



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

# Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

March quarter 2012



Homelessness:

clearer picture,

better future



# **Specialist Homelessness Services Collection**

**March quarter 2012**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Canberra

Cat. no. HOU 265

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**Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report. Please check the online version at <[www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)> for any amendments.**

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# Acknowledgments

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We also acknowledge the contribution of the Specialist Homelessness Services User Advisory Group, which provided valuable advice and support in implementing the collection. We are especially grateful to all homelessness agencies and their clients for their support in implementing and participating in this new data collection.

# Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Indicator Australia
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographic Classification
ASGS	Australian Statistical Geography Standard
CD	Collection District
CMS	Client Management System
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs
H2H	Homeless 2 Home (client and case management system)
LGA	Local Government Area
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
no.	number
NPAH	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
Qld	Queensland
RA	Remoteness Area
SA	South Australia
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SAAP NDC	SAAP National Data Collection
SHIP	Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (client and case management system)
SHOR	Specialist Homelessness Online Reporting
SHSC	Specialist Homelessness Services Collection
SLK	statistical linkage key
Tas	Tasmania
Vic	Victoria

WA	Western Australia
YTD	Year to date

## Symbols

..	not applicable
n.a.	not available
—	nil or rounded to zero
n.p.	not publishable because of small numbers, confidentiality or other concerns about the quality of the data



# Summary

This report presents results of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) for the March quarter 2012. The SHSC describes the clients who receive assistance from specialist homelessness agencies and the services they receive.

## Clients

In this quarter, an estimated 102,356 clients were assisted by specialist homelessness agencies—59% were female and 41% male.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represented 21% of clients.

Domestic and family violence was the most common main reason for seeking assistance (24%).

In 19% of support periods, clients had ‘slept rough’ in the month before presenting for support.

Most clients presented to specialist homelessness agencies alone (69%). For those presenting in families or groups, ‘single people with children’ was the most common type of family to present for assistance (76% of support periods for family members). This was followed by couples with children (15% of support periods).

The age distribution of clients is similar across *Major cities, Inner regional, Outer regional, Remote and Very remote areas*, but there were pronounced sex differences. Females represented a higher proportion of clients with increasing remoteness (57% of clients were female in *Major cities*, compared with 82% in *Very remote areas*).

## Accommodation and other support services

Accommodation was provided to clients in 34% of support periods. Short-term or emergency accommodation was provided most often (in 63% of support periods where accommodation was provided). Where a need for short-term or emergency accommodation was identified, it was met directly by the agency in 65% of support periods.

An estimated total of 1,691,587 accommodation nights were provided in the reporting period to clients of specialist homelessness agencies. On average, 18,594 clients were accommodated on any given night. The average length of accommodation decreases with increasing remoteness of the specialist homelessness agency.

Clients most needed advice or information (in 70% of support periods). In 97% of support periods where information was needed, it was provided directly by agencies.

## Outcomes

There were slightly fewer clients living without shelter, or in inadequate dwellings, at the end of support (4% of closed support periods, compared with 7% at the beginning of these support periods).

There was a small decrease in the proportion of clients with no housing tenure at the end of support (25% of closed support periods, compared with 29% at the beginning of these support periods).

There was a slight decrease in clients who had no income after support (7% of closed support periods, compared with 8% at the beginning of these support periods).



# 1 Introduction

This report presents results for the March quarter 2012, for the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) – covering the collection months January to March 2012. The SHSC describes all clients who receive services from specialist homelessness agencies and the assistance they receive.

The SHSC, which began on 1 July 2011, is designed to support the information needs of the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) (COAG 2009, 2012), to enable monitoring of assistance provided to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and to contribute to the evidence base that shapes policy and service development relating to homelessness.

## 1.1 Things you should know about the data collection

### How the collection is conducted

SHSC data are collected by specialist homelessness agencies for all clients and reported each month to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Data are collected about the characteristics and circumstances of a client when they first present at an agency, and further data—on the assistance the client receives and their circumstances at the end of the month—are collected at the end of every month in which the client receives services and at the end of the support period.

Data are collected via a number of client management systems (CMSs) and submitted to the AIHW via the Specialist Homelessness Online Reporting (SHOR) web portal. Over 80% of homelessness agencies that participate in the collection use the CMS, Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP). This CMS is provided by the AIHW on behalf of all states and territories, except South Australia, where all agencies use the Homelessness 2 Home (H2H) system. A number of agencies in other jurisdictions use different information systems to collect and report their data.

Information on the development of the SHSC, definitions and concepts, and collection materials and processes can be found on the AIHW website, <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/shsc/>>. Information on key definitions, concepts and classifications can be found in the glossary to this report or in the SHSC's collection manual (AIHW 2011).

### Participation of agencies

Specialist homelessness agencies that are funded under the NAHA and the NPAH are in scope for the collection. Those agencies that are expected to participate in the SHSC are identified by state and territory departments responsible for the delivery of services. Some agencies, such as some high-volume agencies that deliver basic services only, are not required to participate.

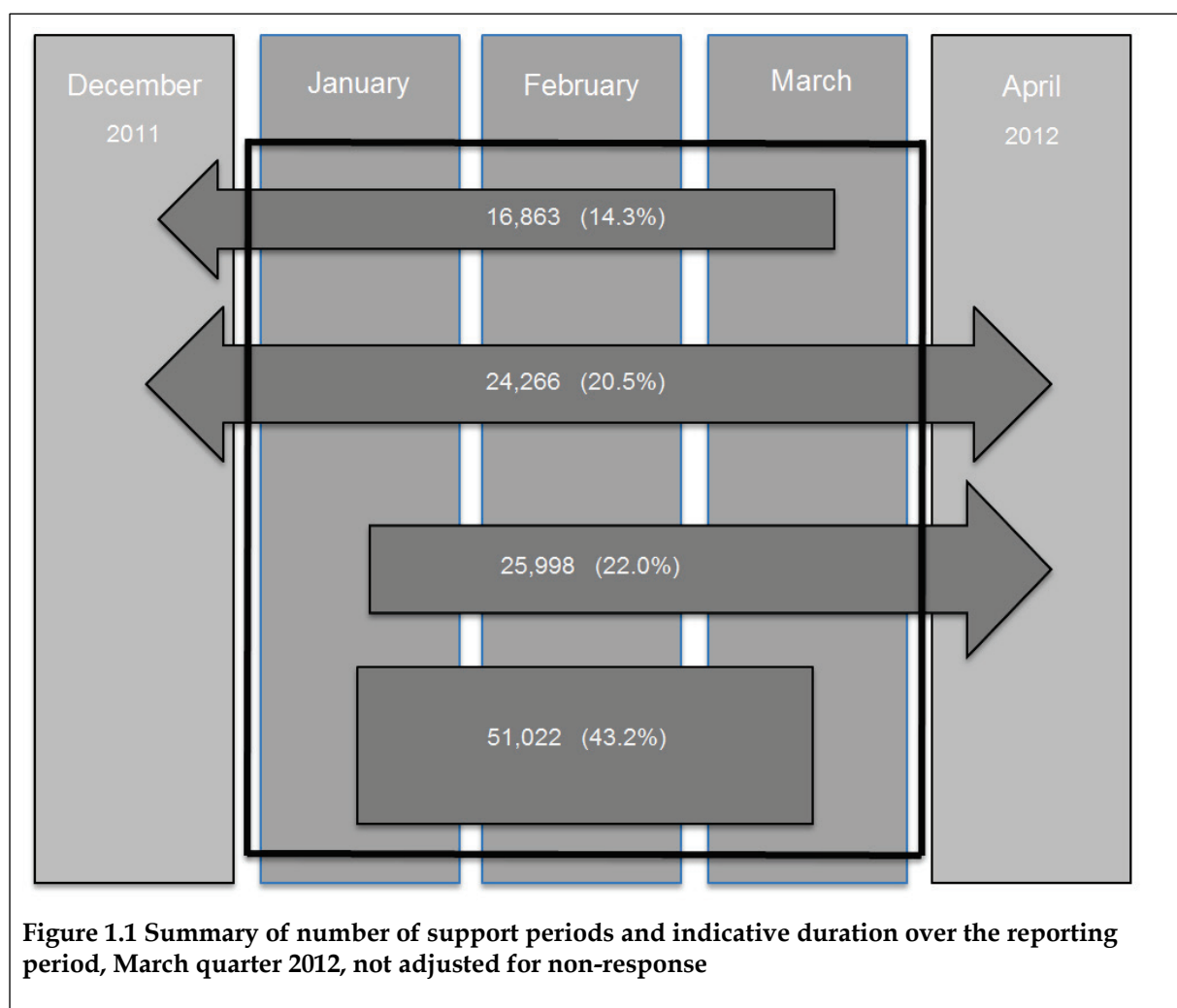
## Participation in the March quarter 2012

One thousand four hundred and seventy-four agencies were expected to submit data in the March quarter 2012, and 1,331 of these agencies submitted data by the 6 July 2012 submission date.

Caution should be taken in comparing overall numbers of clients between the three quarters (including the estimated number of clients) for which SHSC data are available, because a preliminary weighting methodology has been adopted that does not take account of the changes in total number of agencies expected to participate. This will be addressed in the annual report and future quarterly reports, once the overall agency population has stabilised for the collection. See 'Adjusting for non-response (weighting)' below and Appendix A for more details on estimating figures to adjust for non-response.

## Reporting period

This report includes data that were submitted and validated by 6 July 2012 on all clients who were assisted between January 2012 and March 2012. For the March quarter 2012, over half (57%) of all clients' support periods started before 1 January 2012 (the beginning of the quarter), or were still ongoing at 31 March 2012. The remainder of all clients' support periods (43%) began and ended in the March quarter 2012 (Figure 1.1).



Changes in the distribution of support periods over the March quarter 2012 (such as presented in Figure 1.1) – when compared with equivalent figures presented for previous quarters (AIHW 2012a, AIHW 2012b) – will have been affected by:

- the non-availability of South Australian data indicating whether a support period was ongoing or not in previous quarters
- a range of issues that affected the reporting of support periods in the September quarter 2011 that were related to the commencement of the collection at the beginning of that quarter (see AIHW 2012a).

Additionally, changes in the number of clients and support periods reported in previous quarters (see AIHW 2012a, 2012b) will have been affected by the variation in the number of agencies covered in each quarter (see 'Participation of agencies' above).

### **Data quality**

Detailed information on completeness, response rates and other aspects of data quality is provided in the data quality statements in appendixes B and C.

As a relatively new data collection, some level of missing data is expected, and is evident in the data received for the March 2012. Data completeness is expected to improve as agencies become more familiar with the new collection and a longer time series of data becomes available.

A number of data items that had very high rates of missing or invalid data are not reported in this publication. Where data items with high rates of missing data are reported, the rate of missing data is noted. Further analysis is continuing on how best to present data items that have not yet been published.

Differences in the South Australian Homeless 2 Home (H2H) data collection system prevented the inclusion of data on client services and assistance and all information using closed support periods in the 2011 September and December quarter publications (AIHW 2012a, 2012b). South Australia has undertaken an upgrade of the H2H system, allowing for more of their data to be included in the March quarter report. As a result, only information on clients' services and assistance has been excluded in this publication. All other information reported includes South Australian data.

### **Comparisons with the SAAP National Data Collection**

The SHSC replaces the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program National Data Collection (SAAP NDC), which collected data from homelessness agencies from 1996 to June 2011.

The major differences between these collections (in scope, concepts and content) are outlined in the publication *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection: first results (September quarter 2011)* (see AIHW 2012a, Appendix A). As a result of these differences, caution should be exercised in directly comparing SHSC and SAAP NDC data.

## 1.2 Things you should know about this report

### Client, support period and presenting unit data

Data presented in this report are mainly based on 'clients' or 'support periods', with some data based on 'presenting units' (which identify clients who present together to a specialist homelessness agency, and clients who present alone).

Information presented in 'Chapter 2 Data highlights' is based on data for the March quarter 2012 only. Information presented in 'Chapter 3 Data spotlights' is based on data for the March 2012 financial year-to-date (fYTD); that is, the collection months July 2011–March 2012. For more information on fYTD data, see 'Client spotlights' below.

### Client-level data

An individual client may have had more than one support period in the quarter, either from the same agency or from a different agency. Data from individual clients who received services from different agencies and/or at different times are matched based on a statistical linkage key (SLK). All analyses based on client data include only those clients for whom full and valid SLK data (i.e. date of birth, sex and alpha code based on selected letters of name) are available.

Clients who have more than one support period may present with different characteristics in these different support periods. This has implications for the presentation and interpretation of client-level data. In particular:

- Demographic data are derived based on client characteristics as defined at the start of their first support period during the quarter.
- Data about presenting units, reasons for seeking assistance (including main reason), main source of income, labour force status, dwelling type, tenure type, conditions of occupancy and client case management plans are also presented at the client level; however, all responses recorded for clients (where these vary across support periods) are reported.

This means that if a client has the same information recorded against a specific data item in different support periods, the client will be counted only once in the data table.

However, if a client has more than one support period and has different characteristics recorded in those support periods, the client will be counted more than once. For example, a client who presents more than once in the quarter, and identifies different main reasons for seeking assistance at the beginning of each support period, will appear against each of the relevant 'main reason' categories.

In these cases, the number of clients identified in tables can vary because a number of different characteristics can be reported for the same client. Also, the percentages will add up to more than 100%, because percentages are calculated using the total number of unique clients as the denominator. In these situations, percentages should be read as meaning that  $x\%$  of clients had this characteristic at least once during the quarter.

### **Support period data**

Data on client outcomes and some data on services and assistance are presented at the support period level:

- Because a client may have more than one support period during the quarter, these data do not identify the number of *clients* with these outcomes.
- They are generally based on closed support periods only, because they measure the outcome after receiving support.

### **Length of support period and accommodation data**

Accommodation length is obtained by totalling the individual accommodation period lengths that occurred in any support that was active during the March quarter 2012. Data on length of support period/accommodation includes support (or accommodation) provided in the September and December quarters, where the support period (or accommodation) was ongoing on 1 January 2012. Due to incomplete data for support periods that started before 1 July (see AIHW 2012a for more information), these data do not take into account any accommodation provided before 1 July.

### **Reporting of percentages (and missing data)**

All percentages reported in this publication are based on 'valid' responses to questions in the SHSC. That is, 'don't know', 'not applicable' and missing responses to a data item are not included in these calculations. Where the sum of these 'invalid' responses accounts for 15% or more of all responses for a data item, this percentage is reported in the text. The total number of 'invalid' responses is provided as a footnote in the data overview tables in Chapter 4. For more information on missing data and data quality, see Appendix B.

### **Adjusting for non-response (weighting)**

Adjustments for non-response (or 'weighting') are commonly applied to data sets when there is a high rate of missing data.

A weighting method to adjust for missing support period information is being developed. This method relies on a longer time series of data and will produce more reliable estimates for the annual report. However, to give an estimate of the full size of the sector in the March quarter 2012, a simplified version of the method has been used in this report, *where the results reported are for the March quarter only*. Only the March quarter basic client and support period data for the overall population (Chapter 2) have been adjusted for non-response. All other figures given are raw (unweighted), unless otherwise noted. For further information on the weighting method used in this report, see Appendix A.

### **State and territory data (supplementary tables)**

Where data quality and confidentiality provisions allow, state and territory tables equivalent to those in Chapter 4 will be made available on the AIHW's website <[www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)>.

## Client spotlights

This report presents, firstly, an overview of the data collated from the March quarter 2012, based on all clients and their support periods and a section on homeless clients in SHSC (Chapter 2). The source data tables are provided in Chapter 4.

The report also spotlights findings in relation to two selected groups of special interest (Chapter 3), namely:

- families
- services by remoteness area.

These spotlights are presented based on March 2012 fYTD data; that is, all data relating to the period 1 July 2011 to 31 March 2012.

Using year-to-date data enables us to provide a more detailed analysis of these two groups. For example:

- For the service by remoteness analysis, it allows inclusion of data from all agencies that have provided some data for the year-to-date, and so enables a more complete analysis than one based on quarterly data, which would reflect submission patterns for the quarter. This enables better capture of agencies in *Outer regional* and *Remote* areas. If fYTD data were not used for this analysis, the numbers of records included for *Remote* areas would be too small to ensure statistical validity and reliability.
- For the analysis of families, clients may initially present alone and subsequently as a family unit, or vice versa. A fYTD analysis allows for a more reliable basis for analysing family groups than quarterly data alone, and enables matching data from multiple clients using the presenting unit identifier over a longer period.



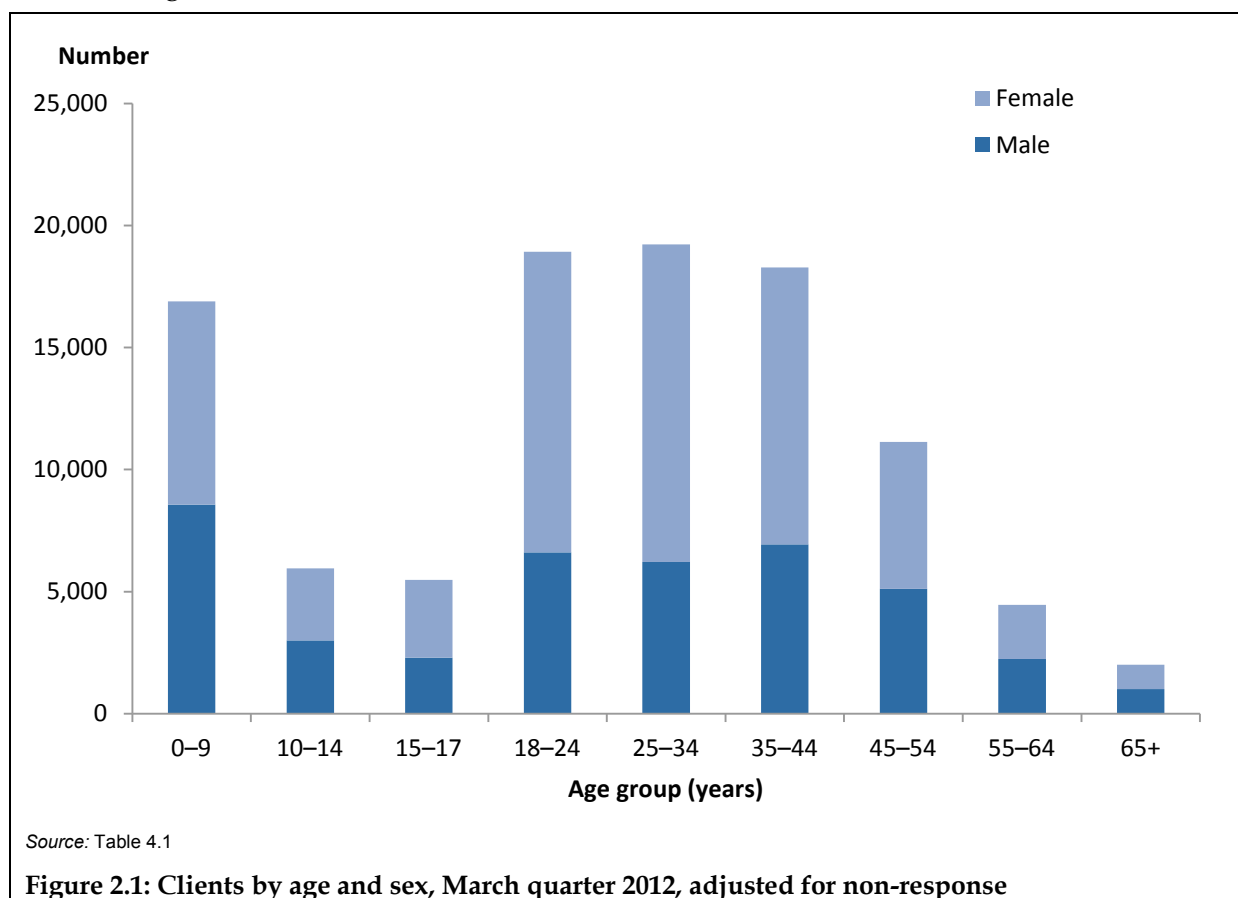
## 2 Data overview: highlights

This chapter describes the client population of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) for the March quarter 2012, including demographic characteristics, services needed and provided, and outcomes that follow support. Data provided for clients including age, sex, state and territory, and information on accommodation provided by specialist homelessness agencies are adjusted for non-response (weighted). For information on methodology used to adjust for non-response, see Appendix A. All information, except for services and assistance, includes South Australian (SA) data. Services and assistance information does not include SA data due to differences in the way SA collects this information.

