

CHAPTER 6

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

1. Temporary accommodation services have been developed to help the disadvantaged and the needy to obtain permanent accommodation or to provide short-term accommodation during periods of crisis, transition or study. These services are particularly pertinent to the Indigenous population because they are often low-income earners and can be highly mobile people.

2. For example, the submission from the Alice Springs Regional Council said that there is a need for temporary accommodation for people visiting Alice Springs that are accessing other services (such as medical services) and that family members also need accommodation when they visit.

3. There are two national programs that provide temporary accommodation and related services. The first is a mainstream program — the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) — and the second is an Indigenous-specific program - Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL).

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

4. The SAAP program was established in 1985 to consolidate a number of Commonwealth and State government programs providing assistance to people who were homeless or experiencing domestic violence.

5. SAAP is a mainstream program, which has the purpose of assisting those for whom the broader welfare support system has been inadequate in preventing homelessness. Since 1985, the Commonwealth and States have agreed to fund SAAP bilaterally.

6. Each SAAP funded agency has an identified primary target group¹:

- young people (aged 15-25);
- single men;
- single women;
- families;

¹ Indigenous people are not a primary target group.

- women escaping domestic violence; and
- cross target/multiple/general.

7. Agencies targeting young people constitute the largest group of SAAP funded agencies (34 per cent). Services targeting women escaping domestic violence comprised 28 per cent of agencies and agencies with multiple target groups comprised 14 per cent of agencies.

8. SAAP agencies provide assistance on a number of levels including crisis accommodation, long-term accommodation, day support, outreach support, telephone referral and other services.

9. In 1999-2000, 1 207 SAAP agencies provided services to over 90 000 clients with 157 000 support periods. There are 86 services managed by Indigenous organisations and another 43 services whose clients are mainly homeless Indigenous people. Figure 6-1 shows the location of SAAP agencies as of June 2000.

10. In April 1999, State and Federal Community Services Ministers agreed that SAAP is a vital and successful program that responds well to the needs of homeless people in Australia. They also agreed that SAAP should continue as a joint Commonwealth-State program, and decided on a strategic and administrative framework that would provide the policy foundation and administrative arrangements for SAAP from 2000 to 2005.

11. In 1999-2000, the total recurrent allocation of funds from the Commonwealth and States was \$245.5 million. A proportion (\$13.8 million) was allocated for administration, training, research and evaluation.

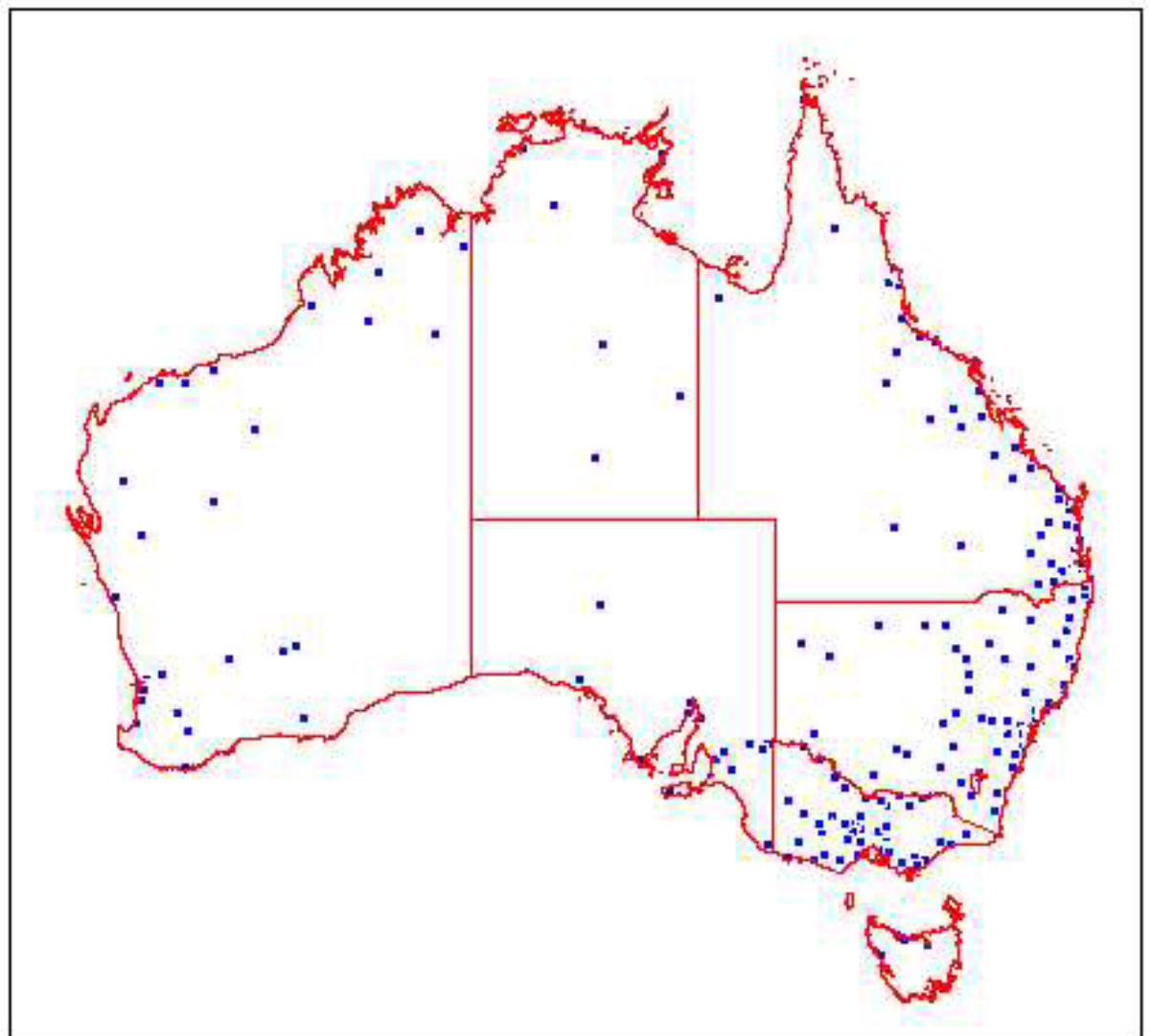
12. The SAAP National Data collection, 1999-2000 showed that:

- 14 per cent of SAAP clients were Indigenous people - they are only 2 per cent of the general population; and
- approximately twice as many Indigenous women used SAAP services as Indigenous men.

13. Capital funding for purchasing accommodation for SAAP is made through the Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) which also commenced in 1985. CAP is funded annually as a tied grant (of about \$50 million) under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA). SAAP/CAP are often referred to interchangeably. This is because the terms of the CSHA link CAP spending to the SAAP criteria for homelessness.

14. Table 6-1 shows the proportion of Indigenous SAAP clients for 1998-99, the last year for which these data are available. The Northern Territory (47 per cent) and Western Australia (31 per cent) were the two States with the highest percentage of Indigenous clients.

Figure 6-1 SAAP AGENCIES BY LOCATION, JUNE 2000



15. (a) These locations are based on the postcodes of SAAP agencies therefore the map is based on the centroid of each postcode. There are some 1207 SAAP agencies in Australia many of which are located within the same postcode areas, thus not all SAAP agencies are visible and location dots overlap.

Source: 1996 Census Cdata file.

Table 6-1 INDIGENOUS PROPORTION OF TOTAL SAAP CLIENTS, 1998-1999

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Indigenous (%)	13.4	4.4	14.2	30.6	13.2	8.8	8.3	47.2	13.0
Non-Indigenous (%)	86.6	95.6	85.8	69.4	86.8	91.2	91.7	52.8	87.0
Total no. of clients	25 100	27 000	13 800	7 200	6 600	3 200	1 700	2 900	87 500

Sources: *SAAP National data Collection Annual Report 1998-1999*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra, 2000.

16. In 1999-2000 Indigenous women escaping domestic violence registered the greatest number of support periods (8 340). The greatest number of support periods provided was in capital cities (8 152), followed by remote centres (6 071). Details of the use of SAAP services by Indigenous people are in Table 6-2.

Table 6-2 INDIGENOUS CLIENTS BY TARGET GROUPS AND REGIONS, 1999-2000

Primary target group	Indigenous support periods					Total	Total support periods
	Capital city	Other metro	Large rural centre	Other rural centre	Remote centre		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	No.
Young people	38.8	8.2	16.3	19.6	17.0	100	4 001
Single men only	44.7	2.4	7.3	4.9	40.1	100	3 352
Single women only	87.6	3.5	2.9	5.7	0.0	100	510
Families	53.0	26.7	7.7	12.0	0.8	100	1 437
Women escaping domestic violence	23.8	3.1	7.2	26.5	39.3	100	8 340
Cross target/multiple/general	39.8	5.6	11.5	27.8	15.2	100	4 786

Source: Data supplied by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, January 2001.

17. Table 6-3 shows the types of assistance provided. The most common forms of assistance were 'housing/accommodation' and 'other support'. Other support includes provision of meals, laundry/shower facilities, recreation, transport, and brokerage services. Both have around 25 per cent of the total support periods.

