



Final Report

Sustaining at-risk Indigenous tenancies: a review of Australian policy responses

authored by

**Paul Flatau, Anne Coleman, Paul Memmott,
Jo Boulderstone and Michele Slatter**

for the

**Australian Housing and Urban Research
Institute**

Western Australia Research Centre
Queensland Research Centre
Southern Research Centre

October 2009

AHURI Final Report No. 138

ISSN: 1834-7223

ISBN: 978-1-921610-24-0

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Authors | Flatau, Paul Coleman, Anne Memmott, Paul Boulderstone, Jo Slatter, Michele | Murdoch University Murdoch University University of Queensland Flinders University Flinders University |
| Title | Sustaining at-risk Indigenous tenancies: a review of Australian policy responses | |
| ISBN | 978-1-921610-24-0 | |
| Format | PDF | |
| Key Words | Indigenous, tenancy, at-risk, Australian policy | |
| Editor | Jim Davison | AHURI National Office |
| Publisher | Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Melbourne, Australia | |
| Series | AHURI Final Report; no. 138 | |
| ISSN | 1834-7223 | |
| Preferred Citation | Flatau, P et al. (2009) <i>Sustaining at-risk Indigenous tenancies: a review of Australian policy responses</i> . AHURI Final Report No. 138. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Western Australia Research Centre. | |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This material was produced with funding from the Australian Government, the Australian states and territories and AHURI participating universities. AHURI Limited gratefully acknowledges the financial and other support it has received from the Australian, state and territory governments, without which this work would not have been possible.

AHURI comprises a network of eleven universities clustered into seven Research Centres across Australia. Research Centre contributions, both financial and in-kind, have made the completion of this report possible.

We would like to thank the managers and staff of tenant support programs around Australia who completed the Australian Tenant Support Program Survey.

Site visits were undertaken to tenant support program and relevant homelessness early intervention administrators in New South Wales, Victoria and the Northern Territory. We would like to thank the following people for meeting us and providing invaluable assistance during our site visits to New South Wales, Victoria and the Northern Territory: Philip Borg and Thea Walsh (Department of Community Services, NSW), Trish Connolly, Sue Findlay, Peter Usher, and Lauvena Wang (Housing NSW), Diane Chapman and Kyree Cooper (Aboriginal Housing Office NSW), Liza Sloan (St George Community Housing), Jean Forbes (Aboriginal Mental Health), Julie Harrison (Metro Community Housing Co-op Ltd); Diane Godfrey, Richard Keane, Peter Lake and Marita Nyhuis (Department of Human Services, Victoria), Dan Laws (Ngwala Willumbong Co-op), Jenny Plant (St Kilda Crisis Services), Jenny Dawson (Youth Services Private Access program), Julia Canty-Waldron (HomeGround Services); Julie Brimson, Sarah Fairhead, Hannah Feneley Peter Holt, and Grace Page (Territory Housing), Harold Ulamari, Gregory Thompson and Darryl Winter (Yilli Rreung Aboriginal Housing Corporation), Toni Vine Bromley (NT Shelter) Michelle Brown and Jill Rechner (NT Families and Children), Mike Byrne (Ozanam House) and Catherine Holmes (Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation).

We would also like to thank those who assisted us with case studies in various sites including staff of the HOME Advice program in the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Rachel Abdulla and Scott Buick from the Wodlitanattoai-Salisbury South Australian HOME Advice service and Graeme Kerkin, Centacare SA and Anna Paris from Ruah Community Services. Particular thanks, too, to Jonathan Leitch and Erica Theos and all the other staff from the Queensland Department of Housing, James Finn of the Queensland Department of Communities and Elizabeth Davidson, the CEO of Bahloo. Finally, we would like to thank Department of Housing staff of the North-West Queensland area office and the Administrator, President and Directors Jimberella, for their assistance in the Mt Isa and Djarra case study.

Kathryn Taylor provided excellent research assistance for the project and Lee-chelle Laing provided invaluable assistance in administering the project from its inception.

The authors would like to acknowledge the support provided to the project by the AHURI User Group of Veronica Craddock, Claire Crombie-Brown, Genevieve Errey, Kartika Franks, Meredith Gibbons, Lana Johnson, Jonathan Lang, Tony Newman, Penny Sullivan, Lucetta Thomas and Ellen Wood.

Grania Sheehan and Tamlin Gorter of AHURI Ltd provided excellent management of the project.

Finally, we would like to thank an anonymous referee for their comments on a previous version of the Final Report.

The opinions in this publication reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of any person or organisation that has provided assistance or otherwise participated in this study in any way.

DISCLAIMER

AHURI Ltd is an independent, non-political body that has supported this project as part of its program of research into housing and urban development, which it hopes will be of value to policy-makers, researchers, industry and communities. The opinions in this publication reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of AHURI Ltd, its Board or its funding organisations. No responsibility is accepted by AHURI Ltd or its Board or its funders for the accuracy or omission of any statement, opinion, advice or information in this publication.

PEER REVIEW STATEMENT

This Report is the product of a double-blind peer review where anonymity is strictly observed between authors and referees.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-------------|
| CONTENTS | V |
| TABLES | VI |
| FIGURES | VII |
| ACRONYMS | VIII |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 1 |
| 1 INTRODUCTION | 12 |
| 2 METHOD | 17 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 17 |
| 2.2 Definitions and key concepts | 17 |
| 2.3 Research design | 19 |
| 2.4 Conclusion | 23 |
| 3 AUSTRALIAN TENANT SUPPORT PROGRAMS | 25 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 25 |
| 3.2 Description of Australian programs..... | 26 |
| 3.3 Tenant support program client characteristics, supports and outcomes..... | 39 |
| 3.4 Tenant Support Programs: working with Indigenous clients and support providers..... | 45 |
| 3.5 Conclusion | 47 |
| 4 TENANT SUPPORT PROGRAM CASE STUDIES | 50 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 50 |
| 4.2 HOME Advice Program: the Wodlitanattoai service, Salisbury South Australia..... | 50 |
| 4.3 Same House Different Landlord case study | 58 |
| 4.4 Ruah - Tenancy Support in Western Australia..... | 65 |
| 4.5 Conclusion | 77 |
| 5 INDIGENOUS TENANCY ISSUES AND SUPPORT IN NORTH-WEST QUEENSLAND: A CASE STUDY | 79 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 79 |
| 5.2 Context..... | 80 |
| 5.3 Tenancy support services in Mt Isa | 84 |
| 5.4 Tenancy support services in Dajarra | 90 |
| 5.5 The new ICHOs arrangement..... | 96 |
| 5.6 Case study | 97 |
| 6 SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH | 100 |
| REFERENCES | 103 |
| APPENDIX A: AUSTRALIAN HOMELESSNESS EARLY INTERVENTION MEASURES AND PROGRAMS RELATED TO TENANCY SUPPORT | 108 |
| APPENDIX B: THE AUSTRALIAN TENANT SUPPORT PROGRAM SURVEY | 119 |

TABLES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 1: Topics and questions covered by the Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey | 21 |
| Table 2: Australian Specialist Tenant Support Programs | 27 |
| Table 3: Distribution of supported housing accommodation program clients in Western Australia..... | 34 |
| Table 4: Australian Specialist Tenant Support Programs: client referral reasons, needs, support services and outcomes | 38 |
| Table 5: Avoidance of eviction, the Supported Tenancy Program, South Australia, 2007-08..... | 43 |
| Table 6: Client outcomes, the Supported Tenancy Program, South Australia, 2007-08 | 44 |
| Table 7: Australian Specialist Tenant Support Programs: working with Indigenous clients and support providers..... | 48 |
| Table 8: Sources of referral, HOME Advice Program, Australia and the Wodlittinattoai Service, 2006-2007..... | 53 |
| Table 9: Issues facing clients, HOME Advice Program, Australia and the Wodlittinattoai Service, 2006-2007..... | 53 |
| Table 10: Client services, HOME Advice Program, Australia and the Wodlittinattoai Service, 2006-2007..... | 55 |
| Table 11: Assessment of overall change in family situation (after support period), HOME Advice Program, Australia and the Wodlittinattoai Service, 2006-2007.... | 55 |
| Table 12: Ruah Tenancy Support – South East, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD/NESB supported individuals..... | 69 |
| Table 13: Ruah Tenancy Support – South East, client tenancy outcomes, cases closed during the reporting period | 71 |
| Table 14: The Mt Isa population, 1976 to 2006 | 81 |
| Table 15: The Dajarra population, 1976 to 2006 | 83 |
| Table A1: Selected early intervention homelessness initiatives, life skills programs and other initiatives with Tenancy Support Components: NSW, Victoria, and Western Australia..... | 111 |

FIGURES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1: The HOME Advice referrals, service response and outcomes chart..... | 52 |
| Figure A1: Tenancy support and related homelessness early intervention programs in NSW | 116 |
| Figure A2: Tenancy support and related homelessness early intervention programs in Victoria..... | 117 |
| Figure A3: Tenancy support and related homelessness early intervention programs in Western Australia | 118 |

ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------------|---|
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| APTCH | A Place to Call Home (Australian Government) |
| APY | Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands |
| ATODS | Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services |
| ATSI | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander |
| ATSS | Aboriginal Tenant Support Service (WA) |
| ATSP | Australian Tenant Support Program Survey |
| CALD | Culturally and Linguistically Diverse |
| CAP | Crisis Accommodation Program (Australian Government) |
| CDEP | Community Development Employment Program |
| CHINS | Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey |
| CMSU | Boarding House Program/Community Managed Housing |
| CRS | Community Rent Scheme |
| CSO | Community Service Organisation |
| DAIA | Department of Aboriginal Islander Affairs |
| DCP | Department for Child Protection (WA) |
| DOGIT | Deed-of-Grant-in-Trust |
| FaHCSIA | Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (Australian Government Department) |
| FHPP | Family Homelessness Prevention Pilot (Australian Government) |
| FVPRAP | Family Violence Private Rental Access Program (Vic) |
| HACC | Home and Community Care (WA) |
| HASI | Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (NSW) |
| HOME Advice | The Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program (Australian Government) |
| IBA | Indigenous Business Australia |
| ICH | Indigenous Community Housing |
| IHO | Indigenous Housing Organisation |
| IHPSP | In-Home Practical Support Program (WA) |
| I&IF | Innovation and Investment Fund |
| IIP | Intensive Intervention Program (SA) |
| ILP | Independent Living Program (WA) |
| ITAR | Indigenous Tenancies at Risk (Vic) |
| ITAS | Indigenous Tenancy Advocacy Service (WA) |
| JGOS | Joint Guarantee of Service (NSW) |

| | |
|-------|--|
| KASH | Kalkadoon Aboriginal Sobriety House |
| NSEB | non-English-speaking background |
| NGO | Non-Government Organisation |
| NSW | New South Wales |
| NT | Northern Territory |
| PJSHP | Port Jackson Supported Housing Program (NSW) |
| PRAAL | Private Rental Aboriginal Assistance Loan (WA) |
| PRAS | Private Rental Access Scheme (WA) |
| PRSAP | Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program (WA) |
| PRTSS | Private Rental Tenancy Support Service (Tas) |
| RTS | Ruah Tenancy Support-South East (WA) |
| REIQ | Real Estate Institute of Queensland |
| Qld | Queensland |
| SA | South Australia |
| SAHT | South Australian Housing Trust (SA) |
| SAAP | Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (Joint Australian and State/Territory Governments Program) |
| SHAP | Supported Housing Assistance Program (WA) |
| SHASP | Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (Vic) |
| SHDL | Same House Different Landlord (Qld) |
| SPER | State Penalties Enforcement Registry (Qld) |
| STP | Supported Tenancies Program (SA) |
| TASS | Community Transitional Accommodation and Support Services (TASS) |
| TFT | Ruah Tenancy Fast Track |
| TSP | Tenancy Sustainability Program (NT) |
| Vic | Victoria |
| WA | Western Australia |
| YPRA | Youth Private Rental Access Program (Vic) |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

One of the most distressing features of Indigenous housing disadvantage is the high rate of homelessness among Indigenous people. At the 2006 Census, the recorded Indigenous homelessness rate was 4.3 per cent, over eight times higher than the rate of homelessness in the non-Indigenous population of 0.5 per cent.

In its recently released White Paper on homelessness, *The Road Home, A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, the Australian Government identified the closing of the gap in the rate of homelessness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as an important indicator by which the success of its homelessness reform agenda could be judged (Commonwealth of Australia 2008, p.21). The 2009 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness between the Commonwealth of Australia and the states and territories includes a specific target to reduce overall Indigenous homelessness by a third on the 2006 Census baseline figure.

This study was completed prior to the implementation of the 2009 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. As such, it provides insights into tenant support programs and homelessness early intervention programs as they operated before the implementation of the 2009 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

Reducing Indigenous homelessness requires a broad policy response; one that addresses the many deep-seated causes of homelessness among Indigenous people. Programs aimed at sustaining tenancies for those at risk of homelessness represent a critical part of a homelessness alleviation framework.

The present study examines the role tenant support programs, and other tenancy support measures, can play in assisting Indigenous households avoid homelessness and sustain tenancies which may otherwise fail. In doing so, the study fills a significant gap in the research and policy literature.

An at-risk tenancy is one in which households:

- Face significant difficulties in establishing and/or sustaining their tenancies due to immediate or long-standing social, health or economic needs.
- Are under threat of possible or actual eviction as a result of rent arrears, accumulated housing debt or tenancy breaches including property damage, inadequate property standards and anti-social behaviour.

Tenant support programs seek to assist those tenants at risk of losing their tenancy maintain their tenancy and so avoid eviction and entry into homelessness. Tenant support programs may also work at the front end of a tenancy. They do so by supporting formerly homeless people enter and sustain a new tenancy.

Governments fund and manage tenant support programs. Support services to clients are provided by non-government agencies. In other words, tenancy support programs around Australia operate on the basis of a split between the financing and management functions of programs and the service delivery functions.

Our study draws on the following sources of evidence:

- The policy-related and research literature on tenant support programs.

- Findings from the Australian Tenant Support Program Survey, undertaken as part of the present study.
- Site visits to a range of programs and services around Australia, in-depth case studies of selected programs, and a detailed 'locality-based' case study of Mt Isa and the Dajarra Township in North West Queensland.

Australian tenant support programs

A key source of information on Australian tenant support programs is the Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey. The ATSP Survey was developed and implemented as part of the present study and administered to all government-funded specialist tenant support programs around Australia. It sought to gather information on the operation of tenant support programs around Australia, their referral mechanisms, the services provided to Indigenous clients and the outcomes achieved by Indigenous clients from the program.

A major difficulty in collecting information on tenant support programs operating across Australia is that each jurisdiction administers its tenant programs on an independent basis. The collection of data is also undertaken at the jurisdictional level; no national administrative data collection covering tenant support programs exists as it does for the Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program.

Furthermore, tenant support programs differ in the type of information they collect. Not all programs collect data across all domains for which we sought information in the ATSP Survey. In particular, not all programs collect information on client outcomes or collect data on a unit record basis which would allow them to differentiate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes.

As a result, we do not have nationally consistent data on tenant support programs and we know less about the operation and effectiveness of tenant support programs and their achievements in sustaining at-risk Indigenous tenancies than is desirable.

Key programs

The first identifiable tenancy support programs in Australia began in public housing. The longest running and largest tenant support program supporting at-risk public housing tenants in Australia is the Western Australian Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP), which commenced in 1991. In Victoria, most Indigenous households at risk of homelessness in public and transitional housing or community-managed housing, including Aboriginal Housing Victoria properties, are supported through the Indigenous Tenancies at Risk (ITAR) program. The South Australian Supported Tenancy Program (STP) provides support services to public rental housing tenants across South Australia. The Intensive Intervention Program (IIP) provides intensive support for a small number of Indigenous households each year in public rental housing properties in The Parks area in Adelaide.

The Queensland Same House Different Landlord (SHDL) program provides a different model of tenancy support in public housing to those operating in other jurisdictions. Under the SHDL program, tenants enter public housing from crisis and emergency transitional accommodation without physically relocating to another dwelling. In other words, households in crisis and transitional housing stay in the same house, but simply change their landlord and tenancy arrangements.

In 2009, Northern Territory Housing introduced a major new tenancy support program for Indigenous clients, the Tenancy Sustainability Program (TSP). The TSP aims to provide life skills training and a case management service which meets the needs of

Indigenous people living in public housing and 'urban community living areas' (often known as town camps) in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek.

A number of jurisdictions have recently introduced tenant support programs in private rental housing. Two important private rental tenancy support programs are the Western Australian Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program (PRSAP), which commenced operations in 2003 as an initiative of the Western Australian State Homelessness Strategy and the Tasmanian Private Rental Tenancy Support Service (PRTSS), which began operations in 2005.

The New South Wales Community Housing Office has recently introduced a number of tenancy support programs for those exiting homelessness, My Place and Port Jackson Supported Housing Program (PJSHP) and is trialling a third, the Allawah Dual Diagnosis pilot project for Indigenous homeless people with mental health and drug and alcohol dependency problems. These programs provide tenancy and other support services to formerly homeless people accessing housing and work intensively with a small number of clients, many of whom are Indigenous.

The Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice program is a large national homelessness early intervention program funded and administered by the Australian Government. The HOME Advice program seeks to identify families at risk of homelessness before they reach crisis stage and provide tenancy and personal support services to these families irrespective of their housing tenure. Around one quarter of HOME Advice clients are Indigenous.

As the description of tenant support programs indicates, there is no shortage of programs around Australia providing support to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients.

