

Measuring the Impact of SAAP-funded Homelessness Services on Client Self-reliance

SAAP is a joint Australian Government/State/Territory initiative

Measuring the Impact of SAAP-funded Homelessness Services on Client Self-reliance

Final Report

Report for the SAAP National Coordination and Development Committee,
commissioned through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs

Social Policy Research Centre
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Abbreviations and Glossary

AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CAD	SAAP National Coordination and Development Committee
FaHCSIA	Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
NDCA	National Data Collection Agency
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
UNSW	University of New South Wales



Executive Summary

Research aims and methods

This study involved designing and carrying out a client survey to measure whether and to what extent receiving SAAP services facilitates positive changes in client self-reliance, and to examine what forms this improvement takes for different groups of clients.

The study consisted of the following:

- ▶ a review of literature on self-reliance and on tools for measuring it in the context of homelessness;
- ▶ consultations with stakeholders, including State SAAP representatives, service providers, peak homelessness organisations and client reference groups;
- ▶ a national survey of SAAP clients recruited through services; and
- ▶ a set of follow-up, qualitative client case studies.

The survey sample focused on clients who had been known to the service for at least four weeks and had been receiving case management. The survey instrument was developed in consultation with stakeholders and was piloted with clients in two SAAP services in Sydney.

There were 630 respondents from across all the States and Territories, recruited through 75 SAAP-funded services. The sample was broadly representative of the service-user population, bearing in mind that it excluded those with only a brief engagement with services.

The final sample size was 16 per cent smaller than originally intended, partly because the recruitment criteria of receiving case management and being known to the service for more than a few weeks meant that some services did not see sufficient clients during the recruitment period. However, the sample turned out to be large enough for detailed analysis, and included sufficient numbers of important sub-groups, such as Indigenous clients and those from CALD backgrounds.

Survey findings

Periods of homelessness

For many respondents, particularly women escaping domestic violence, the current period of homelessness was the first they had ever experienced. However, almost two-thirds of all respondents had been homeless on more than one occasion, and nearly 10 per cent had experiences of homelessness lasting more than 20 years.

Periods of help

For a significant minority of respondents, SAAP support is not simply crisis intervention but a long-term engagement. More than one-quarter reported getting help for between one and five years. A further six per cent overall (10 per cent of men) reported getting help for five years or more.

Reasons for seeking help

The most common reasons were relationship breakdown, domestic violence, abuse and other relational pressures (particularly for female clients). Money problems, eviction or other loss of accommodation, alcohol or drugs, and mental health problems, were also important factors.

Client views of self-reliance

One of the key findings was that self-reliance was a core value shared by SAAP clients. While the most common prerequisite for 'getting back on one's feet' was accommodation, respondents frequently mentioned resuming some measure of personal control over their lives. Getting a job, having sufficient money and feeling safe were also important, along with children's wellbeing.

Barriers to self-reliance

Chief among these were the practical problems of lack of money and accommodation. Also frequently mentioned were: relational problems with other people; lack of employment; drug and alcohol problems; depression, stress and other health factors; lack of support; and what clients' saw as their own negative attitudes.

Progress towards self-reliance

More than two-thirds of respondents said they had moved beyond the halfway point on a 10-point scale of progress, and more than one-third felt they were at point 8 or beyond. Only five per cent said they had made no progress at all. Women reported somewhat better progress than men. The most important factor influencing self-rated outcomes appeared to be the length of time the client had been receiving help from the service.

Nearly three-quarters felt that aspects across all the life domains were either a lot or a little better than before coming to the service. Just over one-quarter felt they were about the same and only a few felt they were worse.

Accommodation was the area where SAAP services had the most impact, not surprisingly. Nearly 90 per cent said that access to accommodation had improved, and the changes in housing tenure reported before and after receiving assistance showed a significant movement away from insecure forms of dwelling towards secure and affordable housing in public and community housing.

Other areas of life where positive effects were identified were those in the 'coping' domain, relating to belief in clients' own ability to get back on one's feet, and to feelings of safety and security. SAAP services seem to be having a strongly positive effect on clients' feelings of safety and personal self-confidence. Improved care of and relationships with children also scored highly.

SAAP services appear to be more limited in helping clients find work. They do help some clients access training and education, and act as an important link to income support through Centrelink. This is particularly crucial for women escaping domestic violence, who need an independent source of income.

In terms of gender differences, women seemed to do somewhat better than men, especially at getting paid work and in accessing emotional support or counselling.

There were few differences in service experience by age group, except that the youngest and oldest age groups reported slightly less improvement in getting accommodation than the 25–50 year olds.

What sort of help?

A number of respondents expressed heartfelt gratitude for the help they had received. ‘Accommodation’ was the most frequently mentioned category (as might be expected). Other forms of help included food and basic necessities, indicating levels of poverty in Australia that go beyond the merely relative.

Who else has helped?

Although almost one-quarter reported no other sources of help, 43 per cent mentioned family or friends and nearly half mentioned other services or workers. Clearly, homelessness does not always mean social isolation.

What help is still needed?

Nearly three-fifths thought they would still need help with housing in the future, and almost 55 per cent also mentioned needing further help with ‘coping’, including dealing with stress. Nearly half thought they would need further support maintaining income and employment, and substantial numbers thought they would still need help with relationships and dealing with other organisations like Centrelink.

Employment

Since coming to the SAAP service for help there was a marginal decrease in employment among respondents and a slight increase in unemployment. Most of those who were previously unemployed remained unemployed, but around one-quarter of those looking for work had moved into work, volunteering or study. Five per cent had been in full-time work before they came to the service, but only one-quarter remained in work at the time of the survey. This may be because homelessness was either directly connected with job loss or made it hard for them to retain work. There was also some movement from home duties into study, part-time work and volunteering, indicating that many women who had left home following domestic violence now had to support themselves alone.

Income

There was little change in income sources, but there was an increase in the percentage on Centrelink payments, mainly from those reporting they had previously had no income or income only from family/partners or friends. In many cases these were women who had left violent partners and had to find their own income. This suggests respondents who were starting on the path of financial independence and access to associated services aimed at increasing their job opportunities. This is consistent with the goals of promoting self-reliance.

Case studies

Most of the clients interviewed for the case studies were women for whom domestic violence was a significant factor in bringing them to a SAAP service. Hence they did not fully represent the SAAP clientele as a whole. Nevertheless, the case studies provide useful illustrations of the forms of assistance services provide, and of the impact that it has on recipients.

All were currently receiving income support, but most were engaged in some form of education or training. All were still in regular contact with the program staff and receiving some form of ongoing counselling or personal support.

For most of these participants, self-reliance meant learning how not to be dependent on another significant person, usually their parents and/or partner.

The majority were still receiving subsidised rental housing, and the idea of no longer relying on the program, either through subsidised housing and/or ongoing counselling, was not something they looked forward to with confidence. Some expressed concern about how they would cope when they were no longer receiving SAAP support, especially when it came to finding their own accommodation and employment, and in managing financially.

Lessons from the research

The study provided a positive picture of the extent to which clients felt they had moved towards self-reliance after getting help from SAAP services. Nevertheless, many were still living in temporary accommodation and saw themselves as continuing to need support in the future in a wide range of areas. The factor identified as the strongest positive influence on outcomes was the length of time clients had been getting help from the service. Services may need to put long-term resources into client support to achieve good outcomes, and part of what services provide is the opportunity to recover from difficult circumstances. In this sense, continuing service receipt is not a sign of dependence, but rather a necessary part of the journey towards eventual self-reliance – at least for some clients.

The survey instrument had some methodological limitations, but proved overall to be an effective way of collecting valuable information on client progress towards self-reliance. Some elements would need to be amended if it were to be used in further research, but the core elements could be replicated for a regular data gathering exercise amongst services. The findings of the study were based only on client self-assessment, however. This is an important element of outcome measurement, but it could be complemented with other forms of measurement, including individual assessment by case managers or other service staff, and achievements against personal client goals.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The hidden and transient nature of much homelessness in a country like Australia makes it difficult to be precise about its extent or to be sure whether it is increasing or declining over time. One estimate, generally acknowledged to be authoritative, uses a broad definition including people in highly insecure housing as well as those literally ‘roofless’, and has put the number of people (including children) homeless at the time of the 2001 Census at around 100,000 (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 2003). Updated estimates based on the 2006 Census are not yet available.

The population of homeless people is made up of individuals and families with widely diverse characteristics and circumstances, such as young people who have left parental homes or State care, women and children escaping domestic violence, and older, single men who are long-term homeless for reasons including marital breakdown. Many have problems in addition to or contributing to their lack of secure housing. A recent estimate puts the proportion of homelessness service users with mental health problems at around 12 per cent and those with substance abuse problems at 19 per cent (AIHW, 2007). Of course, by no means all homeless people are users of services – it is generally acknowledged that the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) only deals with a minority of all those who become homeless at some stage in their lives, and on any one night in Australia a large number of homeless people approaching services are unable to access them because of a shortage of beds or other resources (AIHW, 2004: 61; AIHW, 2006a: 62; Thompson, 2007).

Also any causality that might exist between homelessness and mental health or substance use problems is not necessarily uni-directional. Some recent research in Melbourne by Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald (2007) has indicated that mental health problems are often brought on by the experience of homelessness rather than necessarily being a precursor to it. Nevertheless, the difficulties that some people who become homeless face mean that a wide range of supports are needed in addition to secure housing in order to avoid repeated episodes of homelessness.

1.2 The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

SAAP is the main national service response to homelessness in Australia. Established in 1985, SAAP is cost-shared and jointly managed by the Commonwealth, States and Territories. Together they fund services provided by more than 1300 agencies, including non-governmental, community-based and local government organisations, throughout Australia (AIHW, 2006b). SAAP services typically provide crisis and medium- or longer-term accommodation, and/or case management support. While the focus of services varies across States and Territories, case management has become an increasingly important element of the SAAP service package as a whole in recent years, in recognition of the wider needs of clients. Generally speaking, however, SAAP-funded services are not themselves in the business of providing

secure, long-term accommodation, though they may be able to help some clients access this. The main stated aim of SAAP is to ‘provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services to help homeless people achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence’ (AIHW, 2006b:1).

1.3 Project aims

Achieving ‘self-reliance’ is a key aim of SAAP then, but what do we mean by it in the context of homelessness, and how do we know whether SAAP services are successfully helping clients to achieve it? The SAAP V Multilateral Agreement sees self-reliance in terms of connections with family and social and economic supports and networks (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005: 42). However, SAAP administrative data include only a limited amount of information on client outcomes and do not specifically address many of the wider facets of self-reliance posited in this definition.

SAAP has previously commissioned developmental work on measuring client outcomes and on the concept of self-reliance (Browton, 2000; Kunnen et al., 2004; Kunnen and Martin, 2004), and the current study was designed to build on this work and to take it further. The SAAP V Multilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth, States and Territories includes a program of evaluation with a strong focus on outcomes. Under this initiative, the SPRC was commissioned by the SAAP National Coordination and Development Committee (CAD), through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), to design and implement a client survey to measure how far receiving SAAP services facilitates positive change in client self-reliance, and to examine what forms this improvement takes for different client groups. This research is aimed to complement other work on outcome measures being developed by SAAP.

1.4 Methods

The main element of the study was a self-completion survey of a sample of 630 clients recruited through a representative national sample of SAAP services. The design and content of the survey were informed by:

- A review of the literature on self-reliance and homelessness, and on outcomes tools developed to measure self-reliance;
- Consultations with SAAP policy makers, SAAP services, peak homelessness organisations, and reference groups of clients or ex-clients, in Sydney and Melbourne;
- Collection from SAAP services of other agency-developed survey instruments or tools developed to assess client outcomes; and
- Piloting of the draft survey instrument with clients of three SAAP agencies in Sydney.

The final stage of the research involved developing a set of illustrative case studies of SAAP service clients and ex-clients in the Sydney region. These were based on in-depth interviews with clients demonstrating various forms of progress in achieving self-reliance as a result of receiving SAAP services.

The methodology is discussed further in the next two sections of the report.

1.5 Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the concept of self-reliance as applied to homeless people and the methodological challenges resulting from it. Section 3 describes in more detail the conduct of the research and the methods used. Section 4 describes the achieved sample for the survey and compares the characteristics of respondents with those of SAAP clients as a whole, noting to what extent our sample can be seen as representative. Section 5 presents the results of the survey, looking at client trajectories into and out of homelessness; their experiences with and reasons for accessing SAAP services; factors that helped and hindered the development of self-reliance; the relationship between self-reliance and SAAP services, with specific reference to the ways in which, and the extent to which, the services helped the clients ‘get back on their feet’; and other sources of support that assisted the clients. Section 6 presents the case studies, describing the experiences of clients who have accessed SAAP services. This qualitative exploration complements the quantitative research findings by illuminating further the experiences of self-reliance uncovered in the survey.

Section 7, the conclusion of the study, draws together the results of the survey and case studies. It summarises and discusses the key findings about self-reliance in the context of SAAP services, and their implications for different client groups and service types. This final section also reflects on the methodological lessons for future work in this area.



2 Understanding 'self-reliance' in the context of homelessness

As noted above, the SAAP V Multilateral Agreement describes self-reliance for homelessness service users as a concept with many facets, including access to long-term independent accommodation, restored or improved family links, greater social inclusion, improved financial security and a degree of self-sufficiency (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005). This understanding is grounded in previous research for SAAP conceptualising and testing measures of client outcomes and self-reliance (Browton, 2001; Baulderstone and Talbot, 2004; Kunnen and Martin, 2004; Kunnen, Lee and Martin, 2004).

Kunnen and Martin carried out a series of in-depth interviews with clients of SAAP services aimed at identifying the key elements of self-reliance for them. They concluded that a working definition of self-reliance could be expressed as '*getting back on one's feet*', in terms of achieving individual goals, changing life direction and restoring it to something akin to that previously experienced. Noting that people's routes to re-establishing their lives were likely to vary considerably, depending on their particular circumstances, the researchers described self-reliance as an individually-determined pathway that comprises a number of different dimensions and components.

These included affect – or subjective emotional experience – expressed in terms of goals, confidence, beliefs, acceptance of assistance and resilience; a sense of control and security, involving personal safety and stability; knowledge, in terms of life skills, problem-solving ability, and access to resources and supports; behaviour, in areas of assuming responsibility, coping and substance use; status, including resolution of structural barriers to independence, access to and adequacy of services and supports; connectedness and capacity, in terms of dealing with relationship issues; and stability, in terms of connecting with support and wider social networks. They also emphasised that pathways to recovery were often likely to be discontinuous and context-driven, and that clients needed to be able to define for themselves the aspects of self-reliance that were relevant for them.

While Kunnen and Martin recommended against the use of a quantitative survey instrument as a tool for assessing self-reliance, on the grounds that this was unlikely to be able to capture the varying experiences of clients and the non-linear nature of much progress towards self-reliance, this earlier work on understanding of what self-reliance might mean for homeless people was nevertheless extremely important in informing the methodological design of this study. However, finding a way to gauge the impact that SAAP services might have on clients' capacity to get back on their feet still brought significant conceptual and practical challenges.

The rest of this section discusses these challenges and how the study has attempted to meet them.

2.1 Limitations of an individualist perspective on homelessness

The first difficulty is that the concept of self-reliance derives primarily from a psychological perspective which tends to see it a personal attribute of the individual (Lane, 2001; Marušić et al., 1995). Some of the difficulties people face in trying to escape homelessness are clearly connected with individual psychopathology or behaviour, yet to focus on individual characteristics risks neglecting the wider socioeconomic and political factors that underpin homelessness in a modern wealthy economy. Both the underlying causes of homelessness and the constraints on people's ability to escape it are often external and material, related to the lack of affordable housing options, to poverty or unemployment, and to social inequalities, rather than to personal inadequacies (AHNRC, 2001; Wilkinson, 2005). It would also be inappropriate to attribute the major precursors of homelessness such as domestic violence, family breakdown or child abuse to personal shortcomings of homeless people themselves. Thus any attempt to measure self-reliance on the part of people using homelessness services has to take account not only of personal attributes or behaviour, but also both the material constraints on the individual and the limits to what services are capable of providing, given that most cannot offer long-term, secure housing or jobs.

2.2 Client diversity

Secondly, the literature exploring the concept of self-reliance in the context of homelessness is clear in rejecting a *one-size-fits-all* approach (Kunnen and Martin, 2004). Participants in our consultation groups also pointed out that moving towards self-reliance is a journey that clients start at quite different points and within widely varying constraints. For some, simply engaging in dialogue with service staff about their difficulties is an achievement in itself, whereas for others the focus of change may be on learning practical skills of household management or sustaining a tenancy. Research on women's transitions out of homelessness has also identified factors that are particularly important for women, but which are not always recognised when homeless people are considered as a homogeneous population (Adkins et al., 2003). An instrument to measure change thus needs the breadth and flexibility to pick up on this wide range of possible achievements.

2.3 Self-reliance and independence

A further conceptual difficulty is that self-reliance is often conflated with the idea of *independence* – which in social policy terms is commonly interpreted to mean being free of reliance on welfare or other public services. There is a commonsense notion about welfare services that the ideal is to wean people off needing them. In this context, however, the fact that a client no longer uses a SAAP service may not in itself be a good measure of self-reliance, especially if they have not been able to access alternative resources. Moreover, there are very few people, regardless of their circumstances, that live lives fully independent of others (Harré, 1979). Nor is such independence necessarily a desirable social goal (Cox, 1995; Smith, 2001; Johnson, Headey and Jensen, 2005). The dimensions of self-reliance identified for

SAAP clients involve both *connectedness and relationships with other people and knowledge about and access to appropriate services and other forms of support*.

2.4 Self-reliance and resilience

Another conceptual issue concerns the relationship with *resilience* – again a term often linked with self-reliance (Wagnild and Young; 1993; Chao, 2000; Bartley, 2006). While resilience might be understood as the ability to cope in times of crisis (Browton, 2001), it too is often linked to a sense of connectedness (Fuller, McGraw and Goodyear, 2002). However, for an individual who is homeless, both resilience and self-reliance can also be features of isolation and alienation. These qualities may actually have developed in response to limited support from others, rather than as a capacity gained by establishing connections with others. This can particularly be the case among young homeless people, who often survive by becoming 'street smart' or over-reliant on their own resources to such an extent as to be anomic and isolating (Rew *et al.*, 2001). Again this needs to be borne in mind when considering indicators to express self-reliance.

2.5 Measuring small changes

A further problem – partly conceptual and partly methodological – lies in the capacity of different kinds of research instruments to measure change in individuals where levels of change may only be slight. Because of the multiple and complex difficulties facing homeless people, what may appear to be very small changes can, for some, still be highly significant (Browton, 2000; Kunnen and Martin, 2004). As the agencies we consulted pointed out, just being able to access a community service, for example, could indicate a significant increase in personal confidence or an associated decrease in social anxiety, even though it might not on the surface appear to be contributing to increased self-reliance in a larger sense.

For this reason some of the agencies taking part in the consultations (and others involved in the study) argued that a thorough understanding of the relationship between SAAP services and self-reliance requires a range of methods well beyond those available to us in this particular study. In particular, it was argued that we need longitudinal methods that incorporate the perspectives of a range of stakeholders (including clients, service providers and family members) and use in-depth or scaled measures of achievement against individual goals. This is similar to what was proposed by Kunnen and Martin (2004) in their earlier work on self-reliance. However, such a methodology was beyond the scope of the present project and the resources available. For this study, designing a one-off, cross-sectional survey needed to be able identify elements of change that service users themselves could appreciate and recognise as relevant to their circumstances and personal histories. We therefore determined that, wherever possible, the clients themselves should complete the survey questionnaire, as opposed to the SAAP service providers who worked with them. Thus the question of small changes became one of self-perception on the part of service users themselves. It was up to them to consider whether a change in a particular domain had been significant or not.

2.6 Establishing causal links between client change and service use

Another difficulty arises in trying to establish direct causal links between any detected changes in client behaviour, situation or perception and the services they have received through SAAP. While the survey attempts to focus on the relationship with recent service support, many other factors may contribute to the development of self-reliance in any one individual. These may include personal attributes (such as motivation), family or friendship networks, broader socio-cultural factors and other service use. The survey collects data on demographic and social circumstances, and on service use, but, as is suggested above, any increase in self-reliance is likely to be multifactorial, with influences that are hard to disentangle. This poses a particular problem in relation to homelessness services, since SAAP funding represents only part of the financial resources of many of them, especially the larger, multi-service agencies. Nevertheless, our study makes a concerted attempt to identify the interacting factors promoting (or militating against) self-reliance and it is careful to identify as far as possible the particular role of SAAP services.

2.7 Which clients might be expected to develop self-reliance?

One last question that arose in the design of the study was whom to include in the survey sample. Given the need to link change in self-reliance with SAAP service provision, after how long a period of engagement with a service might we realistically expect to observe change in an individual client? Most SAAP support periods, as recorded in administrative data, are very short – often less than one week – even though many clients return for further assistance (AIHW, 2006b). Does it really make sense to expect a client to demonstrate change in a wide range of life domains simply through accessing crisis accommodation for a few nights? On the other hand, if the focus is only on longer-term recipients of support, does the study risk missing out on the experiences of the majority?