Table 6-3 TYPES OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FOR INDIGENOUS CLIENTS, 1999-2000

Type of assistance	Proportion of total Indigenous	Proportion of Australian total
	%	%
Housing/accommodation	25.9	16.2
Financial/employment	9.6	13.0
Counselling	11.8	13.2
General/advocacy	19.2	12.3
Specialist services	8.9	18.3
Other support	24.5	16.7
Total	100.0	14.8

(a) These percentages do not include 'non response'.

Source: Data supplied by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, January 2001.

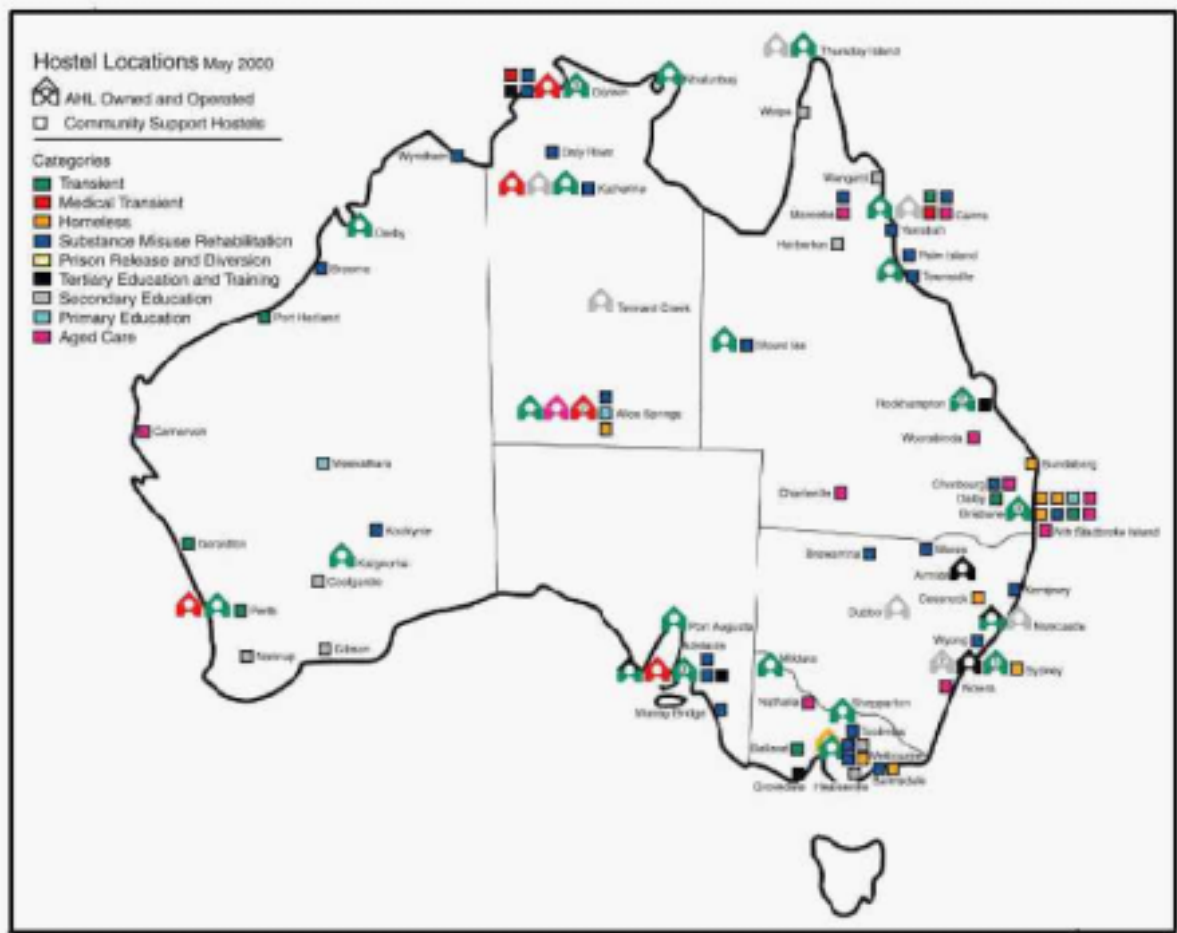
Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL)

18. AHL was incorporated in June 1973 as a company wholly owned by the Commonwealth. It provides low-cost temporary accommodation for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders through a network of hostels. The company owns and operates some hostels and contracts community organisations to run other hostels (known as Community Support Hostels) under AHL instructions. The company has an Indigenous Board of Directors and is largely staffed and managed by Indigenous Australians.