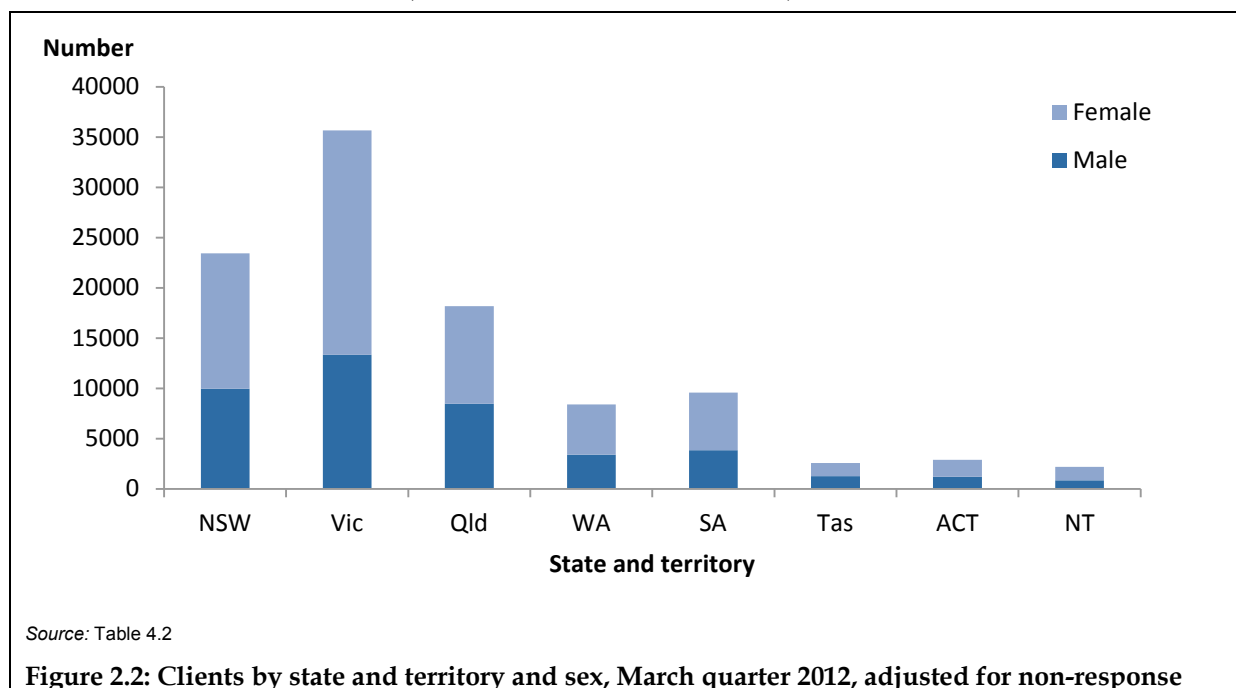
In the March quarter 2012, an estimated 102,356 clients were assisted by specialist homelessness agencies in 130,843 support periods (88,517 clients and 118,149 support periods using unweighted data).

### 2.1 Who was supported?

- 59% of clients were female and 41% were male (Table 4.1).
- 17% of clients were aged under 10, 46% were aged under 25, and just under half (48%) were aged between 25 and 44.



- Victoria recorded the highest number of clients (35,669 clients, 35% of all clients), followed by NSW (23,443 clients, 23% of all clients) (Figure 2.2). The NT recorded the lowest number of clients (2,189 clients, 2% of all clients).



### Indigenous status

- Around one-fifth (21%) of clients who provided information on their Indigenous status identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in the March quarter 2012 (Table 4.3).

### Country of birth

- Most clients were born in Australia (86%).
- For overseas-born clients, the most common countries of birth were: New Zealand (13% of those born overseas), Sudan (9%) and the United Kingdom (7%) (Table 4.4).
- Of those clients who were born overseas, 10% arrived in Australia within the last 2 years (in 2011–2012), and 38% had lived in Australia for 10 years or more (Table 4.4).

### Mental health

- In the March quarter 2012, 12,302 (14%) of all clients were identified with a current mental health issue (see Counting rules and glossary) (Table 4.6).
- There were more females (54%) than males (46%) identified with a current mental health issue.
- Of those clients that were identified with a current mental health issue, over half (53%) reported that they had ever been diagnosed with a mental health issue, prior to receiving services.
- Slightly more female (51%) than male (49%) clients with current mental health issues identified as being diagnosed with a mental health issue.

### **Presenting units<sup>1</sup>**

- Support period analysis shows that most clients (69%) presented alone to specialist homelessness agencies in the March quarter 2012 (Table 4.5). 35% presented in groups. The total percentage exceeds 100% because a small proportion of clients (3%) presented in different presenting unit types at different times in the quarter.
- Presenting unit analysis (which groups support periods for clients with the same presenting unit together) increases the relative proportion of people who attended alone to 88%. (Table 4.5).
- The average size of client groups was 3.7 people.

### **Main reason for seeking assistance**

- Domestic and family violence was the most common main reason reported by clients for seeking assistance (24%), followed by financial difficulties and housing crisis (16%, respectively) (Table 4.7).
  - Domestic and family violence was the most common main reason recorded for females (33% of female clients, compared with 9% of male clients).
  - For males, the most common main reason for seeking assistance was financial difficulties (19%, compared with 14% of female clients).
  - A main reason for seeking assistance was not provided for 19% of clients.
- When looking at all reasons given by clients (and not just the main reason) for seeking assistance, clients reported financial difficulties most often (37%), followed by domestic and family violence (30%), housing crisis (25%) and relationship/family breakdown (23%).

### **Main source of income**

- One-quarter (25%) of clients who recorded information on their main source of income were receiving Newstart Allowance (Table 4.8). 24% were receiving Parenting Payment and 21% were receiving a Centrelink disability support pension as their main source of income. The main source of income was not reported for 30% of clients.

### **Labour force status**

- Just over half (54%) of clients aged 15 and over whose labour force status was recorded were not in the labour force at the beginning of the support period (Table 4.9).
- Most other clients were unemployed (41%).
- 11% per cent of clients were in full- or part-time employment.
- Information on labour force status was not reported for 25% of all clients aged 15 or over.

### **Housing situation before support**

- Nearly three-quarters (74%) of clients reported living in a house, townhouse, or flat when presenting to a specialist homelessness agency (Table 4.11).

<sup>1</sup> In this section, the numbers for presenting units are based on March quarter 2012 results only, whereas numbers presented in the families section within the data spotlight chapter are based on March 2012 fYTD data; there are also differences in the counting rules applied to families in the family section; direct comparisons cannot be made between these data.

- 6% of clients had no dwelling at the time they presented to the specialist homelessness agency.
  - Information on dwelling type was not reported for 22% of all clients.
- 28% of clients had no housing tenure (see Counting rules and glossary) when presenting to the specialist homelessness agency, and 22% were renting in private housing (Table 4.12).
  - Information on housing tenure was not reported for 33% of all clients.
- 38% of clients who provided information about their conditions of occupancy had leased tenure and were nominated on the lease (Table 4.13).
  - Information on conditions of occupancy was not reported for 33% of all clients.
- In 19% of support periods where clients provided information on whether they had been homeless in the last month, clients reported having slept rough in the month before presenting to the agency, and 31% reported having stayed in short-term or emergency accommodation due to a lack of other options (Table 4.14).
  - 61% of clients, who had relevant information recorded, had not been homeless in the month before presenting to the agency.
  - In 36% of support periods, no information was provided on previous homelessness status.

## 2.2 What services were provided?

The following information is for all clients of specialist homelessness agencies and includes information on accommodation and other services provided to clients and some information about the length of support periods. Information in this section presented on clients' service needs does not include SA data. This is because of differences in the way that the South Australian H2H system currently collects data for service need. All other information presented in this section includes SA data.

### Accommodation

- Accommodation was provided in 34% of all support periods.
  - Based on all support periods where accommodation was provided, 63% of clients were accommodated in short-term or emergency accommodation, 36% in medium-term/transitional accommodation and 7% in long-term accommodation (Table 4.18).
- The need for short-term or emergency accommodation was identified for clients in 31% of all support periods, for medium-term/transitional housing in 23% of support periods and for long-term housing in 25% of support periods (Table 4.17).
  - Where a need for short-term or emergency accommodation was identified, it was met directly by the agency in 65% of support periods, in 50% for medium-term or transitional housing and in 7% for long-term housing.
  - For all clients who needed accommodation, clients with long-term housing needs were referred to another service in 39% of support periods.
  - In over half (54%) of support periods where long-term accommodation was needed, clients were neither provided this service, nor referred to another service.
- An estimated 1,691,587 accommodation nights were provided in the March quarter 2012 to clients of specialist homelessness agencies (adjusted for non-response) (Table 4.19).
  - NSW recorded the highest estimated number of accommodation nights provided for the March quarter 2012 (486,447 nights) followed by Victoria (465,761 nights) (adjusted for non-response).

- On average, an estimated 18,594 clients were accommodated on any given night and 36% of support periods per day (on average), included the provision of accommodation (Table 4.20).
- In 42% of closed support periods where accommodation was provided, the client was accommodated for between 1 and 7 days, and in a further 31% of these support periods clients were accommodated for more than 6 weeks (Table 4.18).
  - However, when looking at support periods that were ongoing at the end of the quarter where accommodation was provided (which represent 43% of all support periods in the March quarter 2012), 67% of clients had been provided with accommodation for longer than 6 weeks, and 12% were accommodated for between 1 and 7 days.

#### **Other services**

- Assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction was identified in 21% of support periods and provided by the agency in 82% of these support periods (Table 4.17).
- Most clients were identified as having a need for advice or information (70% of support periods), and this service was provided directly by the agency in 97% of these support periods.
- In 43% of support periods, clients needed assistance with advocacy and liaison services and this was provided by the agency in 96% of these support periods.
- Clients needed material aid/brokerage in 28% of support periods and this was provided by the agency in 85% of support periods.
- In 19% of support periods, clients needed assistance for domestic and family violence and this was provided by the agency in 90% of these support periods.

#### **Length of support period**

- For clients whose support periods ended in the March quarter 2012, 42% of support periods were less than 2 days in length, and 25% were more than 6 weeks (Table 4.15).
- For clients with support periods that were ongoing at the end of the March quarter 2012, 69% of support periods had been open for more than 6 weeks.
- The average length of support periods that closed in the March quarter 2012 was 45 days (Table 4.16).
  - The ACT recorded the highest average length of support periods (74 days) that closed in the March quarter 2012.

## 2.3 How did clients' circumstances change with support?

The following information is for all clients of specialist homelessness agencies whose support period ended in the March quarter 2012 and where valid data were available both at the beginning and end of support.

### Case management and support period outcomes

- In support periods where clients had a case management plan, 43% achieved all their case management goals. In a further 47% of these support periods, clients had completed at least some of their case management goals, and in 10% of these support periods, no case management goals were achieved (Table 4.21).
  - 64% of clients had no case management plan. This was mostly because the service episode was too short (57%), or because they were part of another person's case management plan (18%).
- The most common reason support periods ended was because the client's immediate needs were met, or their case management goals achieved. This was the case in 51% of support periods that were up to 7 days in length and 38% of support periods longer than 7 days (Table 4.22).

### Changes in housing situation

- There were slightly fewer clients living without shelter at the end of support (4% of closed support periods, compared with 7% at the beginning of these support periods) (Table 4.11).
- There was very little change in the proportion of clients renting in private housing after receiving support from a specialist homelessness agency (23% of closed support periods, compared with 22% at the beginning of these support periods).
- There were slightly more clients renting in public housing at the end of support (11% of closed support periods, compared with 9% at the beginning of these support periods) (Table 4.12).
- There was an increase in clients who were nominated on the lease of the accommodation they were living in after receiving support compared with when they first presented to the specialist homelessness agency (41% of closed support periods, compared with 36% of support periods at the beginning of these support periods) (Table 4.13).
  - There were also fewer clients with no tenure at the end of support (25% of closed support periods, compared with 29% when presenting for support).

### Changes in labour force status and main income source

- Overall, there was very little change in clients' labour force status after support – in 94% of closed support periods there was no change in a client's labour force status at the end of support, compared with the beginning of their support period (Table 4.10).
  - There were slightly more clients employed at the end of support (11% of closed support periods, compared with 10% when presenting for support).
- Overall, there was very little change in clients' main source of income after support and only a slight decrease in clients with no income after support (7% of closed support periods, compared with 8% when presenting for support) (Table 4.8).

## 2.4 Homeless clients

Specialist homelessness agencies provide a wide range of services to assist both the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. These services range from providing meals and shower facilities to assistance to obtain and/or sustain a safe long-term housing arrangement. This section provides a profile of clients who were homeless on presentation, reviews the services and assistance sought by them as well as the services provided by specialist homelessness agencies, identifies associated outcomes, highlights gaps in services where needs were identified but no services were provided, and outlines characteristics of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness.

An estimated 40,352 clients, assisted in 56,168 support periods, were homeless in the March quarter 2012 (35,414 clients assisted in 50,715 support periods using unweighted data).

All the following data in this section are not adjusted for non-response.

### Key facts

- Overall, 53% of clients who were assisted by specialist homelessness services over the March quarter 2012 were identified as being homeless at the beginning of their support period, and 47% were determined to be 'at risk of homelessness'.
- For clients who were homeless at the beginning of support periods that commenced in the March quarter 2012, 73% reported as having either slept rough or stayed in short-term/emergency accommodation the month before presenting to a specialist homelessness agency.
- 86% of clients who were homeless at the beginning of a support period that commenced during the March quarter 2012 also reported a previous period of homelessness in the last 12 months.
- The focus of SHSC agencies is on provision of short-term/emergency and transitional accommodation. In 73% of support periods where this service was needed, the need was met. In comparison, where long-term accommodation was needed, the need was met in just under half (47%) of support periods.

## **Box 2.1 Identifying homeless clients**

### **How we identified clients who were homeless**

All clients accepted by specialist homelessness services are considered to be either homeless or at risk of homelessness. 'Homeless' status is derived based on the client's housing circumstances at the beginning of the support period. All other clients not meeting these criteria are considered to be at risk of homelessness.

A client was considered 'homeless' if their housing situation was any of the following:

*Dwelling type:* caravan, tent, cabin, boat, improvised building/dwelling, no dwelling/street/park/in the open, motor vehicle, boarding/rooming house, emergency accommodation, or hotel/motel/bed and breakfast, or

*Tenure type:* Renting or living rent-free in transitional housing, caravan park, boarding/rooming house, emergency accommodation/night shelter/women's refuge/youth shelter, or no tenure, or

*Condition of occupancy:* couch surfing.

### **How we identified clients who were sleeping rough**

*Dwelling type:* no dwelling/ street/park/in the open

### **How we identified clients sleeping in inadequate non-conventional accommodation**

*Dwelling type:* caravan, tent, cabin, boat, improvised building/dwelling or motor vehicle

### **How we identified clients sleeping in supported temporary accommodation**

*Dwelling type:* boarding/rooming house, emergency accommodation, or hotel/motel/bed and breakfast

### **How we identified clients living in housing in a supported tenure**

*Dwelling type:* house/townhouse/flat, and

*Tenure type:* renting or living rent-free in transitional housing, caravan park, boarding/rooming house, emergency accommodation/night shelter/women's refuge/youth shelter

### **How we identified clients living in housing with no tenure**

*Dwelling type:* house/townhouse/flat, and

*Tenure type:* no tenure and *Conditions of occupancy:* not couch surfer

### **How we identified couch surfers**

*Dwelling type:* not sleeping rough or non-conventional accommodation or supported temporary accommodation, and

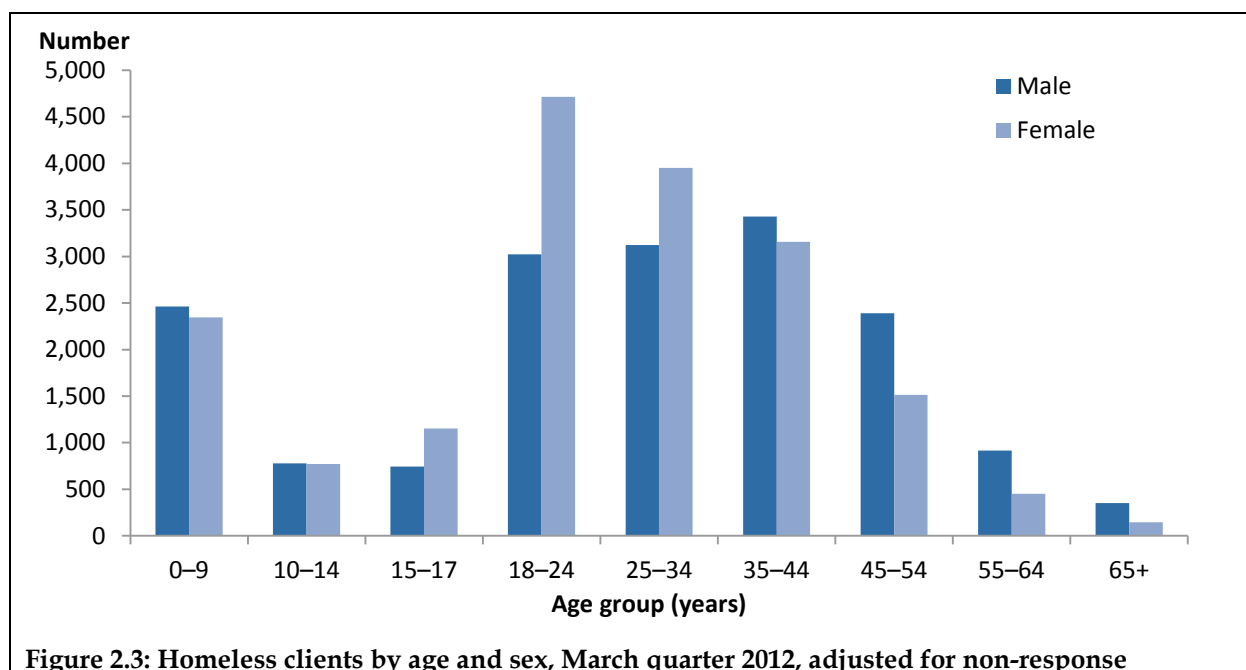
*Conditions of occupancy:* couch surfer.

Definitions of homelessness can vary and may be dependent on the purposes for which the measure is used. It is useful to consider the distinction between those who are homeless and those who are at risk of homelessness among the SHS client population, because the service needs for these two groups can be very different. For example, a key difference can be finding a homeless client immediate accommodation, versus providing a client at risk of homelessness with support to maintain their tenancy. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is currently reviewing the definition of homelessness in the context of the ABS 2011 Census. Once this review has been finalised, the SHSC definition of homelessness outlined above will be revised to align as closely as possible with the new ABS definition.