This was one of the key questions put to the consultative bodies and there were many different views. After much deliberation it was decided to include clients who were known to a SAAP service for at least four weeks, either continuously or intermittently, *and* had received case-management support. This eligibility threshold was seen to have the potential to include the largest proportion of clients who might be expected to perceive significant changes in self-reliance. However, it needs to be recognised that this does exclude many clients of short-term crisis accommodation, unless they are regular users of the same service. In practice this decision also turned out to be one of the factors that limited the responses from services, as many did not see sufficient clients meeting this criterion during the prescribed data collection period. This is discussed further below in the section on methodology.

3 Methodology

3.1 Ethics approval

Prior to commencement of the study, approval for the project was received from the UNSW Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (approval number HREC 06170).

3.2 Survey design

In order to inform the design of a survey instrument suitable for examining self-reliance among clients of SAAP services, the researchers undertook an extensive review of existing self-reliance measures, both nationally and internationally. This included systematic searches for validated and non-validated psychometric tools using academic databases, such as the Mental Measurements Yearbook, PsycINFO and the Social Sciences Index, as well as databases of non-published literature using the GrayLIT Network. Further to this, through networking and generic Internet searches, the researchers contacted government and non-government organisations that have examined the viability of measuring self-reliance, independence and/or resilience in client groups. These search efforts suggested that there were in fact very few tools already in existence that were relevant to or suitable for this task.

Those that were most relevant were those developed in earlier research specifically for SAAP, as discussed above (Browton, 2001; Baulderstone and Talbot, 2004; Kunnen and Martin, 2004; Kunnen, Lee and Martin, 2004). The researchers drew on this work and the facets of self-reliance outlined in the SAAPV Multilateral Agreement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005).

To ensure thoroughness, the researchers also contacted all SAAP services in Australia, requesting information about any internal surveys used to gauge client change. While a number of services had devised tools for this purpose (and passed them on to the researchers), most were found to be too limited in scope. They were also designed for completion by service providers rather than by clients, and they did not explicitly focus on the concept of self-reliance.

In spite of the conceptual and methodological complexities outlined in the previous section, it was imperative that the questionnaire itself be short, clear and simple – a tool that would encourage participation by clients and services alike. SAAP services are typically over-worked and under-resourced, with staff members having only limited time to contribute to the study. Moreover, a significant proportion of clients are likely to have only limited literacy skills (Buhrich, Hodder and Teesson, 2003). Thus in order to secure cooperation from services the survey had to be simply worded and laid out in a way that clients found easy to understand and follow with only limited assistance.

3.3 Stakeholder consultations

Having completed an initial draft design for a survey instrument, the researchers undertook consultations with key stakeholders to discuss the instrument and the study more generally. This was important, not just to get comments on the draft

questionnaire, but also to build support for the study as a whole in order to maximise service participation in the research.

The purpose of the consultations was three-fold:

- to inform the homelessness sector about the study;
- to invite the participation of key stakeholders in the study; and
- to invite detailed comment on the survey instrument, in order to ensure its practicality, the appropriateness of its content and layout for the diverse client groups, and its ability to meet the overarching aim and objective of the project.

The study was publicised through the SAAP Newsletter and the researchers subsequently emailed all SAAP services to inform them about the study, to let them know that some would be chosen to participate in the survey, and to canvass ideas and experiences of any similar attempts to assess client outcomes. A number of services replied expressing interest in the study and offering comments, ideas and examples of tools used in their services.

Two consultation meetings were held, one in Sydney and one in Melbourne. These involved representatives of SAAP State departments, peak homelessness organisations, and SAAP services. Comments were sought by phone and email from a number of organisations whose representatives were unable to attend the meetings. Subsequently one housing service and one peak homelessness body, both in Melbourne, also offered to circulate the draft questionnaire to their consultative client reference groups for comment.

Collectively, those consulted were generally supportive of the project; they recognised the need to develop a standardised yet practical way to gauge client development within SAAP services. Using their knowledge of SAAP services and clients, they offered constructive views on the scope of the survey; the appropriateness of individual survey items; the phrasing of items; survey layout; and the practicalities of survey administration through the agencies. Modifications to the draft survey were made accordingly.

However, stakeholders also raised a number of concerns about the study.

- There was a view from some service-provider and advocacy groups that the research was driven by the Commonwealth Government's need to have a simple quantitative answer to what is a highly complex question. There was concern that this might produce data that did not reflect the realities but which could be used by the Commonwealth in ways that might adversely affect services.
- Related to this was a view that self-reliance was a 'program logic' concept that had little to do with the reality of people's lives and service delivery; in particular, it failed to recognise the differences between people which arise from their varied histories of homelessness and the consequent paths they may take out of homelessness.

- ▶ It was argued that SAAP should not be seen primarily as a housing program but rather as a support program. Most clients are not in a position to become fully self-reliant through SAAP inputs alone, given the limitations of available funding. Thus a failure to achieve full self-reliance outcomes should not be seen as a sign of system failure.
- ▶ It was argued that a key determinant of self-reliance is income through employment, but SAAP can only have a limited impact on client employability. The focus therefore needed to be on the ‘building blocks’ of support through case management that helps people on their way to self-reliance.
- ▶ In this context, stakeholders argued that it was important to recognise that very small changes in behaviour can be crucial. Thus engagement with services is in itself often an important step on the road to greater self-reliance.
- ▶ There was a view that determining on a national scale how far individual clients improved their circumstances as a result of SAAP support required a larger and more detailed study, with a longitudinal focus.
- ▶ There was also concern about the differences in service approaches (e.g. ‘housing first’, or a focus on case management and ongoing support) and how these might influence people’s responses to the survey.

We return to discussion of these issues in the analysis of survey data and the concluding chapter of the report.

3.4 Survey piloting

Following the stakeholder consultations, the modified survey was piloted with four groups of SAAP clients – single men, young people (through two SAAP services in Sydney), and the two client reference groups in Melbourne. While attempts were made to include women with children in the pilot phase, this turned out not to be possible within the timeframe. To ensure that issues specific to this client group were taken into account, the survey instrument was reviewed by a peak non-governmental women’s agency, and comments were incorporated accordingly. Details of the pilot phase of the project are provided below.

Single men

The survey was first piloted in a large, metropolitan SAAP service located in Sydney, NSW. The service supports men with alcohol and other drug problems, aged 18 years and over, by providing safe, overnight accommodation, food, clothing and showering facilities, as well as specialised staff who facilitate rehabilitation.

Seven clients who visited the service during one evening were invited to complete the survey and to participate in a confidential interview with one of the researchers. The purpose of the interview was to understand their experiences with and views on the questionnaire survey, with specific reference to its scope, ease of completion, perceptions of the relevance of survey items to the concept of self-reliance, and whether any items caused distress.

Six clients completed the survey independently, while one required assistance because of a visual impairment. As there were only two staff members at the service and they were occupied with meal duties, one of the researchers assisted this client.

Overall, the clients found the survey to be simple and straightforward. It did not seem cluttered, the text was not too small, and the length of the survey was seen as acceptable. A few clients indicated that some individual survey items were lengthy, particularly where there was a long list of possible responses. However, this became less of a problem when they realised that many of the response options were not applicable to them.

All of the clients stated that the questions were simply worded and self-explanatory, and clarification about a survey item was sought only once. This suggests that the clients were able to understand the questionnaire and the attached instructions, including one respondent who later reported that he did not attend school beyond Year Seven. Reflecting on the skill levels of other friends and acquaintances who accessed SAAP services, several clients thought that they too would experience little difficulty in completing the survey.

Most of the clients were comfortable with answering all the survey items. Some advised that other surveys they had completed had requested far more personal information – so this one was relatively innocuous. However, one client spoke of feeling uncomfortable with questions that related to children and chose not to answer these. This was, he said, because he had been denied contact with his own two children.

One client suggested that the reasons clients present to a homelessness service are often complex and not as direct as suggested by the survey. Another was dubious about the suitability of such a survey for short-term services. He expressed some cynicism about the capacity of such services to facilitate self-reliance among clients when the service opens at 5.30 pm and clients are required to leave by 7.00 am the following day.

Survey response times ranged from five to 25 minutes, with an average of approximately 15 minutes. The clients saw this as acceptable, particularly those who had completed other surveys that sometimes took much longer.

Young people

The second pilot of the survey was conducted in a SAAP service providing short and medium-term accommodation for young people in Sydney. For reasons of client privacy and confidentiality, the service providers themselves preferred to pilot the survey with clients and to provide feedback to the researchers. Four young clients of the service, three of whom were young women, were invited to complete the survey and discuss their experiences with one of the service providers.

According to the service providers, the young clients generally considered the survey to be lengthy. One client only completed half of the survey for this reason.

Notwithstanding this shortcoming, there were no identified problems with the content of the survey or sensitivity around particular questions. However, it should be noted that most of the clients apparently completed the survey with some support from staff.

Staff from the pilot agencies were also positive about the questionnaire; one manager for example, suggested that it was the most appropriate instrument of its kind that he had seen developed for the clients with whom he worked. An examination of the completed surveys confirmed that the clients appeared to have no major problems with the format or logic of the individual items. Consequently, there were no significant revisions to the questionnaire at this stage.

Client reference groups

Following the stakeholder consultation in Melbourne, representatives from one peak homelessness organisation and one SAAP service offered to discuss the survey with their respective client reference groups. These groups are comprised of current and former SAAP clients and meet regularly to inform policy development and service provision in the homelessness sector.

Both reference groups provided constructive comments on the survey. Their overall responses were overwhelmingly positive and they were interested in the themes explored within the survey, viewing it as a useful opportunity for personal reflection about their own achievements. Collectively, they advised that there were no serious problems with the format of the survey, the language or the comprehensibility of its items. All but one member of the first group completed the survey unaided, while the remaining member required assistance because of limited literacy skills. Members took between 10 and 25 minutes to complete the survey, which they all saw as acceptable.

Members of the second reference group identified a number of ways to improve the survey, particularly for clients with limited literacy skills or limited confidence. Suggestions included rewording specific items; reconsidering the array of response options available; rearranging survey items that appeared thematically similar; and improving the aesthetics of the survey. Such feedback underlines the importance of participatory research practices that give key stakeholders the opportunity to inform the study and to maximise the value of the research.

3.5 Survey content

The questionnaire was amended to take account of the piloting and reference group comments described above, and the final version included items about the following areas (see Appendix A for full questionnaire).

- ▶ homelessness histories and circumstances prior to accessing the SAAP service;
- ▶ reasons for accessing the service;
- ▶ understandings of the meaning of self-reliance;

- ▶ factors and support systems that facilitate or hinder ‘getting back on your feet’;
- ▶ changes in self-reliance since accessing the SAAP service, with reference to:
 - accommodation
 - income and employment
 - self-care
 - relationships
 - contact with community and government organisations
 - wellbeing
 - mobility
 - care of children living with them
 - literacy among those whose first language is not English
- ▶ other sources of support;
- ▶ forms of support still needed;
- ▶ housing, employment and income status before approaching the SAAP services and now; and
- ▶ client demographics.

3.6 Selecting the survey samples

Sampling framework

Because there was no direct way to contact homeless SAAP service users other than through the service agencies, it was decided to operate a two-stage sampling method, whereby the researchers would first select a sample of services and then invite those services to recruit clients for the survey.

FaHCSIA supplied the SPRC with a database of funded SAAP services, containing location and contact information, main service-types, primary and secondary client-types, and the most recently recorded annual number of completed service episodes or ‘support periods’ (as a proxy for service ‘size’). Agencies funded as peak bodies, new services only recently established, and those providing only telephone advice and support, were excluded as they were not regarded as relevant to the study. From this adjusted total of just under 1200 agencies, we drew a random sample pool of 200 services.

The selected services were provided with detailed information about the study and invited to participate. They were also advised that the final sample of services selected would be smaller, so that not all who were invited to participate would be included. A total of 113 services initially agreed in principle to participate, and from these a smaller sample of 65 services was chosen, based on a random sampling stratified by State/Territory jurisdiction, service-delivery model, primary client target-group, and agency size (as indicated by the number of support periods between 2004 and 2005). Some minor adjustments were then made to the sample to ensure a range of metropolitan, regional and rural locations, and a good representation of Indigenous-specific services.

Criteria for client selection

There was considerable discussion at the planning stage, and in the consultation meetings, about what criteria services should use for client recruitment. SAAP administrative data show that around 80 per cent of clients have only one support period in a financial year, but the present method of data collection is not able to fully capture support periods crossing years. Nor is there much known about repeat periods of service use in later years. While most clients have short support periods, much of the resources of SAAP services go into working with those with longer periods of support. As discussed above, the concept of building self-reliance through service support really only makes sense when applied to those with more than a passing use of services. Thus there was general agreement that the focus should be on this group. It was finally determined that clients would be eligible to participate in the study if they had been known to the service for a minimum of four weeks, either continuously or intermittently, and had received case-management support from the service during this period.

3.7 Survey administration

To facilitate data collection, each participating service was asked to nominate a staff member whose role it was to liaise with the researchers and collect data. These individuals were provided with a training module comprised of supporting documentation and additional telephone support.

The documentation outlined the client-screening criteria; the procedures to be followed during and after each administration of the survey; issues of confidentiality and privacy; quality control processes; reimbursements for participating services and clients; and contact details for the researchers and the Ethics Secretariat. The module was disseminated to the services, accompanied by survey materials and pencils, promotional material about the project, and a reply-paid, self-addressed envelope in which to return completed questionnaires. Participating clients were offered \$10 vouchers as compensation for their time and contribution, while the services themselves were offered an administrative payment of \$100–\$200, depending on their quota of clients.

The initial aim was to recruit 750 clients through the 65 services. This figure was identified as sufficient to accommodate some potential attrition without jeopardising the sample size. The number to be recruited from each service was contingent on its size. ‘Small’ services (defined in terms of fewer than 100 support periods recorded in the database) were asked to recruit a maximum of 10 clients; services of medium size (100 to 500 support periods) were asked to recruit a maximum of 15 clients; and large services (more than 500 support periods) were asked to recruit a maximum of 20 clients.

The recruitment phase of the study was planned to occur during a specified two-week period from early February 2007. However, in light of recruitment difficulties (and the subsequent need to increase the initial sample), this was not possible. Some of the nominated staff members advised that current client numbers were relatively small, and they were unlikely to meet the suggested quota. This was a particular

problem over the post-Christmas holiday season. As it turned out, the eligibility criteria also placed some restrictions on the ability of services to recruit the required numbers of clients, and from the questionnaires returned it also appeared that a few had been recruited who did not fully meet the criteria. Services not returning questionnaires within the prescribed period were contacted with reminders by email and telephone.

A further problem that emerged during the recruitment phase was that, in some cases, the recorded support periods supplied to the SPRC by the SAAP database did not correspond to the actual volume of clients and service-use. As well, there were a few services that reported having a different primary client-group or service-type from that recorded in the database; and a number of the contact details were incorrect or out of date.

Given the difficulties some agencies experienced in recruiting eligible clients, a decision was taken to increase the service sample to 95 (subsequently amended to 94 because of a duplication), again ensuring that the sample was representative of services nationally. The survey was closed off in early May 2007, with 75 services having participated and provided completed questionnaires for a total of 630 clients. While this was fewer than initially anticipated, it still provided a sample large enough for detailed analysis and one that appears to be broadly representative of SAAP clients as a whole (as shown in Section 4).

3.8 Limitations of the survey

There are inevitably some limitations involved in a survey of this kind. First, as a number of stakeholders have argued, one-off quantitative surveys are not necessarily the best method for capturing the complexities of the changes occurring in the lives of a highly diverse population of homeless people, especially when such changes are non-linear or discontinuous. Ideally, longitudinal follow-up of clients over time, using individual tools of goal attainment, might provide a richer and more complete picture of outcomes achieved through service use. However, the resources necessary to mount such a study on a national and representative level would be considerable and were not available for this particular study. That does not mean that the results of this one-off exercise could not be used to inform a future, more comprehensive study.

Another limitation is that reliance on SAAP services to recruit survey participants risks the possibility of selection bias in the sample. We have no evidence that this happened in the present study, although it does appear that a small number of participants may not have met in full the eligibility criteria prescribed.

As well, the use of a self-completion questionnaire risks excluding clients with limited literacy skills, although the pilot suggested this was rarely a problem and staff were encouraged to offer assistance to clients who needed it. The returns suggested that most of those participating understood most of the questions (though some problems arose from the layout of one set of questions), but we have no way of knowing to what extent different clients received more or less help from service staff, or whether clients with greater literacy or cognition difficulties may have chosen not to take part.

One other aspect of a self-completion questionnaire that might be seen as a limitation is that it relies on subjective self-perception by clients in their assessments of the extent to which they have progressed towards getting back on their feet, rather than being based on some 'objective' measure of achievement. However, while some corroborative view of achievement from case managers or other service staff might have been useful, it is our view that clients' own assessment of their progress, or the lack of it, still provides an important measure of the impact of SAAP service use.

Bearing in mind all these limitations, we are confident overall that the results provide a valid picture of how a broadly representative group of homeless people across Australia view the progress they have achieved in getting back on their feet as a result of receiving services under the SAAP program.

3.9 Case studies

The final element of the research was the assembly of the illustrative case studies, based on in-depth interviews with clients and ex-clients whom SAAP services identified in their view as having made significant progress towards getting back on their feet after being homeless. The purpose of these was to explore in a more qualitative way issues which arose in the survey and to seek clients' own more detailed explanations of how support from services had contributed to their increased self-reliance, what aspects of their lives had changed and how they saw their futures.

The clients were recruited through SAAP agencies that had taken part in the client survey and were based in the Sydney and Blue Mountains regions.

The topic guide for the in-depth interviews is presented as Appendix B to this report.



4 Characteristics of the SAAP services and clients participating in the survey

4.1 The services sample

The 75 SAAP services participating in the survey represented a response rate of just under 80 per cent of all those invited to take part (94). All States and Territories were represented in the sample, as were all six primary client target-groups, as well as services that were small, medium and large in size (according to recorded support periods).

Table 4.1 below compares the service sample with the population of SAAP services as a whole in 2005–06, based on the SAAP National Data Collection and the database of service information provided to the researchers by FaHCSIA. This shows that the sample was largely representative of SAAP services across Australia, except for (as noted earlier) the small number of services funded as peak bodies, newly starting services and those that provided only telephone support.

Jurisdictionally, the sample contained a small under-representation of services in Victoria, and slight over-representations of those in NSW and Queensland, in comparison with the whole population of services. In terms of primary client groups, our sample had slightly fewer services catering for single men and for families, and somewhat more services for women with children. In terms of service type, the sample closely mirrored the overall distribution, except that there was a slight under-representation of services providing emergency and short-term accommodation. This is not surprising given the decision to focus on clients with an involvement of four weeks or more. The size criterion was a construct of the research and, as stated above, seems not always to have been accurate, but the sample did broadly reflect the relative distribution of support periods across the services as a whole.

4.2 The SAAP client sample

In total, 630 SAAP clients participated in the survey. This represents approximately 0.4 per cent of the population of SAAP clients (AIHW, 2006b). Because clients were recruited by the services according to specified criteria rather than through a direct random sampling process, we would not expect the sample to be fully representative of the SAAP clientele. Nevertheless, the known characteristics of the sample were broadly in line with those of the client population. In some cases, survey respondents did not answer all the questions. In the tables below, cases of non-response to one or other of the relevant variables are counted as ‘missing’ and excluded from the percentage totals, but reported in each table.

Table 4.2 compares the sample by sex and age group with the whole SAAP population. Our sample included fewer men proportionately than the population as a whole (35 per cent compared with 40 per cent), and both men and women in the sample were somewhat over-represented in the 15–24-year-old age bracket, and under-represented in the youngest (<15) and oldest (65 and over) groups. Men in our sample were also slightly over-represented in the 45–54 years bracket. Comparison of the mean and median ages of the sample with those for the whole population, however, shows that the sample was only marginally younger overall.

Table 4.1: Comparison of SPRC service sample with national data on SAAP services (2005–06)

	SPRC services sample %	NDCA 05–06 Data %
<i>Jurisdiction</i>		
ACT	2.7	3.8
NSW	30.7	29.8
NT	1.3	2.8
QLD	20.0	15.6
SA	9.3	6.2
TAS	4.0	2.7
VIC	22.7	29.3
WA	9.8	9.8
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Primary target group</i>		
1: Independent, above the school leaving age and unaccompanied by parent/guardian	38.7	36.0
2: Males without partner or children	5.3	7.0
3: Females without partner or children	4.0	3.6
4: Families	6.7	9.2
5: Females with children	26.7	22.8
6: More than one group	18.7	21.4
Total	100.0	100.0
		SAAP database of services %
<i>Service delivery model</i>		
1: Crisis or short-term accommodation (<3 months)	41.3	37.6
2: Medium (3–6 months) to long-term accommodation (>6 months)	38.7	37.9
3: Support only on a walk-in basis	1.3	1.4
4: Support provided in a setting other than the SAAP service	5.3	4.4
5: Telephone support	0.0	1.0
6: Peak body	0.0	0.3
7: More than one model	12.0	13.5
8: Unspecified	1.3	4.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Size</i>		
Small (<100 support periods)	58.7	59.3
Medium (100–500 support periods)	32.0	29.8
Large (>500 support periods)	5.3	4.1
New services	0.0	2.8
Unspecified	4.0	4.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Sources: SPRC survey sample (n=75); AIHW (2006b); SAAP services database supplied by FaHCSIA (N=1187)

Table 4.2: Comparison of client sample with whole SAAP population, by age and sex

Age	SAAP Client Sample %			NDCA Data (05–06) %		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<15yrs	0.0	1.0	0.7	1.8	2.1	1.9
15–24	35.5	38.0	37.1	30.7	35.5	34.6
25–34	19.2	27.8	24.8	24.6	28.2	26.7
35–44	23.4	22.3	22.6	22.6	21.3	21.8
45–54	16.4	8.0	10.9	12.5	8.5	10.2
55–64	4.2	1.5	2.4	5.3	3.0	4.0
65 or over	1.4	1.5	1.5	2.6	1.6	2.0
Total	35.9	64.1	100.0	40.0	59.9	100.0
Mean age (yrs)	33.0	29.8	30.9	33.4	30.8	31.8
Median age (yrs)	32.0	28.0	29.0	32.0	29.0	30.0
N	617					
Missing	13					

Sources: SPRC SAAP client survey; AIHW (2006b)

Comparisons by country of birth, and by Indigenous self-identification, show some differences (Table 4.3). Our sample included a higher proportion of women than men born outside Australia; and of those born outside Australia, women were more likely than men to come from non-English speaking countries. In the sample, 14 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women reported that they usually spoke a language other than English at home. While our sample included a reasonable representation of Indigenous clients, the overall proportion was somewhat smaller than in the SAAP population as a whole (14.3 per cent compared with 17.5 per cent).