Referral reasons and sources

The over-riding reason for an existing tenant to be referred to a tenant support program is that their tenancy is under threat of eviction. Rent arrears; tenant liabilities; poor property standards; other breaches of a tenancy; and neighbourhood issues/conflict are some of the key housing-related indicators that reveal a tenancy to be in an at-risk position.

Lying behind these tenancy-based referral reasons are a myriad of personal drivers of tenancy problems. They include mental and physical illnesses, relationship breakdown, loss of employment, hospitalisation/rehabilitation, experiences of family and domestic violence, and incarceration of one or more of those in the household.

Respondents to the ATSP Survey also identified a number of drivers of tenancy problems in Indigenous households. These include:

- Discrimination by landlords and neighbours.
- Failure of landlords and housing agencies to appropriately address cultural behaviour and imperatives such as duties of hospitality, extended family responsibilities and demand sharing.
- Lack of understanding of Indigenous patterns of occupation and use of housing (domiciliary behaviour).
- Indigenous belief systems and mourning customs.
- Inability to meet unforeseen expenses such as funeral costs.
- Indigenous patterns of mobility.

Indigenous people are more likely to live in regional or remote areas where there may be a limited number of support services available to assist people to address risk factors placing tenancies at risk. When Indigenous people move to urban areas from remote communities they may not have the urban-based 'life skills' necessary to maintain a tenancy.

Tenancy support programs that provide assistance to sustain a tenancy on entry have a very different profile of referral reasons to those programs designed to assist existing tenants under threat of eviction. In terms of the former type of program, the key grounds for referral to the program is that of homelessness, a past history of housing tenancy management problems, and other housing-related needs such as outstanding debts. Significant non-housing-related needs are also critical to the referral.

Not surprisingly, public housing specialist tenant support programs rely exclusively on referrals from their own public housing property managers. Other tenant support programs, however, rely on a broader range of referral sources. For example, the HOME Advice Program has a significant self-referral component. It also draws clients from Centrelink, reflecting the unique role that Centrelink social workers play in the program.

Client needs and support services

Tenant support programs address a range of housing and non-housing client needs. They include mental health conditions; drug and alcohol dependency problems; relationship breakdown; domestic and family violence; overcrowding; poor knowledge of tenancy responsibilities; accumulated or sudden debt and low or inadequate income; lack of financial management; lack of coping skills; locational disadvantage and social isolation; and lack of contact with, or awareness of, services and entitlements.

Support measures common across tenant support programs in the ATSP Survey include tenancy advice/information/support and education; needs assessment and case management; financial support to access housing; individual advocacy; counseling; family/household management skills including financial management; and independent and community living skills development. Some programs (but not all) provide support across a wider set of needs relating to family conflict, violence and abuse; mental illness; general health issues; substance misuse; support service referrals; social and personal development; job search skills development; financial relief and material assistance; legal and child protection matters.

Client outcomes

There is limited information on client outcomes of tenant support programs. There is even less information of the outcomes achieved by Indigenous households as compared with non-Indigenous households. However, from all the available evidence, eviction, and, consequently, homelessness, is avoided for the vast majority of Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) clients of tenant support programs. Tenant support programs are successful in preventing homelessness among those at imminent risk of homelessness. Given the high costs associated with homelessness, this makes tenancy support programs very cost-effective.

Other key client outcomes from tenancy support programs include:

- Reduction in rent arrears and tenant liabilities.
- Improvement in property conditions and reduction in charges relating to property damage.

- Fewer reports of disruptive behaviour.
- Increased linkage to services and improved access to counselling services, referrals to mental health and drug and alcohol services, financial counsellors.
- Capacity building among clients.
- Increased self-esteem, confidence and trust resulting in a greater capacity of tenants to engage with local community support services and participate in community activities.

What works?

The ATSP Survey includes a series of open-ended questions seeking tenant support program administrators' views of on a range of issues. These included the factors contributing to or limiting a program successfully meeting the needs of Indigenous at-risk tenants in different environments as well as the key ingredients of successful collaboration between tenant support administrators and agencies delivering services.

Respondents to the ATSP Survey focused on the following key service delivery practices that helped to contribute to the achievement of positive outcomes for Indigenous clients:

- *Early intervention:* Intervene early before the causes of tenancy instability become too great to manage.
- *Client empowerment:* Empower clients so that they can successfully manage their own tenancies and engage them so that they are attached to achieving positive outcomes from the program.
- *Local knowledge and trust:* Knowledge of local Indigenous communities and the development of trust within communities is vital as is the use of service providers who are local and have credibility in the community.
- *Support workers:* Support workers need to be culturally sensitive, able to understand and acknowledge cultural issues, including kinship obligations, and have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of local family relationships.
- *Case management:* One-to-one client contact, assertive case management, access to brokerage funds, and the use of named referrals linking clients to specific individuals in external agencies together with direct transportation to external agencies works best.
- *External support linkages:* Good linkages with agencies providing personal support services in areas such as mental health support and drug and alcohol counseling and support is critical to address the underlying sources of tenancy failure.

The absence of any of the above factors will limit the ability of a service to meet the needs of clients.

There exists a range of external constraints and client-based responses that may act to reduce the effectiveness of a tenant support program in sustaining Indigenous tenancies. Limited resources impinge on the time available on the part of service workers to work with clients. In regional areas in particular, service workers may have too large an area to cover and there may not exist the range of external support agencies to link clients to support. Resource constraints will affect the recruitment and retention of staff and place limitations on the ability of agencies to rent adequate office space that allows services to meet the needs of clients in conditions of privacy and confidentiality.

The effectiveness of service responses is also influenced by the extent to which Indigenous tenants are away from home due to family commitments. This prevents support plans being fully implemented. Tenants may also fail to access certain local Indigenous services due to cross-cultural differences and beliefs.

Finally, there may be limited availability of Indigenous workers and cultural services in some areas and services to more remote communities due to inadequate financial and human resources.

The model followed by Australian tenant support programs involves a separation of the funding and management functions from the service delivery functions of a given program. An important implication of this is that the quality and effectiveness of the relationship between the funder and service delivery agencies matters critically for the success of the program.

What are the key ingredients to an effective relationship between funders and service delivery agencies? Program administrators suggested the following key factors to a successful relationship.

- There needs to be a common understanding of the goals and objectives of the program among both administrators and service providers and a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities involved.
- The activities of support providers need to be monitored against key performance indicators with regular performance reviews built into agency contracts. Funders and managers should be involved with providers in reviewing tenants' requirements and needs and be engaged in collaborative case management planning to ensure that agreed expectations, goals and outcomes are identified for specific cases.
- Both funders and service agencies need to participate jointly in reviews and changes of service delivery models and practices.
- Funders and service agencies need to develop a shared understanding of the client base and an understanding of service responses to Indigenous people. They also need to acknowledge the importance of relationships when working with Indigenous services and Indigenous tenants.

General homelessness early intervention programs

In addition to tenancy support programs, measures assisting households to sustain their tenancies can also be found in a broad range of homelessness early intervention programs. This report briefly reviewed homelessness early intervention programs in three jurisdictions, WA, NSW and Victoria.

As part of their respective Homelessness Strategies implemented in the early 2000s, both Victoria and WA introduced a number of justice-related early intervention programs that incorporate transitional accommodation with support. The Western Australian programs have significant numbers of Indigenous clients (around 50% of clients are Indigenous) reflecting both the high rate of incarceration of Indigenous people and their risks of homelessness on exit from prison.

There also exist a number of mental health and drug and alcohol-related programs, which seek to provide pathways out of homelessness for people with a serious mental illness and complex needs through the provision of transitional housing and specialist support packages. Victorian programs in particular also target those at-risk of homelessness leaving acute psychiatric units.

Western Australia has a number of Indigenous-specific life skills support programs and private rental access and tenant support services. Included in the former is the In-Home Practical Support Program (IHPS), which operates in remote, regional and urban areas and aims to develop the home living skills of Aboriginal people participating in the program. Other Indigenous-specific programs in Western Australia include:

- The Private Rental Access Scheme (PRAS), which aims to improve Indigenous people's access to the private rental market within the metropolitan area by supporting Indigenous clients in the rental application process.
- The Private Rental Aboriginal Assistance Loan (PRAAL), which assists Indigenous people in private rental accommodation who are at risk of losing their tenancy and likely to become homeless, by providing a loan for their rental arrears.
- The Aboriginal Tenants Support Service (ATSS), which provides support and information to Aboriginal tenants or prospective tenants in regional areas of Western Australia with little experience in renting housing or tenants with a history of poor tenancy, to understand their rights and meet their responsibilities.
- The Indigenous Tenancy Advocacy Service (ITAS), which provides advice and education to tenants and casework services to tenants who need additional assistance in managing issues surrounding their tenancy.

New South Wales provides support for those at risk of homelessness in public rental housing and community housing under cross-government agency commitments or agreements. The most prominent of these agreements is the Joint Guarantee of Service (JGOS) for People with Mental Health Problems and Disorders Living in Aboriginal, Community and Public Housing. Under the JGOS, tenancy and other personal support services are provided to public housing tenants with mental health problems and disorders whose tenancy may otherwise be at risk.

The Human Services Accord extends the JGOS framework in that it represents a formal agreement between NSW Housing and NSW human service agencies more generally.

The NSW Partnership against Homelessness established in 1999 also provides a framework for supporting homeless people. It does so through coordinating government agencies, non-government organisations and local government in specific homelessness initiatives. The Inner City Homelessness Action Plan is the most important of the initiatives under the Partnership against Homelessness. Both the My Place program and the Allawah Dual Diagnosis Pilot are Inner City Homelessness Action Plan projects.

Continuing long-term mental health, personal and tenancy supports for those people with mental health problems and disorders requiring accommodation support is provided under the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI).

Tenant support programs/services: case studies

Three tenant support programs/services were examined in detail in the study. Our aim was to gain further insights into how tenant support programs work in practice to support at-risk Indigenous tenancies.

The three programs were:

- The HOME Advice program Wodlittinattoai service, an Indigenous-specific service in Salisbury, South Australia.
- The Same House Different Landlord (SHDL) Program in Queensland.

- Tenancy support services operated by a community service provider, Ruah, in Perth, Western Australia.

The key aim of the HOME Advice program is to save families from homelessness. This aim was fully met in the case of the Wodlitanattoai service. All clients remained housed because of the support provided by the program. Furthermore, no Wodlitanattoai client completing a support period in 2006-07 reported a worsening of his or her overall family situation. However, there was little improvement in the income position of clients following support. As well as the maintenance of tenancies, clients were also linked to other services and supports in the community.

A number of factors contributed to the Wodlitanattoai service achieving positive client outcomes. These included:

- Having Indigenous staff with strong connections with the community who were able to understand and acknowledge cultural issues, including kinship obligations that can lead to situations putting tenancies at risk.
- Being in a partnership with Centrelink enables an immediate and culturally sensitive response to complex income support issues.
- Working with the extended family, both in the sense of providing assistance/referrals to them and of engaging them in the support of the client
- Providing assisted referrals to other services (providing transport, reminders, accompanying clients) to develop client confidence in accessing services.
- Using community development activities (e.g. a healing day, health day, living skills day) to build social capital (connections and trust) while increasing clients' wellbeing and capacity.
- Retaining contact with clients after official case closure (e.g. visiting to provide Christmas hampers, Easter eggs to children).

Same House Different Landlord program

Under the Same House Different Landlord (SHDL) program, homeless clients are initially housed and supported by a community-based housing organisation. When the community organisation assesses the clients as needing public housing, it houses and supports the client until they have the skills to maintain a tenancy successfully. Once tenancies are stable, the management of the tenancy is transferred to the Department of Housing and it effectively becomes a public housing tenancy.

Our case study examines the operation of the SHDL generally, but with a focus on Bahloo, an Indigenous community organisation providing accommodation through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), for homeless or otherwise homeless young women aged between 13 and 25.

The SHDL program as operated by Bahloo was consistent with funder expectations and required no specific modifications for Indigenous clients. Bahloo identified several characteristics of SHDL, which it believed contributed to the success of the program. These included:

- The flexibility provided by allowing the organisation to exchange properties for more suitable properties.
- The capacity to provide varying levels of support (from intensive support to basic tenancy management) without clients having to move.
- The relationships of mutual respect and understanding developed between Bahloo and the Department of Housing as a result of the program.

- The opportunity to assist SHDL clients to develop strategies for independent living and to deal positively with kinship obligations, thereby reducing the likelihood of tenancy risk.

At the same time, the ages (and relative inexperience) of Bahloo's primary client group meant that some clients were not ready for independent accommodation. Those who were unable to maintain their tenancy in the Same House Different Landlord program usually return to their family, move in with friends, or return to Bahloo. Many of the Indigenous young people (particularly those between 13 and 17 years of age) accommodated by Bahloo lacked the life experience and the skills necessary to maintain a successful tenancy.

Ruah tenancy support in Western Australia

Ruah Community Services in Perth, WA operates four tenancy support services under four different programs.

The oldest of these services is Ruah Tenancy Support-South East (RTS), which provides tenancy and other support services to households at imminent risk of homelessness experiencing difficulties sustaining their tenancies in the private rental market.

The RTS service provides mobile case management assistance over a three to four-month period to private rental tenants who have received a breach or termination and where a legal eviction process has commenced. Immediate presenting issues include the emergence of rental arrears, property standards concerns, and anti-social behaviour notifications.

The RTS service model, which is followed in the other tenancy support services managed by Ruah, includes Tenancy and Personal Support Plans for each client and an emphasis on engagement of the service with property managers and landlords.

Over 80 per cent of clients who entered with the goal of seeking stabilisation of the tenancy achieved this goal. For both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients, it was more difficult to stabilise tenancies in cases where clients presented with high needs, particularly in the case of co-occurring needs, such as mental health conditions and alcohol and drug dependency issues. Having accounted for the needs of clients, there was little difference in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients.

The Ruah Tenancy Fast Track (TFT) project is a SAAP Innovation and Investment Fund (I&IF) pilot project whose purpose is to ensure that homeless families have their crisis housing needs met; are helped to quickly access long-term private rental housing; and are linked into appropriate services and supports to maximise the chances of a successful tenancy.

As with the RTS-South East service, the TFT pilot project has achieved excellent client outcomes. Of the 37 families who had been assisted through 2006 and 2007 and whose cases had been finalised, 22 families in homelessness or at severe risk of homelessness were assisted to access independent private rental housing with a further nine assisted to access temporary housing available to the pilot project while waiting to secure private rental accommodation.

Ruah Tenancy Support Perth Metro is the third tenancy support service funded by the Department of Housing through the Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP). The Ruah Tenancy Support Perth Metro service assists people who have a past experience of homelessness and/or failed tenancies to sustain tenancies on entry to housing. Intensive case management support commences from the start of a new lease to ensure that the individual or family transition successfully into their new

home. There are significant numbers of Indigenous clients in this program with high needs and, while previously the placement of Indigenous families from homelessness into housing had often failed, with tenancy support many succeeded in sustaining their tenancies.

The Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support service provides an intensive outreach case management service to Indigenous families transitioning from the Gngara Aboriginal Town Based Community to mainstream WA Department of Housing properties. The Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support service is funded by the Department of Housing in Western Australia to support families with significant needs make an appropriate transition.

The service was able to successfully transition families into mainstream housing, and households were helped to sustain their tenancies. In cases where tenancies were at risk of failure, tenancy support plans were put in place.

Indigenous tenancy issues and support in north-west Queensland: a case study

The north-west Queensland case study describes, explores and compares housing issues facing Indigenous people and the approaches adopted to managing Indigenous tenancies in Mt Isa, a major regional centre in north-west Queensland, and Dajarra, a small town 150kms south of Mt Isa. Specifically, we examined approaches to managing Indigenous tenancies adopted by the Queensland Department of Housing Area Office (specifically the North West Area Office located in Mt Isa) and Jimberella, an Indigenous community managed housing organisation in Dajarra, roughly 100kms from Mt Isa and in the area covered by the North West Area Office.

None of the tenant support programs identified in the present study operate in Mt Isa or Dajarra. Nonetheless, tenant support services to those tenants at risk of homelessness and prospective tenants entering housing do exist in the area and follow structured pathways.

An early intervention strategy to tenancy problems is adopted. This involves an Officer contacting tenants as soon as they fall one week behind in rent, and counselling and encouraging extra payments to keep them off the arrears sheet. The Housing Services Team was proactive, using a targeted risk-period strategy at five times during the year when Aboriginal tenants were clearly vulnerable for a range of socio-economic and cultural reasons.

An outreach service from the Area Office assisted Aboriginal town campers to lodge housing applications and work through their other needs. A proactive case management approach is taken to those individuals and families with significant debt seeking to enter public housing from homelessness or emergency and crisis accommodation. A repayment scheme is set up, which is linked to Centrecare services, including budget training.

Social rental housing in Dajarra is provided by the Queensland Department of Housing and Jimberella, an Indigenous community managed housing organisation.

The ability of Jimberella to manage at-risk tenancies is influenced by the fact that Jimberella knows their clients, most of whom are family, and that Dajarra is a small town comprised of a relatively small number of family groups. The Jimberella Directors, taking advantage of their community leadership status and their intimate understanding of community affairs, were able to address most tenancy problems with

counseling and verbal persuasion within Aboriginal timeframes, rather than using the formal approach prescribed within the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

Summary and implications for future research

Most Australian programs assist existing tenants to sustain their tenancies, primarily in public housing and community housing, but increasingly we have seen the implementation of new programs designed to assist tenants in private rental housing as well. Recent years have also seen programs and measures introduced that target those who are homeless or at high risk of homelessness to access accommodation with appropriate supports.

What does our review of Australian tenancy support programs tell us about what they do to assist Indigenous tenants and what impact they have had on client outcomes?