19. Figure 6-2 shows the location of Aboriginal hostels across Australia. Hostels are predominantly located in metropolitan and rural centres.

20. Accommodation is offered in the following categories: transient; medical transient; homeless; substance misuse rehabilitation; prison release and diversion; tertiary education and training; primary and secondary education; and aged care. In 1999-2000, hostels for transient and the homeless formed the largest group (47 hostels, 1 157 beds) followed by substance misuse rehabilitation (29 hostels, 511 beds).

Figure 6-2 ABORIGINAL HOSTELS LIMITED LOCATIONS, 2000



Source: Aboriginal Hostels Website, February 2001.

21. Table 6-4 shows the distribution of hostels between the AHL Regions and the average occupancy rates achieved in 1999-2000. In 1999-2000 there were 133 hostels providing over 3 000 beds with an annual average occupancy rate of 68.5 per cent.

Table 6-4 HOSTELS BY OCCUPANCY RATES

AHL Regions	Total hostels	Total beds	Occupancy rates	
			AHL hostels	Community hostels
			%	%
New South Wales	21	400	62	79
Victoria/Tasmania	15	225	78	65
Southern Queensland	21	451	66	68
Northern Queensland	21	637	63	53
Western Australia	18	442	88	71
South Australia	15	180	73	72
Northern Australia	14	495	64	68
Central Australia	8	262	84	57
Total	133	3 092	70	67

Source: Derived from *Aboriginal Hostels Limited Annual Report 1999-2000*, Appendices 3 and 4, pp77-85.

22. Table 6-5 shows the regional spread of hostels, which cater for transient and homeless Indigenous people, and the number of available beds. These hostels account for 35 per cent of all hostels across Australia. Most of the available beds are in Queensland and Northern Australia (about 60 per cent).

Table 6-5 TRANSIENT/HOMELESS HOSTELS

AHL Regions	Transient and homeless hostels	Total hostels	Targeting homeless/transient clients	Total transient/homeless beds
New South Wales	4	21	19.0	34
Victoria/Tasmania	7	15	46.7	109
Southern Queensland	10	21	47.6	202
Northern Queensland	6	21	28.6	210
Western Australia	8	18	44.4	135
South Australia	5	15	33.3	86
Northern Australia	5	14	35.7	292
Central Australia	2	8	25.0	89
Total	47	133	35.3	1 157

Source: Derived from *Aboriginal Hostels Limited Annual Report 1999-2000*, Appendices 3 and 4, pp77-85.

23. AHL aims to locate its hostels in areas of greatest needs as identified by its research. It also changes the mix of available accommodation by withdrawing contracts from under-performing community hostels. AHL regularly evaluates the needs and performance of community hostels by monitoring occupancy rates.

24. The Commonwealth funds AHL's shortfall between operating costs and tariffs received. The operating subsidy for 1999-2000 was \$34 million and a capital grant of \$2.23 million was also provided. Department of Health and Aged Care also provided \$3.9 million to assist in meeting the needs of aged Indigenous people and for SAAP agencies in Victoria.

25. Keys Young in its report on Homelessness² noted that there are two problems associated with access to AHL services — namely:

- (i) residents of the hostels are catered for and living skills are not taught. Therefore, residents have a 'home away from home' and are not encouraged to move to more permanent accommodation; and
- (ii) a modest 'up front' fee is charged so the destitute may not have access.

Temporary Dwellings

26. This section provides the basic information available about temporary dwellings or improvised dwellings – those living in these dwellings are often defined as homeless. Sources of information about families or single people in temporary accommodation (other than SAAP and AHL) are the Census and the Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS). Both attempt to define and measure the extent of temporary accommodation.

- (i) CHINS 1999 defined temporary dwelling as 'a structure used as place of residence, which does not meet the building requirements to be considered a permanent dwelling. Types of structures included are caravans; tin sheds without internal walls; humpies; dongas; and other makeshift shelters'.
- (ii) The Census 1996 used improvised dwellings to cover people in, sleepers out, tent – people in sheds, humpies and other improvised dwellings. It also included people sleeping on park benches or in other 'rough' accommodation. Also tents occupied which are not in caravan parks. Data on the number of people in improvised dwellings are shown in Chapter 1.

² Keys Young. *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait context and its possible implications for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, Final Report*, November 1998.

CHINS Data

27. The CHINS 1999 data show:

- there are some 2 281 occupied temporary dwellings in Indigenous discrete communities in Australia;
- there are close to 8 000 Indigenous people living in these temporary dwellings, an national average of 3.5 people per dwelling; and
- the number of people living in temporary dwellings that require permanent housing.