Table 4.3: Comparison of client sample with whole SAAP population, by sex, country of birth and Indigeneity

Country of birth	SAAP Client Sample %			NDCA Data (05–06) %		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Australia	84.5	79.8	81.4	86.8	84.7	85.6
Another English-speaking country	10.2	5.8	7.1	5.1	4.2	4.5
A non-English speaking country	4.7	15.0	11.5	8.0	11.0	9.9
<i>Self-identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander</i>	7.9	17.5	14.2	11.6	20.7	17.1
N	620					
Missing	10					

Sources: SPRC SAAP client survey; AIHW (2006b)

For the majority of survey participants (52 per cent) the highest level of education achieved was some secondary schooling (Table 4.4). Fourteen per cent had achieved a TAFE qualification and, perhaps surprisingly, five per cent had achieved a university degree.

More than two-thirds of the sample overall (and 74 per cent of the men) described themselves as single at the time they came to the SAAP service. Twenty-six per cent overall were separated or divorced (29 per cent of the women). Three-fifths came to the service alone and a further 28 per cent (mainly but not exclusively women) came on their own with their children. Men were much more likely to come alone (87 per cent). Only a small percentage came either with partners (four per cent) with partners and children (two per cent) or with another family member, such as a parent or sibling (six per cent). Overwhelmingly, therefore, the SAAP service, experience was one that people in the sample encountered on their own or as a single parent.

In total, just under 30 per cent of clients arrived at the SAAP service accompanied by children; most of these were women (96 per cent).

Table 4.4: Educational, marital and family status of SAAP client sample

	Male %	Female %	Total %
<i>Educational status (highest level achieved)</i>			
Primary school	3.3	2.2	2.6
Some secondary school	55.7	50.2	52.1
Completed secondary school	14.1	21.3	19.0
Trade certificate/apprenticeship or similar	6.7	5.7	6.0
TAFE qualification	15.7	13.7	14.4
University degree	3.7	6.2	5.4
No schooling	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Marital status</i>			
Single	73.7	61.7	65.8
Separated/divorced	19.2	29.1	25.7
Married/partnered	5.2	7.5	6.7
Widowed	1.9	1.8	1.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Family status when arrived at service</i>			
Alone	87.4	45.7	60.2
With partner	4.7	3.7	4.0
With children (on own)	2.8	40.7	27.5
With partner and children	0.9	2.7	2.1
With another family member	4.1	7.1	6.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N			612
Missing or multiple responses			18

Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

One question asked in the survey was ‘If you have any children or young people living with you now, how old are they?’ Those who stated that they had at least one child or young person living with them ‘now’ comprised 42.5 per cent of the sample, a much larger proportion than those reporting that they had children with them when they arrived at the service. One explanation for this is that, in the accommodation they had at the time of the survey, they were able to be reunited with children who were not with them when they presented to the service. Just under 40 per cent of those answering this question had only one child, but there were also a small number of large families, including one with eight children. Just under eight per cent of those reporting that they were living with children were men.

The ages of the children of the sample clients appeared broadly to reflect the population of children accompanying SAAP clients across Australia (AIHW, 2006b), as Table 4.5 shows, except that the sample had a higher proportion of children in the youngest age group (in line with its slightly younger profile overall). It also included a few young people aged 18 or over, who would not be counted as children by the standard SAAP definition.

Table 4.5: Comparison of accompanying children in SAAP client sample with those in the SAAP population, by age group

	Children accompanying SAAP client sample	Accompanying children in whole SAAP population
	%	%
Age (yrs)		
0–4	49.9	44.0
5–9	24.7	29.2
10–14	16.8	20.7
15–17	7.0	6.1
18 or above	1.6	NA
Total	100	100
Mean	6.8	6.2
Median	6.0	5.0

Sources: SPRC SAAP client survey; AIHW (2006b)

4.3 Summary

Although the recruitment of a client survey sample through the SAAP services proved to be difficult and time-consuming, the eventual results suggest that the method was effective. Differences in age and sex profile, country of birth, Indigeneity and the ages of children need to be borne in mind in interpreting the survey results, but overall the achieved sample fairly closely represented the SAAP clientele nationally, and provides a good information base for examining client experiences of homelessness and SAAP service use.

The next Section reports the main findings of the survey.



5 Results of the client survey

5.1 Homelessness histories

One factor likely to influence the extent to which service use can hope to boost clients' self-reliance is how long someone has been homeless, when in their lives periods of homelessness began, and how often such periods have recurred. The longer and more frequent homelessness has been, the more entrenched the difficulties are likely to be, and the harder it will be for services to help people regain control over their lives and their situations.

People's histories of homelessness are complex, not least because of the lack of a settled definition of homelessness that everyone would share. They are also subject to difficulties of recall. The survey attempted to address the topic with several questions. First was an open-ended question 'When was the first time in your life you did not have a settled and secure place to live?' and respondents were invited to write in an answer either as a date or as a measure of time elapsed (e.g. 1995, three years ago, last month, etc.). Table 5.1 presents the answers to this question, where the individual answers have been grouped into time periods, broken down by age and sex. Perhaps reflecting the difficulty this question presented for clients themselves, there was a relatively high non-response rate of around 12 per cent (including a few non-responses to age and sex questions).

Around 79 per cent of the sample had experienced homelessness, either continuously or intermittently, for at least a year, and close to half (49 per cent) had first become homeless more than five years before. For eight per cent (45 individuals) the experience of homelessness went back more than 20 years and for some this meant most or all of their lives. Some examples of the responses from this group are given below.

I have never had stable accommodation

I have never felt safe and secure

Never – I went to 17 schools

All my life

Since birth

Since the age of five

Since I was a little kid

As long as I can remember

In childhood ... there was domestic violence and incest in my home

For at least one person, homelessness was intergenerational: a 27 year old man said 'parents, grandparents'. The 'other' responses did not give specific time spans, but some implied extended periods of homelessness, such as 'long time', 'many years off and on' and 'too long'.

Table 5.1: ‘When was the first time in your life you did not have a settled and secure place to live?’, by age and sex

Time since first homeless	Age (years)							Total
	<15	15–24	25–34	35–44 %	45–54	55–64	65 or over	
<i>Male</i>								
<1 month	0	7.6	2.5	0	0	0	0	3.1
>1–6 months	0	7.6	5.0	2.2	10.7	12.5	0	6.3
>6–12 months	0	9.1	0	2.2	3.6	0	0	4.2
>1–5 years	0	51.5	7.5	28.9	3.6	0	0	27.0
>5–10 years	0	16.7	22.5	24.4	28.6	25.0	0	24.3
>10–20 years	0	4.5	45.0	24.4	28.6	20.0	100.0	23.3
>20 years	0	1.5	7.5	15.6	14.3	12.5	0	8.5
Other/NA	0	0	5.0	2.2	0	0	0	3.2
N	0	66	40	45	28	8	2	189
<i>Female</i>								
<1 month	33.3	2.1	1.0	0	0	0	16.7	1.7
>1–6 months	33.3	7.1	7.9	9.0	7.1	0	16.7	8.0
>6–12 months	33.3	7.9	11.9	11.5	7.1	20.0	16.7	10.2
>1–5 years	0	46.4	19.8	28.2	28.6	20.0	33.3	32.7
>5–10 years	0	20.7	21.8	17.9	25.0	40.0	16.7	20.8
>10–20 years	0	8.6	24.8	19.2	7.1	0	0	15.0
>20 years	0	1.4	9.9	10.3	25.0	20.0	0	7.8
Other/NA	0	5.7	3.0	3.9	1.3	0	0	2.2
N	3	140	101	78	28	5	6	361
Total N								550
Missing	3	206	141	123	56	13	8	80

Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

Looking at the age and sex breakdown, we can see that nearly three-quarters of the young men aged 15–24 and more than three-quarters of the women in this age group first experienced homelessness more than one year ago. For 10 per cent of the women aged 15–24, homelessness began more than 10 years ago. While the numbers in the older age groups were small, it is also striking to note that more than two-fifths (42.5 per cent) of the men aged 45–54 first became homeless more than 10 years ago, as did close to one-third (32.1 per cent) of the women of this age.

The second question asked to explore homelessness histories concerned the frequency with which people had been homeless (Table 5.2). Overall, just under 14 per cent said that they had always had secure housing previously and that the episode of homelessness that brought them to this service was the first time they had experienced homelessness. Nearly 16 per cent said that they had been homeless once before, but nearly two-thirds (65.1 per cent) said that this had happened a few times or often. A chi-square test indicates a probability at the five per cent level that the differences between men and women were significant, in that the latter were more likely to have had secure housing previously and were less likely to have been homeless often.

This may reflect the fact that women often become homeless as a result of domestic violence, without having previously experienced housing problems.

Table 5.2: ‘Before you came to this service for help, how many times in your life did you not have a settled and secure place to live?’, by sex

How many times?	Male %	Female %	Total %
Once	14.2	16.5	15.7
A few times	41.5	43.1	42.6
Often	29.2	19.0	22.5
I always had a secure place to live	9.0	16.2	13.7
Don't know	6.1	5.2	5.5
Total	100	100	100
N	212	401	613
Missing			17

$\chi^2 = 12.6, p < 0.05$

Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

The third question asked as a way of establishing a picture of people's homelessness histories concerned the length of time they had been getting help from the SAAP service of which they were presently a client (Table 5.3).

Because the criteria for recruitment of clients for the survey included involvement with the service for at least four weeks and participation in case management, we would expect to see longer periods of engagement with services in this sample than would be the average for the SAAP clientele as a whole. Nevertheless, the lengths of time involved with the service are remarkable. More than one-quarter (26 per cent) reported getting help from the service for between one and five years, and a further six per cent for more than five years. Men were somewhat more likely than women to have long periods of involvement with the service, with more than one-third (34 per cent) of young men aged 15–24 getting help for one to five years, compared with 23 per cent of young women. However, there was no statistically significant difference between men and women in the lengths of service use.

One other point of note is that although crisis and short-term accommodation services generally provide accommodation for no more than three months at a time, close to two-thirds of clients recruited from this type of service said they had been receiving help from the service for more than three months. While this could partly be a matter of recall, it may also indicate the pressure that some services are under not to move people on if there is no other secure accommodation available for them.

Table 5.3: ‘How long have you been getting help from this service?’, by age and sex

How long?	Age (years) %			Total
	Under 25	25–50	51 or older	
<i>Male</i>				
Up to 1 month	10.4	4.5	0	6.1
>1–3 months	22.4	18.9	15.0	19.7
>3–6 months	11.9	18.9	20.0	16.7
>6–12 months	17.9	20.7	20.0	19.7
>1–5 years	34.3	23.4	30.0	27.8
>5 years	3.0	13.5	15.0	10.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	67	111	20	198
<i>Female</i>				
Up to 1 month	12.5	8.8	13.3	10.4
>1–3 months	23.6	19.6	6.7	20.7
>3–6 months	15.3	19.2	13.3	17.4
>6–12 months	21.5	23.4	33.3	23.1
>1–5 years	22.9	26.2	20.0	24.7
>5 years	4.2	2.8	13.3	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	144	214	15	373
Total N				571
Missing				59

Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

The final way of gauging the intensity of involvement with homelessness services is presented in Table 5.4 below, which reports on the number of times people recalled getting help from similar services previously. Despite the lengths of time some people had been homeless and the frequency of homeless episodes, more than two-fifths reported that this was the first time they had got help from any homelessness agency. This is perhaps not surprising given that we know that only a minority of homeless people end up getting help from SAAP services (despite the fact that SAAP is the nation’s primary response to homelessness).¹ The differences for men and women were statistically significant at the one per cent level, with nearly half the women reporting that this was their first use of a service like this, compared with one-third of the men, and correspondingly more men reporting frequent previous use of services.

¹ http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-saap_nav.htm.

Table 5.4: ‘How many time have you got help from services like this before?’, by sex

How often	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
	%	%	%
Never	34.0	49.4	44.0
Once	14.4	18.4	17.0
A few times	37.2	24.6	29.0
Often	10.7	5.2	7.1
Don't know	3.7	2.5	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N			618
Missing			12
$X^2 = 23.3, p < 0.01$			

Source: SPRC client survey

These facets of homelessness experience and service use will come in to play again later when we present analysis of the data on the outcomes achieved in different life domains. We now move on to discuss the reasons clients gave for coming to the SAAP service for help. Again these will provide context for the analysis of reported progress achieved.

5.2 Reasons for seeking help from the SAAP service

Respondents were asked to tick up to four boxes in a list of possible reasons that brought them to the service for help, or to write in another if they felt reasons important for them were not covered in the list provided. In practice 43 respondents (nearly seven per cent) ticked more than four boxes (with a few ticking most or all boxes), and 67 (11 per cent) wrote in another reason.

Table 5.5 presents the list of reasons ticked, or written in, for the whole sample in order of the total frequency with which they were ticked. Respondents were not asked to prioritise the reasons, so the number of times a reason appeared as a first or second reason would partly just reflect the order in which the items were placed in the questionnaire. The list includes the main ‘other’ responses that clients wrote in, which are indicated by being italicised.

Table 5.5: Main reasons clients reported coming to this service for help, in order of total frequency, by sex (numbers)

Reasons	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
I needed to escape domestic violence	21	183	204
My relationship broke down	49	119	168
I was being abused	14	127	141
I needed time out	47	87	134
I was having money problems	65	64	129
I was told to leave	44	76	120
I was moving around	53	58	111
I was taking drugs/drinking too much	58	44	102
I had mental health problems	37	32	69
I recently arrived in the area	30	33	65
I was evicted	27	36	63
My emergency accommodation period ended	26	29	55
My child(ren) was/were being abused	5	45	50
I had trouble with the law/police	20	17	37
<i>'Homelessness'</i>	6	15	21
I had just left hospital	10	9	19
I was losing money by gambling	12	6	18
I had just left gaol	12	3	16
<i>Previous accommodation unsuitable/unavailable</i>	4	10	14
<i>Violent situations other than domestic violence</i>	5	7	12
<i>Because of what this service had to offer</i>	2	10	12
I had recently left State care	4	7	11
<i>Ill-health</i>	2	3	5
<i>Referred to this service</i>	1	1	2
N			613
Missing			17

Source: SPRC client survey

It is evident that relationship breakdown, violence and abuse constituted easily the most common reasons for people approaching SAAP services for help. To some extent, of course, this simply reflects the nature of services available, since women's domestic violence refuges represent a substantial proportion of all SAAP-funded provision. There is likely to be some overlap between the domestic violence and the abuse items, and the 'time out' item would also include pressure arising from relationship difficulties, either with partners, parents or other family members. The next most frequently mentioned reasons included money problems, being 'told to leave' accommodation (which, if counted together with more formal eviction processes, the generalised 'homelessness' category and 'accommodation unavailable or unsuitable' would rise close to the top of the list), moving around – or already being in unsettled accommodation – problem substance use and mental health problems.

Money problems included, in one case, having had a mental breakdown resulting in the loss of a business, while other instances of violence included fights in boarding houses, harassment from neighbours, disputes with flatmates, problems with drug-using housemates, and in one case having to escape from an abusive cult. Unsuitable or unavailable accommodation included severe overcrowding, substandard housing, rented houses being sold by landlords, and house fires.

Looking at the differences for men and women, it is important to note that, because the sample included nearly twice as many women as men, it is misleading simply to compare the numbers in the two columns above. Even so, it is clear that domestic violence, abuse and relationship breakdown were the predominant factors associated with seeking help to a much greater extent for women than for men. For men there was a much wider spread of reasons reported, with issues such as substance abuse and money problems proportionately more common than for women.

Analysis by age group shows that a majority of the males reporting needing to escape domestic violence were in the 15–19 year old age group, suggesting that the violence they were escaping may have been in the parental home (or possibly from house sharers). For both sexes, the ‘time out’ reason was also concentrated in the younger age groups, suggesting that homelessness was often a result of young people leaving conflict or pressures in the parental home.

A similar pattern of reasons was given by respondents identifying as Indigenous, though the order was somewhat different. Domestic violence was again top, with 38 mentions, followed in this case by ‘needing time out’ (28), relationship breakdown (26), abuse (20), money problems (17), being told to leave and moving around (both 16), substance use (13), child abuse (8), being evicted and being new in the area (both 7), loss of emergency accommodation (6), ‘homelessness’ and legal problems (both 5), and mental health problems (3).

Having established a picture of respondents’ histories of homelessness and the reasons that brought them to the SAAP service for help, we now move on to consider what meaning the respondents gave to ‘self-reliance’ in the context of these needs, and what they saw as the barriers to their attaining it.

5.3 What does self-reliance mean to SAAP clients?

The survey was entitled ‘*Getting Back On Your Feet*’, following the earlier exploratory work by Kunnen and Martin (2004), and we posed the question about self-reliance in these terms, as an open-ended question.

There were a huge number of responses (approximately 1255 in total) and we grouped the answers into a series of broad categories where it appeared that respondents were getting at the same point in different words, as shown in Table 5.6 below.

The largest single category, amounting to around one-fifth of all responses to this question, related, not surprisingly, to accommodation. People said that what they needed in order to get back on their feet was safe, secure and affordable housing – ‘having a home’, ‘a roof over our heads’, ‘a stable place to live’, ‘getting a secure place for me and my children’, ‘my own place’.

The next largest category, just over 10 per cent, consisted of references to ‘self-reliance’ and its synonyms: independence, self-sufficiency, reliability, coping, being self-supporting/strong/responsible/in control, taking control, being organised, managing one’s own life, thinking clearly, solving problems, coming to terms with mistakes – ‘everything going smoothly’, ‘getting issues sorted out’, ‘overcoming troubles’ – not dependent on social security/services, not needing help. While not too much weight should be placed on this – it is after all partly just a restatement of the question and an artifact of the survey itself (i.e. – people were told this was a survey about ‘self-reliance’) – nonetheless, a considerable number of people (nearly 21 per cent of the sample) were sufficiently concerned with the issue not only to highlight it in their responses to this question, but also to re-express the same idea in many different ways.

Other frequently cited issues included children’s wellbeing; having employment; ‘moving forward’; having money; safety and stability; interdependence; and ‘returning to the way things were’. People also mentioned pride, contentment and happiness; getting away from fear; being themselves again; getting their freedom back; making new friends; and making a new start in life.

Table 5.6: ‘What does getting back on your feet mean to you?’ (number and percentages of responses in grouped categories)

	Frequency	%
Getting accommodation	267	21.3
Self-reliance & its synonyms	131	10.4
Children’s wellbeing	110	8.8
Having a job	88	7.0
Moving forward	87	6.9
Having money	84	6.7
Safety	78	6.2
Stability	65	5.2
Interdependence	47	3.8
‘Returning to the way things were’	44	3.5
Positive attitudes	41	3.3
Security	32	2.6
Happiness	31	2.5
Education	30	2.4
Good relationship with family	20	1.6
‘means a lot to me’	17	1.4
Staying sober, drug-free	16	1.3
Good health	15	1.2
Mental health	9	0.7
Staying out of trouble with the law/police	4	0.3
Miscellaneous	39	3.1
Total	1255	100
N	609	
Missing	21	

Source: SPRC client survey

Four-fifths of all responses fell into the top 10 categories and these are broken down by sex in Table 5.7 below. The percentages have been recalculated to sum to 100 within this sub-group of main responses.

Table 5.7: ‘What does getting back on your feet mean to you?’ (Top 10 categories by sex)

	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
	%	%	
Getting accommodation	30.4	25.1	26.7
Self-reliance & its synonyms	11.2	13.9	13.1
Children’s well-being	5.6	13.2	10.9
Having a job	13.5	6.8	8.9
Moving forward	11.9	7.4	8.8
Having money	8.6	8.4	8.5
Safety	2.6	10.1	7.9
Stability	6.9	6.4	6.5
Interdependence	5.6	4.3	4.7
‘Returning to the way things were’	3.6	4.3	4.4
Total	100	100	100

Source: SPRC client survey

Although the relative frequency of each of the different grouped responses was similar for men and women overall, there were a few distinct differences. Women were more than twice as likely to highlight their children’s wellbeing as a key element of getting back on their feet – not surprisingly given that clients with children are predominantly women – and nearly four times as likely as men to mention safety. Again this reflects the fact that domestic violence is one of the main reasons that women seek help from SAAP services, but it also underlines women’s sense of vulnerability when experiencing homelessness. Men were slightly more likely than women to highlight getting accommodation as the key element in getting back on their feet, and twice as likely to mention getting a job.