## Demographics

- People aged 18–24 represented 22% of clients who were homeless and people aged 25–34 represented another 20% (Figure 2.3).
- 8,255 children aged 0–17 were identified as homeless, representing 23% of clients who were homeless.
- 51% of homeless clients were female and 49% were male.
- 22% of homeless clients identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (of those who provided information on their Indigenous status).
- 73% of clients presented alone for assistance.
- For clients aged 15 or over who were homeless and who provided information on their main source of income, 91% indicated a government allowance or pension as their main source of income; 5% indicated employment, business or other as their main source of income; and 11% indicated they had no source of income.
- For clients aged 15 or over who were homeless and who provided information on their labour force status, 8% were in full or part-time employment, 47% were unemployed and 55% were not in the labour force.



## Housing situation before support

- Most homeless clients were living in a dwelling type classified as a house, townhouse or flat (46% of support periods). This was followed by supported temporary accommodation (32%), non-conventional accommodation (12%) and sleeping rough (11% of support periods) (Table 2.1).
- For all support periods where homeless clients indicated dwelling type as house townhouse or flat, 36% were couch surfing, 33% recorded no tenure and 32% nominated a supported tenure, (that is, renting or living rent-free in transitional housing, caravan park, boarding/rooming house, emergency accommodation/night shelter/women's refuge/youth shelter).

- In 44% of support periods, clients had no tenure over their accommodation. 38% were living in accommodation where they were paying rent when they presented to the homelessness agency. 17% were living rent free in private, public, community or other housing, and 1% had other types of housing tenure.
- Of those homeless clients who provided information on the conditions of occupancy for the accommodation in which they were staying before they presented to the homelessness agency, 23% were couch surfing, 21% were boarding, 16% were leasing and were nominated on the lease, 12% were living with relatives rent free, 5% were leasing without being nominated on the lease and 22% had other conditions of occupancy.
  - Conditions of occupancy for the accommodation in which they were staying were not reported in 16% of support periods.

**Table 2.1: Homeless clients, by age and sex, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Age group	Dwelling type							Total support periods
	Sleeping rough	Non-conventional accommodation	Supported dwelling	House /townhouse/ flat			Other <sup>(a)</sup>	
				Supported tenure	Couch surfer	No tenure		
Females								
0–14	75	297	883	637	373	994	453	3,712
25–54	667	1,247	3,389	1,650	1,613	1,178	3,359	13,103
15–24	283	470	1,679	1,211	1,802	1,192	1,973	8,610
55+	43	95	232	82	81	88	160	781
Males								
0–14	72	316	945	663	403	961	471	3,831
15–24	423	374	1,133	668	986	590	1,268	5,442
25–54	2,447	1,593	3,630	739	1,025	746	3,299	13,479
55+	349	270	576	68	83	94	317	1,757
Total number	4,359	4,662	12,467	5,718	6,366	5,843	11,300	50,715
Total (per cent) <sup>(b)</sup>	11.1	11.8	31.6	14.5	16.2	14.8	..	..

(a) Includes other tenures and support periods with insufficient or missing information.

(b) Total percentage based on 39,415 support periods excluding other tenures and support periods with insufficient or missing information.

### Main reason for seeking assistance

- For clients who were homeless at the beginning of the support period, and who had information recorded about their main reason for seeking assistance, the most common reason reported was housing crisis (22%) followed by inadequate and inappropriate dwelling (17%), domestic and family violence (17%) and financial difficulties (12%).
  - Other commonly reported reasons were previous accommodation ended (10%) and family/relationship breakdown (8%).

## Services received

- 41% of clients who were homeless when they presented to the specialist homelessness agency received accommodation. In 29% of support periods, they were provided accommodation for a period of 1 day to 1 week, in 33% of support periods they were provided accommodation between 1 and 6 weeks, and in 39% they were provided accommodation for more than 6 weeks.
  - In 59% of support periods, clients did not receive accommodation.
- For accommodation-related needs identified for clients who were homeless:
  - Assistance to sustain rental tenure was needed in 10% of support periods. Clients were provided this service directly by the agency in 86% of support periods where this need was identified.
  - Short-term or emergency housing was identified as a need in 20% of support periods for homeless clients. These clients were provided this accommodation by the agency in 73% of these support periods.
  - Medium-term or transitional housing was needed in 17% of support periods for homeless clients. These clients were provided this accommodation in 58% of support periods where this need was identified.
  - Long-term housing was also identified as a need in 15% of support periods for homeless clients. These clients were provided this accommodation by the agency in 9% of these support periods.
- Advice and information was the most commonly needed of all services and assistance for clients at risk of homelessness (in 37% of support periods). This was provided by the agency in 98% of these support periods.
  - Other basic assistance was needed in 31% of support periods. Clients were provided these services directly by the agency in 98% of these support periods.
  - Advocacy on behalf of client was needed in 24% of support periods. Clients were provided these services directly by the agency in 97% of these support periods.
  - Material aid and brokerage was needed in 18% of support periods. Clients were provided these services directly by the agency in 89% of these support periods.

## Outcomes

The following information is for all homeless people who presented to a specialist homelessness agency, whose support period ended in the March quarter 2012, and where relevant valid data were available both at the beginning and end of support.

- 57% of clients who were homeless had no case management plan.
  - Of those homeless clients who had a case management plan, 42% achieved all of their goals and another 18% achieved half or more of their goals.
- The most commonly reported reason homeless clients' support periods ended was for reaching the maximum service period (in 43% of closed support periods).
- The next most commonly reported reason a homeless client's support period ended was for the client not turning up for service (in 22% of closed support periods).
- There was very little change in homeless clients' income sources at the end of support, compared with at the beginning of support.

- There was a slight decrease in clients who had no income at the end of support (in 22% of closed support periods, compared with 21% when presenting for support).
- Homeless clients' labour force status also changed very little at the end of support, compared with the beginning of support.
  - There was an increase in the number of clients employed at the end of support (in 7% of closed support periods, compared with 6% when presenting for support).
- There was a decrease in the proportion of homeless clients with no dwelling at the end of support (in 8% of closed support periods, compared with 12% when presenting for support).
- There was an increase in the proportion of homeless clients living in a house, townhouse or flat at the end of support (in 48% of closed support periods, compared with 43% when presenting for support).
- There was an increase in the proportion of homeless clients living in short-term or emergency accommodation at the end of support (in 16% of closed support periods, compared with 13% when presenting for support).
- There was an increase in the proportion of homeless clients with leased tenure who were nominated on that lease (in 21% of closed support periods, compared with 15% when presenting for support).
- There was a decrease in the proportion of homeless clients who were couch surfing at the end of support (in 18% of support periods, compared with 23% when presenting for support).

## 3 Data spotlights

This chapter highlights findings in relation to:

- families
- services by remoteness area.

Data presented are for the March 2012 financial year-to-date (fYTD) and are not adjusted for non-response.

Information reported on services and assistance does not include South Australian (SA) data, but all other information does include SA data.

### 3.1 Family client groups

The Australian Government's White Paper, *The road home: a national approach to reducing homelessness* (Australian Government 2008), highlighted the rising number of families and children experiencing homelessness as a result of family breakdown (which may be due to domestic violence or other reasons) or unstable housing, and also the importance of ensuring that children are protected against the long-term effects of the instability that results from homelessness. The 2010–11 Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) report on Government-funded specialist homelessness services found that the largest group of clients of specialist homelessness services (including clients and accompanying children) were women with children (35%) (AIHW 2011b).

Information on how families are identified in the SHSC is shown in Box 3.1.

#### Key facts

- In just under half (44%) of all support periods for the March 2012 fYTD, clients presented as part of a family to a specialist homelessness agency.
- Single people with children were the most common type of family to present to a specialist homelessness agency (76% of support periods for family members). This was followed by couples with children (15% of support periods).
- There were 3.1 people on average in families presenting to specialist homelessness agencies.
- In the March 2012 fYTD, there were more females than males presenting in families to SHS agencies (61% of support periods for females, compared with 39% for males).
- Most clients who presented as part of a family to specialist homelessness agencies were aged under 10 (40% of support periods). This was followed by clients aged 25–34 (14% of support periods) and clients aged 10–14 (12% of support periods).
- In 31% of support periods, families had lived in short-term or emergency accommodation in the month before presenting to a specialist homelessness agency.
- Domestic or family violence was the most commonly identified main reason for seeking assistance for all family members (32% of support periods).

### **Box 3.1 How we identify families**

In line with ABS classifications (ABS 2005), families are defined as two or more clients who present together for services to a specialist homelessness agency, where at least one of those clients is aged at least 15, and they are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering. Family types are identified based on the presence of couple relationships, parent-child, child dependency and other relationships. (see definitions below). Certain characteristics of the SHSC do not follow the ABS classification:

- Information of whether clients are living in the same household is not collected in the SHSC and this is not included in the definition of families.
- Dependent children in SHSC have been identified based on a client's relationship to the presenting unit head being reported as a 'child', 'step child', or 'foster child'. The age of the client is not used to determine their status as a dependent child.

The following family types have been identified:

- *Single person with child(ren)* – where the relationships to the family spokesperson are identified as either child, step child, foster child, niece/nephew or grandchild.
- *Couple with child(ren)* – where the relationships to the family spokesperson are identified as either spouse/partner, parent/guardian, child, step child, foster child, niece/nephew or grandchild.
- *Couple without children* – where the relationship to the family spokesperson is identified as spouse/partner.
- *Other family* – where the relationship to the family spokesperson is any other relationship that follows the definition of family above.

#### **Family spokesperson**

Information is presented on support periods for all members of a family, as well as the family spokesperson. The family spokesperson is the head of the presenting unit; that is, those people that present together to a specialist homelessness agency (a presenting unit can consist of related or unrelated people). The relationships within a presenting unit are determined by each person's relationship to the presenting unit head (or spokesperson).

For presenting units where there are children under 18, the spokesperson is either:

- the parent/guardian representing any child, or children under 18, or
- the most direct relation to any child, or children if there is no parent/guardian present.

For presenting units where there are no children under 18 years present, the spokesperson is either:

- the spouse/partner of another person within the presenting unit, or
- related in some way to another person within the presenting unit.

## Counting family client groups

In this publication, all information on family units is presented at the support-period level. Analysis at the support-period level provides information about a person for a discrete timeframe (the beginning and end of a support period), allowing for a distinct count of family units. Client-level analysis of families over time is complex due to changes in family composition, as well as changes in those family members that present to, and receive, specialist homelessness services, from one support period to another. Therefore, no attempt is made in this publication to look at families presenting for support at different times or at different agencies.

There are also some reporting issues for families within SHSC data. Specifically, there are a large number (10,815) of support periods where clients under 15 years have been recorded as a person presenting alone to a specialist homelessness agency. A person under the age of 15 should not usually become a client of a specialist homelessness service if unaccompanied by a legal parent or guardian. Exceptions may be made for people with highly complex circumstances. However, it becomes increasingly unlikely a person is legitimately a client as their age decreases. The data for support periods of clients aged 0–14 shows a fairly even distribution, suggesting a large number of these support periods have been recorded incorrectly.

Although it is difficult to make an exact determination, this analysis suggests a large number of these children presenting alone to agencies should have been recorded as presenting as part of a family, and therefore included in the counts of families in SHSC.

In this publication, they have not been included because they cannot be linked to a family unit. The exclusion of these clients may have an impact on certain analyses, such as the number of clients in families and the distribution of clients in each family type.

## Demographics

- In just under half (44%) of all support periods for the March 2012 fYTD, clients presented as part of a family to a specialist homelessness agency (Table 3.1).
- Single people with children were the most common type of family to present to a specialist homelessness agency (76% of support periods for family members). This was followed by couples with children (15% of support periods).
- The average number of people presenting in families consisting of a single person with children was 3.1.
- The average number of all people presenting in a family to specialist homelessness agencies was also 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Family client groups and support periods, by family type, July 2011–March 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

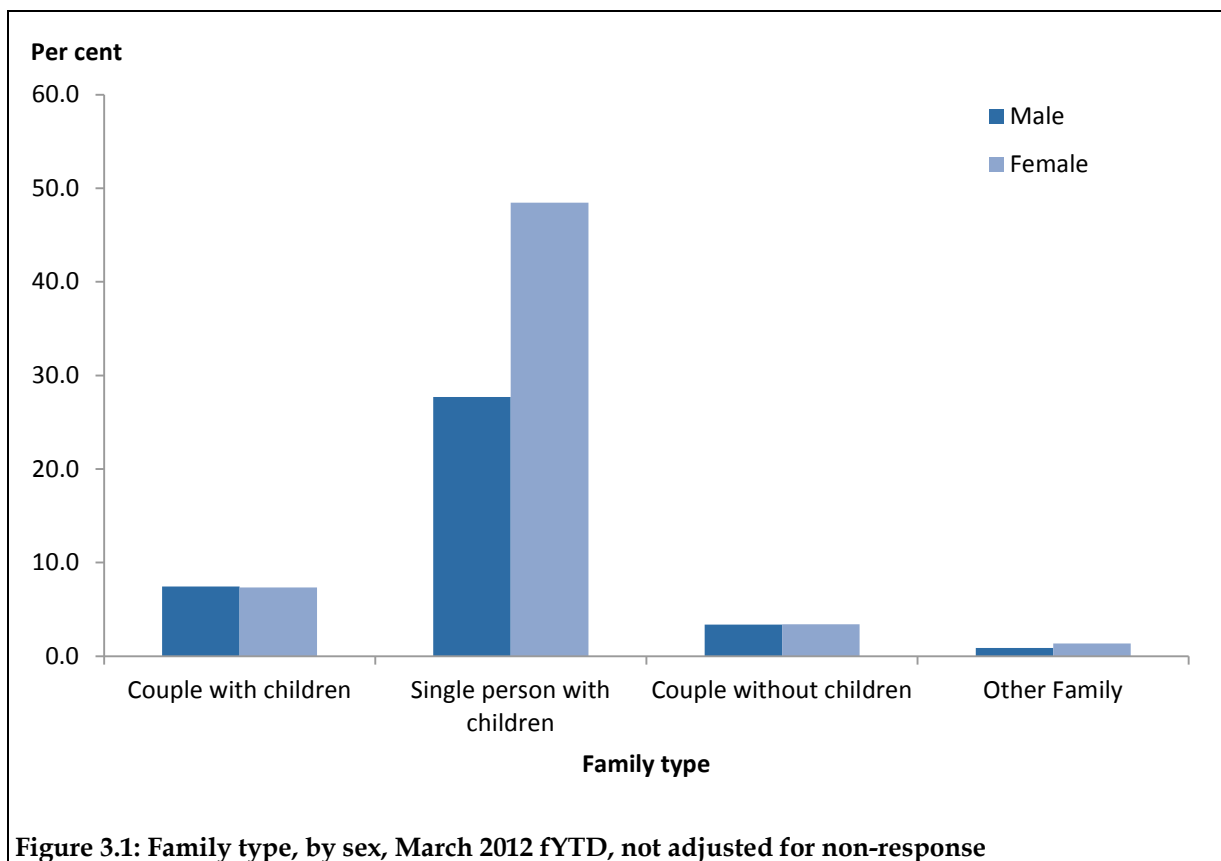
	Single person with child	Couple with child	Couple without child	Other family	Total	
					Number	Per cent
No. of people in the family unit						
2	7,350	..	2,464	496	10,310	43.5
3	5,585	856	..	109	6,650	28.1
4	2,898	672	..	50	3,620	15.3
5	1,314	427	..	12	1,753	7.4
6	540	231	..	7	778	3.3
7+	334	256	..	2	592	2.5
Average no. of people in the family unit <sup>(a)</sup>	3.1	4.4	..	2.4	3.1	..
No. of family units	18,021	2,442	2,464	676	23,703	100.0
No. of support periods	55,375	10,760	4,490	1,637	72,712	..

(a) The average number of people in a family unit is calculated by dividing the number of family units, by the number of support periods for clients identified as being part of a family.

Note: Total number of support periods in the March 2012 FYTD: 164,682.

- In the March 2012 FYTD, there were more females than males presenting in families to specialist homelessness agencies (61% of support periods for females, compared with 39% for males) (Figure 3.1).
- Of all family members (and for each family type), there were many more females than males presenting as the family spokesperson (see Counting rules and glossary) (86% of support periods for females, compared with 14% for males).
- Most clients who presented as part of a family to specialist homelessness agencies were aged under 10 (40% of support periods). They were followed by clients aged 25–34 (14% of support periods) and clients aged 10–14 (12% of support periods).
- Of those children aged under 10, most presented in families consisting of a single person with children (85% of support periods).





### Indigenous status

- Across all family types, nearly one-third (31%) had at least one family member who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- For each family type, the proportion of support periods where at least one family member identified as an Indigenous Australian was very similar (between 30 and 35% of support periods).

### Main source of income

- Parenting payment was the most commonly identified main source of income for all family members aged 15 and over (in 49% of support periods for family members).
  - Parenting payment was also the most commonly identified main source of income for family members aged 15 and over, who were in single person with children families (60% of support periods), couples with children families (38% of support periods) and 'other families' (24% of support periods).
  - For couples without children, Newstart allowance was the most commonly identified main source of income (34% of support periods).
- Parenting payment is also the most commonly identified main source of income for those clients identifying as the family spokesperson (59% of support periods).
- Newstart allowance (15% of support periods) was the next most common main source of income for all family members aged 15 and over.
  - Compared with all members, there are fewer support periods where family spokespersons identify Newstart allowance, youth support and no income as their main source of income.

- One-tenth of all family members (aged 15 and over) reported that they had no income (10% of support periods).

### **Labour force status**

- The majority of all family members and family spokespeople were not in the labour force (60% of support periods for all family members and 62% for the family spokesperson).
  - Single people with children were most likely to not be in the labour force (65% of support periods).
- Both family members and clients identified as the family spokesperson aged 15 and over were employed in around 10% of support periods.
  - The family spokesperson for couples without children was least likely of all family types to be employed (8% of support periods).
- Information on clients labour force status was missing in 28% of support periods.

### **Previous homelessness**

- In 13% of support periods, families had slept rough in the month before presenting to a specialist homelessness agency.
  - Within each family type, couples without children had the highest proportion of family members that had slept rough in the month before presenting to an agency (23% of support periods).
- In 31% of support periods, families had lived in short-term or emergency accommodation in the month before presenting to a specialist homelessness agency.
  - Within each family type, couples with children had the highest proportion of members that had lived in short-term or emergency accommodation in the month before presenting to an agency (32% of support periods).

### **Housing situation before support**

- Most family members were living in a house, townhouse or flat when presenting to a specialist homelessness agency (in 77% of support periods).
  - This was also the case for single people with children (78% of support periods), couples with children (76% of support periods), couples without children (70% of support periods) and for 'other families' (87% of support periods).
- The majority of all family members were either, renting in private housing (29% of support periods) or had no tenure (19% of support periods) when presenting to an agency.
  - This distribution was the same across all family types, except for 'other families'. For these families, 'no tenure' was the most commonly identified tenure type (24% of support periods), followed by renting in private housing (18% of support periods).
- The majority of all families were nominated on a lease when presenting to an agency (45% of support periods).
  - This distribution was the same for all family types, identified in around 40-50% of support periods in each type of family.
  - Couples with children identified being nominated on a lease in 50% of support periods.

### **Main reason for seeking assistance**

- Domestic or family violence was the most commonly identified main reason for seeking assistance of all family members (32% of support periods).
  - Domestic or family violence was also the most commonly identified main reason for seeking assistance for single people with children (40% of support periods) and other families (34% of support periods).
  - Housing crises was the most commonly identified main reason for seeking assistance for couples with children (22% of support periods), followed by financial difficulties (21% of support periods).
  - Financial difficulty was the most commonly identified main reason for seeking assistance for couples without children (24% of support periods).