First, it is clear that all Australian Governments have recognised the importance of early intervention programs in reducing homelessness and have implemented a wide range of programs to support tenants to sustain their tenancies, both at the point of entry into support and at the point of possible loss of the tenancy.

Second, Australian Governments have established tenancy support programs largely independently of one another and without a common framework under which support is provided. Nor have they established common data collection systems and evaluation frameworks. The absence of a common framework has also possibly meant that different jurisdictions may not be fully aware of the range of programs available elsewhere, how they operate, and what they achieve for their clients. Moreover, not all programs have established data collection systems that enable a differentiated analysis based on the Indigenous status of clients.

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness under which the Australian Government and state and territory governments have committed themselves to new services and capital projects designed to contribute to an overall reduction in homelessness. This Agreement can act as the vehicle for the development of a more integrated and common response to tenancy support and encourage the development of common data collection systems and reporting frameworks.

Third, it is evident that Indigenous households at risk of losing their tenancy are gaining access to tenancy support programs and receiving support roughly in line with what might be expected, given their overall representation in various tenure categories and in light of the prevalence of homelessness in the Indigenous population.

Fourth, it is clear that tenancy support does not stop with specialist tenant support programs. There exists a large range of tenant support measures that lie outside these programs. Indeed, most generalist homelessness early intervention programs have as their central component the provision of supported accommodation.

Fifth, both funders and housing providers identified the importance of relationships in delivering services and programs intended to sustain Indigenous tenancies. While it is difficult to quantify these relationships, trust and mutual respect are important in service delivery in a way that not only meets funders' expectations (and agreed outcomes), but that also ensures genuine outcomes for clients whose tenancies are at risk.

Lastly, while there is less information available than we would like, the evidence that is available suggests that the vast majority of Indigenous clients who do receive support under tenancy support programs remain housed, are saved from homelessness, and are linked to external support programs to meet their non-housing needs.

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most distressing features of Indigenous housing disadvantage is the high rate of homelessness among Indigenous people. At the 2006 Census, the recorded Indigenous homelessness rate was 4.3 per cent,¹ over eight times higher than the rate of homelessness in the non-Indigenous population of 0.5 per cent.²

Even so, the measured rate of Indigenous homelessness, based on Census figures, may understate its true level.

First, Taylor and Biddle (2008) argue that there was an under-enumeration of the Indigenous population in the 2006 Census, particularly in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. As such, the *level* of Indigenous homelessness is certainly understated and, quite possibly too, the *rate* of Indigenous homelessness (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2008, p.29). Second, when Indigenous people stay temporarily with extended family members because they have nowhere else to live, they may be less likely than non-Indigenous people to identify themselves as having 'no usual address' on census night. The reason for this is that Indigenous people may be more likely to view staying with extended family as equivalent to living at home.³ As a consequence, Indigenous people who are temporarily staying with relatives because they have nowhere else to live are less likely than non-Indigenous people to be recorded as homeless (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2008, p.29). Third, Indigenous households may be more likely to live in dwellings that should be recorded as 'improvised dwellings' in the Census (and as such be recorded as homeless for the purposes of the Census), but which are not recorded as such.

In its recently released White Paper on homelessness, *The Road Home, A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, the Australian Government identified the closing of the gap in the rate of homelessness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as one indicator of the success of its homelessness reform agenda (Commonwealth of Australia 2008, p.21). The 2009 *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* between the Commonwealth of Australia and the states and territories includes a specific target to reduce overall Indigenous homelessness by a third on the 2006 Census baseline figure and includes a range of new measures

¹ The definition of homelessness typically adopted in Australia is the so-called 'cultural' definition of homelessness. The cultural definition of homelessness identifies as homeless those who fall below some specified minimum community standard. It is operationalised in Australia using Census data and includes three sub-categories: primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness. As outlined in Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2008, p.vii), primary homelessness includes all people without conventional accommodation, including those sleeping on the streets, in parks, squats or in temporary shelters such as cars or railway carriages. Secondary homelessness includes all people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own and people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis (defined as 12 weeks or less). Tertiary homelessness refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis, operationally defined as 13 weeks or longer.

² To arrive at the Indigenous homelessness rate, we used Chamberlain and MacKenzie's (2008, p.29) estimate that 9.1 per cent of the Australian homelessness population of 104,676 identified as Indigenous in the 2006 Census. This gives a split of 9,526 Indigenous homeless people and 95,150 non-Indigenous homeless people. From *2006 Census QuickStats: Australia*, www.abs.gov.au, the Indigenous population was 455,031 while the non-Indigenous population was 19,400,257 at the time of the 2006 Census. Hence, the homelessness rate for Indigenous people is estimated as $(9,526/455,031)*100$ or 4.27 per cent while for the non-Indigenous population the homelessness rate is estimated as $(95,150/19,400,257)*100$ or 0.49 per cent.

³ Visitors to private dwellings identifying as having 'no usual address' in the Census are classified as falling into the secondary homelessness category.

to support at-risk tenancies. (This study was completed before the implementation of the 2009 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. As such, it provides insights into tenant support programs and homelessness early intervention programs as they operated before the implementation of the 2009 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.)

Reducing Indigenous homelessness requires a broad policy response; one that addresses the many deep-seated causes of homelessness among Indigenous people. In terms of housing responses, more affordable and appropriate housing needs to be made available, homeless Indigenous people need to be assisted to access long-term housing, and Indigenous households who are in housing but who are at risk of homelessness need to be assisted to sustain their tenancies.⁴ The first set of policies attempt to increase the outflow of Indigenous people from homelessness. The final policy action listed aims to reduce the inflow of households into homelessness by sustaining tenancies.

It is with the issue of sustaining at-risk Indigenous tenancies that this study is concerned. More specifically, the present study examines the role tenant support programs and other forms of tenancy support can play in assisting Indigenous households avoid homelessness and sustain tenancies that may otherwise fail. In doing so, the study fills a significant gap in the research and policy literature with respect to our knowledge and awareness of the operation and effectiveness of tenancy support programs and other support structures in Australia and their role in preventing and reducing Indigenous homelessness. The Australian Government's White Paper on homelessness foreshadows increased emphasis on early intervention programs, which seek to 'turn off the tap' of entry into homelessness. Tenancy support programs are central to this task.

For the purpose of the present study, we define an 'at-risk' tenancy as one in which households:

- Face significant difficulties in establishing and/or sustaining their tenancies due to immediate or long-standing social, health or economic needs.
- Are under threat of possible or actual eviction as a result of rent arrears, accumulated housing debt or tenancy breaches, including property damage, inadequate property standards, and anti-social behaviour.

Tenant support programs represent an important early intervention response to homelessness. These programs seek to assist those tenants at risk of losing their tenancy to maintain their tenancy and so avoid eviction and entry into homelessness. Tenant support programs may also work at the front end of a tenancy to support formerly homeless people enter and sustain a new tenancy.

The key aim of tenant support programs is to address the immediate housing-related issues that affect the viability of a tenancy. These include poor budgeting surrounding the payment of rent and outstanding debts, poor property standards, and insufficient knowledge of tenancy responsibilities. However, tenant support programs may also

⁴ At the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) meeting of 29 November 2008, COAG agreed to a significant program of investment for housing under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). This included a large boost to remote Indigenous housing, increased spending on homelessness programs, and the construction of new social housing dwellings. Three major National Partnership Agreements provided additional funding towards Homelessness (\$800 million over five years); Remote Indigenous Housing (\$1.94 billion over 10 years) and Social Housing (\$400 million over two years). This package of measures will help alleviate problems in relation to the supply of low-cost housing for Indigenous homeless people.

seek to address the non-housing-related factors that contribute to tenancy instability. The latter include a very low level of income, drug and alcohol dependency, poor access to quality health and support services, and domestic and family violence.

In Australia, governments fund and administer tenant support programs, and responsibility for each program lies with the individual jurisdiction that established it. At the time of writing, there was no coordination of these programs across Australia. Some programs are 'Indigenous-specific' while others are 'mainstream' providing support to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous tenants.

Australian tenant support programs first originated in the public housing sector, but now also operate in community housing and private rental housing. All tenant support programs involve a partnership between government and non-government support providers such as community agencies and Indigenous Housing Organisations (IHO) who provide direct assistance to clients at risk of losing their tenancy.

The focus of the present study is on what can be termed 'specialist tenancy support programs'. Specialist tenancy support programs are those programs that have as their *prime* focus, the provision of tenancy support services to those in long-term public, community and private rental housing at risk of losing their tenancy and becoming homeless. They also include programs that aim to provide access to long-term tenancies for homeless people with tenancy support and other support services on their entry to the housing lease.

Not all tenancy support for at-risk tenancies, however, is provided through specialist tenancy support programs. The same type of tenancy support, which is roughly commensurate with that provided in identifiable tenancy support programs, may be provided through the established practices of housing providers. Moreover, generalist homelessness early intervention programs targeted at those at risk of homelessness with specific needs generally include tenancy support as part of a package of supported accommodation measures. Life skill programs, which are generally targeted at Indigenous households in remote communities, also involve a tenancy component.

Examples of general homelessness early intervention programs include programs targeting households where there is a mental health problem or a mental illness; those with drug and alcohol dependency; and those leaving jail with mental health conditions and/or drug and alcohol dependency problems who are at-risk of homelessness without supported accommodation arrangements in place.

We exclude from our analysis programs providing support to clients in supported crisis and emergency accommodation, principally, under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). It should, however, be noted that some SAAP agencies do provide outreach support to at-risk tenancies in long-term residential tenancies and that some tenancy support programs have recently been incorporated within the SAAP funding arrangements to provide tenancy support under specialist tenancy support program arrangements.

Our study draws on four sources of evidence. The first is the existing policy and research literature on tenant support programs around Australia.

The second source of information is evidence drawn from the *Australian Tenant Support Program Survey*, undertaken as part of the present study and administered to all Australian government-funded specialist tenant support programs. It sought to gather information on their operation, their referral mechanisms, the services they provided to their Indigenous clients, and the outcomes they achieved for them.

The third source of evidence used in the present study was a series of site visits to programs and services in New South Wales, Victoria, and the Northern Territory, together with in-depth case studies of selected programs in South Australia, Western Australia, and Queensland.

The final source of evidence was a detailed 'locality-based' case study of the Mt Isa and Dajarra townships of North West Queensland. These locations were chosen for the case study for a number of reasons, including:

- The mix of housing tenure types, including public and community housing.
- The regional perspective brought to the study by the two locations; one a regional town and the other a small town with a large Indigenous community operating on very similar terms to a discrete, self-governed Indigenous settlement on community title land.
- The existence of specific housing issues of interest including the prevalence of homelessness.
- The fact that none of the specialist tenancy support programs examined in the study operated in the region and yet tenancy support is provided in a number of forms allowing us to examine how such supports operate.
- The research team's in-depth knowledge of the area.

The Mt Isa study examines issues faced by Indigenous people in accessing tenancies, particularly from a position of homelessness and a history of housing difficulties. It contrasts this with the perspective of public and community housing managers and workers in providing housing for Indigenous households and support arrangements for new tenancies or existing Indigenous tenancies. Although Mt Isa is only one locality in Australia and cannot be presented as a general case of tenancy sustainability issues for Indigenous people, it does provide rich insights into issues faced by Indigenous people and housing providers alike in a location with specific housing issues.

A major difficulty we faced in collecting information on tenant support programs from the *Australian Tenant Support Program Survey* is that each program administers its own program on an independent basis and collects data in the form it wishes and on the set of topics it believes are important. The practical implication of this is that it was not possible to derive a consistent set of results on how such programs operate.

Tenant support programs did not consistently collect data across all domains for which we sought information nor collect data on a unit record basis that would allow them to provide findings on an Indigenous status basis. Finally, limitations exist in tenant support programs with respect to the collection of information on client outcomes. As a result, we know less about the operation and effectiveness of tenant support programs and their achievements in sustaining at-risk Indigenous tenancies than we would wish. There remains some way to go before a comprehensive national profile on the operation and effectiveness of Australian tenant support programs is available.

This report describes and reviews all known mainstream and Indigenous-specific specialist tenant support programs operating around Australia. The review describes how these programs operate; the representation of Indigenous people in such programs, the services provided to clients and, where the data permit, the effectiveness of specialist tenant support programs in improving Indigenous housing outcomes. Our study also explores how tenant support program administrators interface with relevant agencies delivering support services to Indigenous tenants and

assesses the role played by tenant support providers, community sector agencies in the main, in sustaining Indigenous tenancies.

The structure of the report is as follows:

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the study's research aims and questions, the project's methodology and research design, and briefly reviews the relevant literature.⁵

Chapter 3 provides a profile of tenant support programs around Australia drawn largely from *Australian Tenant Support Program Survey* findings. The Appendix to Chapter 3 briefly reviews broader homelessness early intervention programs and tenancy support arrangements, which lie outside the specialist tenancy support program structure. The latter review is restricted to the states of NSW, Victoria and Western Australia.

A more detailed analysis of selected tenancy support programs is provided in case study form in Chapter 4.

An in-depth Mt Isa and Dajarra case study is presented in Chapter 5.

⁵ A more detailed literature review is provided in the study's Positioning Paper (see Flatau et al. 2008b).

2 METHOD

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we define key concepts used in the report, outline the study's research questions, and detail the data sources and methods used to answer these research questions.

The key objective of the study is to outline and evaluate the operation and effectiveness of tenant support programs and other tenancy support measures in assisting at-risk Indigenous tenants. An important means by which we gathered information on the operation and effectiveness of tenant support programs was the *Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey*. The ATSP Survey was administered to all known tenancy support programs around Australia.

The research team also made a number of visits to various locations around Australia to gain insights into the operation and effectiveness of selected tenant support programs and like arrangements, such as generalist homelessness early intervention programs and life skills programs.

2.2 Definitions and key concepts

For the purposes of this study, an **at-risk tenancy** is defined as one in which households:

- Face significant difficulties in establishing and/or sustaining a tenancy due to long-standing or immediate social, health or economic needs or behaviours.
- Are under threat of possible or actual eviction as a result of rent arrears, accumulated housing or utility-related debt or tenancy breaches, including property damage, inadequate property standards and anti-social behaviour.⁶

A tenancy may be at risk from its inception. This occurs when the conflation of past tenancy failure, a history of homelessness, and the incidence of mental health conditions and drug and alcohol dependency problems, suggests that there is a high chance of tenancy failure. We refer to such cases as **prospective at-risk tenancies**. When a tenancy is at risk from its inception, tenancy support may be required from the start of the tenancy to give it a greater chance of being sustained over time.

A broad range of factors may place a tenancy at risk of failure. Generally, however, the prevalence of one risk factor on its own may not be sufficient to move a tenancy to an at-risk position. Risk factors include mental and physical health conditions, disabilities and drug and alcohol dependency problems that limit the ability of people to successfully negotiate their tenancy; poor knowledge of tenancy responsibilities; relationship breakdown; domestic and family violence; accumulated or sudden debt and low or inadequate income.⁷ Some of these risk factors are more prevalent in the Indigenous population than the non-Indigenous population (Productivity Commission 2007). Moreover, Indigenous people are more likely to live in regional or remote areas

⁶ The definition adopted is similar to that used in Department of Human Services Victoria (2006, p.5): 'A high-risk tenancy is one that is at high risk of failure as a result of the negative impact of the tenant's social, health and/or welfare problems on their ability to responsibly manage the tenancy. Indicators of a tenant's inability to manage the tenancy include: significant and/or unresolvable rent arrears and serious tenancy breaches, including anti-social behaviour and property damage'. See also Habibis et al. (2007).

⁷ See Slatter and Beer (2004); Crane, Fu and Warnes (2004); LenMac Consulting (2005); Beer et al. (2006); DHS Victoria (2006).

where there may be a limited number of support services available to assist people to address the problems placing their tenancies at risk.

When Indigenous people move to urban areas from remote communities they may not have the urban-based 'life skills' necessary to maintain a tenancy. Indigenous people may also encounter culturally specific impediments in accessing and sustaining tenancies. These include discrimination by landlords and neighbours; failure of housing agencies to appropriately address cultural behaviour and imperatives such as duties of hospitality, extended family responsibilities and demand sharing; lack of understanding of Indigenous patterns of occupation and use of housing (domiciliary behaviour); Indigenous belief systems and mourning customs; and, Indigenous patterns of mobility.⁸

Tenant support programs provide support to households whose tenancies are at risk of failure and aim to put the tenancy on a sustainable path to avoid the damaging consequences to tenants, landlords and the community of abandonment/eviction and possible homelessness. Support services provided under these programs attempt to address the immediate concerns that typically trigger entry and may (and should) also address the underlying issues lying behind tenancy problems.

The focus of the study is on what we term **specialist tenancy support programs**. The key focus of these programs is to sustain at-risk tenancies. They operate under a system of contracts with community support agencies that provide the direct support to tenants. All known programs operating in Australia are covered in this study.

A number of broader **early intervention homelessness programs**, which incorporate tenancy support elements, are also briefly considered. An early intervention homelessness program seeks to prevent homelessness when clear risks of homelessness are evident among particular individuals. Tenancy support **pilot projects**, which trial new forms of tenancy support, as well as **life skill programs**, which include a tenancy support component, are also covered in the review. We restrict our analysis of early intervention homelessness programs, tenancy support pilot projects and life skills programs to those operating in NSW, Victoria and Queensland (see the appendix to chapter 3).

Lying outside the scope of this study are crisis-based homelessness programs, which provide crisis support during a homelessness episode. We also do not consider those programs that provide financial support to prospective tenants seeking to access tenancies unless they have some element of tenancy support attached to them.