In many ways the survey responses support the concept of self-reliance developed by Kunnen and Martin (2004) through their qualitative research and that adopted by SAAP in its Multilateral Agreement. It is encouraging to find that there is a degree of consensus on the topic.

We then asked respondents to write in what they saw as the barriers for them to getting back on their feet (Table 5.8). Again we have grouped responses into broad categories.

Table 5.8: ‘What makes it difficult to get back on your feet?’ (grouped response frequencies)

	Number of responses	%
Lack of money	205	18.2
No accommodation	145	12.9
Problems with other people	121	10.7
No employment	60	5.3
Drug and alcohol problems	50	4.4
Depression/stress etc.	47	4.2
Lack of support	45	4.0
Problems with private rental accommodation	42	3.7
Own negative attitudes	34	3.0
Disability/ill-health	33	2.9
Problems with children	32	2.8
Difficulties with services/Government agencies	27	2.4
Mental health issues	27	2.4
Domestic violence	25	2.2
Immigration problems	22	2.0
Too young to get tenancies	20	1.8
Difficulties with transport	18	1.6
Debts	17	1.5
Trouble with the law	15	1.3
‘The past’	14	1.2
Unskilled/not enough education	11	1.0
Other violence	9	0.8
Problems with the Family Law Court	5	0.4
Being a single parent	4	0.4
Lack of information	3	0.3
Lack of identification (ID)	2	0.2
Miscellaneous	64	5.7
No response	31	2.7
Total	1128	100
N	609	
Missing	21	

Source: SPRC client survey

The largest single category of difficulty mentioned was a lack of or too little money (just over 18 per cent of responses),² although having enough money (or a job) was not given a high priority among those factors necessary for getting back on one's feet. The next most common barriers were 'no accommodation' (13 per cent), which is somewhat tautologous in the context of a survey of homelessness, followed by 'problems with other people' (11 per cent), including relationship problems with partners and with parents, and lack of employment (five per cent).

5.4 SAAP service use and progress towards achieving self-reliance

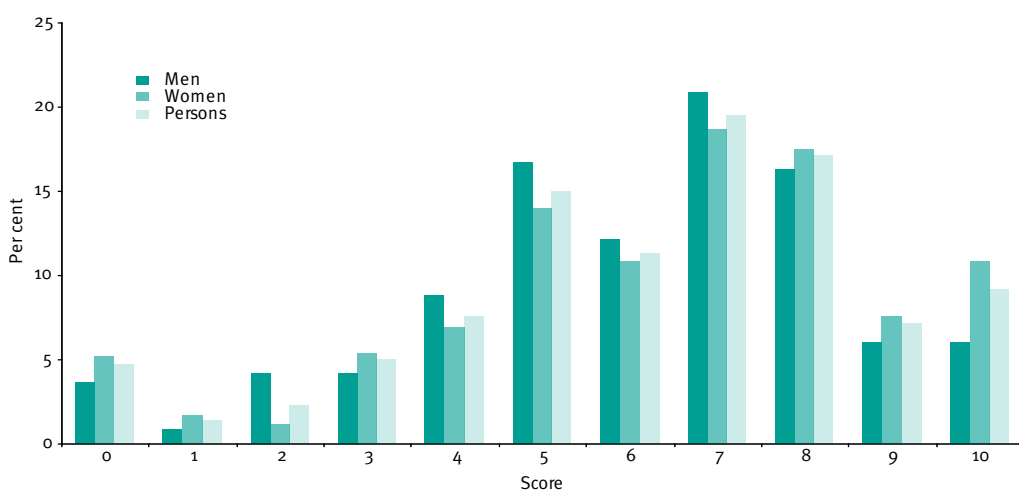
As a way of initially approaching the idea of progress towards self-reliance, we began with a summary question, asking respondents to mark on a line how far they felt they had moved towards getting back on their feet since coming to the service.

Q. Thinking about how things were for you just before you came to this service, how far do you feel you have now moved towards getting back on your feet? Please mark on the line below where you feel you are now.

How things were before	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Back on my feet
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Figure 5.1 below shows the distribution of respondents' assessment of their movements along this continuum, by sex. A small proportion chose to indicate that they were still at the same point as before they began getting help, so we have included zero in the scale. Around five per cent of the sample did not respond to this question: it is possible that some of these respondents also felt things had not improved for them.

Figure 5.1: Percentage distribution of clients' self-assessed scores for movement towards 'getting back on their feet', by sex



Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

² Usually, the response was simply 'money', but it is unlikely that respondents were having difficulties because they had enough money, or too much.

Overall, more than two-thirds (67 per cent) felt they had moved at least beyond the halfway point towards getting back on their feet, and more than one-third felt they were at point 8 or beyond. Only a small number (just under five per cent) put themselves still where they were before they came to the service for help, but just over nine per cent put themselves right at the positive end of the continuum. Women were slightly more likely than men to place themselves at the positive end. While it is possible that there is a tendency for people to be over-optimistic in response to such a question, the responses nevertheless seem encouraging.

As an initial attempt to discern further bi-variate relationships between progress towards self-reliance and client characteristics and circumstances, the mean scores were then broken down by key demographic and circumstantial variables, including the responses to earlier questions on client histories of homelessness (Table 5.9).

Overall, there was relatively little variation according to these different factors, but certain ones appeared to stand out. As a whole, women seem to have done a little better than men, for example, while Indigenous clients seem to have done somewhat worse than non-Indigenous clients. Older clients and those born outside Australia seem to have done somewhat better than younger clients and those born in Australia. Perhaps one of the most interesting findings is that while there is no linear relationship between the length of time that respondents had been homeless and their perceptions of how far they had moved towards self-reliance, there does seem to be a link between movement towards self-reliance and length of time receiving help from the service. The implication is that achieving results takes time and that services need to be able to offer engagement with clients over a significant period to have a perceptible effect.

Table 5.9: ‘How far have you moved towards getting back on your feet?’, mean scores, by client characteristics and circumstances

	Mean score	Standard deviation
All	6.25	2.50
<i>Sex</i>		
Men	6.05	2.57
Women	6.22	2.35
<i>Age group</i>		
Under 25	6.26	2.44
25–50	6.15	2.51
51 or over	6.85	2.55
<i>Indigenous?</i>		
Yes	5.89	2.85
No	6.28	2.45
<i>Country of birth</i>		
Australia	6.19	2.50
Another English-speaking country	6.39	2.33
A non-English speaking country	6.44	2.58

	Mean score	Standard deviation
<i>Highest education level</i>		
Primary school	5.19	3.17
Some secondary school	6.18	2.50
Completed secondary school	6.56	2.47
Trade certificate/apprenticeship or similar	6.03	2.35
TAFE qualification	6.31	2.36
University degree	6.24	2.65
No schooling	8.33	2.89
<i>Family status when came to service</i>		
Alone	6.18	2.40
With partner	6.68	1.82
With children (on own)	6.27	2.71
With partner and children	5.85	3.39
With another family member	6.79	2.30
<i>Time since first homeless</i>		
<1 month	4.27	2.20
>1–6 months	5.90	2.59
>6–12 months	6.56	2.37
>1–5 years	6.32	2.49
>5–10 years	6.30	2.50
>10–20 years	6.65	2.15
>20 years	6.31	2.47
<i>How long getting help from this service</i>		
Up to 1 month	5.30	2.52
>1–3 months	5.53	2.16
>3–6 months	6.40	2.23
>6–12 months	6.70	2.32
>1–5 years	6.88	2.57
>5 years	6.68	2.63
<i>State</i>		
NSW	6.40	2.52
Vic	6.21	2.62
Qld	6.00	2.71
ACT	7.05	2.01
Tas	6.50	2.25
SA	5.86	2.27
NT	7.00	0.71
WA	5.56	2.71
<i>SAAP service type</i>		
Crisis or short-term accommodation	6.16	2.73
Medium to long-term accommodation	6.17	2.15
Day support	5.10	3.21
Outreach support	6.52	1.89
Multiple	6.36	2.11
Other	6.17	2.14
N = 562–630, Missing = 0–68		

Source: SPRC client survey

These, however, are all individual bi-variate relationships and, as was emphasised earlier, self-reliance is a multifactorial concept in itself and is also likely to be influenced by all the diverse factors of client circumstances. To explore this further we therefore used a linear regression model to test the multivariate relationships between the characteristics and circumstances of clients, and their self-rated scores. The regression estimates the extent to which each individual factor influences the score levels, holding the other factors constant.

Table 5.10 presents the results of the regression. The adjusted R Square is quite high, indicating that around 70 per cent of the variation in scores can be explained by the combination of the independent variables listed. Differences in the effectiveness of assistance provided by SAAP services are likely to partly explain the rest, along with unobservable characteristics of clients, such as personality or their inclination to mark themselves high or low on scores. The B statistic shows the size of the effect of each independent variable on the movement towards self-reliance scores, relative to the reference value for the particular variable. The reference value is usually the largest group or in some other way a main point of comparison. Only a small number of variables were statistically significant in the model. As in the bi-variate analysis, these were mostly related to the length of time clients had been receiving help from the service, or, to a lesser extent, respondents' homelessness histories.

Table 5.10: Results of a linear regression, with the dependent variable the score on 'How far have you moved towards getting back on your feet?'

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		
	B	Standard error	t
(Constant)	5.174	0.612	8.461
<i>State</i>			
Vic	0.909	0.375	**2.422
Qld	0.293	0.401	0.730
ACT	1.141	0.698	1.634
Tas	0.703	0.679	1.036
SA	-0.260	0.454	-0.572
NT	-0.454	1.386	-0.328
WA	0.476	0.651	0.731
<i>Reference: NSW</i>			
<i>Service type</i>			
Medium to long-term accommodation	-0.554	0.302	*-1.834
Day support	-1.227	1.095	-1.167
Outreach	0.921	0.752	1.226
Mixed	0.303	0.417	0.728
Unspecified	1.352	1.431	0.945
<i>Reference: Crisis accommodation</i>			
<i>How long getting help from this service?</i>			
Under 1 month	0.687	0.511	1.342
3–6 months	0.799	0.359	**2.226
6–12 months	1.051	0.351	***2.996
1–5 years	1.785	0.342	***5.214
More than 5 years	1.588	0.615	**2.582
<i>Reference: 1–3 months</i>			

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		
	B	Standard error	t
<i>Time since first homeless</i>			
Under 1 month	-1.331	1.069	-1.245
6–12 months	0.714	0.530	1.346
1–5 years	0.480	0.446	1.075
5–10 years	0.390	0.488	0.799
10–20 years	0.763	0.506	1.507
More than 20 years	0.854	0.620	1.376
<i>Reference: 1–6 months</i>			
<i>How often homeless or in insecure housing?</i>			
Once	0.746	0.365	**2.042
Often	-0.432	0.320	-1.350
Never	-0.280	0.437	-0.640
D/K	-1.331	1.069	-1.245
<i>Reference: A few times</i>			
<i>Tenure before coming to service</i>			
Medium to long-term accommodation	0.949	0.573	1.657
Private boarding	0.197	0.399	0.484
Private rental	-0.205	0.385	-0.533
Public housing	-0.497	0.524	-0.949
Community housing	-0.147	1.237	-0.119
House/unit owned/ buying	-0.254	0.554	-0.459
Boarding house/hostel	-0.770	0.553	-1.395
Car/tent/park/ street/squat	-0.623	0.747	-0.834
Sharing	-0.085	0.530	-0.160
Caravan	1.946	2.515	0.774
Prison/detention	2.869	2.491	1.151
Multiple responses	-0.241	0.850	-0.284
Other (State care, hospital)	-0.606	0.500	-1.212
<i>Reference: Crisis accommodation</i>			
<i>Sex</i>			
Male	-0.010	0.296	0.032
<i>Reference: Female</i>			
<i>Age</i>			
25–50 years	-0.496	0.324	-1.531
51 or more	-0.020	0.574	-0.034
<i>Reference: Under 25</i>			
<i>Country of birth</i>			
Another English-speaking country	0.652	0.465	1.401
A non-English speaking country	0.415	0.443	0.937
<i>Reference: Australia</i>			
<i>Speak a language other than English at home?</i>			
Yes	-0.326	0.330	-0.987
<i>Reference: no</i>			
<i>Indigenous?</i>			
Yes	0.296	0.405	0.731
<i>Reference: no</i>			

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		
	B	Standard error	t
<i>Family status on arrival at service</i>			
With partner	0.178	0.655	0.272
With children (on own)	0.229	0.323	0.709
With partner and children	-0.399	0.859	-0.465
With another family member	0.341	0.551	0.619
<i>Reference: Alone</i>			
<i>Highest education achieved</i>			
Primary school	-1.133	0.866	-1.309
Completed secondary school	0.052	0.323	0.160
Trade certificate/ apprenticeship or similar	-0.348	0.471	-0.738
TAFE qualification	-0.151	0.369	-0.409
University degree	-0.682	0.562	-1.212
No schooling	1.218	1.385	0.879
<i>Reference: Some secondary school</i>			
R Square 0.208, Adjusted R Square 0.72, Standard Error of Estimate 2.226			
Significance: *10 per cent level, ** 5 per cent level, *** 1 per cent level			

Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

The effects can also be expressed in terms of their confidence intervals (i.e. the bands of values within which there is a 95 per cent probability that the coefficients fall). Table 5.11 shows the confidence intervals only for those variables found to be statistically significant.

The factor with the most impact on clients' scores was the length of time they had been receiving help from the SAAP service, with the impact increasing the longer the period of help. For example, having been receiving assistance for one to five years increases clients' scores by an estimated 1.79 points, relative to receiving help for only one to three months. To a lesser extent there was also an increase in scores associated with having been homeless only once before (relative to 'often'). It appears that receiving assistance from a service in Victoria is independently associated with an increase of close to one point on the scale, relative to getting help in NSW. It is not clear why this should be the case, but could perhaps be related to variations in models of service-delivery between States.

The only factor that was shown to be significantly associated with a decrease in client-assessed self-reliance was receiving assistance from a service defined as providing medium- to long-term accommodation, relative to that from crisis accommodation services. However, it was significant only at the 10 per cent level and the confidence interval crosses from the negative to the positive sign, indicating that any effect is likely to be small.

Table 5.11: Significant factors influencing clients' self-perceived movement towards self-reliance (coefficients and confidence intervals)

Variables	Co-efficient B	Confidence intervals
<i>State</i>		
Victoria (relative to NSW)	**0.909	0.171 – 1.646
<i>Service type</i>		
Medium to long-term accommodation (relative to Crisis accommodation)	*-0.554	-1.148 – 0.040
<i>How long receiving help from this service?</i>		
3–6 months	**0.799	0.093 – 1.505
6–12 months	***1.051	0.361 – 1.741
1–5 years	***1.785	1.112 – 2.459
More than 5 years	**1.588	0.379 – 2.798
<i>Reference: 1–3 months</i>		
<i>How often homeless or in insecure housing?</i>		
Once (relative to Often)	**0.746	0.028 – 1.465

The tables above provide responses to a summary question on how far clients thought they had progressed towards self-reliance. The next stage was to break down these overall responses across a wide range of life domains, of the kind put forward in Kunnen and Martin's (2004) study. The elements of this question were based on this and other previous research in the area, and were refined through extensive consultation with stakeholders, as outlined in Section 3. The individual items were grouped within key life domains, and two further question units were added, targeted at people with children and at those whose first language was not English.

The question asked 'How have these parts of your life changed since you started getting help from this service?'. Respondents were invited to tick a box according to whether the particular aspect of life was now a lot better, a bit better, the same, worse or did not apply to them.

Table 5.12 presents the simple frequencies of responses to all the items. At this stage the non-applicable responses are included, as these are important in indicating areas of life different proportions of people felt were not germane to them. The first thing to note about this table is the wide variation in the percentages of 'non-applicable' responses. This is not surprising, since clients' circumstances vary considerably and only a proportion would be expected to see, for example, disability, or drug and alcohol use, or child custody issues, as relevant to them. However, it is interesting to note that the domain with the fewest non-applicable responses was that of 'coping', where virtually all clients saw issues of personal self-belief, confidence, communication and dealing with stress as relevant to them. 'Accommodation' was the next most relevant (again this is hardly surprising), followed by relationships and connections with other people, being able to tell other people or agencies what they needed, using services, and non-work-related transport.

Table 5.12: ‘How have these parts of your life changed since you started getting help from this service?’ (row percentages)

Life domains	A lot better	A little better	Same	Worse	Does not apply
<i>Accommodation</i>					
Getting a place to live	61.6	24.3	9.7	0.7	3.8
Preparing for my new home (getting furniture, household goods, paying bond etc.)	37.2	24.0	17.4	0.9	20.5
Keeping up with housing payments and bills	42.9	19.1	18.4	1.5	18.1
Looking after my home (cooking, cleaning, shopping)	48.0	15.5	19.5	0.7	16.4
Getting on with neighbours	32.3	17.0	25.4	1.1	24.3
<i>Income/employment</i>					
Getting paid work	13.2	13.2	26.6	2.8	44.2
Looking for work	13.9	16.0	27.5	1.8	40.7
Doing training or more education	24.6	19.1	23.5	2.0	30.8
Getting a regular income	26.7	13.7	35.7	3.1	20.9
Managing money	29.9	32.5	24.0	3.5	10.1
<i>Looking after myself</i>					
Taking care of my health (taking prescribed medications at the right time etc.)	41.9	21.5	21.1	2.8	12.7
My mental health	34.8	27.9	17.0	2.6	17.8
Getting support with my disability	18.7	9.2	9.6	1.4	61.1
My drug or alcohol problem	23.6	10.9	9.6	1.8	54.1
Getting emotional support/counselling	43.0	24.5	13.9	1.4	17.3
Telling other people what I need (friends, family, Government departments etc.)	41.9	28.5	19.1	1.7	8.8
<i>Relationships with other people</i>					
Getting support from family or friends	34.6	24.2	27.7	5.2	8.2
Getting on with people	36.9	29.7	27.5	1.7	4.3
Social contacts	34.6	28.0	28.5	3.4	5.4
<i>Dealing with other organisations</i>					
Dealing with Centrelink	37.3	22.9	28.7	2.8	8.3
Using the services that can help me	44.9	29.0	20.2	1.0	4.9
Dealing with child custody/access/child support	17.1	12.7	8.9	2.9	58.5
Getting Apprehended Violence/Exclusion Orders	15.3	7.2	9.0	1.8	66.7
Contact with the law/police/gaols	21.4	10.4	12.7	0.9	54.7
<i>Coping</i>					
How I feel about myself	44.5	34.7	16.4	3.6	0.8
Believing I can get back on my feet	53.8	32.2	10.6	2.8	1.7
Communicating and expressing myself	39.1	36.9	19.5	2.8	1.7
Dealing with stress and problems	33.9	39.6	19.3	6.2	1.0
Feeling confident	38.3	37.2	19.5	4.2	0.8
Feeling safe and secure	55.3	26.1	14.2	3.6	0.8
<i>Getting around (transport)</i>					
Getting to work	15.2	10.2	16.9	3.0	54.7
Getting to the shops	36.7	19.4	32.7	4.3	7.0
Getting to medical appointments	38.7	19.6	29.3	3.2	9.1
Getting to family, friends or social activities	30.6	20.7	32.0	5.9	10.9

Life domains	A lot better	A little better	Same	Worse	Does not apply
<i>Questions just for those with children (n=322–342)</i>					
My relationship with my child(ren)	48.4	16.9	11.1	2.0	21.6
My child(ren)'s health	44.8	11.9	17.3	0.6	25.4
My child(ren)'s schooling	39.5	10.2	12.0	1.5	36.7
My child(ren)'s friendships	42.0	14.4	13.2	1.8	28.5
Access to childcare	32.3	9.0	13.0	2.5	43.2
Looking after my child(ren)	48.9	12.6	14.1	1.2	23.1
Dealing with custody/access/child support	24.0	10.8	11.3	3.4	50.8
<i>Questions for those whose first language is not English (n=187)</i>					
Help with speaking English	18.2	7.0	7.5	1.1	66.3
Help with understanding English	20.3	5.9	7.5	0.5	65.8
Main N = 562–630, Missing = 0–68					

Source: SPRC client survey

People for whom the sections on children and English language support did not apply excluded themselves (as was intended), but there were people for whom they were relevant who excluded themselves as well. A significant minority of those with children did not see many of the items relating to children as applicable to them, while around two-thirds of those whose first language was not English did not see language-support as relevant, presumably because they did not have any problems with communicating in or understanding English.