### **Services received**

- Support periods that lasted less than 2 days and for longer than 6 weeks were most common for all families (in 30% of closed support periods for both lengths of support).
  - For single people with children, couples with children and other families, the average length of support lasted between 70 and 75 days.
  - For couples without children, the average length of support lasted for 37 days.
- Overall, family members were accommodated in 39% of support periods.
  - Single people with children were most likely to receive accommodation (52% of support periods) and couples without children were least likely to be accommodated (29% of support periods).
- Where accommodation was provided, all family members received short-term or emergency accommodation more often than any other type of accommodation (between 53% and 76% of closed support periods).
  - 'Other families' were most likely (compared with other family types) to receive short-term accommodation (76% of closed support periods), while couples with children were least likely to receive short-term accommodation (53% of closed support periods).
  - Couples with children were most likely to receive medium-term, or long-term accommodation (42 and 5% of support periods, respectively).
- The average length of accommodation for all family members was 78 nights.
  - Couples with children had the highest average length of accommodation (98 nights) and couples without children had the lowest average length of accommodation (53 nights).
- Short-term or emergency accommodation was the most commonly identified accommodation need for single people with children (43% of support periods) and other families (34% of support periods).
  - Short-term or emergency accommodation was provided in 67% of support periods where this need was identified by single people with children; and in 72% of support periods where this need was identified for 'other families'.
- Long-term housing was the most commonly identified accommodation need for couples with children (45% of support periods) and couples without children (46% of support periods).

- Long-term accommodation was neither provided by the agency nor referred to another agency in 48% of support periods where couples with children identified this need, and in 52% of support periods where couples without children identified this need.
- Advice or information was needed most often by all family types, identified in around 75% of support periods for each family type.
- Financial information was needed by all family types in around 25% of support periods; for 'other families', this need was identified in 18% of support periods.
- Material aid/brokerage was needed by all families in around 36% of support periods.
- Assistance with domestic violence was needed by single people with children in 36% of support periods and by other families in 28% of support periods.
  - For couples with and without children, assistance with domestic violence was needed in 6% and 5% of support periods, respectively.
- Family or relationship assistance was needed by single people with children in 25% of support periods and by other families in 33% of support periods.
  - For couples with and without children, family or relationship assistance was needed in 16% and 12% of support periods, respectively.

## Outcomes

The following information is for all clients who presented in a family unit to a specialist homelessness agency, whose support period ended in the period July 2011–March 2012 and where relevant valid data were available both at the beginning and end of support.

- In 37% of closed support periods, all family members had a case management plan in place.
  - 'Other families' were most likely to have case management plans (40% of support periods); couples with children were least likely to have case management plans (31%).
- Where a case management plan was in place, all family members had completed at least half of their case management goals in 64% of closed support periods.
  - 'Other families' completed at least half of their case management goals in 70% of closed support periods; single people with children completed at least half of their goals in 64% of closed support periods.
- There was a slight increase in the proportion of all family members living in a house, townhouse, or flat at the end of support (82% of closed support periods, compared with 80% when presenting for assistance).
  - Couples with children had the biggest difference in family members who were living in a house, townhouse or flat at the end of support (81% of closed support periods, compared with 76% when presenting for assistance).
  - The proportion of 'other families' living in a house, townhouse or flat decreased after support (86% of closed support periods, compared with 83% when presenting for assistance).
  - This decrease may be explained by a large number of 'other families' reported as living in short-term or emergency accommodation at the end of support (11% of closed support periods, compared with 6% when presenting for assistance).

- There was a slight decrease in the proportion of all family members with no tenure at the end of support (18% of closed support periods, compared with 22% when presenting for assistance).
  - The largest decrease of family members having no tenure at the end of support was for couples with children (18% of closed support periods, compared with 25% when presenting for assistance).
  - Couples without children reported the next largest decrease in the proportion of family members having no tenure at the end of support (23% of closed support periods, compared with 28% when presenting for assistance).
- The majority of all family members were nominated on a lease when presenting for assistance and at the end of support (35% of closed support periods, compared with 41%, respectively).
  - Couples with children had the largest increase in family members nominated on a lease at the end of support (51% of closed support periods, compared with 44% when presenting for assistance).
- Most family members aged 15 and over were receiving parenting payment, both when presenting for assistance and at the end of support (50% of closed support periods, compared with 51%, respectively).
  - Across all family types, there was very little change in the main source of income for family members aged 15 and over at the end of support, compared with the beginning of support.
  - The largest difference in main source of income at the end of support was for 'other family' members aged 15 and over with no income (14% of closed support periods, compared with 17% when presenting for assistance).
- There was a slight increase in the proportion of all family members aged 15 and over who were employed at the end of support (12% of closed support periods, compared with 10% when presenting for support).
- For all family types except 'other families', the proportion of family members aged 15 and over, increased by two percentage points at the end of support, compared with the beginning of support.
  - For 'other families', there was a one percentage point increase in employed family members at the end of support.
- For most family members, support ended because the client's immediate needs were met, or their case management goals were achieved (44% of closed support periods).
  - For couples with and without children, this was the reason support ended in nearly half (48% and 49%, respectively) of closed support periods.
- 'Clients no longer requested assistance' was the next highest reported reason for support ending (24% of closed support periods).
  - For single people with children, this reason was reported in 25% of closed support periods.

## 3.2 Homelessness services and clients by remoteness area

Specialist homelessness agencies provide a wide range of services to assist the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. However, within Australia, the needs and availability of services vary greatly between urban, regional and remote areas. Similarly, the clients served by these agencies vary in their characteristics. This section investigates how agency services and assistance and client characteristics vary by remoteness area.

Geographic information on the location of each agency has been used to identify the remoteness area of the agency. Similarly, clients have been matched to a remoteness area based on the agencies which they attended. Clients may appear in more than one remoteness area if they attended multiple agencies in different remoteness areas during the reporting period (July 2011–March 2012). Of all clients that were assigned a remoteness area (using their agency information), 3% presented to two or more agencies that were allocated to different remoteness area categories.

### Box 3.2 Remoteness classification

Agencies have been classified according to their Remoteness Area (RA) as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC) Remoteness Structure (ABS 2012b). The latest available version of the RA indicator (from the 2006 Census) has been developed by the ABS based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Indicator Australia (ARIA) used in the 2001 Census (see below for information on the Remoteness Structure developed based on 2011 Census data).

As part of the Census, each Collection District (CD) is given an average ARIA value based on the physical road distance between the CD and urban centres. Each CD is then assigned one of six remoteness area classifications based on their ARIA value—*Major cities, Inner Regional, Outer regional, Remote, Very remote* and *Migratory*. For the purposes of this report, *Migratory* is not used.

Using this classification, agencies participating in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection were assigned to a RA based on their recorded Local Government Area (LGA) code. Information on agencies with the same RA has been aggregated for analysis using FYTD data.

The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) is replacing the ASGC as the new Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) geographical framework and came into effect 1 July 2011. Due to the staggered release of the new structure, the publication outlining the new ASGS Remoteness Structure will not be released until December 2012 (ABS 2012a).

For the purposes of this report, two concordances produced by the ABS have been used to match the LGA of agencies participating in the SHSC to RAs defined by the 2006 Census. Neither concordance is one-to-one—where an agency's LGA represents a proportion of a RA, the agency is assigned to the RA with the largest representation in the LGA. Where an agency's LGA code was missing, a RA was assigned using a Postal Area index, also developed by the ABS.

## A profile of agencies by remoteness area

- As expected, the absolute number of agencies and clients decreases with increasing level of remoteness (Table 3.2). The number of clients per agency shows a similar trend, decreasing with increasing remoteness, as does the average number of support periods per day for each agency.
- Consistent with this trend, agencies in more urban areas tend to provide support for longer and have a higher proportion of agencies that deliver their services at multiple locations.

**Table 3.2: Agency information by remoteness area, July 2011–March 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Agency information	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very remote
Agencies (per cent) <sup>(a)</sup>	56.0	23.9	13.7	4.7	1.7
Clients <sup>(b)</sup> (per cent)	59.4	23.7	13.0	3.0	0.9
No. of clients per agency <sup>(c)</sup>	129	120	115	77	64
Support periods (per cent)	63.1	21.5	11.9	2.7	0.8
Agencies' average number of support periods per day <sup>(c)</sup>	41	30	27	17	17
Average length of closed support periods <sup>(c)</sup> (days)	48	49	38	34	15
Agencies with multiple delivery points <sup>(d)</sup> (per cent)	42.7	44.3	19.8	0.0	0.2

(a) Based on the number of agencies where a Remoteness Area could be determined.

(b) The same client may appear in more than one Remoteness Area.

(c) Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

(d) Indicates the proportion of agencies that deliver services from more than one location (including mobile agencies).

- Data items within the SHSC can be used to measure the movement of clients between geographical areas. Postcode and state information is collected for the client's last permanent place of residence, the place they were living the week before receiving support and the agency where they attended to seek assistance. Preliminary analysis has been undertaken to assess movements between these locations as a means of capturing information about client mobility (Table 3.3).
- Of clients who provided geographical information, in three-quarters of support periods (76%), clients accessed services in a different postcode to their last permanent place of residence. In a similar proportion of support periods (73%), clients accessed services in a different postcode to the place they were living in during the previous week.
- The level of movement between states and territories is much smaller. For those clients who provided geographic information, in just 5% of support periods clients accessed services in a different state or territory to the jurisdiction of their last permanent place of residence. In 3% of support periods, clients accessed services in a different state or territory to the jurisdiction they were living in a week before approaching an agency.

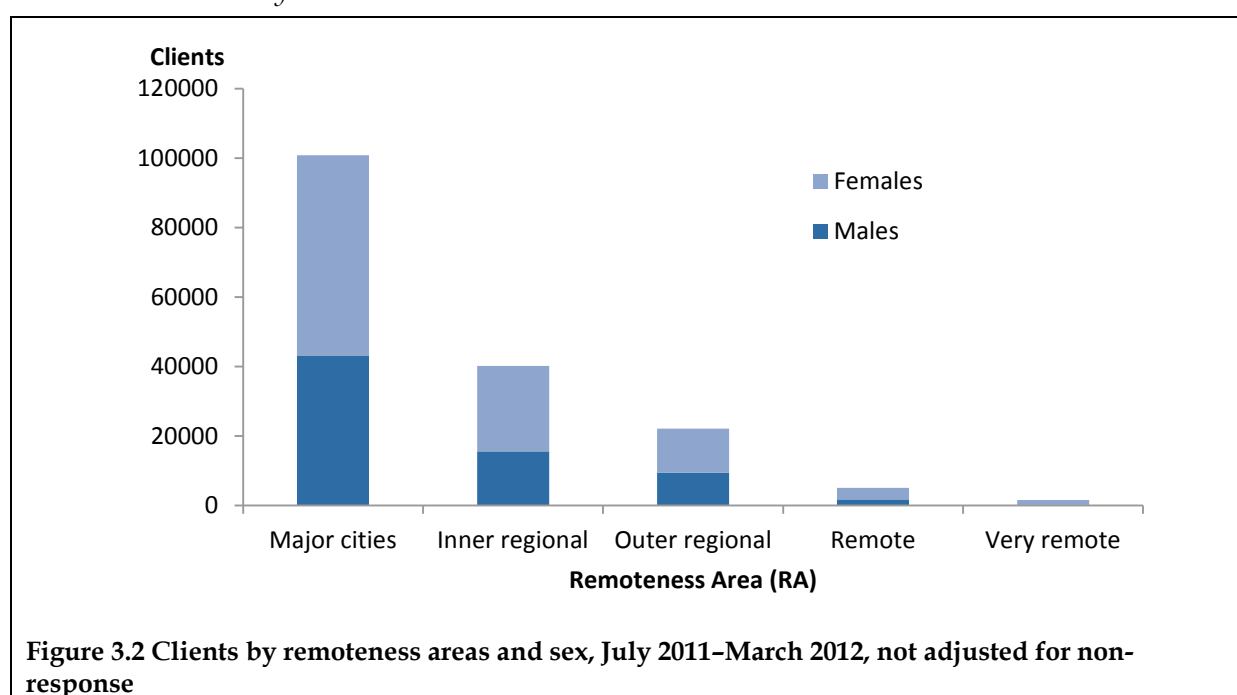
**Table 3.3: Change in localities to access agencies, July 2011–March 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

	Change in postcode (per cent)		Change in state/territory (per cent)	
	From last permanent place to live	From week before beginning of support period	From last permanent place to live	From week before beginning of support period
Support periods	75.5	73.4	5.0	2.9
Not reported	32.3	28.8	26.6	28.1

## Key facts

### Demographics

- The age distribution of clients is similar for each remoteness area, with children under 10 and adults aged 18–44 representing the highest proportion of clients for each remoteness area.
- However, the proportion of children aged under 10 increased with increasing remoteness. Children aged under 10 represented 16% of clients in *Major cities*, 17% of clients in *Inner regional* areas, 21% of clients in *Outer regional* areas, 24% in *Remote* areas and 22% in *Very remote* areas of Australia.



- The difference in the proportion of males to females increases with increasing remoteness. *Major cities* have the most even distribution, with males representing 43% of clients and females 57%, compared with *Very remote* areas where only 18% of clients are male and 82% are female (Figure 3.2).
- The proportion of clients who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander increased markedly with increasing remoteness. Of clients who provided information on their Indigenous status, 14% of clients living in *Major cities* identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, compared with 21% in *Inner regional* areas, 42% in *Outer regional* areas, 76% in *Remote* areas and 93% in *Very remote* areas.



### **Presenting units**

- Across all remoteness areas, the most common type of group (presenting unit) seeking SHS were clients who presented alone followed by lone parents with child(ren).
- With increasing remoteness, the proportion of clients presenting as a lone parent with child(ren) increased (25% of clients living in *Major cities*, compared with 38% living in *Very remote* areas), and the proportion of clients presenting alone decreased (72% of clients living in *Major cities* compared with 61% living in *Very remote* areas).
- The proportion of clients in a unique undefined family group ('other group') remained consistently around 3% across all remoteness areas except for *Very remote* areas where this group represented 6% of clients.

### **Main source of income**

- Consistently across all remoteness areas, of clients aged 15 or older who provided information on their main source of income, the most commonly reported main sources of income were Newstart Allowance, Parenting payment and Disability support pensions.
- The proportion of clients within each remoteness area receiving a parenting payment increased with increasing remoteness (21% of clients living in *Major cities* compared with 41% of clients in *Very remote* areas), and the proportion of clients in each remoteness area with no income decreased with increasing remoteness (10% of clients living in *Major cities* compared with 6% of clients living in *Very remote* areas).
  - Information on main source of income was not reported for clients aged 15 years or over for 35% of clients living in *Major cities*, 37% in *Inner regional* areas, 33% in *Outer regional* areas, 24% in *Remote* areas and 34% in *Very remote* areas.

### **Labour force status**

- In each remoteness area, most clients reported that they were either not in the labour force or unemployed. When comparing labour force status across all remoteness areas, the proportion of clients within each labour force category did not vary greatly (50–56% of clients within each remoteness area were not in the labour force and 41–46% were unemployed).
  - Information on labour force status was not reported for clients aged 15 or over, for 23% of clients living in *Major cities*, 28% in *Inner regional* areas, 16% in *Outer regional* areas, 17% in *Remote* areas and 23% in *Very remote* areas.

### **Education and training status**

- Between 80% and 87% of clients across all remoteness areas reported they were not undertaking formal study or training (which includes vocational education, employment training as well as primary/secondary schools).
- The most commonly reported form of study or training for those who provided information was primary school, which showed a slight increase with increasing remoteness (6% of clients living in *Major cities* compared with 9% of clients in *Very remote* areas).
  - Information on formal study or training was not reported for 42% of clients living in *Major cities*, 47% in *Inner regional* areas, 34% in *Outer regional* areas, 35% in *Remote* areas and 38% in *Very remote* areas.

### Previous history of homelessness

- Clients who provided information on their previous history of homelessness reported similar incidences of sleeping rough across all remoteness areas except for *Very remote* areas (18–22% of clients sleeping rough in the month prior to presenting to an agency and 21–24% reported sleeping rough in the 12 months before support in *Major cities*, *Inner regional*, *Outer regional* and *Remote* areas).
- In *Very remote* areas, 10% of clients reported sleeping rough in the month prior to seeking assistance from a homelessness agency and 11% in the 12 months before support. This difference could be due, at least in part, to the nature of the collection. SHSC is only able to report information on clients who actively seek assistance. In *Very remote* parts of Australia, large geographic areas may be serviced by only a few agencies. Relative to their counterparts in other remoteness areas, people who are sleeping rough would, on average, have to travel much further to obtain services. Where people are not able to seek assistance from SHS because of physical access issues, they are not included in the collection, which may account for the observed difference.
  - Information on previous homelessness history in the month before receiving support was not reported for 38% of support periods in *Major cities*, 42% in *Inner regional* areas, 33% in *Outer regional* and *Remote* areas and 36% in *Very remote* areas.
  - Information on previous homelessness history in the year before receiving support was not reported for 33% of support periods in *Major cities*, 36% in *Inner regional* areas, 23% in *Outer regional* areas, 28% in *Remote* areas and 25% in *Very remote* areas.

### Housing situation before support

#### *Dwelling type*

- At the beginning of the support period, for clients who provided information about their dwelling type, there was little variation in dwelling type between remoteness areas, except in *Very remote* areas. The most commonly reported dwelling type for each remoteness area was a house/townhouse/flat, representing 74% of clients living in *Major cities*, 78% of clients in *Inner regional* areas, 76% of clients in *Outer regional* areas, 77% of clients in *Remote* areas and 92% of clients in *Very remote* areas.
- Seven per cent of clients living in *Major cities*, who provided information on their dwelling type, reported having no dwelling. Four per cent of clients living in *Inner regional* areas, 7% in *Outer regional* areas, 4% in *Remote* areas and 2% in *Very remote* areas also reported having no dwelling.
  - Information on dwelling type was not reported for 31% of clients living in *Major cities*, 35% in *Inner regional* areas, 21% in *Outer regional* areas, 25% in *Remote* areas and 26% in *Very remote* areas.

#### *Tenure type*

- Of clients who provided information about their tenure type, most clients in each remoteness area were in paid rental arrangements although the proportion within each remoteness area decreased with increasing remoteness. Sixty-four per cent of clients living in *Major cities*, 57% in *Inner regional* areas, 57% in *Outer regional* areas and 52% in *Remote* and *very remote* areas were in paid rental arrangements.
- *Remote* and *Very remote* areas had a higher proportion of clients living in rent-free arrangements compared with other remoteness areas. Of clients who provided information on their tenure type, 24% of clients living in *Major cities*, 22% in *Inner regional*

areas, 19% in *Outer regional* areas, 34% in *Remote* areas and 35% in *Very remote* areas were living in rent-free arrangements.

- Clients who reported no housing tenure (who provided information on their tenure type) represented 28% of clients living in *Major cities*, 27% in *Inner regional* areas, 35% in *Outer regional* areas, 24% in *Remote* areas and 19% of clients in *Very remote* areas.
  - Information on tenure type was not reported for 38% of clients living in *Major cities*, 41% in *Inner regional* areas, 26% in *Outer regional* areas, 31% in *Remote* areas and 29% in *Very remote* areas.

#### *Conditions of occupancy*

- The most commonly reported conditions of occupancy across all remoteness areas were 'leased tenure – nominated on lease', 'boarder' and 'living with a relative fee free'. In *Major cities*, *Inner regional*, *Outer regional* areas and *Very remote* areas, a lease in place with the client's name nominated on the lease is the most commonly reported type of occupancy (39% of clients for both *Major cities* and *inner regional* areas, 38% of clients living in *Outer regional* areas and 29% of clients living in *Very remote* areas). However, in *Remote* areas living with a relative fee free was the most frequently reported type of housing security (33% of *Remote* clients).
  - Information on conditions of occupancy was not reported for 39% of clients in *Major cities*, 41% in *Inner regional* areas, 27% in *Outer regional* areas, 32% in *Remote* areas and 40% in *Very remote* areas.