A characteristic of Australian tenant support programs is that they entail a separation of the funding and management functions from the direct service delivery function. Australian governments fund and administer specialist tenant support programs, but non-government community service organisations deliver tenant support services to clients under service agreements and contracts with governments. Given the separation of funding and service delivery functions, the success or otherwise of any given tenant support program will depend, in no small part, on the effectiveness of governance and accountability frameworks surrounding the funder/provider nexus.

Both Australian and state and territory governments fund and manage tenant support programs. Each program has been established on an independent basis and there

⁸ See Solonec (2000); Fopp et al. (2004); EOCWA (2004); Cooper and Morris (2005); Flatau et al. (2005); FOCUS (2000), Stanley (2001), Long, Memmott and Seelig (2007); Keys Young (1998); and HREOC (2003).

has been no attempt, at least to this point, to coordinate these programs across Australia.

The origin of tenant support programs lies in the public housing sector. Public housing tenant support programs still represent the largest programs in existence in Australia. The Western Australian Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP) is the oldest of these programs and was established in 1991. More recently, state and territory governments have expanded beyond the public housing sector and have implemented new programs and pilot projects in the private rental market and in long-term community housing. The Australian Government also established its own homelessness early intervention program focused on tenancy support across all housing tenure sectors, the Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program.

Some specialist tenant support programs are **Indigenous-specific**, meaning they only provide support to Indigenous clients, but the majority are **mainstream** programs providing support to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients.

2.3 Research design

Research questions

Our study addresses three research questions. These relate to an understanding of the operation of tenant support programs, their effectiveness in improving Indigenous client outcomes, and the role played by inter-agency partnerships and accountability frameworks in supporting these programs.

The research questions addressed in the study are as follows:

RQ1: What Australian programs provide tenant support services to Indigenous households at risk of homelessness? What are the needs and background of clients in the various programs? What is the representation of Indigenous clients in Australian tenant support programs? What services are provided to Indigenous clients by Australian tenant support programs?

To answer this question, we first identify all tenant support programs operating in Australia. For each specialist tenant support program (and for selected tenancy support pilot projects and general homelessness intervention programs), we describe the aims and objectives, list whether it is an Indigenous-specific or mainstream program, and describe the housing sectors (public housing, private rental housing and community housing) and regions that the tenant support program operates in. We also examine the level of representation of Indigenous households in mainstream tenant support programs, the main sources/reasons for referral of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients to any given program, the needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients presenting to program providers, and the key services delivered to tenants.

RQ2: How effective are Australian tenant support programs in sustaining Indigenous tenancies and improving outcomes for Indigenous clients?

In what ways and to what extent do tenant support programs address the needs of Indigenous clients? What are the key outcomes for Indigenous clients from receiving support from tenant support programs? Do tenant support programs act to sustain at-risk Indigenous tenancies?

RQ3: How important are inter-agency partnerships and tailored service delivery models in achieving positive outcomes for Indigenous clients of tenant support programs?

What are the key ingredients of successful collaboration between tenant support administrators and the agencies delivering services? How well do tenant support service providers interact with agencies providing non-tenancy-related support such as mental health and drug and alcohol dependency support? How have funders adapted service agreements and providers' service delivery models to meet the needs of at-risk Indigenous tenants in different settings? How successful have these adaptations been?

Data and method

In addressing these research questions, the study faced a major hurdle, namely, that there is no central coordination of tenant support programs around Australia. Nor is there any central collation of data from across the various programs. The absence of any central body of data reflects, in large part, the fact that tenant support programs have been implemented by each jurisdiction independently of each other. They have not been established nor administered, as part of a national coordinated homelessness tenancy support early intervention framework. This is in contrast to the main Australian homelessness crisis program – the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) – which was based on shared Federal and state/territory funding, Federal and state/territory coordination of the program and a common, Australia-wide data collection system.

The absence of any central listing/description of tenant support programs or body of data and evidence on Australian tenant support programs meant that it was necessary for us to develop our own compendium of programs and gather our own evidence on the programs. Nevertheless, the absence of a common framework governing these programs means that there will be gaps and inconsistencies in data collected across programs run in different jurisdictions.

To undertake our task, we developed a list of tenant support programs operating in Australia. Our list was developed from our prior knowledge of tenant support programs drawn from earlier studies, publicly available sources, and by contacting relevant Australian Government and state/territory government departments to ascertain whether they administered any further programs in addition to those on our preliminary list. We then developed a survey instrument, the *Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey*, which elicited information on the operation and effectiveness of a given program; on the background of clients, their needs, the services they received, and the outcomes they achieved.

Information gathered from the ATSP Survey was supplemented by field trips around Australia to obtain first-hand insights into how various tenant support programs worked in practice. Apart from surveying programs in Western Australia and South Australia, the home states of researchers on the team, we also visited Sydney, Melbourne, Darwin and Brisbane, speaking with program administrators of specialist tenant support programs, generalist homelessness intervention programs, pilot programs, and relevant agencies providing tenant support services.

A number of detailed case studies were also undertaken of selected tenant support programs in order to enrich our understanding of their operation and effectiveness. In addition, an in-depth analysis of Indigenous housing and homelessness issues and the potential role of tenancy support in assisting Indigenous households in an at-risk position was undertaken for a particular location, namely Mt Isa and Dajarra.

The ATSP Survey was administered to all known Australian tenant support programs. The topics covered by the survey are summarised in Table 1 below and its findings detailed in the following two chapters.

The first set of questions included in the *ATSP* Survey refers to the structure of the tenant support program in question: Who funds and administers the tenant support program? What are its aims and objectives? What level of funding is provided to the program? What is the jurisdictional and geographical coverage of the program?

In terms of jurisdictional coverage, we wanted to know whether the program was a state/territory government program, a multilateral program involving more than one jurisdiction, or an Australian Government program. We also sought to determine whether it applied across all regions in the relevant jurisdiction or was restricted to particular sites or regions (e.g. very remote, remote, outer regional, inner regional, major cities) and which rental sectors were covered (e.g. public rental housing, private rental housing).

Table 1: Topics and questions covered by the Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey

| <i>Topic</i> | <i>Questions</i> |
|---|---|
| <i>Program structure</i> | Jurisdiction/Department(s)/Agency(ies) responsible for funding and administering the program Aims and objectives of the program Geographical coverage Rental sector/s covered Indigenous-specific or mainstream program Provision of tenant support services Level of funding of the program |
| <i>Client description</i> | Referral reasons (client presenting reasons) Sources of referral Number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients and support periods Number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients receiving support services by gender, age, household type and location |
| <i>Client needs and outcomes</i> | Needs of clients Duration of the support provided Outcomes of clients Status of the tenancy and client on exit from the program |
| <i>Issues</i> | Difficulties or barriers faced by Indigenous tenants in sustaining tenancies The extent to which tenancy support service agreements between funders and service agencies had been tailored to meet the needs of Indigenous clients, particularly those in discrete Indigenous communities Key ingredients of successful collaborations between tenant support administrators and agencies delivering services Factors contributing to or limiting a program successfully meeting the needs of Indigenous at-risk tenants in different environments |

The *ATSP* Survey sought information on whether the relevant program was an Indigenous-specific program, providing services only to Indigenous households, or a

mainstream program, serving both Indigenous and non-Indigenous households. The Survey also addressed the question of the type of agencies that provide tenant support services to clients. Program administrators were asked to indicate whether tenant support services were provided by non-government not-for-profit organisations, by private businesses, by the government agencies administering the program themselves (or other government agencies) or some combination of organisational types.

The second set of topics covered in the *ATSP* Survey included issues such as reasons and sources of referrals, whether the program is voluntary or mandatory, the size and composition of the client group, and the representation of Indigenous clients in the program.

The immediate reasons for client referral to tenant support programs relate mainly to specific housing triggers, such as rental arrears, poor property standards, and histories of homelessness. However, clients may also be referred to tenant support programs because of longer-term health, economic and social issues. And, of course, these may often be the fundamental drivers of tenancies moving to an at-risk position. Not all tenant support programs may record such factors in data collection systems, nor may individual caseworkers be aware of their role in producing poor tenancy outcomes.

There are a number of possible sources of referral of clients to a tenant support program. They include the funders/administrators of the program, tenants themselves, landlords, property managers and community and health agencies. Sources of referral are likely to differ according to the program in question. In the case of public housing tenant support programs, the source of referral will invariably be the public housing authority, who also generally acts as the funder/administrator of the tenant support program. However, a wider set of sources of referral are likely in the case of private sector-based tenant support programs. As with all client-related information, there may be gaps in the evidence base with respect to the reasons and sources of referral, particularly when trying to distinguish between outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients.

The third set of topics covered in the *ATSP* Survey relates to clients and their interactions with the tenant support program. It covers questions on the major needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients receiving support in the program, the services provided to Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients, client outcomes achieved because of the program, the duration of support provided and the reasons for exit from the program.

The needs of clients include housing-related issues, low levels of income, mental and/or physical health conditions, disability status, alcohol and/or drug abuse problems, and domestic/family violence problems. All tenant support programs provide housing-related services to clients involving assistance to resolve identified issues and problems, and disputes with the landlord or the property manager. However, they are likely to extend well beyond these tenancy-focused support measures to include broader types of support, including domestic/family violence support; family/relationship support, including child management; living skills/home skills/personal development; liaison with family reunification; and referrals to drug and alcohol support services and to mental health support services.

Respondents to the *ATSP* Survey were asked to detail the client outcomes achieved. Two main categories of outcome indicators were specified. The first category included tenancy outcome indicators, such as the mean dollar reduction in rent arrears, tenant

liabilities, debts to utilities achieved during the period of support, and the decrease in the number of anti-social behaviour notifications achieved during the support period.

The second category of outcome indicators related to social, health and economic outcomes. They include changes in the level of income achieved over the client's support period, improvements in labour force status and in a client's quality of life over the support period, and whether and to what extent the number of offences, charges, appearances before court, and sentences recorded for clients were reduced during the support period. Information on client outcomes was sought on an Indigenous status basis (i.e. for Indigenous households and non-Indigenous households).

As noted previously, Australian tenant support programs have been established by jurisdictions independently of one another and they use no common set of client outcome indicators or targets. Unlike the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), no national collection of commensurate data on client outcomes exists for homelessness early intervention programs such as tenant support programs. Hence, even where tenant support programs collect client outcome data, it may not be possible to compare outcomes across programs. It is also possible that where client outcome data is collected, it is collected at the agency level and not on a unit record basis. This would make it impossible to identify client outcomes for Indigenous clients separately from those for non-Indigenous clients.

Tenant support programs were also asked to report on the status of tenancies and clients on exit from the program. The exit status indicators included in the *ATSP* Survey as a possible guide are listed below:

- Tenancy sustained.
- Client exited the support period.
- Service provider discontinued support.
- Client eviction/vacant possession.
- Client moved to a new tenancy.

The final set of questions included in the *ATSP* Survey are a series of open-ended questions seeking the views of tenant support program administrators on a range of issues covered by research question three. In particular, they include questions on the extent to which service agreements made between funders and support agencies had been tailored to the needs of Indigenous clients and the factors contributing to or limiting a program successfully meeting the needs of Indigenous at-risk tenants in different environments. Also included is the issue of the key ingredients of successful collaborations between tenant support administrators and agencies delivering services. These set of questions address the issue of whether services and funders are building in to service agreements and service delivery models, features and attributes that meet the position of Indigenous clients.

2.4 Conclusion

A key objective of the present study is to understand better the role of tenant support programs in providing support to at-risk Indigenous tenant households and saving such households from homelessness. Given the absence of a compendium of tenant support programs and a central collection of relevant data and evidence on the operation and effectiveness of Australian tenant support programs, it was necessary to develop our own compendium of programs to gather relevant evidence on their operation and effectiveness. This was achieved using a number of instruments including the *ATSP* Survey, field trips to and case studies of programs, and an in-

depth case study of the intersection between housing and homelessness and the role of tenant support.

Comprehensive information on the composition of the client group in the tenant support program, their needs and services and their outcomes relies on tenant support programs maintaining their data in unit record form. As we shall see in the following chapters, however, this was not done in a number of programs and is a very recent innovation in others. As a result, there is less information on these topics than is desirable.

3 AUSTRALIAN TENANT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a listing, description and analysis of all specialist tenant support programs operating in Australia and selected tenant support pilot projects. It also aims to briefly review homelessness early intervention programs and life skill programs in three jurisdictions, namely, WA, NSW and Victoria. The focus of our examination is on the role tenant support programs play in sustaining at-risk Indigenous tenancies.

As previously noted, specialist tenant support programs are those programs whose prime focus is the provision of services to tenants who are at risk of homelessness or have entered a tenancy from a position of homelessness and need support on entry to sustain the tenancy. Tenant support pilot projects represent trials of a prospective program among selected groups of prospective clients typically in one, or a small number of sites.

Section 3.2 provides a listing and description of all identified specialist tenant support programs in Australia and selected tenant support pilot projects.

In section 3.3, we provide an overview of the background of clients of specialist tenant support programs and the representation of Indigenous clients in the program. We examine their identified needs, the services they receive, and their outcomes insofar as they are known.

As previously alluded to, there are limitations in the evidence base on tenant support programs. First, not all tenant support programs have gathered data in unit record form. This makes it very difficult to distinguish between findings in relation to Indigenous clients as compared with non-Indigenous clients. Second, the collection of information of client outcomes is very patchy in some tenant support programs. This means that there are gaps in terms of what we know about the background, needs, services, and, particularly, the outcomes of Indigenous clients of tenant support programs.

Section 3.4 reports on the views of tenant support program administrators drawn from responses to the *Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey* in relation to a range of issues about their programs, particularly in sustaining at-risk Indigenous tenancies. These include the perceived difficulties or barriers faced by Indigenous tenants in sustaining tenancies; the key ingredients of successful collaborations between tenant support administrators and agencies delivering services; and the factors contributing to or limiting a program successfully meeting the needs of Indigenous at-risk tenants in different environments.

Appendix A briefly reviews homelessness early intervention programs and life skill programs in three jurisdictions, WA, NSW and Victoria. Our aim is to show how tenancy support is provided in a range of contexts outside the boundaries of specialist tenancy support programs.

One key example is that of generalist homelessness intervention programs, which focus on the provision of community and specialist mental health and drug and alcohol supports to those at risk of homelessness. These programs meet client needs in a supported accommodation environment in which tenancy support is provided as a key component of the support packages. Indeed, some would argue that providing housing and tenancy support is fundamental to the success of the early intervention program.

Another example is where tenancy support is provided to social housing tenants but not within a programmatic context. There also exist life skill programs provided to Indigenous tenants largely in the discrete Indigenous community context that may incorporate some element of tenancy support. Finally, a range of tenancy access programs exist that may link entry to some limited component of tenancy support.

3.2 Description of Australian programs

Table 2 lists and briefly describes specialist tenant support programs delivered across Australia.

The first identifiable tenancy support program in Australia began in public housing. Public housing tenancy support programs remain the largest programs operating in Australia. These programs provide case management support to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous public housing tenants who are at risk of homelessness.

One of the key features of the first public housing tenancy support programs, replicated across all subsequent programs, is that tenancy and personal support services are provided by non-government agencies rather than by the government agency operating the program. In other words, tenancy support programs around Australia operate under a principle of a purchaser/provider split where the program financing and management functions are separate from the service delivery functions.

The longest running and largest tenant support program supporting at-risk Indigenous clients in Australia is the Western Australian Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP), which commenced in 1991. SHAP is a mainstream tenancy support program providing tenancy support and other support services to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous public rental housing tenants in Western Australia who are at risk of eviction and have ongoing breaches of their tenancy. In 2007-08, total expenditure on the program amounted to \$2.7 million.

Reflecting both the relatively high representation of Indigenous households in public housing in Western Australia and the high incidence of homelessness in the Indigenous population, the SHAP program supports more Indigenous households than non-Indigenous households. Indeed, this program supports more Indigenous households than any other tenant support program in Australia, including Indigenous specific tenant support programs. In 2007-08, there were 548 Indigenous households supported by the SHAP program and 346 non-Indigenous households supported by the program. The SHAP program operates in a large number of locations across Western Australia including some regional centres where almost all the clients are Indigenous (see Table 3 below).

Similar public housing tenant support programs operate in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

The Victorian Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (SHASP) is the largest such program in Australia although its coverage of Indigenous clients is very small. In Victoria, Indigenous at-risk tenants are invariably supported under the Indigenous-specific Indigenous Tenancies at Risk (ITAR) program.

SHASP commenced operations in January 2006. In addition to providing tenancy support services for those tenancies at risk of failure, SHASP also provides support to new public housing tenants who have a history of homelessness and are at high risk of tenancy failure. It also includes a strong advocacy service component.