28. A regional analysis of the number of people requiring permanent housing is in Table 6-6. Apatula and the Cooktown region had over 200 temporary dwellings. But, the number of people living in temporary dwellings was the highest in Jabiru with a total of 1 089 people living in only 138 dwellings - an average of 7.9 people per improvised dwelling, which is much higher than the national Indigenous average of 3.7 people.

USING SAAP DATA TO MEASURE NEED

29. The provision of temporary accommodation reflects both the short term need for this form of accommodation and the long term need for additional housing.

30. Some of the SAAP data can be dissected at State level (see Table 6-1) and some of the information can be constructed at the ATSIC region level. However, SAAP data are not suitable for measuring needs at the ATSIC regional level because:

- the SAAP client data has been adjusted to compensate for a certain amount of missing data. This manipulation means that dissecting data by ATSIC region is not possible as the data would be unreliable and would raise questions of validity; and
- the location information for clients is actually based on the location of SAAP agencies, not where the client normally lives. Clients may have come from surrounding areas or interstate to access the SAAP agencies. Thus, the location data are not a good indication of need as they only illustrate where the services are being provided, not the actual need of a specific region.

31. This does not preclude the use of data from both SAAP and AHL by State housing bodies or joint planning groups in local planning.

32. The provision of different forms of temporary accommodation for Indigenous people is an important aspect of total housing need. However, data are limited and the extent to which needs are met is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, measures of the current use of services are better than nothing and can help better plan each service.

Table 6-6 TEMPORARY DWELLING DATA, 1999

ATSI Region	Occupied temporary dwellings	People living in temporary dwellings	Ave. no number of people per dwelling	People requiring permanent housing	% of people requiring permanent housing
Sydney	5	12	2.4	12	100.0
Queanbeyan (includes ACT)	14	24	1.7	24	100.0
Binaal Billa (Wagga Wagga)	35	52	1.5	48	92.3
Murdi Paaki (Bourke)	35	120	3.4	118	98.3
Kamilaroi (Tamworth)	5	7	1.4	7	100.0
Many Rivers (Coffs Harbour)	18	51	2.8	51	100.0
Total New South Wales	112	266	2.4	260	97.7
Binjurr (Wangaratta)	2	3	1.5	3	100.0
Tumbukka (Ballarat)	2	2	1.0	0	0.0
Total Victoria	4	5	1.3	3	60.0
South East Queensland (Brisbane)	30	47	1.6	47	100.0
Goolburri (Roma)	0	0	-	0	-
Central Queensland (Rockhampton)	0	0	-	0	-
Townsville	22	22	1.0	22	100.0
Cairns and District	92	265	2.9	263	99.2
Gulf and West Queensland (Mount Isa)	33	181	5.5	181	100.0
Peninsula (Cooktown)	233	809	3.5	809	100.0
Torres Strait	69	222	3.2	201	90.5
Total Queensland	479	1 546	3.2	1 523	98.5
Perth Noongar	1	10	10.0	10	100.0
Kaata-Wangkinyinyi (Narrogin)	7	5	0.7	5	100.0
Yamatji (Geraldton)	18	35	1.9	35	100.0
Ngarda-Ngarli-Yarndu (South Hedland)	89	286	3.2	284	99.3
Kullari (Broome)	134	578	4.3	575	99.5
Malarabah (Derby)	124	402	3.2	355	88.3
Wunan (Kununurra)	120	424	3.5	378	89.2
Western Desert (Warburton)	59	175	3.0	154	88.0
Wongatha (Kalgoorlie)	25	75	3.0	70	93.3
Total Western Australia	577	1 990	3.4	1 866	93.8
Patpa Warra Yunti (Adelaide)	11	32	2.9	14	43.8
Wangka-Wilurrara (Ceduna)	30	64	2.1	60	93.8
Nulla Wimila Kutju (Port Augusta)	94	253	2.7	131	51.8
Total South Australia	135	349	2.6	205	58.7
Total Tasmania	0	0	-	0	-
Yilli Rreung (Darwin)	5	9	1.8	6	66.7
Jabiru	138	1 089	7.9	1 077	98.9
Miwatj (Nhulunbuy)	126	481	3.8	410	85.2
Garrak-Jarru (Katherine)	192	670	3.5	632	94.3
Yappakurlangu (Tennant Creek)	131	431	3.3	346	80.3
Papunya (Apatula)	273	783	2.9	688	87.9
Alice Springs	109	335	3.1	335	100.0
Total Northern Territory	974	3 798	3.9	3 494	92.0
Total	2 281	7 954	3.5	7 351	92.4

Source: *Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey*, produced by ABS on behalf of ATSI, Canberra, 1999.