#### **Main reason for seeking assistance**

- Domestic violence is the most reported main reason for seeking assistance in all remoteness areas and the proportion of clients who report it increased overall with increasing remoteness (27% of clients in *Major cities*, 27% in *Inner regional* areas, 21% in *Outer regional* areas, 39% in *Remote* areas and 51% in *Very remote* areas). The next leading reasons for seeking assistance vary between remoteness areas. For *Major cities* and *Inner regional* areas, the most reported main reason for seeking assistance after domestic violence is financial difficulties (20% of clients in *Major cities* and 14% in *Inner regional* areas) and housing crises (18% in *Major cities* and 15% in *Inner regional* areas). In *Outer regional* and *Remote* areas, financial difficulties (20% of *Outer regional* clients and 14% of *Remote* clients) and inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (15% of *Outer regional* clients and 10% of *Remote* clients) are the next leading reasons for seeking assistance after domestic violence. In *Very remote* areas, following domestic violence, time out from family or other situation (10% of clients) and inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (8%) are the next most reported reason for seeking assistance.
  - Information on the main reason for seeking assistance was not reported for 20% of clients in *Major cities*, 24% in *Inner regional* areas, 15% in *Outer regional* areas, 17% in *Remote* areas and 19% in *Very remote* areas.

## Services received

- Proportionately, the number of support periods that do not include accommodation decrease with increasing remoteness and therefore *Major cities* (that is, more urban areas) are more likely to provide services other than accommodation during a support period (Table 3.4).
- The difference in accommodation nights between the shortest reported accommodation length (1 day to 1 week) and the longest reported length (>6 weeks) of accommodation increased with increasing remoteness. *Major cities* provide 31% of their accommodation for 1 day to 1 week and 42% for periods longer than 6 weeks. This can be compared with *Very remote* areas, where 81% of provided accommodation is for 1 day to 1 week and only 4% is for periods longer than 6 weeks (Table 3.4).
- The average length of accommodation decreases with increasing remoteness: 68 nights for clients in *Major cities*, 51 nights in *Inner regional* areas, 41 nights in *Outer regional* areas, 27 nights in *Remote* areas and 7 nights in *Very remote* areas.

**Table 3.4: Support periods by length of accommodation, July 2011–March 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Length	Accommodation nights (per cent)				
	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very remote
1 day–1 week	30.6	31.1	41.2	59.5	80.7
>1 week–2 weeks	9.0	10.7	11.1	9.3	6.2
>2 weeks–4 weeks	11.0	12.9	11.5	9.1	7.2
>4 weeks–6 weeks	7.8	9.2	8.0	4.6	2.3
> 6 weeks	41.7	36.0	28.3	17.5	3.7
Total accommodation nights provided	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No accommodation (per cent of total support periods)	69.8	71.1	62.9	36.8	32.6

### Notes

1. Data on length of accommodation is based on support periods that were active in the March quarter 2012, but includes periods of support and accommodation that were provided in the previous quarters, where support or accommodation was ongoing 1 January 2012 (i.e. at the beginning of the March quarter 2012).
2. Where support periods were ongoing at the end of the reporting period length of accommodation is measured up until 31 March 2012.

**Table 3.5: Most common identified needs and services provided by remoteness area, July 2011–March 2012, adjusted for non-response**

Service or assistance required	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very remote
Need identified (percentage of all support periods within each RA)					
Short-term or emergency accommodation	10.1	12.3	16.0	22.2	16.8
Medium-term/transitional housing	9.3	9.1	7.4	4.7	0.3
Long-term housing	8.0	12.1	11.6	4.8	0.5
Advice/information	25.3	28.8	25.4	23.9	5.2
Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client	15.6	16.4	15.9	12.7	2.9
Other basic assistance	19.6	19.0	18.0	24.6	14.5
Material aid/brokerage	12.6	9.8	9.6	5.0	4.7
Transport	7.2	7.5	8.4	20.5	12.0
Meals	7.5	5.6	9.0	19.7	10.9
Laundry/shower facilities	6.0	4.0	7.8	19.0	14.6
Service provided (percentage of need identified)					
Short-term or emergency accommodation	69.5	65.3	66.9	95.1	100.0
Medium-term/transitional housing	59.8	42.1	30.1	55.9	n.p.
Long-term housing	10.1	7.1	7.2	2.1	n.p.
Advice/information	97.9	96.8	97.5	98.6	100.0
Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client	96.0	95.9	95.5	97.7	n.p.
Other basic assistance	98.0	96.6	96.9	98.0	97.1
Material aid/brokerage	88.9	83.8	86.5	89.9	98.2
Transport	95.3	93.9	96.1	98.2	99.3
Meals	95.2	95.2	97.6	99.1	98.8
Laundry/shower facilities	97.3	97.6	99.1	99.3	100.0

- *Remote* and *Very remote* areas reported the highest identified need for short-term or emergency accommodation and the lowest identified need for medium-term/transitional and long-term housing. This is potentially a feature of the high level of domestic violence reported as a main reason for seeking assistance reported in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas (Table 3.5).
- The provision of short-term or emergency accommodation is proportionally higher in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas than the more urban areas. The provision of medium-term/transitional housing for *Remote* areas is similar to other remoteness areas, but the provision of long-term housing is slightly less than the other more urban areas. The provision of long-term housing ranged between 7% and 10% of support periods, where it was identified as a need, compared with 2% of support periods for *Remote* areas (Table 3.5).
- Although material aid/brokerage is more likely to be provided in *Very remote* areas, where it has been identified as a need, it is identified as a need more frequently in the more urban areas. It is unclear whether this is due to the difference in demand of clients

per agency (Table 3.2) or potentially due to differences in resources and service availability (Table 3.5).

- Clients in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas have a greater need for more basic assistance such as transport, meals and laundry facilities and agencies provide services to meet these basic needs more commonly than in other remoteness areas (Table 3.5).

## Outcomes

The following information is for clients who presented to a specialist homelessness agency whose support period ended during the fYTD reporting period (1 July 2011–31 March 2012), and where valid data were available both at the beginning and end of support.

- The proportion of clients with a case management plan did not vary greatly, nor consistently across remoteness areas (between 34% and 42% of clients had a case management plan). However, the proportion of clients who had a case management plan and achieved all of their case management goals decreased with increasing remoteness (44% of clients living in *Major cities* compared with 22% in *Very remote* areas). Conversely, the proportion of clients who had a case management plan and achieved at least some of their case management goals (up to half or half or more) increased with increasing remoteness (46% of clients in *Major cities* and 72% in *Very remote* areas).

### *Dwelling type*

- A high proportion of clients in each remoteness area, who reported living in a house, townhouse or flat at the beginning of their support period, continued to live in that dwelling type after receiving support from SHS (between 93% and 94% of closed support periods reported no change in dwelling type between the beginning and the end of the support period in *Major cities*, *Inner regional*, *Outer regional* and *Remote* areas and 98% in *Very remote* areas).
- Not all clients who reported no dwelling at the beginning of their support period obtained a dwelling after receiving support, although those in *Outer regional* areas are more likely to have done so (72% of closed support periods still reported no dwelling after receiving support for clients in *Major cities*, 60% in *Inner regional* areas, 44% in *Outer regional* areas and 78% in *Remote* areas).
  - Data for *Very remote* areas are not reported due to reliability issues associated with small numbers.

### *Tenure type*

- Clients living in *Inner regional* areas had the highest proportion of clients report a housing tenure after receiving support, when no housing tenure was reported at the beginning of the support period (27% of closed support periods for *Inner regional* clients), compared with other urban and *Remote* areas (19% in *Major cities*, 21% in *Outer regional* areas, 18% in *Remote* areas and 6% in *Very remote* areas).
- For clients living in *Major cities*, 85% of closed support periods reported clients who were paying rent for their living arrangement at the beginning of their support period continued to live in paid rental arrangements after receiving support from SHS compared with 79% living in *Inner regional* areas, 83% in *Outer regional* and *Remote* areas and 92% in *Very remote* areas.
- In *Remote* and *Very remote* areas, clients who reported they were not paying rent for the place where they were living at the beginning of their support period were more likely to continue living in that rent-free arrangement after receiving support (81% of closed

support periods in *Remote* areas and 89% in *Very remote* areas), compared with other regional and urban areas (69% in *Major cities* and 63% both in *Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas).

#### *Conditions of occupancy*

- Of all the different types of housing security (conditions of occupancy – see Counting rules and glossary), the type that was most likely to change after receiving support from SHS varied between remoteness areas. For *Major cities* and *Inner regional* areas, those who reported couch surfing at the beginning of their support period reported the most change in housing security after receiving support (25% and 35% of closed support periods, respectively). For *Outer regional* areas, both couch surfing and lease arrangements where the client was not nominated on the lease reported the highest change where that form of housing security was reported at the beginning of the support period (30% for both couch surfing and lease in place where client's name is not nominated on the lease). *Remote* areas reported the highest change in housing security for clients who reported boarding at the beginning of the support period (27%). In *Very remote* areas, those clients living with a relative without payment of a fee reported the highest change in housing security (10%).
- Of all the different types of housing security, a lease with the client nominated on it was most likely to be maintained after the client received support when it was reported at the beginning of their support period in all remoteness areas except for *Very remote* areas (95% of closed support periods reported no change in *Major cities*, 94% in *Inner regional* areas, 95% in both *Outer regional* and *Remote* areas). In *Very remote* areas, housing security where a lease was in place but the client was not nominated on that lease was the most likely condition of occupancy to be maintained after receiving support from an agency (96% reported no change after receiving assistance).

#### *Main source of income*

- The proportion of clients still receiving no income after SHS assistance was similar in *Major cities* (84% of closed support periods) and *Remote* areas (85%). Clients in *Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas were more likely to have income after receiving support (77% and 78%, respectively).
  - Data for *Very remote* areas are not reported due to reliability issues associated with small numbers.
- Few clients in each remoteness area who were receiving a Parenting payment at the beginning of their support period reported a different main source of income after receiving support (97% of closed support periods for clients in *Major cities*, *Inner regional*, *Outer regional* and *Remote* areas, and 99% of clients in *Very remote* areas reported no change in their main source of income).

#### *Labour force status*

- There was little change in labour force status after receiving SHS support in all remoteness areas: in each remoteness area, the average reported change in labour force categories between the beginning and end of closed support periods ranged between 4% and 8%.

#### *Education and training status*

- There was no change in the proportion of clients undertaking formal study or training, including vocational education, employment training and primary/secondary schools, after they received support in any of the remoteness areas (between 98% and 99% of closed support periods for clients who were not undertaking formal study at the beginning of the support period reported no change in their student status after receiving support).



## 4 Data overview: tables

Table 4.1: Clients and support periods, by age group, March quarter 2012, adjusted for non-response

Age group (years)	Sex					
	Males		Females		All clients	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
<b>Clients</b>						
0–9	8,562	20.4	8,334	13.8	16,896	16.5
10–14	3,004	7.2	2,950	4.9	5,954	5.8
15–17	2,292	5.5	3,195	5.3	5,486	5.4
18–24	6,612	15.7	12,311	20.4	18,923	18.5
25–34	6,222	14.8	13,004	21.5	19,226	18.8
35–44	6,933	16.5	11,347	18.8	18,280	17.9
45–54	5,111	12.2	6,018	10.0	11,129	10.9
55–64	2,248	5.4	2,207	3.7	4,455	4.4
65+	1,016	2.4	991	1.6	2,006	2.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>41,999</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>60,357</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>102,356</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<b>Support periods</b>						
0–9	9,549	18.3	9,314	12.4	18,863	14.8
10–14	3,338	6.4	3,352	4.5	6,690	5.2
15–17	2,810	5.4	3,921	5.2	6,731	5.3
18–24	8,401	16.1	15,836	21.1	24,237	19.0
25–34	8,348	16.0	16,979	22.6	25,327	19.9
35–44	9,216	17.6	14,521	19.3	23,737	18.6
45–54	6,590	12.6	7,495	10.0	14,086	11.1
55–64	2,795	5.3	2,602	3.5	5,398	4.2
65+	1,240	2.4	1,134	1.5	2,374	1.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>52,288</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>75,155</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>127,443</i>	<i>100.0</i>

### Notes

1. Number excluded due to errors and omissions (weighted): 0 clients; 3,400 support periods.
2. Data in this table are adjusted for non-response and this methodology results in estimated figures that are not whole numbers. As a result, all figures in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number and male/female client numbers may not add to the figure for 'all clients' due to rounding errors.

**Table 4.2: Clients and support periods, by state and territory, March quarter 2012, adjusted for non-response**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<b>Number</b>									
Clients									
Males	9,959	13,331	8,455	3,399	3,839	1,272	1,202	855	41,999
Females	13,484	22,339	9,739	5,010	5,724	1,314	1,672	1,334	60,357
<i>Total</i>	<i>23,443</i>	<i>35,669</i>	<i>18,194</i>	<i>8,409</i>	<i>9,563</i>	<i>2,586</i>	<i>2,874</i>	<i>2,189</i>	<i>102,356</i>
Support periods									
Males	11,852	18,533	10,058	4,297	4,618	1,481	1,416	934	53,188
Females	16,113	31,239	11,384	6,257	7,361	1,528	2,048	1,518	77,449
<i>Total</i>	<i>27,965</i>	<i>49,772</i>	<i>21,442</i>	<i>10,554</i>	<i>11,979</i>	<i>3,009</i>	<i>3,464</i>	<i>2,452</i>	<i>130,637</i>
<b>Per cent</b>									
Clients									
Males	42.5	37.4	46.5	40.4	40.1	49.2	41.8	39.1	41.0
Females	57.5	62.6	53.5	59.6	59.9	50.8	58.2	60.9	59.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Support periods									
Males	42.4	37.2	46.9	40.7	38.6	49.2	40.9	38.1	40.7
Females	57.6	62.8	53.1	59.3	61.4	50.8	59.1	61.9	59.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

*Notes*

1. Number excluded due to errors and omissions (weighted): 0 clients; 206 support periods.
2. State/territory client numbers do not sum to the national figure because clients may appear in more than one jurisdiction.
3. Data in this table is adjusted for non-response and this methodology results in estimated figures that are not whole numbers. All figures in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 4.3: Clients by Indigenous status and age and sex, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response

Age group (years)	Sex				All clients <sup>(a)</sup>			
	Males (number)		Females (number)		Number		Per cent	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
0–9	1,959	4,438	1,870	4,376	3,829	8,814	5.0	11.6
10–14	563	1,634	597	1,567	1,160	3,201	1.5	4.2
15–17	356	1,307	558	1,819	914	3,126	1.2	4.1
18–24	864	4,183	2,148	7,145	3,012	11,328	4.0	14.9
25–34	802	3,888	2,227	7,367	3,029	11,255	4.0	14.8
35–44	835	4,495	1,559	6,671	2,394	11,166	3.1	14.7
45–54	579	3,250	786	3,495	1,365	6,745	1.8	8.9
55–64	191	1,515	241	1,307	432	2,822	0.6	3.7
65+	47	733	72	619	119	1,352	0.2	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,196</b>	<b>25,443</b>	<b>10,058</b>	<b>34,366</b>	<b>16,254</b>	<b>59,809</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>78.6</b>

(a) Includes clients where information on sex was missing.

Note: Indigenous status was not reported for 12,454 clients.

**Table 4.4: Clients by country of birth (top three countries only) and year of arrival, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Country of birth	Number	Per cent of total <sup>(a)</sup>	Per cent of overseas born	Year of arrival (per cent)			
				2011–2012	2009–2010	2002–2008	Before 2002
All clients <sup>(b)</sup>							
Australia	67,564	85.5	..	..	..	..	..
Overseas born	11,430	14.5	100.0	9.6	18.1	34.1	38.2
Top three countries of birth for overseas born clients <sup>(c)</sup>							
New Zealand	1,521	1.9	13.3	1.6	1.4	3.1	6.5
Sudan	1,041	1.3	9.1	0.3	0.9	7.6	0.7
United Kingdom	837	1.1	7.3	0.3	0.2	1.0	5.6

(a) Total percentages for country of birth information in this table have been calculated using the total number of valid responses as the denominator: 78,994.

(b) Percentages for year of arrival information for all overseas born clients in this table have been calculated using the total number of valid responses as the denominator: 7,061 (13,046 clients did not provide a year of arrival and 68,410 clients reported 'not applicable').

(c) Percentages for year of arrival information for the top three countries in this table have been calculated using the total number of valid responses as the denominator: 6,754 (4,676 clients who were reported as being overseas born clients did not provide a year of arrival).

**Notes**

1. Number of clients where both country of birth and year of arrival not reported: 8,370.
2. Number of clients where country of birth not reported: 1,153.
3. Percentage of overseas born is not equal to the sum of year of arrival due to the difference in the number of records where country of birth is not reported and the number of records where year of arrival is not reported.

**Table 4.5: Clients and presenting units by presenting unit type, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Presenting unit type	Clients <sup>(a)</sup>		Presenting units <sup>(a)(b)</sup>	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Person alone	60,647	68.8	82,448	87.9
Couple, no children	2,012	2.3	1,139	1.2
Person with children	22,018	25.0	8,028	8.6
Couple with children	4,508	5.1	1,138	1.2
Other group	2,220	2.5	1,002	1.1

(a) Client numbers are based on counts of unique clients (using SLK) and presenting units are based on counts of support periods.

(b) Support periods are grouped for clients who present together (if applicable) and presenting unit describes the relationship between these clients. Presenting units are counted based on presenting unit identifier for each support period. Individual presenting units have not been matched for each support period and may be counted more than once.

**Notes**

1. Percentages of clients by presenting unit type information in this table have been calculated using the total number of valid responses as the denominator: 88,162 (information on presenting unit type was not reported for 410 clients).
2. Percentages of presenting units by presenting unit type information in this table have been calculated using the total number of valid responses as the denominator: 93,755 (information on presenting unit type was not reported for 266 support periods).
3. Percentages do not add to 100% because clients may have more than one presenting unit type.

**Table 4.6: Clients with mental health issues, and by diagnosis of a mental health issue, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Age group (years)	Clients with a current mental health issues <sup>(a)</sup>			Clients with mental health issues and who have ever been diagnosed with a mental health issue, by a health professional		
	Total clients		Total clients (per cent)	Total clients (number)		Per cent <sup>(b)</sup>
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
0–9	430	428	6.3	17	7	0.3
10–14	197	187	2.8	17	14	0.4
15–17	245	419	4.9	75	171	3.4
18–24	1,009	1,633	19.4	539	843	19.2
25–34	1,304	1,655	21.8	883	894	24.6
35–44	1,520	1,641	23.3	1,029	944	27.4
45–54	1,050	980	14.9	660	588	17.3
55–64	373	323	5.1	246	188	6.0
65+	113	80	1.4	56	39	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,241</b>	<b>7,346</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,522</b>	<b>3,688</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) Clients identified as having a current mental health issue in the March quarter 2012 are those that were reported as having been in a psychiatric hospital or unit in the last 12 months, or their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a mental health services, or they reported 'Mental health issues' as a reason for seeking assistance, or their dwelling type either a week before presenting to an agency, or when presenting to an agency, was a psychiatric hospital or unit, or at some stage during their support period, a need was identified for psychological services, psychiatric services, or mental health services.

(b) Percentage of clients who reported they had ever been diagnosed with a mental health issue and have a current mental health issue.

Note: Number clients with insufficient information to determine their mental health status and whether they had ever been diagnosed with a mental illness: 1,394.