Table 2: Australian Specialist Tenant Support Programs

| Tenant Support Program | *Description | Number of Indigenous client households | Number of non-Indigenous client households |
|---|---|--|--|
| Australian Government | | | |
| <p>The Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program (2004 –) (FHPP 2002-2004)</p> | <p><i>The HOME Advice Program</i> is an Australian Government early intervention mainstream program designed to identify effective methods of recognising families at risk of homelessness and provide early assistance to prevent family homelessness occurring. Its precursor was the Family Homelessness Prevention Pilot, which began in 2002. The HOME Advice program is unique among tenant support programs in covering all housing sectors.</p> <p>The HOME Advice Program involves a partnership between the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), Centrelink and non-government service providers. There are eight HOME Advice Program sites, one in each state and territory. The program has one Indigenous-specific service, the Wodlitinattoai—Salisbury South Australian service.</p> <p>Eligibility for the HOME Advice Program is restricted to families at risk of homelessness before they reach the homelessness crisis stage. (A family is defined as two or more persons who live in the same house and are related by blood, defacto or de jure marriage or adoption.)</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$1,992,000 2007-08 \$2,025,000</p> | <p>2006-07 75 2007-08 75</p> | <p>2006-07 207 2007-08 230</p> |
| NSW | | | |
| <p>NSW Office of Community Housing initiatives</p> <p>My Place (2002 –)</p> | <p><i>My Place</i> is a NSW Office of Community Housing program, which began operation in 2002. Its target group is rough sleepers in inner Sydney. Rough sleepers are assisted to overcome the difficulties of moving from the street or crisis accommodation into independent living. Support is provided to clients to assist the transition to independence once the tenancy has commenced. The target group for the My Place program are those who drift in and out of absolute homelessness or may alternate between rough sleeping and short stays in SAAP services, boarding houses and squats.</p> <p>The program uses private rental leases funded under the Community Housing Leasing Program of the NSW Office of Community Housing. It involves a partnership between the NSW Office of Community Housing, three housing associations and five support agencies.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$600,000 2007-08 \$660,000 (housing-related funds only)</p> | <p>2006-07 4 2007-08 5</p> | <p>2006-07 9 2007-08 14</p> |
| <p>Allawah Dual Diagnosis Pilot Project (2007-)</p> | <p>The <i>Allawah Dual Diagnosis pilot project</i> commenced in 2007. It provides access to housing and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with mental health and substance use disorders in inner city Sydney who are insecurely housed, living in sub-standard housing, living in overcrowded conditions, or who are rough sleeping or accessing SAAP services.</p> | <p>Not available</p> | <p>Not available</p> |

| Tenant Support Program | *Description | Number of Indigenous client households | Number of non-Indigenous client households |
|--|--|---|---|
| | <p>The objectives of the pilot project are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provide culturally appropriate housing and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with a dual diagnosis. → Enable clients of the pilot to address their mental health and substance use issues. → Assist clients of the pilot to appropriately access wider support services. → Assist clients to access long-term stable accommodation. <p>Prospective clients must be in a position to maintain a tenancy in order to be eligible for the program. This includes an ability to pay rent; maintain a property; and, live harmoniously in the community. Assessments are made by the partner organisations in the project.</p> <p>Government Funding: \$110,000 per year for the two years of the pilot project (housing-related funds only)</p> | | |
| <p>Port Jackson Supported Housing Program (PJSHP) (2004-)</p> | <p>The <i>Port Jackson Supported Housing Program</i> (PJSHP) is a NSW Office of Community Housing program which commenced operations in 2004 and provides stable, secure and sustainable tenancies for people who are unable to maintain a tenancy either in mainstream social housing or the private rental market, due to their complex support needs. The program targets identified priority groups most at risk of homelessness who are identified as having moderate to high support needs to achieve a sustainable tenancy.</p> <p>St George Community Housing manages the properties under the Port Jackson Supported Housing Program; 21 support services have been endorsed as Support Partners to the program. The program operates in the Sydney, more specifically in the Local Government areas of Ashfield, Botany, City of Sydney, Leichhardt, Marrickville, Randwick and Waverly.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$559,963 2007-08 \$578,442</p> | <p>2006-07 Not available</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> | <p>2006-07 Not available</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> |
| Victoria | | | |
| <p>Indigenous Tenancies at Risk (ITAR) Program (2006-)</p> | <p>The <i>Indigenous Tenancies at Risk</i> (ITAR) program is a Victorian Department of Human Services program. It is an Indigenous-specific tenant support program designed to reduce the risk of homelessness among Indigenous tenants in public and transitional housing or community managed housing, including Aboriginal Housing Victoria properties across Victoria. The program supports public or community housing managed tenants who are at risk of being evicted, and links them into appropriate services or supports in order to assist them maintain their tenancy. The ITAR program developed from a Victorian Homelessness Strategy pilot project and began operation in July 2006. Support is provided by non-government organisations.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$559,963 2007-08 \$578,442</p> | <p>2006-07 264</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> | <p>2006-07 Not applicable</p> <p>2007-08 Not applicable</p> |

| Tenant Support Program | *Description | Number of Indigenous client households | Number of non-Indigenous client households |
|---|--|---|---|
| Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (SHASP) (2006-) | <p>The <i>Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program</i> (SHASP) is a Victorian Department of Human Services program and commenced operations in January 2006. It provides tenancy support and advocacy services to social housing tenants across Victoria. Its aims are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → ensure that public housing applicants who have more complex issues are appropriately assisted to have their housing needs addressed → establish successful public housing and housing association tenancies → prevent homelessness, and → ensure the needs of social housing tenants unable to advocate on their own behalf are met. <p>The SHASP comprises a number of funded activities. These include the provision of advocacy services for social housing tenants experiencing major tenancy difficulties who are unable to advocate on their own behalf; the provision of support to new public housing tenants who have a high risk of tenancy failure; and the provision of support services when a public housing tenancy is breaking down. Support services are provided by non-government organisations.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$4,897,000 2007-08 \$5,038,000</p> | <p>2006-07 47</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> | <p>2006-07 5667</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> |
| Youth Private Rental Access Program (2006-) | <p>The <i>Youth Private Rental Access program</i> (formerly the Private Rental Brokerage Program for Young People) is a Victorian Department of Human Services program and commenced operation in July 2006. The program provides support to homeless young people aged 15-25 and young people aged 15-25 at risk of homelessness in the private rental market in several sites in Victoria.</p> <p>The key aims of the program are to assist newly homeless young people to resolve conflict and re-establish relationships with family and significant others where appropriate and provide a range of flexible support packages that ensure homeless young people are assisted to secure and establish and/or maintain private rental accommodation.</p> <p>Services are provided by non-government organisations.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$1,000,531 2007-08 \$1,029,546</p> | <p>2006-07 Not available</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> | <p>2006-07 Not available</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> |
| Family Violence Private Rental Access Program (2006-) | <p>The <i>Family Violence Private Rental Access Program</i> (formerly the Family Violence Private Rental Brokerage Program) is a Victorian Department of Human Services program and commenced operations in July 2006. The program is designed to ensure women and women with children who are escaping from, or who have experienced family violence are assisted to establish and/or maintain private rental accommodation on the basis of a range of flexible financial brokerage packages together with related forms of assistance and support.</p> | <p>2006-07 Not available</p> <p>2007-08</p> | <p>2006-07 Not available</p> <p>2007-08</p> |

| Tenant Support Program | | *Description | <i>Number of Indigenous client households</i> | <i>Number of non-Indigenous client households</i> |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | <p>Eligibility for the program is restricted to women and women with children who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → are escaping from and/or have experienced family violence in the last 12 months → wish to establish and/or maintain private rental accommodation as a long-term housing option → will be safe and secure in private rental accommodation → who are likely to be able to sustain private rental accommodation when the period of private rental brokerage and assistance ends. <p>The Family Violence Private Rental Access Program seeks to complement domestic violence outreach services. The program operates across Victoria.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$262,353 2007-08 \$299,153</p> | Not available | Not available | |
| Queensland | | | | |
| Same House Different Landlord Program (1997-) | <p>The <i>Same Household Different Landlord Program</i> is a Queensland Department of Communities program (housing and homelessness services). This program enables crisis and transitional accommodation tenants to enter public housing without physically relocating to another dwelling and facilitates the establishment of more successful public housing tenancies for those clients who enter public housing through the provision of support on entry to the program.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$220,000 2007-08 \$160,000</p> | <p>2006-07 Not available</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> | <p>2006-07 Not available</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> | |
| Western Australia | | | | |
| Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP) (1991-) | <p>The <i>Supported Housing Assistance Program</i> (SHAP) is a Western Australian Department of Housing program that commenced in 1991. It provides tenant support services to public rental housing tenants across Western Australia. It aims to provide tenants with access to appropriate skills development and support to enable them to fulfil their obligations and responsibilities as tenants. SHAP assists tenants who are risk of eviction and have ongoing breaches of the tenancy.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$2,555,900 2007-08 \$2,713,000</p> | <p>2006-07 629</p> <p>2007-08 548</p> | <p>2006-07 279</p> <p>2007-08 346</p> | |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program (PRSAP) (2003- SAAP funded from July 2007)</p> | <p>The <i>Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program</i> (PRSAP) commenced operations in 2003 as an initiative of the Western Australian State Homelessness Strategy. From July 2007, the non-government services providing support under the program were funded under the SAAP V Multilateral and Bilateral Agreements. PRSAP services operate at a number of sites in Western Australia.</p> <p>PRSAP services work with families or individuals having difficulty in maintaining tenancies and provide assistance structured around the needs of each person or family. The services aim to work with families before debts, or other tenancy management issues become too large or eviction processes begin and use a case management approach to address and identify issues that may lead to eviction. PRSAP services work with families until the tenancy is stabilised. The services are able, with tenants consent, to liaise with landlords and property managers to facilitate the maintenance of tenancies.</p> <p>Support and advocacy services for people in private rental accommodation may also provide support to people who have recently been homeless and who have been identified as requiring ongoing support to maintain their new accommodation and avoid further episodes of homelessness.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$1,015,266 2007-08 \$1,159,000</p> | <p>2006-07 239 2007-08 Not available</p> | <p>2006-07 1598 2007-08 Not available</p> |
| <p>SAAP – Innovation and Investment Fund (I&IF) Pilot Ruah Tenancy Fast Track</p> | <p>The <i>Ruah Tenancy Fast Track SAAP I&IF pilot</i> works with newly homeless families and at-risk of homelessness families and assists them to access long-term private rental housing, link them to appropriate services and supports to maximise the chance of a successful tenancy. It also provides follow up support to optimise their chance of successfully maintaining their tenancy.</p> | | |
| South Australia | | | |
| <p>Supported Tenancy Program (STP) (2002 pilot) (2004 program implementation) (SAAP funded from 2006) Mainstream program formerly provided by the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) Indigenous-specific program formerly provided by the Aboriginal Housing Authority (AHA) In July 2006, the SA Government dissolved the two entities and formed Housing SA. The two separate programs retained their status until 1 July 2008.</p> | <p>The <i>Supported Tenancy Program</i> (STP) is a Housing South Australia program that aims to prevent the eviction of Housing SA (formerly SAHT and AHA) tenants identified as being at risk of eviction. Eligibility for the STP is based on breaches of the Conditions of Tenancy and a range of identified indicators that place the tenant at risk of eviction. Key criteria include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Identified need for financial counselling as a result of non payment of rent. → Limited independent living skills, resulting in poor property and living conditions including hoarding and squalor. → A history of failed housing tenancies, homelessness, multiple claimed bonds and family violence and instability → Disruptive behaviour issues and disputes with neighbours. → A history of medical or mental health issues including drug and alcohol misuse. <p>The STP program includes a number of services providing support to Indigenous tenants in formerly Aboriginal Housing Authority properties. STP service providers provide case management and direct service delivery outreach support aimed at addressing the underlying issues that cause tenancy instability.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 SAHT \$1,070,063 AHA \$137,114 2007-08 SAHT \$1,084,616 AHA \$138,978</p> | <p>2006-07 109 2007-08 95</p> | <p>2006-07 515 2007-08 486</p> |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Intensive Intervention Program (IIP) (2004)</p> | <p>The <i>Intensive Intervention Program</i> (ILP) is a Housing South Australia program that commenced operations in 2004. It is an Indigenous specific tenant support program for Indigenous tenants and their families and wider kinship groups housed in public rental housing properties in The Parks area in Adelaide.</p> <p>Eligibility for the ILP is restricted to Indigenous families, including extended family members who are Housing SA tenants in The Parks Housing SA area that are at risk of eviction due to tenancy issues associated with debt, disruption or property maintenance issues.</p> <p>IIP aims to stabilise and maintain the housing situations of Indigenous tenants and their families by addressing the issues that may lead to the involvement of government and non-government agencies around a range of issues including education, child protection and justice.</p> <p>Family/extended family travelling from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands to the city often have high/complex needs requiring time intensive support. In many instances, case management of family members is essential to the ongoing viability of these tenancies.</p> <p>In addition to the service provision principles specified in the Service Agreement of the mainstream STP, IIP aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Work across different kinship groups including both urban and APY lands based customers. → Work inter-generationally and develop relationships with family members. → Allow for long-term contact with clients as the need arises through several cycles of change. → Provide intensive support where and when needed through visits and telephone contact. → Work with stakeholder organisations/agencies to assist in the development of more appropriate and relevant services. <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$75,000 2007-08 \$75,000</p> | <p>2006-07 12</p> <p>2007-08 16</p> | <p>2006-07 Not Applicable</p> <p>2007-08 Not Applicable</p> |
| Tasmania | | | |
| <p>Private Rental Tenancy Support Service (2005)</p> | <p>The <i>Private Rental Tenancy Support Service</i> is a Housing Tasmania program was implemented in 2005, It assists those in the private rental housing market across Tasmania with multiple needs to develop skills and linkages to relevant community support services to enhance their capacity to maintain a successful and independent private rental tenancy. Non-government organisations provide support.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$455,638 2007-08 \$388,246</p> | <p>2006-07 57</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> | <p>2006-07 969</p> <p>2007-08 Not available</p> |
| Northern Territory | | | |
| <p>Indigenous Housing Assistance Program (Tenancy Support Services) (2004)</p> | <p>The <i>Indigenous Housing Assistance Program</i> (Tenancy Support Services) is a Territory Housing Indigenous specific program providing support to Indigenous tenants in public housing and private rental housing. It commenced in its current form in December 2004 in Darwin and March 2005 in Alice Springs. The program provides support to Indigenous people to access and maintain tenancies in urban areas, particularly those new to urban areas, to enable them to adjust to an urban lifestyle. It seeks to increase the capacity of tenants to meet their tenancy obligations and their knowledge of tenancy rights and responsibilities.</p> | <p>2006-07 Not applicable</p> <p>2007-08</p> | |

| | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|--|
| <p>Tenancy Sustainability and Support Program (2009)</p> | <p>The <i>Tenancy Sustainability and Support Program</i> is a new program introduced in 2009 by Territory Housing to replace the former Tenancy Support Services program. It is targeted at residents of urban community living areas (town camps) and public housing residents in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine and Tennant Creek. The program is designed to provide support to the following tenants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Public housing tenants or town camp residents experiencing difficulty maintaining their tenancies or where the tenancy may be at risk of failure or may require support and training to manage their tenancy. → Public housing applicants who have previously been evicted from public housing (or surrendered their tenancy) through a failure to meet tenancy obligations and who have been identified by Territory Housing as in need of life skills training or intensive case management before entering a new public housing tenancy agreement. <p>The Tenancy Sustainability and Support Program aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Increase the knowledge and capacity of tenants to meet their tenancy obligations and responsibilities, improve the sustainability of public housing or town camp tenancies. → Reduce repairs and maintenance costs and increase the life of housing infrastructure. → Improve environmental health outcomes for households. → Better integrate socially and economically isolated tenants into broader community, economic and cultural networks. <p>Government Funding: The Tenancy Sustainability and Support Program was only implemented in 2009.</p> | <p>Not applicable</p> | |
| The Australian Capital Territory | | | |
| <p>Community Linkages Program: Sustaining Tenancies Program (2001)</p> | <p>The <i>Sustaining Tenancies Program</i> is a Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services program that commenced in 2001. Under the program, public and community housing tenants are supported to sustain their tenancies and have increased ability to manage their personal and financial circumstances. An aim of the program is that tenants have increased knowledge about and capacity to access community resources and support networks.</p> <p>The program works with public and community housing tenants who are experiencing difficulty maintaining their tenancies or who are facing eviction.</p> <p>Government Funding: 2006-07 \$123,539 2007-08 \$133,961</p> | | <p>No Breakdown between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients</p> <p>2006-07 135 (total)</p> <p>2007-08 84 (total)</p> |

Sources: Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey, site visits, published and unpublished reports.

*Description: Jurisdiction responsible for funding and administering the program; history of the program; aims and objectives of the program; target group; eligibility; geographical coverage; rental sector/s covered; and whether the program is an Indigenous-specific or a mainstream tenant support program; government recurrent funding for tenancy support services (2006-07 and 2007-08).

Table 3: Distribution of supported housing accommodation program clients in Western Australia

| <i>Location</i> | <i>Number of Indigenous clients</i> | <i>Number of non-Indigenous clients</i> |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 2006-07 | | |
| Capital city(ies) | 406 | 181 |
| Inner Regional | 199 | 98 |
| Outer Regional | 24 | 0 |
| Remote | n/a | n/a |
| Very Remote | n/a | n/a |
| Total | 629 | 279 |
| 2007-08 | | |
| Capital city(ies) | 463 | 181 |
| Inner Regional | 85 | 165 |
| Outer Regional | - | - |
| Remote | n/a | n/a |
| Very Remote | n/a | n/a |
| Total | 548 | 346 |

Source: Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey.

The Indigenous Tenancies at Risk (ITAR) program is an Indigenous-specific Victorian program supporting Indigenous tenants at risk of homelessness in public and transitional housing or community managed housing, including Aboriginal Housing Victoria properties. As with a number of Victorian early intervention homelessness programs, the ITAR program developed from a Victorian Homelessness Strategy pilot project and began operation in July 2006. In 2006-07, 264 Indigenous households were supported under the program and total funding on the program amounted to \$0.6 million.

The South Australian Supported Tenancy Program (STP) is a tenancy support program that aims to prevent the eviction of Housing SA tenants identified as being at risk of eviction.⁹ As with the WA SHAP and Victorian SHASP programs, STP provides support services to public rental housing tenants across South Australia and includes a number of services, which provide support to Indigenous tenants in formerly Aboriginal Housing Authority properties. Total funding for the program in 2007-08 was \$1.2 million with 95 Indigenous and 486 non-Indigenous households supported under the program.