Although it is important to understand these variations in relevance of the different areas of life in which SAAP services might intervene to assist clients, a more useful way of looking at the data is to take out the non-applicable answers and just examine the distribution of responses amongst those who saw the item as relevant. This analysis is presented in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13: ‘How have these parts of your life changed since you started getting help from this service?’, excluding non-applicable responses (row percentages)

	A lot better	A little better	Same	Worse
<i>Accommodation</i>				
Getting a place to live	64.0	25.3	10.1	0.7
Preparing for my new home (getting furniture, household goods, paying bond etc.)	46.9	30.2	21.9	1.1
Keeping up with housing payments and bills	52.3	23.3	22.5	1.9
Looking after my home (cooking, cleaning, shopping)	57.3	18.3	23.3	0.8
Getting on with neighbours	42.6	22.5	33.5	1.4
<i>Income/employment</i>				
Getting paid work	23.7	23.7	47.6	5.0
Looking for work	23.5	27.1	46.4	3.0
Doing training or more education	35.6	27.6	34.0	2.8
Getting a regular income	33.7	17.3	45.1	3.9
Managing money	33.3	36.2	26.7	3.9
<i>Looking after myself</i>				
Taking care of my health (taking prescribed medications at the right time etc.)	48.0	24.6	24.2	3.2
My mental health	42.3	34.0	20.6	3.1
Getting support with my disability	47.9	23.7	24.7	3.7
My drug or alcohol problem	51.4	23.7	20.9	4.0
Getting emotional support/counselling	51.9	29.6	16.8	1.7
Telling other people what I need (friends, family, Government departments etc.)	46.0	31.3	20.9	1.9
<i>Relationships with other people</i>				
Getting support from family or friends	37.7	26.4	30.2	5.7
Getting on with people	38.5	31.0	28.7	1.8
Social contacts	36.6	29.6	30.2	3.6
<i>Dealing with other organisations</i>				
Dealing with Centrelink	40.6	25.0	31.3	3.1
Using the services that can help me	47.2	30.5	21.1	1.1
Getting Apprehended Violence/Exclusion Orders	46.0	21.7	27.0	5.3
Contact with the law/police/gaols	47.1	23.0	28.0	1.9
<i>Coping</i>				
How I feel about myself	44.8	35.0	16.5	3.6
Believing I can get back on my feet	54.3	32.5	10.7	2.5
Communicating and expressing myself	39.8	37.6	19.8	2.9
Dealing with stress and problems	34.3	40.0	19.5	6.2
Feeling confident	38.6	37.6	19.6	4.2
Feeling safe and secure	55.7	26.3	14.4	3.6
<i>Getting around (transport)</i>				
Getting to work	33.5	22.6	37.4	6.6
Getting to the shops	39.5	20.8	35.1	4.6
Getting to medical appointments	42.6	21.6	32.2	3.5
Getting to family, friends or social activities	34.3	23.3	35.9	6.6

	A lot better	A little better	Same	Worse
<i>Questions just for those with children</i>				
My relationship with my child(ren)	61.7	21.6	14.1	2.6
My child(ren)'s health	60.0	16.0	23.2	0.8
My child(ren)'s schooling	62.4	16.2	19.0	2.4
My child(ren)'s friendships	58.8	20.2	18.5	2.6
Access to childcare	56.8	15.8	23.0	4.4
Looking after my child(ren)	63.7	16.4	18.4	1.6
Dealing with custody/access/child support	48.8	21.9	22.5	6.9
<i>Questions for those whose first language is not English</i>				
Help with speaking English	54.0	20.6	22.2	3.2
Help with understanding English	59.4	17.2	21.9	1.6
Unweighted mean for all items (does not add to 100 because of rounding)	47.0	25.8	25.6	3.2

Source: SPRC client survey

The answers to this question about improvement (or otherwise) in various aspects of life are in line with the responses to the summary question about movement towards self-reliance. From the mean of all the items, we can see that nearly three-quarters of respondents (73 per cent) felt that these aspects of life were either a lot or a little better than before coming to the service for help. Just over one-quarter felt they were about the same, and only a few (3.2 per cent) felt they had deteriorated. However, these means are unweighted and thus do not take account of the number of people for whom particular items were relevant. Nor is there any sense of the relative importance of particular aspects of life.

Looking at individual items (and also bearing in mind the results of Table 5.12), it is clear that getting accommodation was the area which was most generally relevant and which had improved the most for the largest percentage of respondents (89.3 per cent a lot or a little better). Next were items in the 'coping' domain, relating to belief in one's own ability to get back on one's feet, and to feeling safe and secure. It is important to recognise that these were also items of broad relevance amongst the sample as a whole, and that SAAP services seem to be having a strongly positive effect on clients' feelings of safety and personal self-confidence.

Issues to do with children, including relationships with them and being able to look after them, also scored highly but, as we saw earlier, were relevant only to those with children – and not to all of them. By contrast, the areas of life where noticeably less improvement was experienced were those connected with work and income, where about half felt that little had changed, although there was a greater positive impact on getting into training or education. As was stated earlier in the report, this reflects the limited ability of SAAP services to have much impact on that crucial aspect of self-reliance that derives from having an earned income.

So far we have just reported the results for the sample as a whole, but there were some variations according to client characteristics and circumstances. Because of the large number of individual items and the similarity in scores within many of the domain groupings, we selected one key item from each domain to represent it, and

cross-tabulated the results by the most important client variables. Relatively few of these showed statistically significant differences, based on chi-square tests, and in most cases the probability of differences being other than sampling effects was quite low. Those that were significant and included sufficient cases are presented in Table 5.14.

The length of time clients had been with the service was the circumstantial variable with the most consistent probability of a bi-variate relationship with the level of improvement in these areas of life. In terms of getting a place to live, there was a linear increase in the proportion of clients describing this as a lot better as the length of time they had been with the service increased, and a decrease in the percentage saying it was unchanged. A similar, though less clear, pattern can be seen in relation to getting a paid job, getting support from family and friends, and belief in the ability to get back on one's feet. This is consistent with the earlier observation that achieving improvements in homeless people's circumstances can take time, and services need to be able to devote resources to some clients for considerable periods. However, a related explanation could be that the longer clients are away from the initial event that precipitated their homelessness and brought them to the service, the less potent it is in their minds. These two explanations are not inconsistent, as part of what services provide is the opportunity to break out of difficult circumstances and recover.

Table 5.14: Selected areas of life improvement, by significant client characteristics and circumstances, excluding non-responses

	A lot better	A little better	Same	Worse
Getting a place to live (total)	63.8	25.5	10.0	0.7
<i>By age group*</i>				
Under 25 years	59.4	26.4	14.2	0
25–50	67.4	23.9	7.8	0.9
51 or over	57.9	34.2	5.3	2.9
<i>By how long receiving help from this service***</i>				
Less than 1 month	44.7	36.2	17.0	2.1
1–3 months	52.3	30.6	16.2	0.9
3–6 months	57.3	33.3	8.3	1.0
6 months to 1 year	77.3	16.0	5.9	0.8
1–5 years	68.8	25.5	5.7	0
Over 5 years	86.2	6.9	6.9	0
Getting paid work (total)	23.2	23.9	47.8	5.1
<i>By sex*</i>				
Male	20.8	27.7	43.1	8.5
Female	25.0	21.2	51.1	2.7
<i>By how long receiving help from this service*</i>				
Less than 1 month	0	26.1	69.6	4.3
1–3 months	16.7	30.0	53.3	0
3–6 months	22.8	22.8	50.9	3.5
6 months to 1 year	22.0	20.3	45.8	11.9
1–5 years	29.5	26.1	38.6	5.7
Over 5 years	46.2	15.4	38.5	0

	A lot better	A little better	Same	Worse
Getting emotional support/ counselling (total)	51.6	29.7	17.0	1.7
<i>By sex***</i>				
Male	40.8	27.0	29.6	2.6
Female	56.9	31.0	10.9	1.3
<i>By country of birth*</i>				
Australia	51.2	27.5	19.2	2.1
Another English-speaking country	65.5	24.1	10.3	0
A non-English speaking country	46.7	46.7	6.7	0
Getting support from family or friends (total)	37.8	26.4	30.1	5.7
<i>By family status when arrived at service**</i>				
Alone	34.0	28.3	31.5	6.2
With partner	33.3	25.0	33.3	8.5
With children (on own)	43.3	25.3	28.7	2.7
With partner and children	30.8	15.4	23.1	30.8
With another family member	55.9	17.6	23.5	2.9
<i>By how long receiving help from this service**</i>				
Less than 1 month	34.1	27.3	34.0	4.6
1–3 months	18.6	28.4	48.0	4.9
3–6 months	43.8	24.9	29.2	2.2
6 months to 1 year	37.6	32.1	22.0	8.3
1–5 years	41.5	23.0	29.6	5.9
Over 5 years	62.1	17.2	13.8	6.9
Using services that can help me (total)	47.4	30.3	21.3	1.1
<i>By sex**</i>				
Male	39.7	30.4	27.8	2.1
Female	51.5	30.2	17.7	0.6
<i>By country of birth*</i>				
Australia	46.1	29.9	22.8	1.1
Another English-speaking country	54.1	16.2	27.0	2.7
A non-English speaking country	51.5	40.9	7.6	0
Believing I can get back on my feet (total)	54.1	32.6	10.8	2.5
<i>By sex*</i>				
Male	49.7	31.7	16.1	2.5
Female	56.3	33.1	8.1	2.5
<i>By country of birth*</i>				
Australia	53.6	31.5	12.0	2.9
Another English-speaking country	69.8	20.9	9.3	0
A non-English speaking country	47.1	48.5	2.9	1.5
<i>By how long receiving help from this service*</i>				
Less than 1 month	55.1	30.6	14.3	0
1–3 months	40.2	42.7	13.7	3.4
3–6 months	57.1	35.7	4.1	3.1
6 months to 1 year	56.8	30.5	11.0	1.7
1–5 years	62.8	30.3	4.8	2.1
Over 5 years	62.5	12.5	21.9	3.1

	A lot better	A little better	Same	Worse
Getting to work (transport) (total)	33.2	22.5	37.5	6.7
<i>By sex*</i>				
Male	27.6	20.0	39.0	13.3
Female	37.2	24.3	36.5	2.0
<i>By service type*</i>				
Crisis/short-term accommodation	23.5	22.4	46.9	7.1
Medium/long-term accommodation	41.6	27.7	23.8	6.9
Other (includes outreach, multiple, day support)	43.8	16.7	52.1	2.1

X² * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Note: Total percentages vary slightly from those in Table 5.12 because of some missing cases created by non-responses on other variables

Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

Sex was the most common intrinsic client characteristic where there was a significant difference in reported outcomes. Women reported doing slightly better at getting paid work than men and in improving their ability to get transport to work. The differences were clearest (and the probability that this was not a sampling artefact was strongest), in the areas of getting emotional support or counselling, and of accessing other services that could help. Remembering that these percentages are only of those who saw these life areas as applicable to them, this is in line with the common observation that women are more likely than men both to seek emotional support and to engage with services. However, it could also be that for these reasons services are more attuned to offering such support to women than to men.

Age appeared to be an issue only in relation to getting accommodation, with the youngest and oldest age groups reporting slightly less improvement than the 25–50 year olds.

As a way of linking the improvements respondents reported in these various life domains with the particular service from which they had been receiving assistance recently, the questionnaire asked them to say how helpful the service had been for them in these broad domains.

Table 5.15 presents the responses, excluding, as before, the non-applicables and other non-responses. The total numbers who responded in each life area are reported in the right-hand column.

The results are consistent with the previous tables in that they indicate a high level of satisfaction with the assistance provided by the services overall, but with some variation across the different life domains. Again, accommodation was the area in which services were rated very helpful by the most people, with ‘looking after myself’ and ‘dealing with other organisations’ also rating highly, as well as ‘my children’ and ‘help with English’, for those to whom these two areas applied.

A number of areas indicated somewhat lower levels of satisfaction for men, including ‘income/employment’, ‘relationships with other people’, ‘coping’, ‘my children’ and ‘help with English’. However, the numbers involved in some of these areas were

small and only ‘income/employment, ‘coping’ and ‘my children’ showed statistically significant differences. The proportion of men reporting services unhelpful in relation to their children was larger than the proportion who said they had children with them when they came to the service, which suggests that some of this dissatisfaction may be concerned with child contact or child support issues.

Table 5.15: ‘How helpful has this service been for you in these parts of your life?’, by sex, excluding non-applicable responses (percentages)

	Very helpful	Quite helpful	Not helpful	Total (n)
<i>Life domains</i>				
<i>Accommodation</i>				
Male	74.4	22.6	3.0	199
Female	77.2	21.1	1.6	399
Persons	76.2	21.7	2.1	568
<i>Income/employment**</i>				
Male	49.3	40.5	10.1	148
Female	51.5	45.3	3.0	267
Persons	50.8	43.6	5.5	415
<i>Looking after myself</i>				
Male	57.1	37.9	4.9	182
Female	64.7	33.2	2.2	368
Persons	62.2	34.7	3.1	550
<i>Relationships with other people</i>				
Male	46.6	45.5	7.9	178
Female	55.7	38.7	5.6	341
Persons	52.6	41.0	6.4	519
<i>Dealing with other organisations</i>				
Male	52.4	42.4	5.3	170
Female	61.9	35.2	2.9	349
Persons	58.8	37.6	3.7	519
<i>Coping**</i>				
Male	38.9	52.2	8.9	180
Female	55.9	39.3	4.8	356
Persons	50.2	43.7	6.2	536
<i>Getting around</i>				
Male	49.7	45.4	4.9	163
Female	53.0	40.1	6.9	304
Persons	51.8	42.0	6.2	467
<i>My children**</i>				
Male	44.8	41.4	13.8	58
Female	63.0	33.3	3.7	246
Persons	59.5	34.9	5.6	304
<i>Getting help with English</i>				
Male	54.8	34.5	9.7	31
Female	67.5	28.6	3.9	77
Persons	63.9	30.6	5.6	108

X² significance by sex * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

While these questions have addressed the areas of life in which SAAP services provide assistance, it is also of interest to see from the clients' point of view what actual forms of help they have received. One question asked respondents to write in the ways in which they felt the services had helped them. There was a large number of separate responses (1385 in all), many of which included heartfelt expressions of thanks and praise for services and individual staff members. Although we have again had to group the responses into broad categories to give a sense of their numerical concentration (Table 5.16), it is also important to give a flavour of these comments in clients' own words, and some examples are presented in the box below.

Q: 'In what ways has this service helped you?'

Examples of clients' comments

- ▶ Many ways, made me a stronger person
- ▶ Taught me to cook, live independently
- ▶ Helped me to get my life on track
- ▶ Help to get off heroin, support to change my life
- ▶ Opened my eyes to my life and compared it to others
- ▶ Getting me the best unit in town, where I don't have to move
- ▶ Many ways, they have housed me and got me into study
- ▶ Too many to list!
- ▶ Off drugs, going better at school, growing up, getting ready for the real world
- ▶ Shown me I can live on my own and be entirely independent of my ex
- ▶ My self-esteem back
- ▶ Accommodation, motivation, respect, self-determination
- ▶ Immeasurably, foremost by enabling me to feel myself again in a home
- ▶ Peace of mind
- ▶ Time to heal and set goals
- ▶ My mental health is on track, I have somewhere to sleep, I have support
- ▶ Saved my sanity
- ▶ Feeling safe and secure
- ▶ Knowing I can be supported and respected – a lovely new home was found for me
- ▶ To work things out with my mum and have space
- ▶ Accommodation, support, kindness, safety
- ▶ Meals, love, blankets
- ▶ In every way, loveliest ladies I've ever met, so glad I came here!
- ▶ Helped me realise there's help and can start again
- ▶ Stable house for my kids, out of bad relationship, made me strong
- ▶ Welcomed me into a wonderful community and eight years later I still come here
- ▶ Job, flat, support at mediation and court, budgeting, living skills, certificate
- ▶ Getting back to school, getting benefit and ID
- ▶ I've got my life back, my dignity, for the first time I have hope

Table 5.16: ‘In what ways has this service helped you?’, grouped responses (numbers and percentages)

Types of help	Frequency	%
Accommodation	335	24.2
Other services	119	8.6
Other support (unspecified)	110	7.9
Independence	67	4.8
Safety	65	4.7
Money	60	4.3
Emotional support	59	4.3
Help with children	56	4.0
Praise for staff	56	4.0
‘In many ways’	52	3.8
Food	46	3.3
Life skills	46	3.3
Security/stability	45	3.2
Other necessities	44	3.2
Relationships/social contacts	36	2.6
Schooling, training and qualifications	30	2.2
Miscellaneous	26	1.9
‘Starting again’	24	1.7
Self-respect	18	1.3
Detoxification and AOD support	18	1.3
Legal issues	16	1.2
Health	13	0.9
Employment	12	0.9
Immigration	10	0.7
Mental health	9	0.6
Miscellaneous	26	1.9
No response	13	0.9
Total	1385	100

‘Accommodation’ was the most frequently mentioned category, as would be expected given that this is the primary purpose of these services. More interesting are some of the other forms of help noted by respondents. Although ‘food’ was mentioned by only a small proportion of respondents (seven per cent or 46 people), it still means that there are Australian citizens who cannot provide themselves with the most basic necessity of all. There were also 44 people (some of whom would have been the same people) who were provided with other basic necessities – clothes, laundry, shower, furniture, toiletries, linen, bond, utility deposits, telephone, storage for possessions, an accommodation address (‘mail’), and presents for their children. Combined with the fact that they also lacked access to another basic necessity, shelter, it means that there are levels of poverty in a wealthy nation like Australia that are absolute. This is not relative poverty, a matter of community standards, the lack of which, although important for people’s comfort, wellbeing and self-respect, is not immediately threatening to health and life. This is poverty as a lack of the basic necessities for human existence.

Homeless people who approach SAAP services are also likely to get help from other sources. The survey asked them to write in whom else they had found helpful. This provides a useful indicator of the extent to which SAAP clients can be seen as isolated or socially excluded. Their responses were grouped into a number of categories, as shown in Table 5.17. If we assume that a non-response is likely to indicate that respondents could not think of anyone else who was helpful, the total reporting no other sources of help is around one-quarter (24.9 per cent). Of those who indicated no one else helped, some examples of the comments were: ‘only this service’, ‘just this service’, ‘you guys are the only ones that give damn’, and ‘no one has offered me the support I received here and I have been a State ward since age three’. One woman insisted that she was entirely self-reliant and did not need anyone else: ‘ME and my babies – they help a lot’.

The total mentioning family or friends as a source of help, either alone or in combination with other services or workers, was more than two-fifths (43.4 per cent), while nearly half (49.8 per cent) mentioned other services or workers.

Overall, while a significant minority appeared to have few connections or sources of help outside the SAAP service itself, and thus might be seen as socially excluded, most did report having such connections, either with family and friends or with other services and individual workers, about whom respondents often wrote with warmth and affection.

Table 5.17: ‘Apart from this service, who else has been helpful? (for example – other services, family, friends etc.)’, percentage of responses in grouped categories

	%
Family or friends	26.0
Other services	24.9
No response	16.8
Other services + family and/or friends	15.4
No one	8.1
Workers individually identified	4.4
Workers + family and/or friends	2.1
Other	2.2
Total	100
N = 630	

Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

In spite of the progress that many respondents indicated they had made towards getting back on their feet, most were still receiving help from a homelessness service, either in the form of temporary accommodation or through case management and other outreach support. We therefore asked them to assess what areas of life they thought they were still likely to need support with in the future, by ticking as many boxes as they liked from the grouped list of life domains.

As a broad indicator of the relative levels of still unmet need across the whole sample, Table 5.18 shows the overall percentages that thought they would still need help in the given area. In this case the total percentage includes those who had previously reported items within the various life domains as not being applicable to them.

Table 5.18: ‘What do you think you might still need help with in the future?’ (percentages)

Life domain	%
Accommodation	59.5
Income/employment	46.8
Looking after myself	36.7
Relationships with other people	31.3
Dealing with other organisations	37.8
Coping	54.8
Getting around	32.1
My children	22.1
Getting help with English	7.9
N = 630	

Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

Nearly three-fifths said they thought they would still need help with housing – not surprisingly, since many would still be living in temporary accommodation. Nearly 55 per cent ticked the box for the area of ‘coping’, including various items concerned with dealing with stress. Close to half thought they would need further support with maintaining an income and employment – and we saw from earlier questions that clients did not tend to see SAAP services as a particularly effective source of help in this area. Substantial numbers thought they would still need help with maintaining relationships and dealing with other organisations like Centrelink. Although only just over one-fifth of the sample ticked the box for ‘my children’, it needs to be remembered that only about one-third had children with them when they came to the service and two-fifths reported being with children at the time of the survey, so it was still a significant issue for a large proportion of these clients.

5.5 Housing, employment and income status: before and now

The final piece of analysis concerns indicators of client status in the areas of housing, employment and income sources before and after receiving help from the SAAP service. These are likely to be key direct indicators of improvement in client self-reliance following service use. However, they turned out to be perhaps the least satisfactory element of the questionnaire for obtaining full and consistent responses from clients.

First, respondents were asked to say what kind of family living arrangement they had had just before coming to the service for help. Twenty-seven per cent said they were living on their own, 24 per cent were living with their partners in their own places, 18 per cent with parents or other family in their own places, and 20 per cent with friends. Nearly four per cent gave multiple responses, two per cent ‘other’, and four per cent did not respond.