**Table 4.7: Clients by reasons for seeking assistance, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Reason for seeking assistance	All reasons given by clients for seeking assistance <sup>(a)</sup>			Main reason given by clients for seeking assistance <sup>(b)</sup>		
	Male	Female	Total clients (number)	Male	Female	Total clients (number)
<b>Financial</b>						
Financial difficulties	12,367	15,320	27,687	5,521	6,402	11,923
Housing affordability stress	5,190	7,342	12,532	1,522	2,279	3,801
Employment difficulties	1,660	1,173	2,833	147	67	214
Unemployment	3,520	2,224	5,744	216	84	300
Problematic gambling	313	107	420	57	16	73
<b>Accommodation</b>						
Housing crisis	8,306	10,210	18,516	5,441	6,357	11,798
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	7,042	9,171	16,213	4,041	5,257	9,298
Previous accommodation ended	5,851	6,148	11,999	2,610	2,351	4,961
<b>Interpersonal relationships</b>						
Time out from family/other situation	3,383	5,284	8,667	807	1,090	1,897
Relationship/family breakdown	6,068	10,697	16,765	2,081	2,999	5,080
Sexual abuse	171	1,035	1,206	29	202	231
Domestic and family violence	3,949	18,040	21,989	2,703	14,843	17,546
Non-family violence	578	1,111	1,689	171	398	569
<b>Health</b>						
Mental health issues	4,433	4,674	9,107	1,068	714	1,782
Medical issues	2,829	3,255	6,084	498	380	878
Problematic drug or substance use	2,903	1,926	4,829	738	319	1,057
Problematic alcohol use	2,353	1,157	3,510	590	153	743

(continued)

**Table 4.7 (continued): Clients by reasons for seeking assistance, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Reason for seeking assistance	All reasons given by clients for seeking assistance <sup>(a)</sup>			Main reason given by clients for seeking assistance <sup>(b)</sup>		
	Total clients		(per cent)	Total clients		(per cent)
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Other reasons						
Transition from custodial arrangements	1,372	453	2.5	1,037	272	1.8
Transition from foster care and child safety residential placements	176	257	0.6	108	128	0.3
Transition from other care arrangements	449	397	1.1	187	176	0.5
Discrimination including racial and sexual discrimination	132	257	0.5	19	38	0.1
Itinerant	2,059	1,573	4.9	1,029	749	2.4
Unable to return home due to environmental reasons	731	1,113	2.5	216	233	0.6
Disengagement with school or other education and training	639	738	1.9	139	105	0.3
Lack of family and/or community support	4,273	6,435	14.4	584	713	1.7
Other	4,636	4,948	12.9	2,746	3,017	7.8
<b>Total clients<sup>(c)</sup></b>	<b>29,803</b>	<b>44,407</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>29,766</b>	<b>44,365</b>	<b>..</b>

(a) Total and percentages do not add to 100 because clients may have multiple reasons for seeking assistance recorded.

(b) Total and percentages do not add to 100 because clients who had more than one support period and who identified different (main) reasons for seeking support on each occasion are recorded more than once.

(c) Total clients are reported as total unique clients who provided information about their reason(s) for seeking assistance.

Note: Number of client who did not report a reason for seeking assistance in any of their support periods during the reporting period: missing females (all reasons), 10,255, missing males (all reasons), 8,110, missing females (main reason), 9,936, missing males (main reason), 7,890.

**Table 4.8: Clients aged 15 or over by main source of income, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Main source of income	All clients at beginning of support period <sup>(a)(b)</sup>		Closed support periods <sup>(c)</sup>				Support periods with no change (per cent)
			Beginning of support period		End of support period		
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
Government pension or allowance							
Newstart Allowance	12,818	24.9	8,548	26.4	8,528	26.3	95.1
Parenting payment	12,318	23.9	6,856	21.1	6,982	21.5	97.2
Disability Support Pension (Centrelink)	10,585	20.5	7,388	22.8	7,489	23.1	97.4
Youth Allowance	5,374	10.4	2,683	8.3	2,706	8.3	92.0
Age Pension	932	1.8	583	1.8	589	1.8	97.9
Austudy/ABSTUDY	322	0.6	131	0.4	134	0.4	90.8
Disability Pension (DVA)	816	1.6	372	1.1	349	1.1	78.5
Service Pension (DVA)	23	0.0	9	0.0	8	0.0	88.9
War Widow(er's) Pension (inc. income support supplement) (DVA)	37	0.1	20	0.1	21	0.1	95.0
Sickness Allowance	154	0.3	62	0.2	63	0.2	80.6
Carer Allowance	218	0.4	104	0.3	99	0.3	83.7
Carer Payment	473	0.9	272	0.8	264	0.8	91.2
Other government pensions and allowances	739	1.4	354	1.1	320	1.0	78.8
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>27,382</i>	<i>84.4</i>	<i>27,552</i>	<i>84.9</i>	<i>95.4</i>
Other source of income							
Employee income	3,479	6.7	2,015	6.2	2,159	6.7	92.1
Unincorporated business income	48	0.1	27	0.1	24	0.1	81.5
Other income	532	1.0	323	1.0	335	1.0	92.6
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>2,365</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>2,518</i>	<i>7.8</i>	<i>92.0</i>
No income	5,204	10.1	2,686	8.3	2,363	7.3	84.8

(a) Number of clients aged 15 or over who did not report a main source of income in any of their support periods during the reporting period: 22,205.

(b) Clients who had more than one support period during the reporting period and who identified a different main source of income on each occasion are recorded more than once.

(c) Numbers are for closed support periods where a valid response was recorded both when presenting to an agency and at the end of support.

*Note:* Percentages for main source of income information at the beginning of the support period in this table have been calculated using the total number of valid responses as the denominator: 51,570.



**Table 4.9: Clients aged 15 or over by labour force status, at beginning of the support period, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Labour force status <sup>(a)</sup>	Age group							All clients	
	15–17	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	Number	Per cent
Employed									
Full time	28	468	401	488	315	80	8	1,788	3.5
Part time	183	1,040	785	837	472	140	17	3,474	6.7
Don't know	12	138	155	168	108	24	5	610	1.2
Unemployed	835	5,956	5,367	4,994	2,975	940	209	21,276	41.3
Not in labour force	1,553	5,726	7,075	6,496	4,000	1,882	1,073	27,805	54.0
<b>Total clients<sup>(b)</sup> (number)</b>	<b>2,443</b>	<b>12,404</b>	<b>12,874</b>	<b>12,147</b>	<b>7,416</b>	<b>2,942</b>	<b>1,282</b>	<b>51,508</b>	<b>. .</b>

(a) Clients who had more than one support period during the reporting period and who identified a different labour force status on each occasion are recorded more than once.

(b) Total clients are reported as the total number of unique clients who provided information about their labour force status.

Note: Number of clients aged 15 or over who did not report a labour force status in any of their support periods during the reporting period: 17,454.

**Table 4.10 Clients aged 15 or over by labour force status, closed support periods, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

	Beginning of support period		End of support period		Support periods with no change (per cent)
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
Employed	3,186	9.9	3,521	10.9	92.8
Unemployed	12,336	38.2	12,080	37.4	92.5
Not in labour force	16,770	51.9	16,691	51.7	95.5
<b>Total clients (number)</b>	<b>32,292</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>32,292</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>94.1</b>

Note: Numbers are for closed support periods where a valid response was recorded both when presenting to an agency and at the end of support.

**Table 4.11: Clients and closed support periods, by dwelling type, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Dwelling type	All clients at beginning of support period <sup>(a)(b)</sup>		Closed support periods <sup>(c)</sup>				Support periods with no change (per cent)
	Number	Per cent	Beginning of support period		End of support period		
			Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
Adequate dwelling							
House/townhouse/flat	50,170	73.6	27,273	67.7	27,672	68.7	94.4
Temporary accommodation							
Boarding/rooming house	3,028	4.4	1,837	4.6	1,963	4.9	84.5
Emergency accommodation	5,885	8.6	2,824	7.0	3,952	9.8	74.4
Hotel/motel/bed and breakfast	2,277	3.3	1,283	3.2	1,105	2.7	69.8
Hospital (excluding psychiatric)	408	0.6	265	0.7	198	0.5	66.4
Psychiatric hospital/unit	405	0.6	211	0.5	139	0.3	53.6
Disability support	41	0.1	24	0.1	33	0.1	91.7
Rehabilitation	440	0.6	193	0.5	231	0.6	69.9
Boarding school/residential college	33	0.0	12	0.0	15	0.0	91.7
Aged care facility	24	0.0	11	0.0	19	0.0	100.0
Adult correctional facility	856	1.3	357	0.9	286	0.7	70.9
Youth/juvenile justice correctional centre	184	0.3	73	0.2	54	0.1	56.2
Immigration detention centre	5	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
Sub-total	..	..	7,091	17.7	7,995	19.7	74.9
Inadequate dwelling							
Caravan	1,264	1.9	668	1.7	594	1.5	73.7
Tent	494	0.7	288	0.7	231	0.6	69.1
Cabin	310	0.5	123	0.3	100	0.2	65.0
Boat	8	0.0	6	0.0	8	0.0	83.3
Other	1,739	2.6	917	2.3	853	2.1	78.0
Sub-total	..	..	2,002	5.0	1,786	4.4	74.5
Without shelter							
No dwelling/street/park/in the open	3,785	5.6	2,626	6.5	1,790	4.4	66.0
Improvised building/dwelling	1,052	1.5	630	1.6	549	1.4	80.6
Motor vehicle	1,210	1.8	674	1.7	504	1.3	69.7
Sub-total	..	..	3930	9.8	2843	7.1	69.0
Total <sup>(d)</sup>	68,130	..	40,296	100.0	40,296	100.0	87.5

(a) Number of clients who did not report a dwelling type in any of their support periods during the reporting period: 25,455.

(b) Clients who had more than one support period during the reporting period and who identified a different dwelling type at the beginning of the support period on each occasion are recorded more than once.

(c) Numbers are for closed support periods where a valid response was recorded both when presenting to an agency and at the end of support.

(d) Total clients are reported as total unique clients who provided information about their dwelling type.

**Table 4.12: Clients and closed support periods at the beginning and end of support period, by tenure type, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Tenure type	All clients at beginning of support period <sup>(a)(b)</sup>		Closed support periods <sup>(c)</sup>				Support periods with no change (per cent)
			Beginning of support period		End of support period		
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
Long-term secure							
Renter—private housing	13,828	21.8	8,097	22.2	8,255	22.6	88.9
Renter—public housing	6,579	10.4	3,304	9.1	3,821	10.5	92.1
Renter—community housing	2,370	3.7	992	2.7	1,265	3.5	85.0
Life tenure scheme	22	0.0	5	0.0	5	0.0	80.0
Owner—shared equity or rent/buy scheme	89	0.1	52	0.1	44	0.1	76.9
Owner—being purchased/with mortgage	1,198	1.9	730	2.0	693	1.9	88.9
Owner—fully owned	325	0.5	217	0.6	213	0.6	88.0
Sub-total	..	..	13,397	36.7	14,296	39.2	89.3
Medium-term secure							
Renter—caravan park	931	1.5	471	1.3	431	1.2	75.2
Renter—boarding/rooming house	3,712	5.8	2,035	5.6	2,036	5.6	80.9
Other renter	2,044	3.2	1,119	3.1	1,120	3.1	77.8
Sub-total	..	..	3,625	10	3,587	9.9	79.2
Short-term secure							
Renter—transitional housing	2,655	4.2	758	2.1	987	2.7	72.4
Renter—emergency accommodation/night shelter/women's refuge/youth shelter where rent is charged	4,334	6.8	1,994	5.5	2,870	7.9	73.1
Other tenure type not elsewhere specified	834	1.3	312	0.9	357	1.0	73.4
Sub-total	..	..	3,064	8.5	4,214	11.6	72.9

(continued)

**Table 4.12 (continued): Clients and closed support periods at the beginning and end of support period, by tenure type, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Tenure type	All clients at beginning of support period <sup>(a)(b)</sup>		Closed support periods <sup>(c)</sup>				Support periods with no change (per cent)
	Number	Per cent	Beginning of support period		End of support period		
			Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
Not secure							
Rent free—private housing	4,231	6.7	1,920	5.3	1,544	4.2	65.2
Rent free—public housing	1,408	2.2	617	1.7	737	2	71.6
Rent free—community housing	449	0.7	222	0.6	264	0.7	78.8
Rent free—transitional housing	603	0.9	161	0.4	178	0.5	60.9
Rent free—caravan park	113	0.2	58	0.2	52	0.1	72.4
Rent free—boarding/rooming house	561	0.9	266	0.7	203	0.6	59.0
Rent free—emergency accommodation/night shelter/women's refuge/youth shelter where rent is not charged	1,990	3.1	857	2.3	945	2.6	60.1
Other rent free	3,912	6.2	1,867	5.1	1,529	4.2	68.6
No tenure	17,909	28.2	10,451	28.6	8,956	24.5	80.0
Sub-total	..	..	16,419	44.9	14,408	39.4	75.0
Total <sup>(d)</sup>	63,552	..	36,505	100.0	36,505	100.0	80.5

(a) Number of clients who did not report a tenure type in any of their support periods during the reporting period: 30,750.

(b) Clients who had more than one support period during the reporting period and who identified a different tenure type at the beginning of the support period on each occasion are recorded more than once.

(c) Numbers are for closed support periods where a valid response was recorded both when presenting to an agency and at the end of support.

(d) Total clients are reported as total unique clients who provided information about their tenure type.

**Table 4.13: Clients and closed support periods, by conditions of occupancy, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Conditions of occupancy	All clients at beginning of support period <sup>(a)(b)</sup>		Closed support periods <sup>(c)</sup>				Support periods with no change (per cent)
			Beginning of support period		End of support period		
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
Long-term secure							
Leased tenure—nominated on lease	20,460	37.5	10,611	36.4	11,868	40.7	95.0
Medium-term secure							
Lease in place—not nominated on lease	4,411	8.1	1,973	6.8	1,924	6.6	79.5
Not secure							
Couch surfer	7,155	13.1	3,491	12.0	2,778	9.5	73.1
Boarder	8,678	15.9	4,426	15.2	4,392	15.1	82.1
Living with relative fee free	9,129	16.7	4,119	14.1	3,823	13.1	80.2
Other	8,738	16.0	4,540	15.6	4,375	15.0	80.9
<i>Sub-total</i>	..	..	16,576	56.9	15,368	52.7	79.4
<b>Total<sup>(d)</sup></b>	<b>54,603</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>29,160</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>29,160</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>85.1</b>

(a) Number of clients who did not report condition of occupancy in any of their support periods during the reporting period: 31,643; 10,551 clients reported 'not applicable'.

(b) Clients who had more than one support period during the reporting period and who identified a different condition of occupancy at the beginning of the support period on each occasion are recorded more than once.

(c) Numbers are for closed support periods where a valid response was recorded both when presenting to an agency and at the end of support.

(d) Total clients are reported as total unique clients who provided information about their condition of occupancy.

**Table 4.14: Clients by previous experience of homelessness, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Previous experience of homelessness	In the last month before support		In the last year before support	
	Number	Per cent <sup>(a)</sup>	Number	Per cent <sup>(a)</sup>
Sleeping rough or in non-conventional accommodation	12,019	19.3	15,100	22.5
Short-term or emergency accommodation, due to a lack of other options	19,190	30.8	23,707	35.3
Not homeless	37,913	60.8	38,086	56.8

(a) Percentages do not add to 100% because clients may have reported both 'sleeping rough' and being in 'short-term or emergency accommodation' in the time period.

**Notes**

- Percentages of clients by previous homelessness history in the last month before support have been calculated using the total number of valid responses as the denominator: 62,312.
- Percentages of clients by previous homelessness history in the last year before support have been calculated using the total number of valid responses as the denominator: 67,085.
- Number of clients who did not report previous homelessness history in any of their support periods during the reporting period: 31,991 for previous month and 26,699 for previous year.

**Table 4.15: Support periods, by length of support period, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Length of support period	Closed support periods	Ongoing support periods <sup>(a)</sup>
<2 days	28,353	751
2 day–1 week	8,667	2,830
>1 week–2 weeks	4,482	2,872
>2 weeks–4 weeks	5,391	5,094
>4 weeks–6 weeks	4,168	4,263
>6 weeks	16,824	34,454
<b>Total</b>	<b>67,885</b>	<b>50,264</b>

(a) Ongoing support period length is measured up to 31 March 2012.

*Note:* Data on the length of support periods is based on support periods that were active in the March quarter 2012, but includes periods of support that were provided in previous quarters where the support period was ongoing on 1 January 2011 (i.e. at the beginning of the March quarter 2012).

**Table 4.16: Closed support periods and average length of support period by jurisdiction, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

State/territory	Closed support periods	Average length (days)
NSW	12,250	68.2
Vic	30,860	32.2
Qld	12,006	45.6
WA	5,299	58.8
SA	3,223	45.0
Tas	1,450	51.3
ACT	1,389	74.0
NT	1,408	32.8
<b>Australia</b>	<b>67,885</b>	<b>45.0</b>

*Note:* Data on the length of support periods is based on support periods that were active in the March quarter 2012, but includes periods of support that were provided in previous quarters where the support period was ongoing on 1 January 2011 (i.e. at the beginning of the March quarter 2012).

**Table 4.17: Support periods, by need for services and assistance and service provision status, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Services and assistance types	Need identified	Need identified as % of support periods <sup>(a)</sup>	Service provision status				
			Provided only	Provided and referred	All provided as % of need identified	Referred only	Not provided or referred
Accommodation services							
Short-term or emergency accommodation	33,031	30.9	19,612	1,928	65.2	4,287	7,204
Medium-term/transitional housing	24,996	23.4	11,252	1,268	50.1	4,588	7,888
Long-term housing	27,093	25.3	1,607	329	7.1	10,569	14,588
Assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction	22,157	20.7	16,540	1,698	82.3	1,315	2,604
Assistance to prevent foreclosures or for mortgage arrears	608	0.6	378	36	68.1	58	136
Total support periods for sub-group <sup>(b)</sup>	70,768	66.2	38,952	9,879	69.0	9,002	12,935
Advice, advocacy, referral							
Assistance to obtain/maintain government allowance	8,015	7.5	5,465	1,229	83.5	752	569
Legal information	10,620	9.9	6,276	1,560	73.8	1,796	988
Court support	5,959	5.6	3,721	613	72.7	831	794
Advice/information	74,736	69.9	67,051	5,668	97.3	1,050	967
Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client	45,427	42.5	38,198	5,211	95.6	802	1,216
Financial information	17,889	16.7	12,494	2,147	81.8	1,438	1,810
Assistance with immigration services	878	0.8	401	227	71.5	151	99
Total support periods for sub-group <sup>(b)</sup>	80,724	75.5	65,971	12,476	97.2	1,232	1,045
Child and parenting-specific services							
School liaison	4,239	4.0	3,127	408	83.4	269	435
Child care	4,806	4.5	3,143	651	78.9	537	475
Structured play/skills development	4,304	4.0	3,564	276	89.2	209	255
Child contact and residence arrangements	1,825	1.7	1,116	212	72.8	193	304
Child protection services	3,015	2.8	1,373	630	66.4	631	381
Parenting skills education	3,420	3.2	1,599	547	62.7	661	613
Child specific specialist counselling services	2,109	2.0	731	312	49.5	613	453
Total support periods for sub-group <sup>(b)</sup>	13,673	12.8	8,038	2,754	78.9	1,576	1,305
Counselling and professional services (health, legal)							
Family/relationship assistance	15,663	14.6	12,207	1,206	85.6	794	1,456
Assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems	8,642	8.1	6,733	718	86.2	375	816

(continued)