South Australia also operates an Indigenous-specific intensive tenancy support program, the Intensive Intervention Program (IIP), which commenced in 2004. The IIP provides intensive support for a small number of Indigenous households each year in public rental housing properties in The Parks area in Adelaide. The program aims to stabilise and maintain the housing situations of Indigenous tenants and their families with high and complex needs. The program works across different kinship groups including both urban and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands-based clients. It seeks to work with Indigenous households through a model of developing

⁹ Housing SA combines the functions of the former South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) and the Aboriginal Housing Authority (AHA).

relationships with family members of different generations and maintaining long-term contact with clients as the need arises through various cycles of change.

The Queensland Same House Different Landlord (SHDL) program lies in a somewhat different category than other public housing tenant support programs operating in Australia. In effect, it represents a transitional support program for those entering public housing from crisis and transitional accommodation, but includes tenancy support as part of the transitional housing support arrangements. Under this program, tenants enter public housing from crisis and emergency transitional accommodation without physically relocating to another dwelling. In other words, households in crisis and transitional housing stay in the same house, but simply change their landlord and tenancy arrangements. Support services are provided on entry to the long-term public housing tenancy. The fact that tenants in transitional crisis accommodation do not have to move to new public housing dwellings is seen as a better way to establish more successful public housing tenancies for those clients who come from crisis and transitional accommodation. We provide an in-depth case study review of the Queensland Same House Different Landlord program in the following chapter.

Northern Territory Housing has recently introduced a major new tenancy support program for Indigenous clients, the Tenancy Sustainability Program (TSP). The TSP, which is being rolled out in 2009, aims to provide life skills training and a case management service that meets the needs of Indigenous people living in 'urban community living areas' and public housing clients. Urban community living areas are defined as: 'an area containing multiple dwellings in close proximity to a regional urban centre set aside for Indigenous people from remote communities to live in for a short term or long term basis. These areas are managed by Indigenous community organisations and are sometimes known as 'town camps'. In the case of Darwin, service providers are required to take on the headleases of six public housing dwellings per year and deliver intensive tenancy support services to clients living in these dwellings under the new *A Place to Call Home* (APTCH) initiative.

Eligible clients of the TSP are:

- Public housing tenants in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek and residents of town camps in Darwin and Alice Springs experiencing difficulty maintaining their tenancies and/or whose tenancy is at risk due to antisocial behaviour or failure to comply with other essential conditions of their tenancy who may require support and training to manage their tenancy.
- Residents of town camps in Darwin and Alice Springs and prospective public housing tenants in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek who have applied for public housing with no previous rental history, no rental history reference, or who have previously been evicted from public housing (or surrendered their tenancy) through a failure to meet tenancy obligations, and who have been identified by Territory Housing as in need of participation in the TSP before entering a new public housing tenancy agreement.
- APTCH clients in Darwin.

The TSP aims to:

- Increase the knowledge and capacity of tenants to meet their tenancy obligations and responsibilities.
- Improve the sustainability of public housing tenancies by supporting clients to develop the knowledge and skills to successfully maintain a safe and healthy home and living environment.
- Reduce repairs and maintenance costs and increase the life of housing infrastructure.

- Improve environmental health outcomes for households.
- Better integrate socially and economically isolated tenants into broader community, economic and cultural networks in order to support their connectedness to their neighbourhoods and improve their opportunities for social, cultural and economic success.

The TSP includes both Life Skills training and intensive case management. Life skills training include four modules: managing money and resources; managing visitors and crowding; household orientation and functionality; and maintaining a safe, healthy and hygienic home (incorporating the nine healthy Living Practices) including basic dwelling and yard maintenance. Intensive support and/or early intervention through case management occur where:

- The safety and health of a household, or individuals within it, is at risk.
- A tenant has been placed on an Acceptable Behaviour Agreement.
- The tenancy is at risk of failure through eviction or surrender of lease because of the inability of the household members to meet the responsibilities of the tenancy.

Public housing tenant support programs represent the most prominent form of tenant support for Indigenous households in Australia. However, a number of jurisdictions have also recently introduced tenant support programs in private rental housing for those at risk of eviction and facing the prospect of homelessness or those entering private rental tenancies from homelessness or from a position where they are at risk of homelessness.

Two examples of private rental tenancy support programs supporting tenants at risk of eviction are the Western Australian Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program (PRSAP), which commenced operation in 2003 as an initiative of the Western Australian State Homelessness Strategy and the Tasmanian Private Rental Tenancy Support Service, which began operations in 2005. In both programs, community-based organisations work with families at risk of homelessness facing possible eviction and seek to stabilise the tenancy and address identified issues that may lead to eviction. In 2007-08, total government funding provided for the PRSAP was \$1.2 million with 1598 clients supported; the corresponding funding and client numbers in Tasmania were \$0.4 million and 969 clients. No information was supplied in the ATSP survey on the breakdown between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients.

An interesting pilot initiative in Western Australia is the Tenancy Fast Track SAAP Innovation and Investment Fund pilot managed by Ruah Community Services. This pilot works with newly homeless families and at-risk of homelessness families and assists them to access long-term private rental housing, link them to appropriate services and supports to maximise the chance of a successful tenancy; and provide them with follow up support to optimise their chance of successfully maintaining their tenancy. The pilot provides case management support over a relatively long period to maximise the chances of the tenancy being sustained. Around one-fifth of all clients of the Ruah Tenancy Fast Track service are Indigenous.

Victoria operates two private rental support programs – the Youth Private Rental Access Program and the Family Violence Private Rental Access Program. These programs began in 2006 to assist clients of homeless services to access private rental tenancies, supporting tenants to maintain their tenancies in the early phases.. Both programs work closely with homelessness support services and aim to provide a continuum of care from crisis through to the establishment of successful tenancies.

The New South Wales Community Housing Office has recently introduced two tenancy support programs for those exiting homelessness and is trialing a third – the

Allawah Dual Diagnosis pilot project. These programs provide tenancy and other support services to formerly homeless people accessing housing, and work intensively with a small number of clients many of whom are Indigenous.

The My Place program was introduced as part of the first phase of the NSW Inner City Homelessness Action Plan. My Place works intensively with a small number of rough sleepers and other homeless people with high needs in inner city Sydney to provide access to community housing leases and to sustain their tenancy while in housing.

The Allawah Dual Diagnosis pilot project operates in inner city Sydney commencing services in 2007. This pilot project provides housing and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with mental health and substance use disorders, who are rough sleepers, are insecurely housed, living in sub-standard housing, living in overcrowded conditions, or who are accessing SAAP services. The project provides accommodation in community housing, and adds on to this tenancy support together with support for people experiencing mental illness and substance misuse.

The Port Jackson Supported Housing Program (PJSHP) works with clients who are homeless or have an urgent risk of homelessness or who face significant barriers to sustaining a tenancy without a documented level of support. The program supports clients to access and maintain their tenancies in community housing.

The PJSHP model involves a number of components. First, intensive supported tenancy management on the part of the community housing provider, St George Community Housing. In practice, this means a lower ratio of properties per housing manager relative to other supported housing models. Second, partnerships with support providers, in which only eligible clients of preferred support partners can obtain tenancies under the PJSHP. Support partners nominate potential clients when a property becomes available. A panel, comprising of representatives of support partners and housing managers, considers the nominations and selects a suitable tenant for the property. Third, all new tenants in the program are signed up to a three months fixed term tenancy agreement, which may be renewed subject to successful tenancy outcomes. Fourth, support for the client is provided by both St George Community Housing and the preferred support partners. One difficulty of this approach is that some support partners may only provide a limited outreach service to clients because of their limited resources or for other reasons. Fifth, the PJSHP has an earmarked designated property portfolio only available to Port Jackson clients. Around 13 per cent of PJSHP tenants are Indigenous.

The final program of interest is the Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice program, a large national homelessness early intervention program funded and administered by the Australian Government. The HOME Advice program seeks to identify families at risk of homelessness before they reach crisis stage and provide tenancy and personal support services to these families irrespective of their housing tenure. For the purposes of the program, a family is defined as two or more persons who live in the same house and are related by blood, defacto or de jure marriage or adoption.

Table 4: Australian Specialist Tenant Support Programs: client referral reasons, needs, support services and outcomes

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Drivers of tenancy instability</i> | <p>General drivers of tenancy instability: Mental health conditions; drug and alcohol dependency problems; poor knowledge of tenancy responsibilities; relationship breakdown; domestic and family violence; overcrowding; accumulated or sudden debt and low or inadequate income; lack of financial management; lack of coping skills; location and social isolation; lack of contact with, or awareness of, services and entitlements.</p> <p>Indigenous-specific drivers of tenancy instability: Discrimination by landlords and neighbours; failure of landlords and housing agencies to appropriately address cultural behaviour and imperatives such as duties of hospitality, extended family responsibilities and demand sharing; Lack of understanding of Indigenous patterns of occupation and use of housing (domiciliary behaviour); Indigenous belief systems and mourning customs; Inability to meet unforeseen expenses such as funeral costs; and Indigenous patterns of mobility. Indigenous people are more likely to live in regional or remote areas where there may be a limited number of support services available to assist people to address risk factors placing tenancies at risk. When Indigenous people move to urban areas from remote communities they may not have the urban-based 'life skills' necessary to maintain a tenancy.</p> |
| <i>Referral reasons/sources</i> | <p>Tenancy-based referral reasons: Rental arrears; tenant liabilities; property standards; tenancy breaches not accounted for elsewhere; general support in a tenancy in relation to allocations, transfers, applications; and, neighbourhood issues/conflict. Housing Termination Notices and Court Orders in relation to eviction may act as immediate triggers for entry to a tenancy support program.</p> <p>Non-tenancy-based referral reasons: Mental health and physical health needs; drug and alcohol dependency problems; hospitalisation/rehabilitation; relationship breakdown; and, experiences of family and domestic violence.</p> <p>Referral reasons for programs seeking to support clients entering new tenancies in a supported environment: Homelessness; history of housing tenancy management problems; mental and physical health needs; low income; drug and alcohol dependency problems.</p> <p>Sources of referral: Public housing specialist tenant support programs rely exclusively on referrals from public housing property managers. Other programs rely on a broad range of referral sources, including the tenant, Centrelink (in the case of the HOME Advice Program), State Housing Authorities, real estate agencies (private rental tenancy support programs), community support agencies and Indigenous or mainstream organisations.</p> |
| <i>Client needs and support services</i> | <p>Major needs: Mental health conditions; drug and alcohol dependency problems; poor knowledge of tenancy responsibilities; relationship breakdown; domestic and family violence; overcrowding; accumulated or sudden debt and low or inadequate income; lack of financial management; lack of coping skills; location and social isolation; lack of contact with, or awareness of, services and entitlements.</p> <p>Common support measures: Tenancy advice/information/support and education; needs assessment and case management; financial support to access housing; individual advocacy; counseling; family/household management skills; financial management; independent and community living skills development.</p> |

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| | Additional support measures: Family conflict, violence and abuse support; mental health, general health, drug and alcohol abuse support service referrals; social and personal development; job search skills development; financial relief and material assistance; legal support and child protection support. |
| Client outcomes | Client outcomes: Sustaining tenancies; reduction in rent arrears and tenant liabilities; improvement in property conditions and reduction in charges relating to property damage; reduced disruptive behavior outcomes; avoidance of homelessness; increased linkage to services; access to counseling services, referrals to mental health and drug and alcohol services, financial counselors; building capacity of clients; increased self-esteem, confidence and trust by tenants resulting in a greater capacity to engage with local community support services and community participation. |

Sources: Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey, site visits, published and unpublished reports.

The HOME Advice program uses the model, common across all Australian tenant support programs, of support services being delivered by non-government community organisations, but also incorporates a direct role for a Centrelink support worker. (Centrelink is the Australian Government's income support agency.) The HOME Advice program represents one of the largest tenant support programs in operation in Australia with funding of \$2.0 million and 305 clients in 2007-08. Around one quarter of all HOME Advice clients are Indigenous.

The program has one Indigenous-specific service, the Wodlittinattoai—Salisbury South Australian service; which is examined in the following chapter.

3.3 Tenant support program client characteristics, supports and outcomes

In this section, we outline what we know of the characteristics of clients of tenant support programs, examine sources and reasons for referral, the services provided to clients and their needs, and the outcomes achieved by clients (see Table 4 above). Our review is topic rather than program-based reflecting in part the absence of detailed information on all topics for all programs. Responses to the Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey provide the evidence base for the following discussion.

Drivers of tenancy instability, referral reasons and sources

The over-riding reason for existing tenants' referral to a tenant support program is that their tenancy is under threat of eviction. Referral may occur when problems emerge but no formal legal action has been taken, when a Breach Notice or Housing Termination Notice has been issued and, finally, when Court Orders in relation to an eviction are instituted. However, the primary reason why referral occurs to programs that focus on providing front-end tenancy support is that the prospective clients have been homeless and there is a high risk that, without support, their tenancy will fail.

There are a number of immediate housing-related reasons for a tenancy to move into an at-risk position. These will generally form the reason for referral of the tenancy to the tenant support program. They include rent arrears; tenant liabilities; poor property standards; other breaches of a tenancy (such as keeping a cat or dog on the premises when this is not allowed; sub-letting to others where there is no legal basis for this, and using the premises for an illegal purpose or for business purposes without approval); and, neighbourhood issues/conflict.

Lying behind these tenancy-based referral reasons are a myriad of possible underlying drivers of tenancies moving to an at-risk position. These include mental and physical illness and required supports, relationship breakdown, loss of employment, hospitalisation/rehabilitation, experiences of family and domestic violence, Indigenous cultural supports, and incarceration of one or more of those in the household.

A number of Indigenous-specific drivers creating problems for tenancies were identified in responses to the ATSP Survey. They include:

- Discrimination by landlords and neighbours.
- Failure of landlords and housing agencies to appropriately address cultural behaviour and imperatives such as duties of hospitality extended family responsibilities and demand sharing.
- Lack of understanding of Indigenous patterns of occupation and use of housing (domiciliary behaviour).
- Indigenous belief systems and mourning customs.
- An inability to meet unforeseen expenses, such as funeral costs.
- Indigenous patterns of mobility.

Indigenous people are also more likely to live in regional or remote areas where there may be a limited number of support services available to assist them to address risk factors placing tenancies at risk. When Indigenous people move to urban areas from remote communities they may not have the urban-based 'life skills' necessary to maintain a tenancy.

Not all tenant support programs provide a breakdown of the reasons for referral nor provide a breakdown between reasons for referral for Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients. In some cases, there is no record maintained of the underlying reasons for tenancy failure.

The Western Australian SHAP program, which assists at-risk public housing tenants, provides a breakdown of referral reasons for Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients. Referral reasons listed relate to the housing-related reasons for the referral. Among Indigenous clients, property standards represented the main reason for referral accounting for 60 per cent of all referrals, tenant liabilities accounted for a further quarter of all reasons, rent arrears 10 per cent of client referrals, and other reasons a final 10 per cent of clients. Among non-Indigenous clients, property standards was the main reason for referral among a much smaller group of clients (20%) with tenant liabilities the main reason for referral of 15 per cent of clients, rent arrears 20 per cent of clients, other tenancy breaches 5 per cent of clients, and other reasons 40 per cent of clients.

In the Victorian Indigenous-specific ITAR program, the main reasons recorded for referral include rental arrears/debts; assistance in applying for new tenancies; assistance to transfer to other properties, and tenant liabilities. In the mainstream SHASP program, the key reasons for referral are rental arrears/debts; overcrowding; history of housing tenancy management problems; property standards; family or domestic violence; appeals; tenant liabilities; anti-social behavior; homelessness; relocation and complaints.

The ACT Community Linkages program lists, as the main sources of referral to the program, Housing Termination Notice currently in force; rental arrears; property standards; support in the tenancy (allocations, transfers, applications); Court Orders in relation to eviction; and neighbourhood issues/conflict.

The South Australian tenancy support programs record what can be seen as the underlying reasons for referral to the program by distinguishing between behavioural reasons for referral and mental health, general health, physical reasons and other reasons for referral. Among Indigenous clients in the SA Supported Tenancy Program in 2007-08, 38.9 per cent were assessed as having behavioural reasons as the primary reason for referral, 16.7 per cent mental health needs as a primary source of referral, 22.2 per cent with general health needs, and 5.6 per cent with physical needs as a primary source of referral. The profile of primary reasons for referral for Indigenous clients is little different to the non-Indigenous profile of reasons.

Tenancy support programs that provide assistance to sustain a tenancy on entry (such as the My Place program) have a very different profile of referral reasons as compared with programs designed to provide assistance to existing tenants under threat of eviction. In terms of the former type of program, the key grounds for referral to the program is that of homelessness, a past history of housing tenancy management problems, and other housing-related needs, such as outstanding debts. However, referral to the tenancy support program is also conditional on the existence of a range of non-housing-related needs. They include needs such as relationship breakdown, loss of employment, experiences of family and domestic violence, Indigenous cultural supports, incarceration of one or more of those in the household, debts and/or outstanding fines to utilities.

Not surprisingly, public housing specialist tenant support programs rely exclusively on referrals from their own public housing property managers. Other tenant support programs, however, rely on a broader range of referral sources. For example, the HOME Advice Program has a significant self-referral component. It also draws clients from Centrelink, reflecting the unique role that the Centrelink social worker plays in the program. Referral sources include the client themselves (32.6% of cases); family and friends (5.9%); Centrelink (24.5%); State Housing Authorities /Community Housing (11.1%); and other sources (25.9%).

In the WA Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program, an important source of referrals is real estate agencies. The Indigenous-specific ITAR program receives referrals from Indigenous or mainstream organisations as a primary source of referral to the program.