Then respondents were asked to tick a box for the type of accommodation they were living in just before coming to the service for help and the type of accommodation they were in now. The ‘before’ and ‘now’ boxes were placed in parallel (see Appendix A Q. 15). Unfortunately, a substantial number of respondents (23 per cent) seemed not to have understood the layout of these questions and did not respond to the ‘now’ column. There were also a considerable number of multiple responses (11 per cent ‘before’, four per cent ‘after’), although respondents were asked to tick only one box. These multiple responses do not represent proper responses to what ‘best’ described their situations, but they are not necessarily inconsistent, because the accommodation categories were not fully discrete. The data therefore do not allow us to analyse the full sample for movements from the kind of accommodation before coming to the service to that occupied at the time of the survey. Consistent results can, however, be presented for just under three-quarters of the sample.³

Table 5.19 presents the responses to accommodation ‘now’, cross-tabulated with those for ‘before’. Because the numbers are mostly small, it is better to read the results as numbers rather than percentages (although percentages are given for the totals of both ‘before’ and ‘now’). Housing tenure before coming to the service was quite widely distributed, with close to one-fifth (17.8 per cent) already being in crisis accommodation of some form, just over 30 per cent boarding or renting privately, nearly eight per cent being literally roofless or in a squat, and very few in public or community housing. Tenure at the time of the survey, however, was quite different, with a marked shift towards crisis and medium-term housing (as would be expected), but also towards social rented housing (especially community housing) and a substantial decline in the proportion living in the most insecure forms of housing. In some respects this is simply a description of what SAAP is meant to do – that is, provide crisis and medium-term housing, and help clients move towards more secure forms of longer-term accommodation – but it is encouraging to see these aims played out in the survey results.

Another point of interest is that there were very few clients in the survey who said they had come directly from State care, even though it is known that young people leaving care are highly vulnerable to homelessness.

³ Analysis of non-responses to this question showed that they were somewhat more likely to come from clients of non-residential SAAP services (outreach and day support), from services in SA and WA, from men, from people identifying as Indigenous, and from those born in Australia.

Table 5-19: ‘Which of the following best describes the type of accommodation you had before you came to the service, and where you are living now? (please tick one box only in each column)’, accommodation now by accommodation before (numbers)

Before	Now											Total (%)			
	Crisis	Medium term	Private boarding	Private rental	Public housing	Community housing	Owned/ buying	Boarding/ hostel	Car/tent/ park/etc.	Sharing	Caravan		Prison/ detention	Multiple	Other
Crisis accommodation	12	37	3	2	5	12	2	4	1	1	0	0	4	0	83 (17.8)
Medium to long-term	9	5	0	5	2	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	28 (6.0)
Private boarding	19	21	4	8	4	4	1	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	66 (14.1)
Private rental	31	19	4	8	8	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	78 (16.7)
Public housing	10	8	0	1	6	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	30 (6.4)
Community housing	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (0.4)
House/unit owned/buying	8	6	0	6	3	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29 (6.2)
Boarding house/hostel	11	6	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24 (5.1)
Car/tent/park/ street/squat	16	2	1	3	2	9	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	35 (7.9)
Sharing	13	7	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	25 (5.4)
Caravan	3	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9 (1.9)
Prison/detention	3	0	0	0	3	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	10 (2.1)
Multiple responses	5	10	2	4	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	44 (9.4)
Other (State care, hospital)	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4 (0.8)
Total (%)	140 (30.0)	125 (26.8)	14 (3.0)	40 (8.6)	44 (9.4)	45 (9.6)	10 (2.1)	14 (3.0)	1 (0.2)	2 (0.4)	1 (0.2)	0 (0)	27 (5.8)	2 (0.4)	467 (100)

Missing = 163

Source: SPRC SAAP Client survey

Table 5.20: “Which of the following best describes your work situation *before* you came to the service, and your situation *now*? (please tick one box only in each column)”, work status before by work status now (numbers)

Before	Now								Total		
	F/t work	P/t work	Casual work	UE: looking for work	UE: not looking for work	Studying	Voluntary work	Home responsibilities		Retired	Multiple
Full-time work	5	0	0	8	1	0	2	3	0	0	19
Part-time work	0	12	2	4	1	0	1	5	0	2	27
Casual work	1	1	11	10	2	1	0	1	0	1	28
Unemployed – looking for work	9	2	5	62	2	5	4	3	0	6	98
Unemployed – not looking for work	1	1	0	2	36	0	0	0	2	2	44
Studying	4	2	0	3	3	28	2	2	0	2	44
Voluntary work	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
Home/family responsibilities	0	2	2	11	2	6	3	95	0	2	123
Retired	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	6
Multiple	2	0	0	3	3	1	1	2	1	11	21
Total	22	20	20	103	47	41	14	111	9	28	413
Missing											217

Source: SPRC SAAP client survey

Questions on work and income sources before coming to the service for help and 'now' were organised in a similar way and also had high levels of non- or multiple response, particularly to the 'now' column. For work, there was an 11 per cent non-response rate to the 'before' question, but a 31 per cent non-response rate to 'now', while the rates of multiple responses were seven and five per cent respectively. Full answers were available for just under two-thirds of the sample and these are shown in Table 5.20, again in numbers.

The 'Total' column on the right shows the overall distribution of work status before clients came to the service. The largest single group (just under 30 per cent) was made up of people with home or family responsibilities (mainly caring for children or someone with a disability), while 34 per cent were unemployed, either looking for work or out of the labour market, and 18 per cent were in some form of work.

The 'Total' row at the bottom shows the distribution of work status at the time of the survey. The table indicates a fair degree of stability, as can be seen by following the diagonal red line, but also a certain amount of movement between work statuses since coming to the SAAP service. Overall there was a marginal decrease in the level of employment and a slight increase in unemployment. There was also some movement from home responsibilities into study, part-time work and volunteering, reflecting the fact that many women who had left their partners following domestic violence now had to find ways to support themselves and their children alone. The majority of those who were unemployed before remained unemployed, but it is encouraging to see that around one-quarter of those looking for work had moved into some form of work, volunteering or study.

What appears less positive is the small group (fewer than five per cent) who were in full-time work before they came to the service, only just over one-quarter of whom remained in work at the time of the survey. This may be because the events that precipitated these respondents' homelessness were either directly connected with job loss, or made it hard for them to retain work once their accommodation was lost.

The final table shows clients' reported sources of income before they came to the service and at the time of the survey (Table 5.21). This was subject to the same limitations described for the previous 'before' and 'now' questions, and full results are available for only 76 per cent of the sample.

Table 5.21: 'Where did you mainly get your income from *before* you came to this service and where do you mainly get your income from *now*? (please tick one box only in each column)', income before by income now (percentages)

Income before	Income now					Total (row)	Total (column)
	Paid work	Centre-link	Family/partner/friends	No income	Other		
Paid work	54.6	43.1	0	0	1.4	100	15.1
Centrelink payment	5.9	93.2	0.6	0	0.3	100	71.1
Family/partner/friends	10.3	62.1	17.2	10.3	0	100	6.1
No income	32.3	51.6	0	16.1	0	100	6.5
Other	0	83.3	0	0	16.7	100	1.3
Total N = 477	15.3	80.9	1.5	1.7	0.6	100	100
Missing = 153							

Source: SPRC SAAP Client survey

There was relatively little change in income sources between the two points in time. Fifteen per cent reported being in paid work before they came to the service for help and the same proportion reported being in work at the time of the survey. There was an increase between the two time points in the percentage reporting being on Centrelink payments, which at first sight might appear inconsistent with a goal of self-reliance. However, the movement on to payments was mainly from those reporting no income or those reliant on income from family/partners or friends. Although there were only a small number of people in this situation, nearly two-thirds had moved onto Centrelink payments and 10 per cent had found paid work. In many cases these are likely to be women who have left violent partners and have to find an income source of their own. This is consistent with the argument made by some of the agencies and individuals consulted for the study, that one step in progress towards self-reliance may often be accessing services such as Centrelink, so as to begin to establish financial independence.

We also asked respondents the types of Centrelink payment they were on before accessing the service and now. Most commonly these were Parenting Payment, Disability Support Pension, Youth Allowance and Newstart Allowance, with a small number on other payments or combinations of payments, and there was very little change between the two points in time.

5.6 Summary of results

The client survey attracted 630 returns, some of which had missing responses to particular questions.

Almost four-fifths of respondents reported having first been homeless at least one year previously, and nearly half more than five years previously. A few talked of homelessness having lasted most or all of their lives or as even being

intergenerational. Sixteen per cent had only had one period of homelessness, but 23 per cent had been homeless 'often'. Men were more likely than women to report frequent periods of homelessness. Although the recruitment criteria created a bias towards clients whose service use was more than short-term, a strikingly large proportion reported receiving help from the SAAP service for long periods of time: 28 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women said they had been receiving help for between one and five years, and for 10 per cent of men the assistance had lasted more than five years.

The most common reasons given for seeking assistance from the SAAP service were relationship breakdown, domestic violence, abuse and other relational pressures (particularly for the female clients). Money problems, eviction or other loss of accommodation, problem alcohol or drug use, and mental health problems were also important factors.

When asked what self-reliance, or 'getting back on your feet', meant to them, the most common response concerned getting accommodation, followed by various aspects of resuming control over their lives. Getting a job, having money and safety were also frequently mentioned, while children's wellbeing was particularly important for those who had children. The barriers cited to getting back on their feet included, in particular, lack of money and accommodation, but also problems with other people; lack of employment; drug and alcohol problems; depression, stress and other health factors; lack of support; and clients' own negative attitudes.

However, when asked to mark where on a 10-point scale clients felt they now were, compared to how they were before they came to the SAAP service for help, more than two-thirds said they had moved beyond the half-way point, and more than one-third felt they were at point 8 or beyond. Only five per cent said they had made no progress at all. Overall, women reported having made somewhat better progress than men. Bi-variate and multi-variate analysis suggested that the most important factors influencing self-rated outcomes were the length of time the client had been receiving help from the service and, to a lesser extent, the number of times people had been homeless.

Respondents were also asked whether things were better or worse in a number of separate domains of life since they came to the service for help. Expressed as an unweighted mean across all these areas, nearly three-quarters of respondents (73 per cent) felt that these aspects of life were either a lot or a little better than before. Just over one-quarter felt they were about the same and only a few felt that they had deteriorated. However, these do not take account of the number of people for whom particular items were irrelevant.

Getting accommodation was the area which was most generally relevant and which had improved the most for the largest percentage of respondents (89 per cent a lot or a little better). Next were various items in the 'coping' domain, especially belief in one's own ability to get back on one's feet, and feeling safe and secure. These were also items of broad relevance amongst the sample as a whole; SAAP services seem to be having a strong positive effect on clients' feelings of safety and personal self-confidence.

The areas of life where less improvement was experienced were those connected with work and income, where about half felt that little had changed, although there was greater positive impact on getting into training or education.

The length of time clients had been with the service was again the circumstantial variable most consistently linked with improvement in key areas of life. There was a linear increase in the proportion of clients describing access to accommodation as a lot better the longer they had been with the service, and a decrease in the percentage saying it was unchanged. Women reported doing slightly better at getting paid work than men, and in improving their ability to get transport to work. The sex differences were clearest in the areas of getting emotional support or counselling, and in accessing other services that could help.

There was a high level of satisfaction overall with the assistance provided, but with some variation across the life domains. Accommodation was the area for which the largest proportion of people rated the services as very helpful, with 'looking after myself', 'dealing with other organisations' and, for those to whom it applied, 'my children' and 'help with English' also rating highly.

One question asked respondents to write in how they felt the services had helped them. There was a large number of separate responses (1385 in all), many of which included heartfelt expressions of thanks and praise for services. 'Accommodation' was the most frequently mentioned category, as would be expected given that this is the primary purpose of these services. Some of the other forms of help included food and basic necessities, indicating there are levels of poverty in Australia that are absolute rather than just relative.

Homeless people who approach SAAP services are also likely to get help from other sources. The survey asked respondents to write in whom else they had found helpful. This provides an indicator of how far SAAP clients can be seen as socially excluded. The total reporting no other sources of help was almost one-quarter, while 43 per cent mentioned family or friends as a source of help, either alone or in combination with other services or workers. Nearly half mentioned other services or workers.

In response to a question about what areas of life clients thought they would still need support with in the future, nearly three-fifths said help with housing – not surprisingly, since many would still be living in temporary accommodation. Nearly 55 per cent also mentioned the area of 'coping', including dealing with stress, while close to half thought they would need further support with maintaining income and employment. Substantial numbers thought they would still need help with maintaining relationships, and dealing with other organisations like Centrelink.

Client status in the areas of housing, employment and income sources before and after receiving help from the SAAP service turned out to be the least satisfactory element of the questionnaire for obtaining full and consistent responses from clients. Full responses were available for only around three-quarters of the sample.

Housing tenure before coming to the service was widely distributed, with 18 per cent already being in crisis accommodation, just over 30 per cent boarding or renting privately, and nearly eight per cent literally roofless or in a squat. Tenure at the time

of the survey was quite different, with a marked shift towards crisis and medium term housing, but also towards social rented housing (especially community housing), and a substantial decline in the proportion living in the most insecure forms of housing.

Before coming to the service, 34 per cent were unemployed (either looking for work or out of the labour market), 30 per cent had home or family responsibilities, and 18 per cent were in some form of work. By the time of the survey there was a marginal decrease in the level of employment and a slight increase in unemployment. There was also some movement from home responsibilities into study, part-time work and volunteering, reflecting the fact that many women who had left their partners following domestic violence now had to support themselves alone. The majority of those who were previously unemployed remained unemployed, but around one-quarter of those looking for work had moved into work, volunteering or study.

Of the five per cent who were in full-time work before they came to the service, only one-quarter remained in work at the time of the survey. This may be because the events that precipitated homelessness were either directly connected with job loss or made it hard for them to retain work.

There was relatively little change in income sources between the two points in time, but an increase in the percentage reporting being on Centrelink payments. This might appear inconsistent with a goal of self-reliance, but the movement on to payments was mainly from those reporting no income or from those reliant on income from family/partners or friends. Although there were only a small number of people in this situation, nearly two-thirds had moved onto Centrelink payments and 10 per cent had found paid work. In many cases these were women who had left violent partners and had to find an income source of their own. It might be concluded that those respondents who accessed Centrelink payments were starting on the path of financial independence and in a better position to gain access to associated services aimed at increasing their job opportunities. This is consistent with the goals of promoting self-reliance.

The most common types of Centrelink payment received were Parenting Payment, Disability Support Pension, Youth Allowance and Newstart Allowance, and there was very little movement between payment types.



6 Case studies

6.1 Introduction

The final element of this study involved carrying out a set of qualitative case studies of movement towards self-reliance, based on in-depth interviews with clients judged by SAAP services to have made significant progress.

The purpose of these case studies was to explore how the issues identified in the survey played out in the lives of some individuals, including respondents' ideas about self-reliance, the barriers they found to achieving it, the kinds of help they received from services, and the factors associated with making progress towards getting back on their feet.

Services based in areas of metropolitan and regional NSW close to Sydney were asked to recruit clients according to the same criteria as used for the survey. Clients were offered vouchers to the value of \$40 as compensation for the time and effort involved in taking part in the study. Interviews lasting up to one hour were carried out either at the SAAP service, at their current accommodation or at another place of their preference. The names of the clients have been changed to avoid identification. In a few instances details of their circumstances have also been altered where these were unusual enough to risk identification.

While by no means exhaustive of the diverse circumstances of people who receive help from SAAP services, the case studies provide some illustrations of the impact of such assistance and the challenges still facing recipients.

6.2 'Alana': 24 year old sole parent

Alana grew up on Sydney's lower north shore. Her father, a doctor, left the family when she was 15, leaving Alana's mother in debt and forcing her to sell the family home. Alana's grandfather stepped in and provided the family with a place to live.

At age 20, Alana moved to Canberra to study communications at university. She also met her partner Tim in Canberra and eventually moved in with him and his family. Their daughter was born two years later. Alana completed two years of her university degree before deciding to change her career choice. She enrolled in a course that required her and her daughter to travel to Sydney – staying with her mother during the week – and travelling back down to Canberra on the weekends to be with her partner.

Alana experienced violence from her partner throughout the relationship. After the birth of their daughter she also became increasingly anxious when his parents became overbearing in raising the child and tried to isolate Alana from her daughter. Alana wanted to leave, but was frightened and did not know how she could leave. Her primary concerns were securing custody of her daughter and protecting herself, her daughter and Alana's mother from Tim, once he realised that Alana was not returning.

I wanted to leave but I was too scared and I didn't know how to go about it. I was scared that he would try and take her out of the country or that his parents would try and take her out of the country because they are not from Australia. Also the fact that he knew where my mum lived and I was staying with her, and I knew that he would come up once he knew that I was not coming back and he would cause trouble.

After speaking with friends about her situation, Alana finally decided to see a family law solicitor who advised her not to return to her partner. Another friend also gave her the telephone number for a homeless crisis hotline.

Alana was 24 with a two-year-old daughter when she was referred to a crisis accommodation centre for women and children, just prior to Christmas. The centre provided Alana and her daughter with crisis accommodation for approximately one month, referred her to subsidised transitional housing and gave her a fridge.

The centre also helped her find long day care for her daughter, which allows her to continue her studies. The partnership agreement between the crisis centre and transitional housing provider requires that the centre provide an outreach worker for Alana for the duration of her stay.

The centre put Alana in contact with victim's compensation to determine if she was eligible for domestic violence compensation, which also provided her with eight hours of counselling with a clinical psychologist. She was also referred to and attended another women's crisis centre for individual domestic violence counselling. As well, Alana attended the centre's domestic violence peer group counselling, an eight-week course attended by other women affected by violence. Alana felt she benefited from the one-on-one counselling, but preferred the peer group counselling sessions.

I found that the DV group helped me a lot more. I really, really liked the one-on-one counsellor, but I just think hearing what other women have to say, who have been in the same situation, just makes you realise that it's not just you and that you're not imagining things.

Alana contacted Centrelink and was placed on Parenting Payment. Being on income support also allowed Alana eligibility for legal aid for her daughter's custodial matter. Alana's solicitor has advised her to continue with domestic violence counselling.

My lawyer wants me to go back to counselling. He's worked with domestic violence and he just thinks that I am not fixed yet, even though I think I am. I think I just need a break from it. I feel at the moment because I am so busy I just really don't have time. I'm studying four days a week and looking after my daughter.

Full-time study and looking after her daughter has made it difficult for Alana to find work. She would like to find part-time work but has been unable to find work that fits in with her set days of study and childcare arrangements.

The major issue currently facing Alana is finding more permanent housing. Alana's subsidised housing was initially for six months, and has recently been extended for a further six months. She is on several community housing waiting lists. Alana does

not know what she will do at the end of her transitional housing placement. She is also still struggling with the loneliness that comes with not living with her partner.

Hopefully they will have found something for me because I am on a few waiting lists. After January, if they haven't found me a place I'm not really sure what I'm going to do because I can't afford to go into the private rental market because it's just so expensive, and because I haven't had much of a work history.

Alana was asked to describe what self-reliance means to her and how self-reliant she currently felt.

Independence. Just being able I suppose do the basic things. I suppose just being able to look after yourself. I'm a lot better than at first because this is the first time in my life that I've ever lived by myself and actually been this independent. Before, it was Tim's parents that were paying for everything – food and bills, but that came at a cost.

Learning to budget better is something that Alana would like further help with. Working on her budgeting skills was something that Alana and her caseworker discussed during their meetings but did not complete. Alana also recognises the importance of her mother's support in helping her look after her daughter.

Commenting on what might hinder her self-reliance, Alana said:

I think I have a tendency to depend on others really easily. I think I just need more time to live by myself and with my daughter and to be able to look after both of us independently. Also, I think if I got back together with my daughter's dad that would stop me from being self-reliant. Because it's also just being self-reliant in the fact that I don't have a man there to do things for me as I always have. I've always been in a relationship.

Having a place of her own is important to Alana. She feels that if she had to live with her mother, who has recently moved into a two-bedroom unit, she would not have the space she and her daughter need and she would not be learning to be independent.

It would make it too easy to go back to Tim.

6.3 'Dale': 18 year old man

Dale and his mother moved around a lot when he was young and Dale attended many different schools. His mother's drug and alcohol use worsened over the years and Dale became a ward of the State at age 11. His aunt was granted guardianship of Dale.

Dale suffers from diagnosed depression and at around the age of 14 he started to self-harm. Dale believes that he is the type of person that does not make friends easily and that this was not helped when he changed high schools three times. Also during this time Dale came out as gay.

At age 17, Dale and his aunt's relationship deteriorated and he sought help from his Department of Community Services' (DoCS) caseworker. Up until that time Dale had

had only sporadic contact with DoCS. The Department placed Dale in a supported housing service, arranged income support through Centrelink and referred him to a counsellor.

From the age of 11 to 17 DoCS weren't very helpful because my aunt was so domineering and wouldn't actually allow them to do anything. However after I left my aunt and moved into the service they were very helpful in getting me set up financially with things.

When Dale moved into the service he continued to see his counsellor for a time but is not currently in counselling. He also had access to the service's support worker. Dale was struggling with feelings of isolation. To help him with this the support worker referred him to a youth group and to a local youth drama group. Dale found the groups helpful and he made friends, but he is no longer involved with either group.

While living at the service, Dale experienced at least one serious episode of depression, during which he felt suicidal. His support worker was on duty at the time and was able to help him through the episode, including phoning the local hospital for advice and escorting Dale to the hospital's mental health ward, where Dale stayed overnight. The support worker controlled Dale's medication intake during his stay with the service.

Dale stayed with the service for just over one year and moved into subsidised transitional housing when he turned 18, which is the eligibility age limit of the service. The service found a subsidised housing placement for Dale and helped him connect the utilities. DoCS provided him with some furniture. Dale had been living in his new accommodation for four months at the time of the interview and said that he was enjoying it. His support worker remains in contact with Dale and has visited him.

