greatest need (P6) national standard.

The CSHA priority access to those in greatest need (P6) national standard

Low income households that at the time of allocation experienced one or more of the following circumstances:

- *they were homeless; or*
- *their life or safety was at risk in their accommodation; or*
- *their health condition was aggravated by their housing; or*
- *their housing was inappropriate to their needs; or*
- *they had very high housing costs.*

The CSHA priority access to those in greatest need (P6) categories are defined below.

4.1 Homeless

Homeless, for the purpose of the CSHA national standard, is defined as an applicant with 'no housing' or an applicant residing in temporary or emergency accommodation at the time of housing allocation. It includes applicants who:

- lived in accommodation provided by a SAAP agency or some other form of emergency accommodation; or
- were totally without permanent shelter (e.g. wandered from place to place, slept out on the street or on park benches, etc.); or
- lived in shelter that was unlawful such as those who were forced to squat in derelict buildings; or
- stayed temporarily with friends or relatives in the short term (e.g. up to a maximum of 6 weeks duration).

A narrow definition of homeless has been chosen, focusing on persons who experienced primary and secondary homelessness (excluding people residing in boarding houses) according to Chamberlain (1999). This approach allows a distinction to be made between this category of the national standard and other categories of the national standard that identify persons who do not have access to safe, secure and affordable housing. It is for this reason that the SAAP (AIHW 2000c) and *National Community Services Data Dictionary* (AIHW 2000d) definitions of homeless have not been adopted for the CSHA national standard. These definitions identify people who do not have access to safe, secure and adequate housing.

4.2 People whose life or safety was at risk in their accommodation

Applicants living in a situation that placed their life or safety at risk includes situations where people were:

- subject to domestic violence
- subject to sexual/emotional abuse
- subject to child abuse
- at risk of violence or feared for their safety in the home environment.

Violence is defined as any incident involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of either physical or sexual assault. Physical assault involves the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a person. The threat to harm should only be included if it is believed the harm is likely to be carried out. Sexual assault includes acts of a sexual nature against a person's will through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion, or any attempts to do this (ABS 1996).

4.3 People whose health condition was aggravated by their accommodation

This category identifies people who lived in a housing situation that was unsuitable for their needs at the time of housing allocation. It includes people who lived in the following situations:

- they had a medical condition or disability which rendered their housing unsuitable (e.g. disabled person who required modified accommodation, older persons who were housebound due to mobility problems in highset dwellings);
- appropriate housing stock was either not available, or not available at an affordable cost, in the private rental market (e.g. dwellings with appropriate modifications for a person with a disability);
- a health condition or disability which was caused or exacerbated by the living situation.

4.4 People whose housing was inappropriate to their needs

This category captures housing situations that indicate a person did not have access to safe and secure housing at the time of allocation and these situations are not included in categories 4.1 to 4.3 above (people with housing affordability issues are captured in category 4.5). Inappropriate housing includes persons who:

- lived in poor housing locations that resulted in isolation from community services, social networks and support systems, and these services and supports were necessary to maintain independent living. This category includes families that were divided due to their housing situation;
- lived in overcrowded situations where an additional two bedrooms were required for adequate housing according to the proxy occupancy standard (used in measuring P3 match of dwelling to household size);
- were unable to access accommodation in the private rental market due to discrimination. Discrimination refers to a person who was treated unfairly because they belonged to a

particular group of people. Types of discrimination include sex, race, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability (Anti-discrimination Board: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au);

- lived in situations where their tenure was insecure and they had received an eviction notice (either written or verbal) and they had no access to adequate legislative protection;
- lived in housing that had severe structural or other maintenance problems (e.g. property had been declared unfit for human habitation, severe dampness, lacked essential facilities such as cooking or bathroom).

4.5 People with very high housing costs

This category identifies households that paid 41% or more of their income in rent at the time of housing allocation.

This definition is not intended to suggest that households paying between 30–41% of income on rent live in affordable housing situations. The definition aims to capture the group of the population which experiences the more severe end of housing affordability problems and the group for which literature suggests are least able to decrease their housing costs (FaCS 2001).

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