Client needs and support services

Unlike the SAAP administrative data system, where data are collected at the unit record level about the identified needs of clients and of services provided to clients, there is no common reporting system across tenant support programs in Australia.

Tenant support programs in the ATSP Survey identified a range of housing and non-housing needs of clients. They included mental health conditions; drug and alcohol dependency; relationship breakdown; domestic and family violence; overcrowding; poor knowledge of tenancy responsibilities; accumulated or sudden debt and low or inadequate income; lack of financial management; lack of coping skills; location and social isolation; and lack of contact with, or awareness of, services and entitlements.

The South Australian Supported Tenancy Program (STP) reported that the majority of clients referred to the STP have multiple complex issues.

- Mental Health needs – clients with mental health problems and poor independent living skills may not understand the importance of rubbish removal and cleaning of the property resulting in poor property condition, hoarding and unhealthy living conditions inside the property. In many cases, the STP response suggested that mental illnesses were exacerbated by ongoing drug and alcohol misuse.

- Cultural Barriers – as a result of family and cultural expectations, the STP response suggested that Indigenous clients can experience overcrowding problems with extended family living in the property. This affects the tenant's ability to sustain the tenancy resulting from disruptive behaviour and family violence. The STP response also noted that there were major issues for family members who were still very traditional in their way of living.

Support measures common across tenant support programs in the ATSP Survey include tenancy advice/information/support and education; needs assessment and case management; financial support to access housing; individual advocacy; counseling; family/household management skills, including financial management, and independent and community living skills development. Additional factors identified in certain programs (but not all) as requiring support include family conflict, violence and abuse; mental illness; general health issues; substance misuse; support service referrals; social and personal development; job search skills development; financial relief and material assistance, and legal and child protection matters.

Tenant support programs generally did not differentiate between the profile of Indigenous and non-Indigenous needs and support measures. One program that does is the Australian Government HOME Advice program. We leave for the following chapter a discussion of differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous support measures in the HOME Advice program using the Wodlitinattoai Service in Salisbury South Australia as the basis for our discussion.

Client outcomes

As with client needs and supports in tenant support programs, there is limited information on client outcomes from tenant support programs, particularly differentiated by Indigenous status.

Across all programs, the key outcome from the program is that eviction and, consequently, homelessness, is avoided. Given the high costs associated with homelessness, this makes tenancy support programs very cost-effective.

Other key tenancy-related outcomes from tenancy support programs include the following:

- Reduction in rent arrears and tenant liabilities.
- Improvement in property conditions and reduction in charges relating to property damage.
- Fewer reports of disruptive behaviour.
- Increased linkage to services and improved access to counseling services, referrals to mental health and drug and alcohol services, financial counsellors.
- Capacity building among clients.
- Increased self-esteem, confidence and trust by tenants resulting in a greater capacity to engage with local community support services and community participation.

The South Australian Supported Tenancy Program (STP) is one program that was able to provide a detailed Indigenous and non-Indigenous split on tenancy-related outcomes.

As evident in Table 5, the vast majority of the STP clients (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) had avoided eviction. However, the reason for closure of the support period was not identified in the data in the majority of cases. In those where it was identified, the main reason for leaving the program was that the tenancy had been stabilised.

The STP response to the ATSP Survey provides further indicators on the outcomes generated from tenancy support through this program. As indicated in Table 6, the 'Housing is Maintained' outcome represents the most significant primary and secondary outcome from the TSP. It accounts for around 45 per cent of all primary outcomes for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients. Other key housing-related outcome indicators include the fact that support had led to lower levels of neighbourhood disruption, reduced property damage, and led to a greater understanding of tenancy obligations.

What is also evident in the STP client outcomes data is that a range of non-housing-related outcomes are also evident from tenancy support programs, emphasising the fact that these programs not only provide tenancy support, but also provide a range of other supports relating to the broad needs of clients. Non-tenancy related outcomes include improved access to community supports and relevant resources and an improvement in health outcomes.

The Port Jackson Supported Housing Program works at the other end of the spectrum to the STP supporting homeless people or those at very high risk of homelessness into supported accommodation in community housing. Over the three years from its inception, 72 per cent of the 165 tenants maintained their tenancy within the program, 15 per cent had made planned exits into stable housing, with the remainder failing or in jail.

Table 5: Avoidance of eviction, the Supported Tenancy Program, South Australia, 2007-08

| | <i>Non-Indigenous</i> | | <i>Indigenous</i> | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>AHA</i> | | <i>SAHT</i> | | <i>Total</i> | |
| | | | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> |
| <i>Eviction avoided 2007/08</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 445 | 91.6 | 28 | 87.5 | 61 | 96.8 | 89 | 93.7 |
| No | 8 | 1.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 1.6 | 1 | 1.1 |
| No record | 33 | 6.8 | 4 | 12.5 | 1 | 1.6 | 5 | 5.3 |
| Total | 486 | 100.0 | 32 | 100.0 | 63 | 100.0 | 95 | 100.0 |

Source: Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey.

Table 6: Client outcomes, the Supported Tenancy Program, South Australia, 2007-08

| | <i>Non-Indigenous</i> | | <i>Indigenous</i> | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| | | | <i>AHA</i> | | <i>SAHT</i> | | <i>Total</i> | |
| | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> |
| <i>2007/08 Primary client changes for closed support periods</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Access Community Supports | 5 | 2.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Access Relevant Resources | 11 | 5.3 | 3 | 20.0 | 2 | 8.3 | 5 | 12.8 |
| Arrears Reduced | 1 | 0.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Aware of Community Supports | 6 | 2.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 4.2 | 1 | 2.6 |
| Engaged In Education | 3 | 1.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Engaged in Training | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Family Relationship Improved | 3 | 1.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Found Employment | 3 | 1.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Health Issues Addressed | 6 | 2.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Housing is Maintained | 92 | 44.0 | 8 | 53.3 | 9 | 37.5 | 17 | 43.6 |
| N/A | 13 | 6.2 | 1 | 6.7 | 6 | 25.0 | 7 | 17.9 |
| Neighbourhood Disruption Ceased | 7 | 3.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 4.2 | 1 | 2.6 |
| Neighbourhood Disruption Decreased | 6 | 2.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 8.3 | 2 | 5.1 |
| Parenting Skills Improved | 3 | 1.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Reduced Property Damage | 20 | 9.6 | 1 | 6.7 | 2 | 8.3 | 3 | 7.7 |
| Regular Rent Payments | 4 | 1.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Understand Tenancy Obligations | 15 | 7.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| No Record | 11 | 5.3 | 2 | 13.3 | 1 | 4.2 | 3 | 7.7 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>209</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>15</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>24</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>39</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| <i>2007/08 Secondary client changes for closed support periods</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Access Community Supports | 19 | 9.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 4.2 | 1 | 2.6 |
| Access Relevant Resources | 29 | 13.9 | 1 | 6.7 | 2 | 8.3 | 3 | 7.7 |
| Arrears Reduced | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 6.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.6 |
| Aware of Community Supports | 13 | 6.2 | 1 | 6.7 | 1 | 4.2 | 2 | 5.1 |
| Engaged In Education | 3 | 1.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Engaged in Training | 1 | 0.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Family Relationship Improved | 3 | 1.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Found Employment | 4 | 1.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Health Issues Addressed | 17 | 8.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Housing is Maintained | 27 | 12.9 | 3 | 20.0 | 4 | 16.7 | 7 | 17.9 |
| N/A | 21 | 10.0 | 1 | 6.7 | 6 | 25.0 | 7 | 17.9 |
| Neighbourhood Disruption Ceased | 6 | 2.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Neighbourhood Disruption Decreased | 6 | 2.9 | 1 | 6.7 | 1 | 4.2 | 2 | 5.1 |
| Parenting Skills Improved | 7 | 3.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 4.2 | 1 | 2.6 |
| Reduced Property Damage | 7 | 3.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Regular Rent Payments | 7 | 3.3 | 1 | 6.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.6 |
| Understand Tenancy Obligations | 14 | 6.7 | 3 | 20.0 | 5 | 20.8 | 8 | 20.5 |
| No Record | 25 | 12.0 | 3 | 20.0 | 3 | 12.5 | 6 | 15.4 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>209</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>15</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>24</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>39</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

Source: Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey.

The Northern Territory Tenancy Sustainability Program (TSP) is a new program for which no substantial client outcome data exists. What is of interest, however, is the use of an extensive performance evaluation process surrounding the program.

As outlined above, the TSP incorporates two components – Life Skills and intensive case management. For each Life Skills module in the TSP, a set of performance indicators are specified. For example, in the case of the managing money and resources life skills module, the performance indicators specified are that:

- Households will have a continuous supply of electricity to:
 1. Allow fresh food to be safely stored and prepared.
 2. Allow for lighting at night for the increased safety of household members.
- Households will have on hand a reserve of basic food stuff.
- Households will have on hand basic toiletry items and cleaning agents such as personal soap, laundry powder, toilet paper and dish washing liquid.
- Households will have available some cash reserves to meet unanticipated costs, e.g. to replace a broken refrigerator or washing machine.
- There will be a reduction in tenant indebtedness to Territory Housing.

Beyond the set of performance indicators listed for each life skills module, the TSP includes a set of overall Key Performance Indicators with associated targets. They include:

- The dollar value of rental arrears (10% reduction).
- The number of anti-social behaviour complaints (10% reduction).
- The number of evictions (10% reduction).
- The dollar value of tenant-related property damage (10% reduction).
- Tenants reporting property damage (15% increase).
- Successful first property inspections (15% increase).
- New tenants' leases being extended, but not on probation (15% increase).

3.4 Tenant Support Programs: working with Indigenous clients and support providers

The ATSP Survey includes a series of open-ended questions seeking the views of tenant support program administrators on a range of issues. They include the factors contributing to or limiting a program successfully meeting the needs of Indigenous at-risk tenants in different environments, and the key ingredients of successful collaborations between tenant support administrators and agencies delivering services.

A summary of responses to these questions from service providers is included in Table 7 below.

Responses to the ATSP Survey focused on the following key service delivery practices, which helped to contribute to the achievement of positive outcomes for Indigenous clients:

- *Early Intervention*. Intervene early before the causes of tenancy instability become too great to manage.

- *Client Empowerment.* Empower clients so that they can successfully manage their own tenancies and engage them so that they are attached to achieving positive outcomes from the program.
- *Local knowledge and trust.* Knowledge of local Indigenous communities and the development of trust within communities.
- Is vital as is the use of service providers who are local and have credibility in the community.
- *Support workers.* Support workers need to be culturally sensitive, able to understand and acknowledge cultural issues, including kinship obligations, and have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of local family relationships.
- *Case management.* One-to-one client contact, assertive case management, access to brokerage funds, and the use of named referrals linking clients to specific individuals in external agencies, together with direct transportation to external agencies, works best.
- *External support linkages.* Good linkages with agencies providing personal support services in areas such as mental health support and drug and alcohol counseling and support is critical to address the underlying sources of tenancy failure.

The absence of any of the above factors will limit the ability of a service to meet the needs of clients. In addition, there exists a range of external constraints and client-based responses that may act to reduce the program's effectiveness. They include limited resources, which impinge on the time available on the part of service workers to work with clients. In regional areas in particular, service workers may have too large an area to cover and there may not exist the range of external support agencies to link clients to for support. Resource constraints will affect the recruitment and retention of staff and place limitations on the ability of agencies to rent adequate office space that enables services to meet the needs of clients in conditions of privacy and confidentiality.

The effectiveness of service responses is also influenced by the extent to which tenants are away from home due to family commitments. This prevents support plans from being fully implemented. Tenants may also fail to access certain local Indigenous services due to cross-cultural differences and beliefs.

Finally, there may be limited availability of Indigenous workers and cultural services in some areas, and services to remote communities, due to inadequate financial and human resources.

As noted in earlier chapters, the model followed by Australian tenant support programs involves a separation of the funding and management functions of the program from the service delivery functions. An important implication of this fact is that the quality and effectiveness of the relationship between the funder and service delivery agencies matters critically for the success of the program.

What are the key ingredients of an effective relationship between funders and service delivery agencies? Program administrators suggested the following as key factors.

First, there needs to be a common understanding of the goals and objectives of the program among both administrators and service providers and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities involved. A reference group consisting of supporting agencies, housing officers and community elders is critical to maintaining contact between funders and providers. This group is also needed to provide a strategic forum where issues can be discussed and the focus, priority and momentum of the program can be maintained.

The activities of support providers need to be monitored against key performance indicators with regular performance reviews built into agency contracts. At the more micro-level, funders and managers should be involved with providers in reviewing tenants' requirements and needs and be engaged in collaborative case management planning to ensure that agreed expectations, goals and outcomes are identified for specific cases.

Both funders and service agencies need to participate jointly in reviews and changes of service delivery models and practices. Funders and service agencies need to develop a shared understanding of the client base and an understanding of service responses to Indigenous people. Further than this, funders and housing providers need to acknowledge the importance of relationships when working with Indigenous services and Indigenous tenants.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter provides a review of specialist tenant support programs around Australia. All Australian Governments have implemented tenant support programs of one kind or another. The oldest and largest of these programs operate in public housing. In recent years, we have seen tenant support programs branch out into other tenure types, including private rental housing and community housing. The HOME Advice program is completely tenure neutral. We have also seen tenant support programs develop at the front-end of tenancies supporting households entering housing from homelessness.

Our review suggests that Indigenous households have been able to gain access to tenancy support programs in line with their representation in particular tenure locations and received a broad range of supports, including tenancy-related support and personal support measures linked to mental illness, drug and alcohol dependency and other issues known to impact negatively on the maintenance of a tenancy.

There are gaps in our knowledge of client outcomes from tenure support programs. However, the existing evidence indicates that Indigenous tenants have sustained their tenancies and have avoided homelessness. This is a major contribution to the overall effort of reducing the Indigenous homelessness rate, which would be higher if such programs were not in place.

Table 7: Australian Specialist Tenant Support Programs: working with Indigenous clients and support providers

| | |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Factors that contribute to successful outcomes with Indigenous clients</i></p> | <p>As early intervention as possible, assisting clients before rent arrears and tenant liabilities or other causes of tenancy instability become too great.</p> <p>Knowledge of local communities, development of trust within communities, service providers who are local and have credibility in the community.</p> <p>Empowerment of clients and developing tools and options to enable tenants to successfully manage their own tenancy.</p> <p>Tenants' willingness to be involved in the program.</p> <p>Brokerage funds to assist with meeting tenancy-related crisis problems.</p> <p>Indigenous support workers; support workers who are culturally sensitive, are able to understand and acknowledge cultural issues, including kinship obligations.</p> <p>One-to-one client contact and assertive case management.</p> <p>Good linkages with agencies providing personal support services in areas such as drug and alcohol counseling and support.</p> <p>Named referrals – referrals made to individuals in external agencies rather than the agency itself – direct transportation to external agencies.</p> <p>An in-depth knowledge and understanding of local family relationships.</p> |
| <p><i>Factors limiting the ability of tenant support programs to meet at-risk Indigenous tenant needs</i></p> | <p>A lack of affordable housing options for Indigenous families has an impact on securing safe, stable and affordable housing.</p> <p>Limited brokerage funds.</p> <p>Limited time available to develop trust and the relationship between the support worker and the client.</p> <p>Management of conflict of interest issues which lead to the blurring of professional boundaries.</p> <p>Tenants not at home due to family commitments which prevents support plans being implemented.</p> <p>Limited Indigenous workers and cultural services in some areas and tenants who do not access certain local Indigenous services due to cross-cultural differences and beliefs.</p> <p>Limited services to remote communities due to inadequate financial and human resources and large geographic area to cover.</p> <p>Workers covering too large an area.</p> |

Recruitment and retention of staff.

Physical limitations – crowded office space to meet women and children's needs including privacy and confidentiality.

Expectations placed on the support worker to achieve quick and positive outcomes are high and in some cases unachievable.

Clients' lack of trust of service providers and of government more generally.

***Keys to successful
collaboration between
administrators and agencies***

Common understanding of the goals and objectives of the program among both administrators and service providers.

Well established reference group consisting of supporting agencies, housing officers and community elders, to provide a strategic forum where issues can be discussed and where the focus, priority and momentum of the program can be maintained.

Relationships of trust and respect between funders and housing providers.

Flexible working arrangements and flexibility to be innovative and creative.

Clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, key performance indicators and outcomes; regular performance reviews, and clear protocols.

Close monitoring and support, open communication between administering agency and support providers, regular follow up and review of tenants' requirements and needs; regular meetings, ad-hoc meetings between staff to openly discuss issues.

Collaborative case management planning to ensure that agreed expectations, goals and outcomes are identified.

Joint participation and agreement in reviews and changes of service delivery models and practices.

Clear criteria in relation to referrals; referrals to incorporate sufficient information for the support worker to immediately commence intervention rather than using time trying to establish what the main issues are.

Provision of appropriate resources.

Development of best practice infrastructure and systems of governance.

Holistic understanding of Indigenous service responses and what is culturally appropriate or supportive for people to feel safe and secure.

Sound knowledge of the client base.

Sources: Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey, site visits, published and unpublished reports.

4 TENANT SUPPORT PROGRAM CASE STUDIES

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we provided a profile of tenant support programs around Australia. In this chapter, we undertake a closer examination of services in three different jurisdictions to gain further insights into how tenant support programs work in practice to support at-risk Indigenous tenancies.

The first program reviewed in further depth is the HOME Advice program and, more particularly, the Wodlittinattoai service, which is an Indigenous-specific service in Salisbury, South Australia.