**Table 4.17 (continued): Support periods, by need for services and assistance and service provision status, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Services and assistance types	Need identified	Need identified as % of support periods <sup>(a)</sup>	Service provision status				
			Provided only	Provided and referred	All provided as % of need identified	Referred only	Not provided or referred
Psychological services	2,839	2.7	736	407	40.3	831	865
Psychiatric services	1,428	1.3	367	215	40.8	467	379
Mental health services	4,695	4.4	1,432	732	46.1	1,428	1,103
Pregnancy assistance	1,095	1.0	382	221	55.1	244	248
Family planning support	895	0.8	330	124	50.7	248	193
Physical disability services	366	0.3	80	59	38.0	136	91
Intellectual disability services	391	0.4	93	69	41.4	113	116
Health/medical services	8,657	8.1	2,955	1,860	55.6	2,719	1,123
Professional legal services	2,232	2.1	515	480	44.6	919	318
Financial advice and counselling	4,094	3.8	1,632	659	56.0	1,022	781
Counselling for problem gambling	255	0.2	104	25	50.6	58	68
Drug/alcohol counselling	3,370	3.2	1,395	498	56.2	718	759
Specialist counselling services	4,409	4.1	1,790	583	53.8	1,292	744
<i>Total support periods for sub-group<sup>(b)</sup></i>	<i>28,660</i>	<i>26.8</i>	<i>15,323</i>	<i>6,874</i>	<i>77.4</i>	<i>3,845</i>	<i>2,618</i>
<b>Counselling and professional services (related to personal safety)</b>							
Assistance for incest/sexual assault	1,165	1.1	677	139	70.0	154	195
Assistance for domestic/family violence	20,291	19.0	16,612	1,581	89.7	822	1,276
Assistance for trauma	5,102	4.8	3,650	442	80.2	382	628
<i>Total support periods for sub-group<sup>(b)</sup></i>	<i>22,416</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>17,837</i>	<i>1,989</i>	<i>88.4</i>	<i>1,071</i>	<i>1,519</i>
<b>Engagement with education/training/employment</b>							
Employment assistance	4,702	4.4	2,473	496	63.1	677	1,056
Training assistance	4,042	3.8	2,154	514	66.0	622	752
Educational assistance	7,503	7.0	4,567	1,084	75.3	769	1,083
<i>Total support periods for sub-group<sup>(b)</sup></i>	<i>10,639</i>	<i>9.9</i>	<i>6,153</i>	<i>1,614</i>	<i>73.0</i>	<i>1,262</i>	<i>1,610</i>
<b>Homeless living support</b>							
Material aid/brokerage	30,289	28.3	22,457	3,401	85.4	2,258	2,173
Living skills/personal development	18,005	16.8	15,315	1,072	91.0	625	993
Assertive outreach	12,334	11.5	10,412	713	90.2	604	605
Retrieval/storage/removal of personal belongings	9,392	8.8	7,695	643	88.8	395	659
Meals	19,550	18.3	17,921	696	95.2	682	251
Laundry/shower facilities	16,264	15.2	15,519	329	97.4	258	158
Recreation	13,961	13.1	12,624	560	94.4	344	433
Transport	21,203	19.8	19,125	1,034	95.1	444	600
Other basic assistance	54,813	51.2	49,929	3,458	97.4	743	683
<i>Total support periods for sub-group<sup>(b)</sup></i>	<i>75,233</i>	<i>70.3</i>	<i>61,606</i>	<i>10,238</i>	<i>95.5</i>	<i>1,550</i>	<i>1,839</i>

(continued)



**Table 4.17 (continued): Support periods, by need for services and assistance and service provision status, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Services and assistance types	Need identified	Need identified as % of support periods <sup>(a)</sup>	Service provision status				
			Provided only	Provided and referred	All provided as % of need identified	Referred only	Not provided or referred
Specialist services for specific needs							
Interpreter services	1,279	1.2	773	292	83.3	176	38
Culturally specific services	3,627	3.4	2,391	645	83.7	388	203
Assistance to connect culturally	2,250	2.1	1,389	444	81.5	232	185
Other specialised service	7,062	6.6	4,004	1,472	77.5	1,232	354
Total support periods for sub-group <sup>(b)</sup>	10,505	9.8	6,044	2,477	81.1	1,479	505

(a) Total support periods with needs identified, provided or referred included: 106,953.

(b) Total support periods for sub-groups are reported as total support periods that had at least one need identified within that sub-group.

**Notes**

1. Excludes South Australian data—see Chapter 1 for more information.
2. Agencies can provide multiple services to a client, so numbers will not sum to the total number of support periods.
3. Support periods where services and assistance was not reported: 11,196.

**Table 4.18: Support periods by accommodation status and length of accommodation, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Length of accommodation	Closed support periods	Ongoing support periods <sup>(a)</sup>	All support periods with accommodation		
			Support periods with short-term or emergency accommodation	Support periods with medium-term transitional accommodation	Support periods with long-term accommodation
1 day–1 week	7,776	2,545	9,745	692	412
>1 week–2 weeks	1,935	1,190	2,825	351	172
>2 weeks–4 weeks	1,907	1,826	3,277	678	181
>4 weeks–6 weeks	1,241	1,529	2,177	791	211
>6 weeks	5,774	14,551	7,433	11,781	1,759
<i>Total support periods with accommodation</i>	<i>18,633</i>	<i>21,641</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>..</i>
No accommodation	49,252	28,623	..	..	..
<b>Total</b>	<b>67,885</b>	<b>50,264</b>	<b>25,457</b>	<b>14,293</b>	<b>2,735</b>

(a) Ongoing accommodation length is measured up to 31 March 2012.

*Notes*

1. Data on the length of accommodation is based on support periods that were active in the March quarter 2012, but includes periods of accommodation that were provided in the previous quarters where the accommodation was ongoing on 1 January 2012 (i.e. at the beginning of the March quarter 2012).
2. Clients can receive different types of accommodation in the one support period. Total support periods with any form of accommodation provided: 40,274.

**Table 4.19: Total number of nights of accommodation provided, by jurisdiction and accommodation type, March quarter 2012, adjusted for non-response**

Accommodation type	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Short-term or emergency	153,819	84,416	197,773	46,271	40,631	22,225	29,044	16,478	590,657
Medium-term/transitional	301,558	356,634	101,006	70,777	44,319	25,966	33,305	20,212	953,777
Long-term	31,070	24,711	12,679	21,277	42,478	2,413	10,976	1,549	147,153
<b>Total</b>	<b>486,447</b>	<b>465,761</b>	<b>311,458</b>	<b>138,325</b>	<b>127,428</b>	<b>50,604</b>	<b>73,325</b>	<b>38,239</b>	<b>1,691,587</b>

*Note:* Data in this table is adjusted for non-response and this methodology results in estimated figures that are not whole numbers. As a result, all figures in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number.

**Table 4.20: Support periods with accommodation by jurisdiction, March quarter 2012, adjusted for non-response**

State/territory	Support periods with accommodation	Average accommodation length (nights)	Average support periods with accommodation per day	Average support periods per day
NSW	12,224	95.8	5,346	13,389
Vic	10,383	108.4	5,118	15,668
Qld	9,574	67.4	3,423	7,450
WA	4,403	69.3	1,520	4,541
SA	3,702	67.3	1,404	7,093
Tas	1,498	66.1	556	1,297
ACT	1,303	144.3	806	1,876
NT	1,522	54.4	420	817
<b>Total</b>	<b>44,609</b>	<b>86.7</b>	<b>18,594</b>	<b>52,131</b>

*Notes*

1. Data on the length of accommodation is based on support periods that were active in the March quarter 2012, but includes periods of accommodation that were provided in the previous quarters where the accommodation was ongoing on 1 January 2012 (i.e. at the beginning of the March quarter 2012).
2. Data in this table is adjusted for non-response and this methodology results in estimated figures that are not whole numbers. As a result, all figures in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number.

**Table 4.21: Closed support periods, by case management plan status, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Case management plan status	Number	Per cent
<b>Case management plan in place</b>	<b>23,372</b>	<b>36.1</b>
Extent to which case management goals achieved		
Not at all	2,352	10.1
Up to half	6,392	27.3
Half or more	4,678	20.0
All	9,950	42.6
<b>No case management plan</b>	<b>41,383</b>	<b>63.9</b>
Reason no case management plan		
Client did not agree to one	4,534	11.0
Service episode too short	23,622	57.1
Part of another person's case management plan	7,627	18.4
Other	5,600	13.5
<b>Total support periods</b>	<b>64,755</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Note:* Number of clients who did not report a case management plan status in any of their support periods during the reporting period: 3,130.

**Table 4.22: Closed support periods by reason support period ended and length of support period, March quarter 2012, not adjusted for non-response**

Reason support period ended	Length of support period						Total	
	≤1 week		>1 week					
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Client referred to another specialist homelessness agency	2,912	7.8	1,866	6.8			4,778	7.4
Client referred to a mainstream agency	1,444	3.9	761	2.8			2,205	3.4
Client's immediate needs met/case management goals achieved	18,951	51.0	10,479	38.1			29,430	45.5
Maximum service period reached	332	0.9	933	3.4			1,265	2.0
Service withdrawn from client and no referral made	541	1.5	1,084	3.9			1,625	2.5
Client no longer requested assistance	7,824	21.1	6,715	24.4			14,539	22.5
Client did not turn up	983	2.6	962	3.5			1,945	3.0
Lost contact with client	1,887	5.1	2,871	10.4			4,758	7.4
Client institutionalised	36	0.1	84	0.3			120	0.2
Client incarcerated	32	0.1	98	0.4			130	0.2
Client died	28	0.1	24	0.1			52	0.1
Other	2,194	5.9	1,605	5.8			3,799	5.9
Total	37,164	100.0	27,482	100.0			64,646	100.0

*Note:* Number of clients who did not report a reason for support period end in any of their support periods during the reporting period: 1,436.

# Appendix A

## Non-response adjustment (weighting) methodology

This section describes the methodology used to create weighted estimates for the March quarter 2012, which appear in 'Chapter 2 Data overview: highlights'.

A more complete method for adjusting for missing support period information is being developed; the method described in this section is a simplified version of that method. In this report, only the March quarter 2012 data has been adjusted for non-response, because it is not valid to apply the simplified weighting methodology to year-to-date data, due to the assumptions that the simplified methodology makes.

### The weighting methodology

Non-response adjustment produces estimates of the figures that would result if data were available for all entities expected to respond. That is, estimates of the figures that would have been observed if the March quarter 2012 snapshot contained data on all support periods active in that quarter, for all agencies expected to participate in that quarter; and if all of those support period records contained information that could be used to form a valid Statistical Linkage Key (SLK). The SLK is used to create client-level data by enabling linkage of support periods that are likely to belong to the same individual client.

Non-response adjustment in the SHSC is performed for support periods and, separately, for clients, as follows:

- support period records are weighted to account for agencies that did not participate
- client records are weighted to account for:
  - support period-level weighting, i.e. non-participation of agencies
  - support period records with invalid Statistical Linkage Keys (SLKs)
  - mixed agency participation and mixed SLK validity.

### Support period weights

Support period weights adjust only for agency non-participation. The weight for a support period is:

$$w_i = \frac{N_A}{n_{A,r}}$$

where  $w_i$  is the support period weight for a valid support period,  $N_A$  is the total number of agencies expected to participate at some time during the quarter and  $n_{A,r}$  is the number of agencies that respond at some time during the quarter.

### Client weights

Clients may have more than one support period in the quarter. Further, clients may be supported at an agency that participates in the collection in one support period, and in another support period the client may be supported at a non-participating agency—this is referred to as mixed agency participation. As well, a client may provide information that can be used to form a valid SLK (which is used to create client level data) in some support

periods but not others. This could happen, for example, where one support period was brief and another support period was longer and agency workers were able to obtain more data—this is referred to as mixed SLK validity.

The weighting process accounts for mixed agency participation and mixed SLK validity. It begins by accounting for non-responding agencies and support periods with invalid SLKs in aggregate. An intermediate weight is calculated as:

$$w_j = \frac{N_A}{n_{A,r}} * \frac{N_S}{n_{S,v}}$$

where  $w_j$  is the intermediate weight for a valid support period,  $N_A$  is the total number of agencies expected to participate at some time during the quarter,  $n_{A,r}$  is the number of agencies that respond at some time during the quarter,  $N_S$  is the number of support periods for which data was supplied and  $n_{S,v}$  is the number of support periods with a valid SLK.

Next, the process accounts for mixed agency participation and mixed SLK validity by taking into account the number of support periods recorded for each client—clients with one support period are less likely to have at least one support period at a participating agency, therefore they require larger adjustments than clients with many support periods, because they are more likely to have at least one support period at a participating agency. The weight for a client is:

$$w_k = \frac{1}{1 - \prod_{j=1}^{n_k} (1 - w_{k,j}^{-1})}$$

where  $w_k$  is the client weight,  $w_{k,j}$  is the  $j^{th}$  intermediate weight for client  $k$ ,  $n_k$  is the number of observed support periods for client  $k$ , and  $\prod_{j=1}^{n_k}$  is the product over all support periods for client  $k$ .

## Considerations

Non-response adjustment makes the following core assumptions:

- Responses and non-responses are clearly defined; that is, agencies that should have participated in the collection can be divided into two distinct groups—those that participated and those that did not.
- Responses are representative of non-responses; that is, it is assumed that agencies that respond are similar to agencies that do not respond. Similarly, support periods with valid SLKs are assumed to be similar to support periods without valid SLKs.

When these assumptions do not hold, estimates are biased (i.e. higher or lower, on average, than their true values). Varying agency participation (a violation of the assumption that responses and non-responses are clearly defined) and lack of appropriate stratification (a violation of the assumption that, within strata, responses are representative of non-responses) lead to bias.

### Varying agency participation

Agencies were designated as ‘participating’ if they returned support period data at any time during the reporting period.

Not all SHSC participating agencies returned support period data in all three months of the March quarter. This is likely because:

- some agencies were not ready to participate in the new collection earlier in the quarter
- some agencies did not provide later months' information in time to be included in this report
- some agencies had activity for some months but not others.

Ideally, non-response adjustment would take account of this varying participation over time; however, the quantity and quality of SHSC data processed to date does not lend itself to such a refinement.

Unless varying agency participation occurs only due to some agencies having activity for some months but not others, designating agencies as '*participating*' if they participated at any time during the reporting period causes weighted estimates—both of numbers of support periods and of numbers of clients—to be, on average, underestimates. This occurs because agencies that participated in only one or two months in the quarter, because they were not ready to participate earlier in the quarter or did not provide later months' data in time, have missing support periods, and the weighting methodology does not adjust for these missing periods.

## **Stratification**

Non-response adjustment is typically applied using a stratified approach: respondents are split into strata—often based on location, age group and sex—and weights are calculated within strata. This occurs because persons with the same location, age group and sex can be assumed to be more similar than persons generally.

For March quarter 2012, a stratified approach could not be implemented because there were only two previous reporting periods with which to compare the March quarter 2012 data. Non-response adjustment benefits from comparison of response over time to indicate the efficacy of a particular adjustment approach.

As a result, national-level weights are applied to state/territory estimates. This means all weighted estimates for jurisdictions with high agency participation, such as South Australia, are likely to be overestimates; and all weighted estimates for jurisdictions with low agency participation, such as the New South Wales, are most likely underestimates.

Weights generated for all persons regardless of age or sex were used to create estimates of numbers of clients by age and sex. Because SLK validity varies between age and sex groups, this means that some weighted estimates are likely to be underestimates and others are likely to be overestimates. For example, the number of clients aged 0–14 is likely to be higher than Table 4.1 indicates, because SLK validity is low for persons aged 0–14.

The weighting methodology will be improved over the next year, as more SHSC data is collected. It is planned to implement a stratified approach; this will reduce (and in some cases eliminate) bias caused by varying rates of agency participation and SLK validity.

## **Comparability of weighted estimates over time**

Non-response adjustment produces estimates of the figures that would result if data were available for all entities expected to respond. If the entities expected to respond in one time

period are different from those in another time period, data for the two time periods are not directly comparable.

In the December quarter 2011, 1,478 agencies were expected to respond and 1,357 of these returned support period data. 86,212 clients were observed in the 1,357 agencies; as a result of non-response adjustment, it was estimated that 98,742 clients visited at least one of the 1,478 agencies.

In the March quarter 2012, 1,474 agencies were expected to respond and 1,331 of these returned support period data. 88,517 clients were observed in the 1,331 agencies; as a result of non-response adjustment, it was estimated that 102,356 clients visited at least one of the 1,474 agencies.

Based on these data, one cannot conclude that there were 3,614 more SHS clients in the March quarter 2012 than in the December quarter 2011. The agencies expected to participate in the March quarter 2012 are different from those expected to participate in the December quarter 2011. Some agencies that were expected to participate in the March quarter 2012 and were not expected to participate in the December quarter 2011 may have, in the December quarter 2011, served clients not among the 98,742 estimated to have visited an agency that was expected to participate in the December quarter 2011. Similarly, some agencies that were expected to participate in the December quarter 2011 and were not expected to participate in the March quarter 2012 may have, in the March quarter 2012, served clients not among the 102,356 estimated to have visited an agency that was expected to participate in the March quarter 2012. One can conclude only that the number of clients visiting at least one agency expected to participate in the March quarter 2012 was higher than the number of clients visiting at least one agency expected to participate in the December quarter 2011.

In the annual report, data for all quarters will be weighted on a common basis. However, due to the difference between the weighting methodology that will be used for the annual report and that used in the quarterly reports (as well as a range of other reasons, including more data being submitted and improved validation), annual data will not be directly comparable with quarterly data.



# Appendix B

## Data quality statement (Specialist Homelessness Services Collection— March quarter 2012)

### Summary of key data quality issues

- The Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) replaces the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program National Data Collection (SAAP NDC). There are significant differences between the two, creating comparability issues.

### March quarter 2012

- Analysis of the March quarter 2012 SHSC data identified some data quality issues. In particular, the rate of invalid/'don't know'/missing responses was high for many data items in the March quarter 2012, as it was in the December quarter 2011. Data items with very high rates of invalid/'don't know'/missing responses are not reported on in this publication.
- All agencies that receive funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) or the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) to provide specialist homelessness services are in scope for the SHSC, but only those expected to provide data are covered. Many high volume services and intake services are not covered.
- Ninety per cent of covered agencies returned support period data for the March quarter 2012, although some reported for only one or two months. This is a two percentage point decrease from the December quarter 2011.
- Matching of data from individual clients who presented at different agencies and/or at different times requires a valid statistical linkage key (SLK). Ninety-four per cent of support periods had a valid SLK in the December quarter 2011. This is a one percentage point increase from the December quarter 2011.

### March 2012 financial year-to-date (fYTD)

- Analysis of the March 2012 financial year to date SHSC data identified some data quality issues. In particular, the rate of invalid/'don't know'/missing responses was high for many data items. Data items with very high rates of invalid/'don't know'/missing responses are not reported on in this publication.
- All agencies that receive funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) or the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) to provide specialist homelessness services are in scope for the SHSC, but only those expected to provide data are covered. Many high volume services and intake services are not covered.
- Ninety-four per cent of covered agencies returned support period data for the March 2012 fYTD, although many did not return data for all nine months.

- Matching of data from individual clients who presented at different agencies and/or at different times requires a valid statistical linkage key (SLK). Ninety-three per cent of support periods had a valid SLK in the March 2012 fYTD.

## **Description**

The SHSC collects information on people who receive services from agencies that receive funding under the NAHA or the NPAH to provide specialist homelessness services. A limited amount of data is also collected about clients who seek, but do not receive, assistance from a specialist homelessness agency.

Data are collected monthly from agencies participating in the collection.

The SHSC replaced the SAAP NDC on July 1 2011. There are significant differences between the SAAP NDC and the SHSC.

## **Institutional environment**

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is a major national agency set up by the Australian Government under the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987* to provide reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. It is an independent statutory authority established in 1987, governed by a management Board and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health and Ageing portfolio.

The AIHW aims to provide authoritative information and statistics to promote better health and wellbeing. The Institute collects and reports information on a wide range of topics and issues, ranging from health and welfare expenditure, hospitals, disease and injury, and mental health, to ageing, homelessness, disability and child protection.

The Institute also plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The Institute works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to these standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and, where possible, to compile national data sets based on data from each jurisdiction, to analyse these data sets and disseminate information and statistics.

The *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*, in conjunction with compliance to the *Privacy Act 1988*, ensures that the data collections managed by the AIHW are kept securely and under the strictest conditions with respect to privacy and confidentiality.