It's good. It's different living alone. But compared to living with some of these residents it's a good thing. But being alone can be depressing at times – especially in the first two days I got very depressed because there was just no one around. But then a friend came around. I suppose it's just learning to get out of the house, whereas before I could stay here and there would be people around that I could communicate with, but now I need to leave the house to find people to communicate with.

Dale can stay in his current accommodation for 12 months. After that time he is not sure what will happen.

I move off into my own life I suppose.

Commenting on self-reliance, Dale said:

Well I suppose I'll just have to break it down and give definitions. To be self-reliant of course is to be able to take care of oneself in an adequate manner. So I guess it entails being able to cook for yourself, cleaning, getting myself up in the morning to get off to school, taking my medicine.

The service helped Dale learn to cook, clean the house and build more routine into his day, although he feels he was already quite good with some of these tasks and didn't really need help.

Certainly I am self-reliant now.

Dale was asked to comment on what might hinder his self-reliance.

I suppose certainly finances could strangle me, but given our government and how good it is, we are lucky enough to have organisations like Centrelink and I of course get my youth allowance through them. And it's a common misconception and certainly one I believed in for several years that once you turn 18 DoCS sort of cut you off. But they don't, they assist you right up till you are 21, I believe.

Dale is currently receiving case management through a non-government organisation after care program to which DoCS referred him. He is also completing his HSC through the Pathways program and is looking for part-time work. He would like to go to university to study history.

6.4 'Jacqui': 16 year old former State ward

Jacqui moved back and forth between her mother and grandmother when she was young. She cannot remember why she became a ward of the State, only that her mother had drug and alcohol problems and Jacqui's grandmother was granted guardianship of her when she was seven years old.

Jacqui lived with her grandmother until she was 14, when she moved back in with her mother. Her mother still has drug and alcohol issues and Jacqui found it hard to build a relationship with her. She feels that she moved from one extreme to another.

My nan was really strict when I lived with her, I mean really over the top strict. And I went back to live with my mum and she's insecure, so she wanted me to love her so she let me do what ever I wanted. So if your mum says you can do whatever you want you're not going to be doing anything good.

Their relationship deteriorated and Jacqui also started to truant from school. After about a year of living with her mother, Jacqui ran away from home but was quickly located by police and taken into custody. Her DoCS caseworker was contacted and Jacqui went back to live with her grandmother for a few weeks while her caseworker found Jacqui a supported accommodation placement.

Jacqui moved into supported accommodation for young people and stayed there for about four months. The service had a support worker on duty between the hours of 4.00 pm till 9.00 am the next morning. Residents were not allowed to stay in the house during other times and must be either attending work or school. Jacqui did not respond well to the service's model of supervision. Rather than go to school she would often spend the day with her mother, who lives close to the school.

Well I kind of got a bit worse then because there was more freedom. I was enrolled in school but I didn't use to go. I had time during the daytime to do whatever I wanted. I had the whole day to waste every day.

Jacqui was expelled from school. She also moved out of the service and went to live with her aunt for a few months but this did not work out either. Jacqui and her aunt's partner did not get along. Jacqui contacted the service and asked if she could return. By this time Jacqui had also developed an alcohol problem and was drinking a lot.

Jacqui is now 16 and has been living at the service again for about a year. Jacqui did not have any income when she came to the service. Her support worker linked her up with Centrelink to receive income support. The service also taught her how to carry out household tasks, such as cleaning.

Jacqui is currently completing her school certificate through correspondence and regrets not completing it through school. She is also working three jobs: full-time at a butcher, part-time at another butcher and on call for evening and weekend shifts at a fast food restaurant. Jacqui would like to find a place of her own and the service is helping her with this.

I'm moving. Soon. As soon as I find a place to move to.

Jacqui maintains a relationship with her grandmother, who telephones Jacqui every day. Her relationship with her mother however, remains problematic.

My mum still rings me but I don't talk to her. I don't like her. I'm at this stage – well – she doesn't remember very much obviously. I'm over it. I don't care anymore. I'll feel sorry for her kind of. She's very insecure she needs someone to love her. I felt sorry for her for a while, I was nice to her for a while, but it didn't make a difference to what she was doing so I don't care. Whatever. I don't really care – what ever she wants to do she can do.

Jacqui was asked to describe what self-reliance means to her and how self-reliant she currently feels.

Being more independent. Learning how to cope more on your own. Instead of people doing things for you, you do them yourself. When I first came here I didn't now how to work a washing machine.

Over the past year Jacqui believes she has matured. She used to drink a lot and go out and not come home, or would stay away for weeks. She does not do these things any more and feels she is more self-reliant.

Jacqui was asked to comment on what might hinder her self-reliance.

Not having a job. Because you need money.

Jacqui feels secure with her two part-time jobs but is not so sure about her full-time work, as she is having difficulty working with one of her colleagues. Jacqui is currently saving money so that she can move into her own place.

I'm going to move somewhere around here probably, I think so for a while. And then I'm going to move to America in five years.

6.5 ‘Kirsten’: 22 year partnered parent, child of foster parents

Kirsten described her family life when growing up as very stable. Her parents are foster carers for the Department of Community Services and another non-governmental child protection organisation.

At age 16, Kirsten started to use marijuana and amphetamines and was socialising with ‘the wrong crowd’. She rebelled against her parents and moved out of home.

Kirsten’s parents eventually persuaded her to move to the NSW central coast to get her away from the crowd she was mixing with and to help her to stop using drugs. She did not find this helpful however, as she found the central coast had the same drug culture. Kirsten felt she needed get even further away and moved to live with a cousin in country NSW.

Kirsten found this worked for her and she stopped using drugs, although she admits to still smoking marijuana occasionally. She stayed in country NSW for a year but started to miss her family and decided to move back home. When she returned, her mother helped her to get drug counselling through the community health centre. Kirsten received counselling for one year and found this helped her.

Kirsten’s first serious relationship, at age 20, was also her first experience with domestic violence. The relationship ended when she was hospitalised and her partner was taken into custody.

She also experienced domestic violence with her next partner. Six weeks after this relationship ended Kirsten found out that she was pregnant. She moved into share accommodation with a friend but did not feel comfortable with her friend’s friends coming and going in the house. Her housemate and friends also smoked marijuana, which Kirsten knew was not a good environment for her to be in.

Also during this time Kirsten’s employer dismissed her. She lodged an unfair dismissal claim on the basis that she had been dismissed because she was pregnant. She was not successful with the claim.

When Kirsten was four months pregnant she decided that she needed to find a more stable living environment.

The main issue was to try and keep a roof over my head and try and have somewhere when I had the baby. I needed to have a house for it and for it to have its own room and it was really hard to try and do that through a normal real estate or through a private rental.

Kirsten contacted a local women’s crisis housing service for advice. The service accepted her into their housing and support program, and placed her in one of their emergency housing properties for six months until her baby was born. The service then found her a subsidised, community housing placement.

Kirsten also attended a mother’s program through the service and received regular support from the outreach worker, who would phone or meet up with her three to four times per week.

It's not just them helping you look for a place. They sort of build you up. Like repair you, pretty much. Build your self-esteem up and build your confidence levels up and all that sort of stuff.

The service's outreach worker also helped Kirsten with her communication skills, which helped Kirsten develop a better relationship with her parents.

She gave me advice on how to approach situations. Just how to approach my mum and I used it and I still use it now and we get along perfectly.

Kirsten was asked to describe what self-reliance means to her and if the service helped her become self-reliant.

Pretty much my independence. The service helped me in a lot of ways. It was like doing a TAFE course on life, pretty much, and not to make the same mistake twice or three times. Mainly I felt the program helped me getting back on my feet and being able to do things for myself, and not having to ring my mum all the time and ask for twenty dollars here and there or borrowing money off friends.

Kirsten also believes that the program helped her to establish boundaries in her life and to say 'no' to people. She feels she now can say no to taking drugs with her friends and is able to better express her needs with her new partner. For example, asking him not to have his mates around all the time because it interferes with her sleep.

About eight months ago Kirsten decided to leave community housing and move into private rental with her partner.

Kirsten has also started a part-time cleaning business, working on the days that her mother can provide childcare for her daughter. This needs to coincide with the days that Kirsten's mother places her own five-year-old son, Kirsten's youngest brother, in childcare. Kirsten's mother also provides childcare for Kirsten at other times to give her some time to herself. As Kirsten does not drive, her mother picks her up and drives her to her cleaning appointments. Kirsten's parents have offered to buy her a car as soon as she gets her driver's licence.

Kirsten formally completed the housing and support program 12 months ago, but is still in contact with the service's outreach worker.

I still see my caseworker even though I'm with my partner. She has still agreed to see me if I have any problems and for stuff like that, so I've always got her if I need her for anything.

6.6 'Mia': 36 year old migrant sole parent

Mia was referred to a women's crisis housing service in June 2007. She and her eighteen-month old son had been in Australia for four months, having arrived in Australia from Serbia in February to start a family life with her Australian husband.

Mia was 30 when she met her husband over the Internet in 2001. They corresponded for the next two and a half years before meeting in Serbia in 2004. They married within a few months of meeting. Her husband returned to Australia and Mia began

making all the necessary arrangements for her to move to Australia. A few weeks later Mia found out that she was pregnant. Her husband did not want Mia to have the baby and asked her to have an abortion.

Mia stayed in Serbia and had her baby. During this time Mia and her husband had a reconciliation of sorts, although Mia does not feel that he really accepted the situation.

If I hadn't had a child with him maybe I wouldn't come here. Maybe I would, but it would be easier for me to go back. So much easier. I would be already in Serbia by now.

But because of child I wanted to give him a chance to have a father. And I still loved him and I trusted his promises.

While Mia had reservations about joining her husband in Australia, she felt that she had to come to Australia and at least try and give their son a family.

Mia arrived in February 2007 and the verbal and emotional abuse started almost immediately. Mia felt that her husband was trying to change her into another type of person.

Threatening me and blackmailing me that he is 'going to look elsewhere' as he used to say, if I don't do all that he expects me to do.

By March the verbal and emotional abuse escalated and Mia's husband raped her. Their relationship continued to deteriorate and in April her husband raped her again. During the next episode of violence she feared for her life. Mia knew she had to get her and their son out of the situation but she didn't know how to do it in Australia.

I had no family, no friends and that made it more difficult. I had nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. And I was thinking that he was behaving that way because he knew I had no one to protect me. I couldn't even think about telling about it to my parents or my brother in Serbia because what could they do.

Mia remembered seeing the domestic violence advertisement on television 'Australia Says No'. This made her think that perhaps there was somewhere she could go. She found a Serbian-speaking solicitor in the Yellow Pages who was willing to give her some free legal advice.

I told her briefly my situation because I was thinking of running away back to my country. I just didn't think there was another way, a place to escape to. To call the police I am just going to make myself stay here if I call the police, because I knew it would not be legal to run away because I have an Australian kid. I didn't want the police to stop me. I just didn't have any other option.

The solicitor advised her of her rights and also told her that there were refuges available to her. She advised Mia to contact the Serbian Consulate. The Consulate advised Mia to contact a migration agent. The migration agent advised Mia that she could take out an AVO against her husband, that she could stay in a women's refuge and that Mia should find a doctor so she had a formal record of her physical injuries. The migration officer referred her to a psychologist. The psychologist referred Mia to a child protection officer. Mia spoke again with the psychologist who referred Mia

to another migration agent. The migration agent referred Mia to a social worker at a welfare agency. The social worker referred her to the Domestic Violence Hotline. The domestic violence hotline worker made an appointment for Mia to meet with a women's crisis accommodation service.

The crisis accommodation service provided Mia and her son with emergency accommodation and her caseworker helped her contact and meet with a number of other organisations including: the police to make a statement against her husband; Centrelink to receive income support and the Department of Immigration to apply for permanent residency. Mia needed permanent residency in order to get more permanent accommodation, otherwise she and her son would need to keep moving from crisis accommodation to crisis accommodation every three months.

I don't know what I would do without my caseworker. I knew nothing about Australian system, about Centrelink. I really had no idea about anything.

At the time of the interview Mia had been living in crisis accommodation for four months and her caseworker was trying to find her another crisis accommodation service to move into. Mia was also on a community housing waiting list. She did not feel she was self-reliant. She was missing her family and was worried that she would not have any support when she moved out of crisis accommodation into community housing. She was worried about who will look after her son if she became ill. She was also concerned that she would not be able to find employment that suited her son's childcare needs and did not know how she was going survive on income support.

Mia had also been recently advised that she had been granted permanent residency, but she was in two minds about this.

6.7 'Kylie': 26 year old sole parent

Kylie and her two sisters grew up in public housing in southwestern Sydney. Domestic violence was a constant in their lives. Kylie's sisters also became controlling and violent as they grew up, and Kylie was often the victim of this. She had her first child when she was 20 and her second child was born two years later.

When Kylie was pregnant with her second child she decided that she could not take the fighting and violence at home any more and moved in with a friend. Kylie called the homeless persons' hotline and was referred to a local women's crisis accommodation service. She stayed with the service for a short time and the service assisted her in obtaining public housing.

Kylie was grateful for having somewhere of her own to live, but was placed in the same suburb as her family and only a short distance from her sister's house. Kylie felt she was back in an abusive and controlling environment.

My sister would come up to my house and say can I borrow \$20 off you. And if I said I didn't have it then there was an argument, and I may have only had \$30 to my name but just to get her to go away I'd give her the \$20.

She's hit me plenty of times and with two boys there's no way I want anything like that.

In an attempt to get away from her family's intimidation and violence, Kylie placed her name on the Department of Housing's mutual exchange list. However, no one wanted to move to her suburb. She did not bother to place herself on the Department of Housing's transfer list as she felt this would take many years, and she needed to move herself and her children away as soon as she could.

Kylie decided to move out of her house and moved in with a friend. Again, she contacted the homeless persons' hotline and spoke with a counsellor. This time, however, Kylie requested that she be referred to crisis accommodation located in another area of Sydney. She and her sons were referred to a crisis accommodation service in southern Sydney in November 2005.

The service provided Kylie and her sons with crisis accommodation for three months. During this time Kylie felt she completely changed. She was provided with regular counselling during her stay, and the support staff taught her how to carry out various household and other duties on a regular basis – skills that she felt she really needed help with. The service also helped her develop her household budgeting skills and provided occasional childcare. This allowed her time to carry out various responsibilities and appointments, or just have some time for herself. The service worked with the Department of Housing to have Kylie placed on the waiting list for housing in the area.

When I came here, and after a certain amount of time, my self-esteem just boosted. My confidence just boosted. I was able to say what I wanted to say. I just felt like a totally different person, because the place is so inviting and you can be totally comfortable as soon as you come here.

Kylie found counselling helpful, but felt it was the constancy of support from the service staff that really improved her life. She believes that there was a big difference between the two crisis accommodation services from whom she received assistance.

The staff here are just always constantly on hand to give you a hand with anything that you need, whereas the staff at the previous refuge were only there from 9.00 to 5.00 and not on weekends. They had video cameras and things all around the area, but they were only there from 9.00 to 5.00 and they barely did anything at all. They just sat upstairs in their office.

After three months the service referred Kylie and her children to another crisis accommodation service in the area. She stayed with this service for four weeks until her public housing placement came through.

Kylie was asked to describe what self-reliance means to her and how self-reliant she currently feels.

That I can do it on my own. Not so much without having to rely on anyone, because I think everyone needs to rely on people. But for me how I feel about it is that I try to rely on myself for everything first, and if I need to I'll put my hand up for help and stuff like that. But I'm much more able to do things on my own.

On what might hinder her self-reliance, Kylie said.

I don't know. I guess if I fell into a situation, as in I felt that I had to please everybody. If I was trying to do too much for somebody, I would then be relying on someone else to make me happy. If I push myself too far to help somebody and I'm constantly saying 'yes, yes, yes', then I'm falling back into the trap that I was in before.

Kylie is still in regular contact with the service. Her eldest son attends maths tutoring at the service during the school term and Kylie started to have counselling again herself at the beginning of 2007, after a significant violent episode with her sister. The counsellor is also providing her with grief counselling after her mother's recent death in September.

6.8 'Tina': 26 year old sole parent

Tina moved in with her partner and his family when she was 21. Their two daughters were born over the next 4 years. Her partner was very controlling and would verbally and physically abuse her. Tina's partner controlled all finances and made all decisions regarding what the family would do on a day-to-day basis. He would not allow her to take the children outside the family home unless accompanied by either himself or his mother. Tina left her partner several times during this period and would stay with her mother.

When Tina's first child was five months old, Tina moved back in with her mother who was dying of cancer. During this time Tina found out that she was pregnant with their second child. When her mother passed away Tina became homeless. Scared and not aware of any other options, Tina returned to live with her partner and his family.

Her partner's abuse continued and he started to physically abuse their eldest daughter. He also threatened to harm their newborn daughter.

When she was about three weeks he actually threatened to strangle her because she wouldn't stop crying. So that was it for me. I don't know why it took me that long to figure it out.

Tina moved in with her sister but her partner located her. Tina was seeing a grief and loss counsellor at that time and she sought help from her. The counsellor referred Tina to a domestic violence counsellor, who subsequently referred Tina to a women's crisis accommodation service in southern Sydney.

Tina and her daughters moved into crisis accommodation in May 2006. The service provided her with one-on-one counselling during her stay. The service also provided Tina with initial and ongoing financial assistance to keep her furniture in storage. With two children under the age of two years, she also found the service's occasional childcare very helpful for her counselling appointments and for respite. The service also referred Tina to a domestic violence support group at another local service, which Tina found very helpful.

Tina stayed in crisis accommodation for a little over three months and was then placed in the one of the service's transitional housing properties. The service provided her with furniture and whitegoods, and paid for a removalist to collect her furniture from storage.

Tina is currently studying for her Business Certificate III at TAFE. As she is studying, she is also eligible for subsidised childcare.

Tina was asked to describe what self-reliance means to her and how self-reliant she currently feels.

I think just being able to – with your finances and stuff – being able to support yourself and your children. Just trying to do things for yourself on your own decision. Not relying on someone else to make decisions for you and things like that.

It was a bit scary at first, leaving the service, because even though I knew I was going into another program which has a lot of support as well, I was still paying rent, electricity and food, so it wasn't as much support as I was getting at this service.

When Tina first moved into transitional accommodation she felt apprehensive because she had never lived on her own before. However, she believes that the crisis accommodation service prepared her well for living on her own. Previously Tina's mother or partner had made all the decisions for her.

Tina was asked to comment on what might hinder her self-reliance.

I suppose if I went into a relationship that turned sour. I think if I didn't have the sole parent pension too, without that I would be completely lost I think. That's a big help. And just living where I am at the moment I don't think that I would be able to afford private rent because I'm paying a subsidised rent. And I think that if I wasn't still in the support program I definitely would not be where I am today.

When Tina's grandmother recently passed away she sought grief and loss counselling from the service. Tina and her daughters are in regular contact with the service and attend various social events organised by them, such as family picnic days.

Tina and her daughters can remain in their transitional housing property for two years. She has applied for public housing from the Department of Housing, but was advised that she is not eligible for priority housing and that there is a twelve-year wait time.

6.9 'Kirra': 38 year old sole parent, of Maori descent

Kirra was working night shifts but could not find childcare for her daughter, who had recently returned to live with her after living interstate with her father. Kirra's employer refused her request to work day shifts, so Kirra had to leave her job to care for her daughter in the evenings. She fell behind in rent payments for her private rental accommodation and they were evicted. Kirra was also recovering from the effects of domestic violence and the subsequent court proceedings with her previous partner.

Kirra and her daughter were homeless when they approached Centrelink for an emergency payment and contacted a welfare agency for food vouchers. The welfare agency referred her to the homeless persons hotline, which then referred them to a crisis accommodation service. Kirra and her daughter stayed at this service for four days. They were then referred to another crisis accommodation service where they stayed for just under three months.

Kirra's caseworker helped Kirra obtain parenting payment from Centrelink. In addition, the service provided her with group domestic violence counselling and encouraged Kirra's daughter, who had developed suicidal ideation, to also consider counselling. Her daughter did not want counselling but accepted their referral to attend art therapy. Kirra believes this helped her daughter enormously.

The service helped Kirra enrol in a TAFE course to study social work. Kirra is also looking for part-time work but finding it difficult.

I've tried to find work, but it is really hard as a single mum because if you can find work that's fine but the problem is the hours and trying to put it around my daughter. Because she is a teenager it's really hard to find someone who will watch her at her age. And I can't leave her at home on her own.

Kirra was asked to describe what self-reliance means to her.

Myself. Reliance. What am I capable of and able to do. It's up to me. I've always had the motto, 'If I want to do something no one is going to do it for you'. I have to do it myself.

Asking for help, however, is something that Kirra now feels more comfortable doing and that this was an important lesson she learnt during her stay in the service. The service has also changed her perception of people generally, and she now believes that there are people who are willing to help her.

I didn't realise I was such a proud person. I was so closed-minded.

Kirra was asked to comment on what might hinder her self-reliance.

Are you talking material? Nothing. I have no idea. I don't really know until I come across it to be honest. I've always been like there must be some way of doing it.

The service helped Kirra and her daughter find and move into subsidised, transitional housing in March 2007. The service currently supports them through fortnightly visits from the service's outreach worker. Kirra finds this support helpful as she is currently dealing with a custody case with her daughter's father.

Kirra feels she has a long way to go before she is fully independent. She must leave transitional housing in January 2008 and is having difficulty finding a private rental. If she is able to find a place she is not sure she will be able to pay rent as well as buy food.

Now I have to tell my story again at the end of the year because I have to find my own accommodation. It's looking like I might have to return back to the

service. I don't want to but no one is giving me anything to rent because I am not working. No one wants to touch me because I am not working and I am a single mum.

Kirra is currently trying to find a place to rent beyond metropolitan Sydney.

6.10 Summary of issues

The clients whose stories we were able to obtain do not fully represent the SAAP clientele as a whole, even those who had made significant progress towards self-reliance. Most were women, for whom domestic violence was a significant factor in bringing them to a SAAP service for help. While there was one young man amongst them, we were not able to capture the experiences of older homeless men. Nevertheless, the case studies provide a useful illustration of the forms of assistance services provide and the impact that they have on recipients.

All clients were currently receiving income support, but most were now engaged in some form of education or training. All were still in regular contact with the program staff and were receiving some form of ongoing counselling or personal support.

For most participants, self-reliance meant learning how not to rely on another significant person, usually their parents and/or partner, for money, or to do things for them or make decisions for them.

The majority of participants are still receiving subsidised rental housing through the program, or through another government-funded service to which they had been referred. Thus the idea of no longer relying on the program, either through subsidised housing and/or ongoing counselling, was not something they looked forward to with confidence. Some expressed concern about how they would cope when they were no longer receiving SAAP support, especially in terms of finding their own accommodation and employment, and in managing financially.



7 Discussion and conclusions

One of the central aims of SAAP is to foster self-reliance amongst people who become homeless and need to seek help from services funded under the program. This study involved designing and carrying out a client survey to measure whether and to what extent receiving SAAP services facilitates positive change in client self-reliance, and to examine what forms this improvement takes for different client groups. The research was aimed to complement other work on outcome measures developed by SAAP.

The study noted at the outset that there are some problems with the concept of self-reliance as applied to homeless people, especially in the context of the limited resources available for SAAP service provision and the shortage of suitable and affordable accommodation for people facing social disadvantage. Nevertheless, one of the key findings of the study has been that while self-reliance is indeed a problematic concept, there is still a core of agreement attached to the term which most SAAP service users share. The most common definitions provided by respondents included, first, getting accommodation, and then resuming control over their lives in various ways. Getting a job, having sufficient money and feeling safe were also frequently mentioned, while children's wellbeing was particularly important for those for whom it was relevant. The barriers cited to achieving self-reliance included not only lack of money and available accommodation, but also problems in relationships with other people; lack of employment; drug and alcohol problems; depression, stress and other health factors; lack of support; and clients' own negative attitudes.

The survey attracted responses from 630 service users across Australia, including clients in all the States and Territories, recruited through 75 SAAP-funded services. While there were some minor differences, the sample was broadly representative of the SAAP service use population, bearing in mind that it focused on those with more than a brief engagement with services.

People's individual histories of housing difficulties and homelessness are complicated, and hard to summarise in quantitative terms. However, the survey shows that services often deal with people with long-term and entrenched experience of homelessness. While for many clients, particularly women escaping domestic violence, the current period of homelessness was the first they had experienced, for close to one in 10 in the sample the experiences of homelessness went back more than 20 years, and nearly two-thirds had been homeless more than once. Perhaps even more striking was the length of time respondents had been receiving help from the SAAP service. More than one-quarter reported getting help for between one and five years, and a further six per cent for more than five years. For men, the proportion getting help for five years or more was even higher, at 10 per cent. Clearly, for a significant minority, SAAP support is not just a short-term crisis intervention, but a long-term engagement. This suggests that the problems and barriers to self-reliance cited are often simply not susceptible to quick and easy solutions.

Overall, the survey provides a highly positive picture of the extent to which clients felt they had moved towards self-reliance after getting help from SAAP services. Most saw themselves as well on the way towards ‘getting back on their feet’. Although it is not possible to make direct claims of causality – many clients get help and support from individuals and services other than the particular SAAP service through which they were recruited for this survey – the strong implication is that the services are instrumental in this process. The case studies provide detailed examples of the range of supports provided by services that helped clients rebuild their lives, even though some service users still felt vulnerable and apprehensive about their long-term housing prospects. The kinds of comments offered in response to open-ended questions also showed how deeply grateful many clients felt for the help they had received from services.

The results suggest that the area where SAAP services have the most positive impact on self-reliance for the largest proportion of clients is, not surprisingly, in their core business of providing temporary accommodation and ongoing housing support. This is demonstrated not only by the response to the questions on progress made in the different domains of life (in which nearly 90 per cent said that access to accommodation had improved), but also in the changes in housing tenure reported before and after receiving assistance. These showed a significant movement away from the most insecure forms of dwelling (and literal rooflessness), and towards secure and affordable housing in the public and community housing sectors.

However, there were also many other areas of life where positive effects were identified, especially items in the ‘coping’ domain, relating to belief in clients’ own ability to get back on their feet, and to feeling safe and secure. These were also items of broad relevance amongst the sample as a whole. SAAP services seem to be having a strongly positive effect on clients’ feelings of safety and personal self-confidence. Issues relating to children also scored highly amongst those for whom they were relevant.

Where SAAP services are more limited in their effectiveness is in helping clients find work – an important route to gaining and sustaining self-reliance – although they do help some clients access training and education, and also act as an important link in connecting clients with income support through Centrelink. This is particularly crucial for women escaping domestic violence, who have to secure an independent source of income.

Another interesting finding is that apart from the length of involvement with services, and the frequency of previous homelessness episodes, most of the observable characteristics and circumstances of clients seemed to have little significant impact on the variation in outcomes. To some extent women seemed to do better generally than men, especially at getting paid work and accessing emotional support or counselling. Whether the latter is because women tend to be more open to such support or because services are more attuned to providing it for them (or both) is hard to tell. Age appeared to be an issue only in relation to getting accommodation, with the youngest and oldest age groups reporting slightly less improvement than the 25–50 year olds. There were also no significant differences in outcomes at the

average level between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients, or between CALD and non-CALD clients – although, as would be expected, clients whose first language was not English benefited particularly from help with language issues.

This relative equality of outcomes is positive in the sense that services mostly seem to be providing an equally effective level of support for all clients, regardless of their characteristics. However, these factors only accounted for a proportion of the variation in outcomes, and it is likely that factors not captured in the survey, such as differences in client personalities and experiences, and in the relative effectiveness of services, are responsible for the rest.

In spite of the positive outcomes clients reported, many were still living in temporary accommodation at the time of the survey, and saw themselves as continuing to need assistance in the future in a wide range of areas, particularly with longer-term housing options, help with coping with personal problems, and other forms of support.

This has important implications when put together with the findings about progress towards self-reliance. The factor that the survey identified as having the strongest positive influence on self-rated outcomes, holding other factors constant, was the length of time clients had been getting help from the service. Many of the problems and barriers to self-reliance cited are often simply not susceptible to quick and easy solutions, and services may often need to put long-term resources into client support to achieve good outcomes.

Another explanation could be that the longer clients are away from the initial event that precipitated their homelessness and brought them to the service, the less potent it is in their minds. These two explanations are not inconsistent, however, as part of what services provide is the opportunity for recovery from difficult circumstances. Several of the qualitative case studies showed that even where clients had received a wide range of highly effective supports from services, and had made considerable progress in getting their lives back on track, they still relied heavily on support from case workers or other services. Thus there is an argument for seeing continuing and long-term service receipt not as a sign of dependence, but rather as a necessary part of the journey towards eventual self-reliance – at least for some clients.

As was described in the report's section on methodology, there were inevitably some limitations to this study. Recruiting survey respondents through SAAP services turned out to be time-consuming and difficult. The final sample size was thus 16 per cent smaller than originally intended. The choice of recruitment criteria contributed to this difficulty, as some services did not have many clients with whom they had more than a brief engagement. While it should be recognised that the findings apply only to that part of the SAAP clientele who receive case management and are known to the service for more than a few weeks, these are nevertheless the service users whom we would expect SAAP services to assist most in rebuilding self-reliance. The sample also turned out to be large enough for detailed analysis, and included sufficient numbers of important sub-groups, such as Indigenous clients and clients from CALD backgrounds.

The use of a self-completion questionnaire may have created some bias in sampling towards those with fewer literacy problems, although help was available from service workers if required. We feel that it was an effective tool in that clients could track their own path to self-reliance, and could also indicate what that is comprised of, what remained for them to overcome and how they saw themselves being able to do this. So, although this is a self-administered quantitative tool, it permits deeper understanding of clients' situations, how far they have moved towards self-reliance in their own terms, and what further services and supports they believe that they require to assist them further.

Most of the questionnaire items worked well and produced consistent results, but the layout of one set of 'before' and 'now' questions appears to have caused difficulties for clients, resulting in a loss of around 25 per cent of useable responses to these particular questions. This would need to be addressed in any further research using a similar instrument by amending both the layout and the wording of these questions, but we do not believe that it invalidates the overall method of supported self-completion.

The key items concerning progress towards self-reliance and personal change in different domains of life produced rich and important information for policy makers and service managers in SAAP. We suggest that in an amended form the survey instrument could be used in the future as a means of regular data collection on client progress. Much of the basic demographic information would already be held on the SAAP client data system, allowing an abbreviated instrument to focus in more depth on the core items. The current instrument is, however, based only on client self-assessment. This is an important element of outcome measurement as it allows clients to reflect on the progress they have made in areas of particular importance to them. Nevertheless, there is an argument that in future research such measures need to be complemented, or triangulated, with other forms of outcome measurement, including individual assessment by case managers or other service staff, and scaled measures of achievement against personal client goals. Such methods are more labour-intensive than self-completion surveys, but could still be carried with smaller samples of clients, possibly focusing on client sub-groups of particular interest.

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Appendix A: Getting Back On Your Feet: a survey of people who use homelessness services

Getting Back On Your Feet

A Survey of People Who Use Homelessness Services

This survey is about how services for homeless people help them get back on their feet.

Some of the questions ask about your experiences before you came to this service for help, while others ask about changes since then.

Your answers will be confidential and they will be analysed in a way that does not identify you. You do not have to do this survey or answer every question in it. However, the results will be very important in helping to improve services for people in need.

Please fill in the boxes next to the answer that applies to you. Sometimes you will be asked to put a tick in the box and sometimes you will be asked to write in some information.

If you don't understand any of the questions, please ask one of the service staff for help. It should take you about 15 minutes.

When you have finished, please give the questionnaire to a staff member at the service in the envelope provided. They will give you a \$10 voucher as a thank you for your contribution.

The researchers doing the survey are from the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. We have been asked to do it by the Government Departments that fund homelessness services.

Thank you for your help!



Agency ID

1. How long have you been getting help from this service?

Please write in

2. Before you came to this service for help, how many times in your life did you not have a settled and secure place to live?

Please tick one box only

- Once
- A few times
- Often
- I always had a secure place to live
- Don't know/can't remember

3. When was the first time in your life you did not have a settled and secure place to live?

Please write in (eg. 1995, three years ago, last month etc.)

4. What were the *main* reasons you came to this service for help?

Please tick up to four boxes

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was evicted | <input type="checkbox"/> I was having money problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was told to leave | <input type="checkbox"/> I was taking drugs/drinking too much |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My emergency accommodation period ended | <input type="checkbox"/> I was losing money by gambling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I needed time out from family (or from a situation with other people) | <input type="checkbox"/> I had trouble with the law/police |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My relationship broke down | <input type="checkbox"/> I had just left gaol |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I needed to escape domestic violence | <input type="checkbox"/> I had just left hospital |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was being abused | <input type="checkbox"/> I had mental health problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My child (or children) was being abused | <input type="checkbox"/> I recently arrived in the area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I had recently left State care (or foster care etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> I was moving around |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please write in</i>): | |

5. How many times have you got help from services like this before?

Please tick one box only

- Never
- Once
- A few times
- Often
- Don't know/can't remember

We're interested in how people *get back on their feet* after getting help from services. To help us understand this, the next few questions ask you to write in a brief answer.

6. What does 'getting back on your feet' mean for you?

Please write in

7. What kinds of things make it difficult for you to get back on your feet? (Please write in)

8. In what ways has this service helped you? (Please write in)

9. Thinking about how things were for you *just before* you came to this service, how far do you feel you have *now* moved towards getting back on your feet?
Please mark on the line below where you feel you are now

How things were before	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Back on my feet
---------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	-----------------

10. How have these parts of your life changed since you started getting help from this service?
Please tick one box only in each row

	A lot better	A little better	Same	Worse	Does not apply to me
Accommodation					
Getting a place to live	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparing for my new home (getting furniture and household goods, paying the bond etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keeping up with rent/mortgage payments & household bills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looking after my home (cooking, cleaning, shopping)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting on with neighbours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Income/employment					
Getting paid work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doing training or more education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting a regular income	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looking after myself					
Taking care of my health (taking prescribed medications at the right time etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting support with my disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My drug or alcohol problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting emotional support/counselling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telling other people what I need (friends, family, Government departments etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships with other people					
Getting support from family or friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting on with people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social contacts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dealing with other organisations					
Dealing with Centrelink	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using the services that can help me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dealing with child custody/access/child support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting Apprehended Violence/Exclusion Orders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact with the law/police/gaols	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coping					
How I feel about myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Believing I can get back on my feet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating and expressing myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	A lot better	A little better	Same	Worse	Does not apply to me
Dealing with stress and problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling confident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling safe and secure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting around (transport)					
Getting to work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting to the shops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting to medical appointments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting to family, friends or social activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please write in):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

These questions are just for people who have children living with them

My relationship with my child(ren)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child(ren)'s health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child(ren)'s schooling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child(ren)'s friendships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access to childcare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looking after my child(ren)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dealing with custody/access/child support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

These questions are just for people whose first language isn't English

Help with speaking English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help with understanding English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. How helpful has this service been for you in these parts of your life?

Please tick one box only in each row

	Very helpful	Quite helpful	Not helpful	Does not apply to me
Accommodation (getting a place to live, keeping up with rent etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Income/employment (looking for work, regular income, managing my money etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looking after myself (taking care of my health, emotional support etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships with other people (support from family, social contacts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dealing with other organisations (Centrelink, child support, courts etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coping (dealing with stress and problems etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting around (transport to family, friends, shops, social activities etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My children (relationships, schooling, child support etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting help with English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Apart from this service, who else has been helpful (for example - other services, family, friends etc.)? (Please write in)

13. What do you think you might still need support with in the future? *(Please tick as many boxes as you like)*

- Accommodation (getting a place to live, keeping up with rent etc.)
- Income and employment (looking for work, regular income, managing my money etc.)
- Looking after myself (taking care of my health, emotional support etc.)
- Relationships with other people (support from family, social contacts etc.)
- Dealing with other organisations ((Centrelink, child support, courts etc.)
- Coping (dealing with stress and problems etc.)
- Getting around (transport to family, friends, shops, social activities etc.)
- My children (relationships, schooling, child support etc.)
- Getting help with English
- Other (please write in): _____

14. Which of the following best describes where you were living just before you came here?
Please tick one box only

- On my own
- With parents or other family in their own place
- With my partner (spouse/boyfriend/girlfriend) in our own place
- With friends

15. Which of the following best describes the type of accommodation you had before you came to this service, and where you are living now? *(please tick one box only in each column)*

	Just before I came here	Where I'm living now
Crisis accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medium-term temporary accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boarding in a private home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private rental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A house/unit I owned or was buying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boarding house/hostel/hotel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caravan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car/tent/park/street/squat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospital	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In State care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In prison or detention centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other <i>(please write in)</i> :	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Which of the following best describes your work situation *before* you came to this service for help and your situation *now*? (Please tick one box only in each column)

	Working for pay <i>before</i> coming here?	Working for pay <i>now</i> ?
Yes, full-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, part-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, casually	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, unemployed and looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, doing voluntary work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, home or family responsibilities (includes caring for a child or someone with a disability)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (<i>please write in</i>): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. Where did you mainly get your income from *before* you came to this service and where do you mainly get your income from *now*? (Please tick one box only in each column)

	Just before I came here	<i>Now</i>
Paid work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Centrelink payment (<i>please say which type of payment</i>): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family/spouse/partner/friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I didn't have any income	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (<i>please write in</i>): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now just a few final questions about yourself

18. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

19. How old were you on your last birthday?

Please write in your age in years: _____

20. Where were you born?

Please tick one box only

- Australia
- Another English-speaking country
- A non-English-speaking country

21. Do you usually speak a language other than English at home?*Please tick one box only*

- No
 Yes

22. Are you an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander?*Please tick one box only*

- No
 Yes

23. What is your marital status?*Please tick one box only*

- Married or living as a couple
 Separated/divorced
 Widowed
 Single

24. When you came to this service for help, did you come on your own or with someone else you were living with?*Please tick one box only*

- I came alone
 I came with my partner (spouse/boyfriend/girlfriend)
 I came with my child/ren
 I came with my partner and my child/ren
 I came with another family member (such as a brother, sister, aunt etc.)

25. If you have any children or young people living with you now, how old are they?*Please write in their ages*

Child 1 _____	Child 4 _____
Child 2 _____	Child 5 _____
Child 3 _____	Child 6 _____

26. Which of the following best describes your highest level of education?*Please tick one box only*

- Primary school
 Some secondary/high school
 Completed secondary/high school
 Trade certificate/apprenticeship or similar
 TAFE qualification
 University Bachelor degree or higher

Thank you very much for your help. Please give your questionnaire to a service staff member in the envelope provided. The research should be finished by about the middle of 2007 and all the services involved will be informed of the findings. We would like to let you know about the results. If you are interested please give your contact details to the staff member and you will be sent a copy of the summary.

Dr Tony Eardley
 Senior Research Fellow
 Social Policy Research Centre
 University of New South Wales



Appendix B: Topic guide for case study interviews

Name of Service: _____

1. We are interested in knowing a bit about why and how you came to [service name] – would you mind telling me a bit about what was happening in your life prior to you coming to the service? How long have you been/were you homeless? Have you been homeless on more than one occasion? (explore history of homelessness)
2. How did you find out about the service?
3. We are interested to know about how the service helped you – if at all – in the following areas of your life: [For each of the following areas ask]

Initial question: Did the service help you with [area of life]?

Follow up question: What specifically did the service do to help you with [area of life/response(s) from initial question], that you weren't able to do on your own – that is – prior to you coming to the service?

Areas of life

- *Accommodation [prompts if necessary:* getting a place to live; getting furniture etc; keeping accommodation; managing rent/mortgage/bills; cooking/cleaning/shopping]
- *Employment/Income [prompts if necessary:* financial assistance; looking for work; getting a job; getting a regular income; training or education; managing money]
- *Connect with other organisations that could help you [prompts if necessary:* income support from Centrelink; with police to get apprehended violence/exclusion orders; help with speaking/understanding English]
- *Deal with other organisations [prompts if necessary:* dealing with Centrelink; dealing with the law/police/gaols]
- *Looking after yourself [prompts if necessary:* taking prescription drugs; mental health support; support for your disability; help with Drug/Alcohol problem, other counselling services; telling other people what you need – friends/family/govt departments]
- *Relationships with other people [prompt if necessary:* getting on with family or friends; getting support from family/friends/people; getting on with neighbours]
- *Coping [prompts if necessary:* how you feel about yourself; believing you can get back on your feet; communicating and expressing yourself; dealing with stress and problems; feeling confident, feeling safe and secure].
- *Transport [prompts if necessary:* getting to work; getting to the shops; getting to medical/Centrelink/court appointment; getting to family/friends/social activities]

- *Child [ren] (if have) [prompts if necessary: your relationship with your children; children’s health; children’s schooling; children’s friendships; access to childcare; looking after your children; dealing with custody/access/child support]*
 - *Anything else?*
4. Apart from this service and people or organisations that we have already discussed, is there anyone else or thing *that has been helpful for you?* How have they helped?
 5. As you know, this study is about ‘self-reliance’. We are interested in knowing what the term *self-reliance* means to you. Can you tell me some of the things that *help* you be self-reliant?
 6. Can you tell me some of the things that hinder you from being self-reliant?
 7. Finally, just a few question about yourself

Sex	Male / Female
Age last birthday?	
Where were you born?	
Do you usually speak a language other than English at home?	YES / NO
Are you an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander?	YES / NO
What is your marital status?	<input type="checkbox"/> Married or living with someone <input type="checkbox"/> Separated/divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> Single
When you came to [name of service] for help, did you come on your own or with someone else you were living with?	<input type="checkbox"/> Came alone <input type="checkbox"/> Came with my partner (spouse/boyfriend/girlfriend) <input type="checkbox"/> Came with my children <input type="checkbox"/> Came with partner and children <input type="checkbox"/> Came with another family member (brother/sister/aunt etc)
If you have children or young people with you now, how old are they?	Child 1 _____ Child 2 _____ Child 3 _____ Child 4 _____ Child 5 _____ Child 6 _____

Which of the following best describes your highest level of education?

- Primary school
- Some secondary/high school
- Completed secondary/high school
- Trade certificate/apprenticeship or similar
- TAFE qualification
- University Bachelor degree or higher