For further information see the AIHW website <[www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)>.

The SHSC was developed by AIHW in conjunction with the states and territories and is being administered by the AIHW.

## **Timeliness**

The SHSC began on 1 July 2011. Under the collection guidelines, specialist homelessness agencies provide their data to the AIHW each month, although delays in the provision of data from agencies do occur. Once validated, submitted data are regularly loaded to a Master Database. From this Master Database 'snapshots' are created at particular points in

time for reporting purposes. Snapshots are taken following the end of each quarter and another one for the whole collection year for annual reporting.

#### *March quarter 2012*

The March quarter 2012 snapshot contains data submitted to the AIHW for the January, February and March 2012 collection months, using responses received and validated as at 6 July 2012 when the snapshot was taken.

#### *March 2012 financial year-to-date*

The March 2012 fYTD snapshot contains data submitted to the AIHW for the July 2011, August 2011, September 2011, October 2011, November 2011, December 2011, January 2012, February 2012 and March 2012 collection months, using responses received and validated as at 6 July 2012 when the snapshot was taken.

### **Accessibility**

Published results from the March quarter 2012 are available in this report and elsewhere on the AIHW website.

Data not available online or in reports can be obtained from the Communications, Media and Marketing Unit on (02) 6244 1032 or via email to [info@aihw.gov.au](mailto:info@aihw.gov.au). Requests that take longer than half an hour to compile are charged for on a cost-recovery basis.

### **Interpretability**

Information on the development of the SHSC, definitions and concepts, and collection materials and processes can be found on the AIHW website, <[www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)>.

Information on definitions, concepts and classifications can also be found in the SHSC's collection manual (AIHW 2011a).

### **Relevance**

#### **Scope and coverage**

The SHSC is a key source of information for measuring the outcomes and outputs for people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, who seek specialist homelessness services.

The SHSC collects, via specialist homelessness agencies, information on people who seek and receive services from those agencies. All agencies that receive funding under the NAHA or NPAH to provide specialist homelessness services are in scope for the SHSC.

#### *March quarter 2012*

Only those specialist homelessness agencies that are identified (by state and territory departments responsible for the provision of services) as being expected to provide data for the SHSC at some time in the March quarter 2012 are covered. Some 'high volume' services that provide short-term interventions (e.g. referral, meals) may not be expected to provide data. In the March quarter 2012, 1,474 agencies were covered.

#### *March 2012 financial year-to-date*

Only those specialist homelessness agencies that are identified (by state and territory departments responsible for the provision of services) as being expected to provide data for the SHSC at some time in the March 2012 financial year to date are covered. Some 'high volume' services that provide short-term interventions (e.g. referral, meals) may not be expected to provide data. In the March 2012 financial year to date, 1,506 agencies were in coverage.

Not everyone in scope for SHSC is homeless, because specialist homelessness agencies provide services to people at risk of homelessness, as well as to people who are currently homeless.

Not all homeless people and people at risk of homelessness are in scope for the SHSC—only those who seek services from specialist homelessness agencies are in scope. In the client collection, data are collected by homelessness agency workers for each client support period. Some basic information is also collected on instances where people seek, but do not receive, assistance from a homelessness agency ('unassisted people').

### **Reference period**

SHSC data are reported to the AIHW every month and, once validated, these data are loaded to a Master Database. Snapshots of this database are created at particular points in time for reporting purposes. Snapshots are taken following the end of each quarter for quarterly reporting.

#### *March quarter 2012*

The 'March quarter 2012' data refers to data for January, February and March 2012. It covers support periods active in at least one of those months: clients who had an active support period in at least one of those months, and unassisted people who sought services in one of those months.

#### *March 2012 financial year-to-date*

The 'March 2012 financial year to date' data refers to data for July 2011 to March 2012 inclusive. It covers support periods active at any time in that period: clients who had an active support period at any time in that period, and unassisted people who sought services at any time in that period..

Information on unassisted people is not presented in this report due to issues with the quality of these data arising from inconsistent interpretation of the data concepts.

### **Geographic detail**

Data are published at the national, state/territory level and remoteness area (March 2012 fYTD only).

### **Statistical standards**

A client is defined in the SHSC as a person who receives a specialist homelessness service — assistance provided to a client aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. A client may be of any age — children are clients if they receive a service from a specialist homelessness service.

A support period is defined in the SHSC as a period of support provided by a specialist homelessness service agency to a client.

Standard Australian Classification of Countries 2008 (ABS 2008) codes were used as the code-frame for questions relating to country of birth.

Australian Classification for Source of Income 2010 (ABS 2010b) codes were used as the code-frame for questions relating to a client's source of income.

Australian Standard Geographic Classification Remoteness Structure (ABS 2012b) was used as the code-frame for information relating to services and clients by remoteness area.

## **Accuracy**

### **Potential sources of error**

As with all data collections, the SHSC estimates are subject to errors. These can arise from data coding and processing errors, inaccurate data or missing data. Reported findings are based on data reported by agency workers.

### **Data validation**

The AIHW receives data from specialist homelessness agencies every month. These data go through two processes of data validation; that is, error checking. Firstly, data validation is incorporated into the client management systems (CMSs) most agencies use to record their data. Secondly, data are submitted through the AIHW online reporting web-portal, Specialist Homelessness Online Reporting (SHOR). SHOR completes a more thorough data validation and reports (to staff of the homelessness agency) any errors that need correcting before data can be submitted.

### **Agency participation**

#### *March quarter 2012*

Ninety per cent of agencies expected to participate, returned support period data for at least one month in the March quarter 2012. This is two percentage points lower than in the December quarter 2011.

#### *March 2012 financial year-to-date*

Ninety-four per cent of covered agencies returned support period data for the March 2012 fYTD, although many did not return data for all nine months.

### **Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) validity**

An individual client may seek or receive support on more than one occasion – either from the same agency or from a different agency. Data from individual clients who presented at different agencies and/or at different times is matched based on a statistical linkage key (SLK), which allows client-level data to be created. The SLK is constructed from information about the client's date of birth, sex and an alphacode based on selected letters of their name.

If a support period record does not have a valid SLK, it cannot be linked to a client, and thus it is not included in client-level tables (although it is included in support period-level tables). In the March quarter 2012, 94% of support periods had a valid SLK – a one percentage point increase from the December quarter 2011.

### **Incomplete responses**

In many support periods, in both the March quarter 2012 and the March 2012 fYTD, valid responses were not recorded for all questions – invalid responses were recorded, 'don't know' was selected, or no response was recorded.

For example:

#### *March quarter 2012*

- 'facilities/institutions the client has been in in the last 12 months' and 'time period the client received assistance for their mental health issue' have the highest rates of invalid/'don't know'/missing response—53% each

- 'dwelling type at presentation' and the outcome variable 'dwelling type at the last service date in the reporting period' have invalid/missing/don't know response rates of 26% and 25%, respectively
- 'main reason for seeking assistance' has an invalid/missing/don't know response rate of 18%.

The rate of invalid/'don't know'/missing responses in the March quarter 2012 was similar to that in the December quarter 2011.

#### *March 2012 financial year-to-date*

- 'facilities/institutions the client has been in in the last 12 months' and 'time period the client received assistance for their mental health issue' have the highest rates of invalid/'don't know'/missing response—53% and 52%, respectively
- 'dwelling type at presentation' and the outcome variable 'dwelling type at the last service date in the reporting period' have invalid/missing/don't know response rates of 26% each
- 'main reason for seeking assistance' has an invalid/missing/don't know response rate of 16%.

Support periods with invalid/'don't know'/missing responses were retained in the collection and, due to the difficulty of doing so accurately, no attempt was made to deduce or impute the true value of invalid/'don't know'/missing responses.

Data items with very high rates of invalid/'don't know'/missing responses were not reported on in this publication.

### **Non-response bias**

Less than 100% agency participation, less than 100% SLK validity and a high rate of incomplete responses do not necessarily mean that estimates are biased. If the non-respondents are not systematically different in terms of how they would have answered the questions, then there is no bias. Given the results of analyses of agency participation, SLK validity and incomplete responses performed to date, some non-response bias is expected.

### **Non-response adjustment**

#### *March quarter 2012*

As some data are missing because of agency non-participation and SLK invalidity, non-response adjustment (or 'weighting') has been applied to create a selection of weighted estimates. Only a limited number of estimates were amenable to non-response adjustment in the March quarter 2012.

A more complete method for adjusting for missing information will be applied to annual data; the method used in the March quarter 2012 is a simplified version of that method.

Non-response adjustment in the SHSC is performed for support periods and, separately, for clients. The process used is described in Appendix A.

The process accounts only for agency non-participation and SLK invalidity—due the difficulty of doing so accurately, no adjustments are made for incomplete responses.

In the March quarter 2012, non-response adjustment was performed at the national level only. This may lead to biased estimates, because analysis has shown that agency participation and SLK validity vary with characteristics such as state/territory, age group and sex, and the non-response adjustment process does not account for this.

The non-response adjustment process used in the March quarter 2012, which designates agencies 'participating' if they returned support period data at any time during the reporting period, causes weighted estimates to be, on average, underestimates.

#### *March 2012 financial year-to-date*

Although some data are missing because of agency non-participation and SLK invalidity, non-response adjustment (or 'weighting') has not been applied to the March 2012 fYTD data. Standard non-response adjustment methodologies assume that responses and non-responses are clearly defined (i.e. that agencies that should have participated in the collection can be divided into two distinct groups—those that participated and those that did not); this assumption is badly violated in the March 2012 fYTD data, where many agencies return some support period data but do not return data for all nine months.

A more complete method for adjusting for missing information, which allows for agency part-year participation, is being developed for application to the annual data. This will lead to comparability issues, as different weighting methodologies give different estimates for the same raw data.

### **Coherence**

The SHSC replaces the SAAP NDC, which began in 1996. The SHSC differs from the SAAP NDC in many respects.

The major definitional differences between SAAP and SHSC relate to the capture of information about children and support. In the SAAP NDC, children who accompanied a parent or guardian were counted as accompanying children; in the SHSC, children are included as clients (in their own right) if they directly receive a service. In SAAP, support was considered to entail generally 1 hour or more of a worker's time; in SHSC no time-related condition exists. Further information on the comparability of SHSC and SAAP can be found in the report outlining findings from the September quarter 2011 (see Appendix A, AIHW 2012a).

### **Comparison with other collections**

The other major data sources on homelessness are:

- The ABS Census, which collects data from all persons in Australia on Census night, including data allowing respondents' homelessness status to be derived (see Chamberlain & Mackenzie 2008). The cultural definition of homelessness is used, which identifies three homelessness categories:
  - Primary homelessness includes all people without conventional accommodation.
  - Secondary homelessness includes people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another, including all people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided by specialist homelessness services; people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own; and people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis.
  - Tertiary homelessness refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium- to long-term basis (Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2008).

The cultural definition of homelessness does not define 'at risk of homelessness'.

Data are currently available for 2001 and 2006.

- The ABS General Social Survey's homelessness module (ABS 2010a), which collects data from usual residents of private dwellings, including data on whether respondents have ever been homeless. The survey defines homelessness as being without a permanent place to live for a selection of reasons. Data are currently available for 2010 only.
- The National Census of Homelessness School Students, which collects data on homeless school students via principals of all government and Catholic secondary schools (Mackenzie & Chamberlain 2008). Both the cultural definition of homelessness and a service delivery definition are used. Data are currently available for 2006 and selected prior years.

Because these collections differ greatly from SHSC in scope, collection methodology, definitions and reference periods, comparisons between collections should be made with caution.



# Counting rules and glossary

The following concepts and terms have been used in this report. More detailed descriptions of data concepts can be found in the SHSC's Collection Manual (AIHW 2011a).

**Age:** Age is calculated as age of the client on the start date of their first support period of the reporting period or the first date of the reporting period, whichever of the two is the later date.

**Accommodation length:** Accommodation length for a client is obtained by totalling the individual accommodation period lengths that occurred in any support period that was active in the reporting period. Accommodation periods active during the March reporting period that include consecutive nights which extend outside of the reporting period into the September quarter, were also included in accommodation length analysis.

**Care and protection order:** Legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments some responsibility for a child's welfare. The level of responsibility varies with the type of order or arrangement. These orders include guardianship and custody orders, third-party parental responsibility orders, supervisory orders, interim and temporary orders, and other administrative arrangements.

**Client:** A person who receives a specialist homelessness service. A client can be of any age—children are also clients if they receive a service from a specialist homelessness agency.

To be a client, the person must directly receive a service and not just be a beneficiary of a service. Children who present with a parent or guardian and receive a service are considered to be a client. This includes a service that they share with their parent or guardian such as meals or accommodation.

Children who present with a parent or guardian but do not directly receive a service are not considered to be clients. This includes situations where the parent or guardian receives assistance to prevent tenancy failure or eviction.

Clients can be counted differently according to the data item that is being reported:

- **Clients (demographic)** – For clients with multiple support periods, reported data is determined based on the information at the start date of the client's first support period in the reporting period or the first date of the reporting period, whichever is later.
- **Clients (counted by support periods)** – For each data item, clients are counted based on support periods with distinct client information. The same client can be counted more than once if they have multiple support periods with a different response for the data item. The result is that percentages do not add up to 100.
- **Clients (outcomes)** - Clients are counted based on closed support periods where a valid response is recorded both when presenting to an agency and at the end of support.

**Closed support period:** A support period that had finished on or before the end of the reporting period – 31 March 2012.

**Conditions of occupancy:** Refers to the security of a client's accommodation arrangement. Responses include:

- Leased tenure – nominated on lease
- Lease in place – not nominated on lease

- Couch surfer
- Boarder
- Living with relative fee free.

The information provided is usually analysed in conjunction with other housing information such as 'tenure type' and 'dwelling type' to determine the overall nature of a client's housing situation.

**Family spokesperson:** is the head of the *presenting unit* (see definition below). The relationships within a presenting unit are determined by each person's relationship to the presenting unit head (or family spokesperson).

For families where there are children under 18, the spokesperson is either:

- the parent/guardian representing any child, or children under 18, or
- the most direct relation to any child, or children if there is no parent/guardian present.

For families where there are no children under 18 present, the spokesperson is either:

- the spouse/partner of another person within the presenting unit, or
- related in some way to another person within the presenting unit.

**Homelessness:** A person is homeless if they are either:

- living in non-conventional accommodation or 'sleeping rough', or
- living in short-term or emergency accommodation due to lack of other options.

**Indigenous status:** In practice, it is not realistic to collect information on the community acceptance part of 'The Commonwealth Definition' and therefore standard questions on Indigenous status relate to descent and self-identification only.

Where Indigenous status is not stated, the 'not stated' figure includes clients where contradictory Indigenous status' were reported across multiple support periods as well as, missing, 'not applicable' and 'don't know' responses.

**Labour force status:** Reported data excludes clients aged under 15.

**Main source of income:** Reported data excludes clients aged under 15.

**Material aid/brokerage:** Money given to the client for bond/rent/transport etc. and other non-monetary assistance such as clothing, food, vouchers and bus/train tickets.

This assistance is not expected to be repaid.

**Mental health client:** A client is identified as having mental health issues if they have provided any of the following information:

- They have been in a psychiatric hospital or unit in the last 12 months.
- Their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a mental health services.
- They have reported 'Mental health issues' as a reason for seeking assistance.
- Their dwelling type either a week before presenting to an agency, or when presenting to an agency, was a psychiatric hospital or unit.
- At some stage during their support period, a need was identified for psychological services, psychiatric services, or mental health services.

**No tenure:** A type of housing tenure recorded for clients who are sleeping rough or do not have a legal right to occupy a dwelling and may be asked to leave at any time.

Includes couch surfing, living in an institutional setting, living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting, using cars or railway carriages, improvised dwellings or living in long grass.

**Non-conventional accommodation:** Non-conventional accommodation is defined as:

- living on the streets
- sleeping in parks
- squatting
- staying in cars or railway carriages
- living in improvised dwellings
- living in long grass.

**Ongoing support period:** A support period is considered ongoing at the end of the reporting period if each of the following conditions is met:

- no support end-date is provided
- no after-support information is provided
- corresponding client data was received in the month following the end of the reporting period.

**Presenting unit:** A client or group of clients that present together to a specialist homelessness agency and receive assistance.

When counted by presenting unit, support periods are grouped for clients who present together (if applicable) by their presenting unit identifier for each support period. Individual presenting units are not matched for each support period and may be counted more than once.

**Primary homelessness:** People without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, in parks, under bridges, in derelict buildings, improvised dwellings, etc.

**Reporting period:** For the purposes of this report there are two reporting periods:

March quarter 2012: 1 January 2012 to 31 March 2012.

March 2012 financial year-to-date (fYTD): 1 July 2011 to 31 March 2012.

This means that data in this report relates to clients supported in either of these periods. Each section will clearly indicate which reporting period is used. Data were received by the AIHW by 6 July 2012.

**Short-term or emergency accommodation:** Short-term or emergency accommodation includes:

- refuges
- crisis shelter
- couch surfing
- living temporarily with friends and relatives
- insecure accommodation on a short-term basis

- emergency accommodation arranged by a specialist homelessness agency (e.g. in hotels, motels etc.).

The following short-term accommodation options are not included:

- hotels, motels, caravan parks and other temporary accommodation used when a person is on holiday or travelling
- custodial and care arrangements, such as prisons and hospitals
- temporary accommodation used by a person while renovating usual residence or building a new residence (e.g. weekenders, caravans).

**Specialist homelessness agency:** An organisation that receives government funding to deliver specialist homelessness services. Assistance is provided to clients aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. Agencies may also receive funding from other sources.

Inclusion of agencies in the SHSC is determined by the state and territory departments responsible for administering the government response to homelessness. Not all funded agencies are required to participate in data collection.

**Specialist homelessness service(s):** Assistance provided by a specialist homelessness agency to a client aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness.

The specialist homelessness services that are in scope for this collection and that may be provided during a support period are:

*Housing/accommodation services:*

- short-term or emergency accommodation
- medium-term/transitional housing
- long-term housing
- assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction
- assistance to prevent foreclosures or for mortgage arrears.

*General assistance and support:*

- assertive outreach
- assistance to obtain/maintain government allowance
- employment assistance
- training assistance
- educational assistance
- financial information
- material aid/brokerage
- assistance for incest/sexual
- assistance for domestic/family violence
- family/relationship assistance
- assistance for trauma
- assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems
- living skills/personal development
- legal information

- court support
- advice/information
- retrieval/storage/removal of personal belongings
- advocacy/liaison on behalf of client
- school liaison
- child care
- structured play/skills development
- child contact and residence arrangements
- meals
- laundry/shower facilities
- recreation
- transport
- other basic assistance.

*Specialised services:*

- child protection services
- parenting skills education
- child-specific specialist counselling services
- psychological services
- psychiatric services
- mental health services
- pregnancy assistance
- family planning support
- physical disability services
- intellectual disability services
- health/medical services
- professional legal services
- financial advice and counselling
- counselling for problem gambling
- drug/alcohol counselling
- specialist counselling services
- interpreter services
- assistance with immigration services
- culturally specific services
- assistance to connect culturally
- other specialised services.

**Support period:** The period of time a client receives services from an agency is referred to as a support period. A support period starts on the day the client first receives a service from an agency.

A support period ends when:

- the relationship between the client and the agency ends
- the client has reached their maximum amount of support the agency can offer
- a client has not received any services from the agency for a whole calendar month
- and there is no ongoing relationship.

Where a client has an appointment with the agency which is more than a calendar month in the future then it is not necessary to close the support period. This is because it is expected that there is an ongoing relationship with the client.

The end of the support period is the day the client last received services from an agency.

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Each year many Australians experience homelessness or find themselves in circumstances of risk of becoming homeless. This report presents the third quarterly results of the new Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. This collection replaces the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program National Data Collection which collected data on homelessness service provision by Australian governments since 1996.