The second program reviewed is the Same House Different Landlord Program in Queensland in which households in homelessness-based supported accommodation move seamlessly through into long-term social housing with support while staying in the same dwelling.

The final case study is of a range of tenancy support services operated by a community service provider, Ruah in Perth, Western Australia. Ruah operates four tenancy support services in Perth under four different programs, each with its own particular target client group.

4.2 HOME Advice Program: the Wodlittinattoai service, Salisbury South Australia

Background

One of the key tenant support programs operating in Australia is the Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program. The HOME Advice Program provides support to families at risk of homelessness, irrespective of their housing tenure, at eight sites around Australia.

In this section, we examine the operation of the Indigenous-specific service operating in Salisbury in South Australia – the Wodlittinattoai service (Wodlittinattoai means ‘so as not to be without a home’). Salisbury is located on the northern outskirts of Adelaide. The research team spent some time with the Wodlittinattoai service and Centrelink Social Worker, and liaised with the national HOME Advice Program in Canberra.

The Wodlittinattoai service originated as one of eight pilot sites (one in each state and territory) for the Family Homelessness Prevention Pilot (FHPP), an early intervention initiative to develop approaches to reduce family homelessness. The first clients were accepted into the service in July 2003. Wodlittinattoai was the only Indigenous-specific service in the pilot program, re-named the Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program when refunded at the end of the pilot period.

As with all HOME Advice Program services, the Wodlittinattoai service operates on a service partnership model involving a non-government agency which provides tenancy and general support services and Centrelink. In the case of the Wodlittinattoai service, the non-government agency is Centacare.¹⁰

The Wodlittinattoai service supports Indigenous families who are experiencing difficulties in maintaining their accommodation for a range of different reasons.

¹⁰ Centacare Catholic Family Services is the official community service agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide with offices in a number of areas in South Australia

Centacare, the Coordinator and Family Support Worker employ two Indigenous staff, and Centrelink employs a part-time Social Worker. These staff work as a team to offer family counseling, advocacy, family support, budgeting skills development, outreach support and facilitates linkages to other services, both Indigenous and mainstream.

The 2007 *HOME Advice Program Evaluation Report* (MacKenzie, Desmond et al. 2007) covering all eight sites noted that many similarities existed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous families in the HOME Advice program. The areas of difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous families lay in the greater likelihood of Indigenous families being in public housing (51% compared with 27% for non-Indigenous families) and on a Centrelink benefit (84% compared with 75% for non-Indigenous families). Indigenous families were also more likely to make more frequent moves than non-Indigenous families; 40 per cent of Indigenous families had three or more moves within a two-year period as compared with 22 per cent of non-Indigenous families.

Interestingly across both Indigenous and non-Indigenous families, there was little difference in the experience of past homelessness. Around 80 per cent of families in the HOME Advice Program had not previously experienced homelessness. In other words, the HOME Advice Program is working with a client base where the risk of homelessness is high, but experience of homelessness is relatively low.

There were 21 referrals to the Wodlitanattoai program in 2006-07 and 27 in 2007-08. The client numbers do not include extended family members who may be staying in a client's home on a long-or short-term basis. Wodlitanattoai statistics show that the actual number of adults and children supported is at least 20 per cent higher than the 'official' client numbers reported to the funder.

The model

The HOME service model allows for multiple pathways into support as shown in Figure 1 below.

The Home Advice Program model uses a strengths-based approach and recognises the need to work holistically with families before a tenancy crisis develops. It involves workers from government and non-government organisations working closely together. However, the practicalities of this form of cooperation differ between the various sites.

The Wodlitanattoai project experienced some initial challenges in making the model work. The forms of support provided to clients and way of working were familiar to the non-government organisation involved (Centacare), whereas the role of the Centrelink social worker in the service was outside the usual experience of the organisation. This created some challenges for both Centacare and Centrelink. Changes were subsequently made to structures and communication practices to accommodate these concerns.

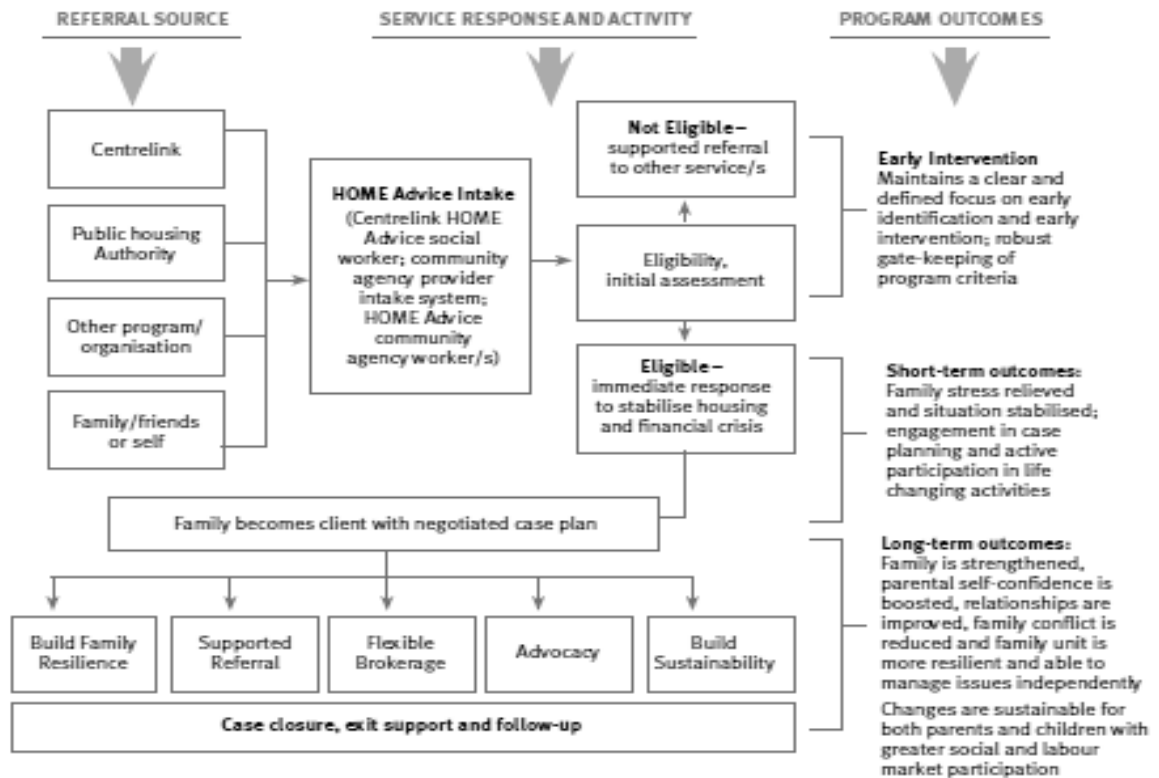
Co-location of the Centacare and Centrelink staff in the program ultimately proved successful, with staff from each agency bringing strengths and particular knowledge to the work.

In the HOME Advice Program model, Centrelink HOME Advice social workers bring significant knowledge of income support issues to the service and are able to facilitate priority intervention in relation to income support assessments, participation requirements, debt reviews and the appeals system (see MacKenzie et al. 2007).

Referrals

The pattern of referral sources for the Wodlittinattoai service is roughly similar to the Australia-wide HOME Advice Program profile (see Table 8). In the case of the Wodlittinattoai service, Centrelink is not quite as significant a source of client referral accounting for around 15 per cent of referrals as compared with around 20 per cent Australia-wide. There is a great deal of variation in the contribution of Centrelink referrals across the various HOME Advice services suggesting that the number of referrals may be linked to differences between Centrelink offices in terms of practices adopted in identifying at-risk families or reflect differences between individual Centrelink caseworkers.

Figure 1: The HOME Advice referrals, service response and outcomes chart



Source: The Home Advice Program Evaluation Report (Mackenzie, Desmond and Steen 2007, p.20).

On the other hand, 'other programs and services' represented a major source of client referral for the Wodlittinattoai service. Centacare had a high level of connectedness with other programs and services in the community. Workers had created effective links with other services in the area. Possibly all potential at-risk of homelessness eligible families were picked up through these service linkages.

Table 8: Sources of referral, HOME Advice Program, Australia and the Wodlittinattoai Service, 2006-2007

| | <i>HOME Advice Program</i> | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | <i>Australia-wide</i> | | | | <i>Wodlittinattoai</i> | | | |
| | <i>2006-07</i> | | <i>2007-08</i> | | <i>2006-07</i> | | <i>2007-08</i> | |
| | <i>No</i> | <i>per cent</i> | <i>No</i> | <i>per cent</i> | <i>No</i> | <i>per cent</i> | <i>No</i> | <i>per cent</i> |
| Self/family or friends | 110 | 37.0 | 125 | 39.9 | 6 | 28.6 | 10 | 37.0 |
| Centrelink | 58 | 19.5 | 69 | 22.0 | 3 | 14.3 | 4 | 14.8 |
| Other programs/services | 93 | 31.3 | 89 | 28.4 | 11 | 52.4 | 11 | 40.7 |
| State Housing Authorities | 35 | 11.8 | 27 | 8.6 | 2 | 9.5 | 2 | 7.4 |
| Not stated | 5 | 1.7 | 3 | 1 | -- | -- | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 297 | 100.0 | 313 | 100.0 | 21 | 100.0 | 27 | 100.0 |

Source: Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey

Needs and services

Table 9 presents evidence in relation to issues facing clients on entry to support. More than one issue can be identified as important for any given client.

As evident from Table 9, there are high levels of need for HOME Advice program clients in the domains of family conflict, violence and abuse; illness and disability; living situation and living skills. In respect of three of these domains, namely, family conflict, violence and abuse; living situation and living skills, somewhat higher proportions of Wodlittinattoai clients are affected than HOME Advice program clients generally. In respect of addictive behaviours, Wodlittinattoai clients have significantly higher needs than HOME Advice program clients do generally.

Table 9: Issues facing clients, HOME Advice Program, Australia and the Wodlittinattoai Service, 2006-2007

| | <i>Australia-wide</i> | | | | <i>Wodlittinattoai</i> | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | <i>2006-07</i> | | <i>2007-08</i> | | <i>2006-07</i> | | <i>2007-08</i> | |
| | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> |
| | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> |
| Legal | 91 | 31.5 | 103 | 33.4 | 2 | 10.0 | 11 | 40.7 |
| Child protection | 52 | 18.0 | 48 | 15.6 | 4 | 20.0 | 3 | 11.1 |
| Family conflict, violence and abuse | 169 | 58.5 | 175 | 56.8 | 16 | 80.0 | 18 | 66.7 |
| Illness and disability | 181 | 62.6 | 180 | 58.4 | 10 | 50.0 | 20 | 74.1 |
| Addictive behaviour | 59 | 20.4 | 88 | 28.6 | 10 | 50.0 | 16 | 59.3 |
| Living situation | 248 | 85.8 | 261 | 84.7 | 19 | 95.0 | 23 | 85.2 |
| Living skills | 218 | 75.4 | 232 | 75.3 | 17 | 85.0 | 24 | 88.9 |
| Total | 289 | | 308 | | 20 | | 27 | |

Source: Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey

In Table 10, we present evidence on support services provided to HOME Advice clients. The pattern of support among Wodlittinattoai clients is not too dissimilar to that for HOME Advice program service clients more generally. The evidence presented in Table 10 suggests that clients receive a broad range of support services from HOME

Advice services. However, apart from a few exceptions, a greater proportion of Wodlittinattoai clients receive any given support service than is evident for HOME Advice clients generally.

In drawing together the evidence on both needs and services, it would appear that Wodlittinattoai clients experience somewhat greater needs than other HOME Advice clients but at the same time also receive a wider set of supports. Consistent with this outcome, Wodlittinattoai clients were supported for somewhat longer periods than HOME Advice clients more generally. The average length of a support period for HOME Advice clients in 2007-08 was 170 days. In the case of Wodlittinattoai clients, the average length of support was 259 days.

Client, organisational and community outcomes

The key aim of the HOME Advice program is to save families from homelessness. This aim was fully met in the case of the Wodlittinattoai service. All clients remained housed as a result of the support provided by the HOME Advice program.

Table 10: Client services, HOME Advice Program, Australia and the Wodlittinattoai Service, 2006-2007

| | Australia-wide | | | | Wodlittinattoai | | | |
|--|----------------|----------|------------|----------|-----------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | 2006-07 | | 2007-08 | | 2006-07 | | 2007-08 | |
| | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent |
| Information, advice and referral | 283 | 96.6 | 299 | 97.1 | 20 | 100.0 | 27 | 100.0 |
| Individual advocacy | 257 | 87.7 | 260 | 84.4 | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 74.1 |
| Counselling | 186 | 63.5 | 181 | 58.8 | 11 | 55.0 | 15 | 55.6 |
| Needs assessment and management of case/service plans | 204 | 69.6 | 198 | 64.3 | 12 | 60.0 | 16 | 59.3 |
| Development of family/household management skills | 117 | 39.9 | 129 | 41.9 | 8 | 40.0 | 15 | 55.6 |
| Mutual support and self-help | 103 | 35.2 | 113 | 36.7 | 15 | 75.0 | 17 | 63.0 |
| Social and personal development | 75 | 25.6 | 95 | 30.8 | 9 | 45.0 | 17 | 63.0 |
| Recreational/leisure activities | 61 | 20.8 | 62 | 20.1 | 2 | 10.0 | 14 | 51.9 |
| Independent and community living skills development | 44 | 15.0 | 56 | 18.2 | 8 | 40.0 | 14 | 51.9 |
| Drop in social support | 79 | 27.0 | 86 | 27.9 | 9 | 45.0 | 13 | 48.1 |
| Social support, escorting, visiting and personal transport | 92 | 31.4 | 107 | 34.7 | 11 | 55.0 | 22 | 81.5 |
| Job search skills development | 29 | 9.9 | 39 | 12.7 | 1 | 5.0 | 4 | 14.8 |
| Financial relief | 193 | 65.9 | 211 | 68.5 | 7 | 35.0 | 12 | 44.4 |
| Emergency financial assistance for accommodation | 78 | 26.6 | 68 | 22.1 | -- | -- | 0 | 0.0 |
| Material assistance | 143 | 48.8 | 139 | 45.1 | 12 | 60.0 | 16 | 59.3 |
| Accommodation placement and support | 36 | 12.3 | 29 | 9.4 | 2 | 10.0 | 3 | 11.1 |
| Community development and support | 44 | 15.0 | 36 | 11.7 | 6 | 30.0 | 13 | 48.1 |
| Cultural group development | 8 | 2.7 | 8 | 2.6 | 3 | 15.0 | 5 | 18.5 |
| Other | 1 | .3 | 0 | 0.0 | -- | -- | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | 293 | | 308 | | 20 | | 27 | |

Source: Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey

Table 11: Assessment of overall change in family situation (after support period), HOME Advice Program, Australia and the Wodlittinattoai Service, 2006-2007

| | HOME Advice Program | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Australia-wide | | Wodlittinattoai | |
| | 2006-07 | | 2006-07 | |
| | No | Per cent | No | Per cent |
| Improved substantially | 121 | 44.8 | 10 | 52.6 |
| Improved somewhat | 106 | 39.3 | 7 | 36.8 |
| Remained the same | 28 | 10.4 | 2 | 10.6 |
| Worsened somewhat | 12 | 4.4 | -- | -- |
| Worsened substantially | 3 | 1.1 | -- | -- |
| Total | 270 | 100 | 19 | 100 |

Source: Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey

As is evident in Table 11, no Wodlitanattoai client completing a support period in 2006-07 reported a worsening of their overall family situation. Over half of all clients reported that their family situation had improved substantially and a further 40 per cent indicated that their family situation had improved somewhat. However, there was little improvement in the income position of clients following support.

As well as the maintenance of tenancies, clients were linked to other services and supports in the community.

Wodlitanattoai staff have developed agency-level protocols for working with Indigenous staff and have been able to play significant roles in staff education and in improving access for Indigenous clients to other services within Centacare and in the local community. They have provided assistance and co-working arrangements to develop culturally appropriate ways of working with Indigenous communities and clients.

Wodlitanattoai staff are involved with local community events and broader community development. This brings additional resources and connections for the local community while building awareness and linkages for the service.

What contributes to it working well?

The Indigenous staff have connections with the community and are able to understand and acknowledge cultural issues, including kinship obligations, which can lead to situations that put tenancies at risk. They use cultural introductions¹¹ to increase acceptance by clients, and are able to introduce the non-Indigenous worker who benefits from the implied level of trust. They take care to speak using language appropriate to the clients, taking whatever time is needed to develop acceptance before becoming task-or problem-focused. They are also able to help with the introduction of clients to other mainstream services within Centacare and the community, although some clients prefer to deal with an Indigenous worker or Indigenous-specific service. The staff have contributed to wider organisational staff education and participated in agency working parties.

The Centrelink social worker operates from the Centacare office and has the skills and flexibility to undertake long-term case management and outreach as well as act as a facilitator for interaction with the Centrelink system. He is conscious of his 'whiteness' in his approach to case management, but has found that the difference is in the issues that clients face, rather than the approach to support. He identified listening respectfully as an important element as well as the introduction through the Indigenous worker.

Flexible adaptation of the program model has been important in its success. This has been supported by Centacare's acceptance of different ways of working. Aspects of the Wodlitanattoai service model, which appear to have contributed to its success, include:

- Location of the service within a non-profit organisation reduces the fear of government intervention felt by some clients.
- The partnership with Centrelink enables an immediate and culturally-sensitive response to complex income support issues, and has meant that families receive their entitlements.

¹¹ Workers introduce themselves by saying which part of the country they are from and their community ties.

- Recognition of the importance of engagement with the community as a foundation for support relationships (e.g. through provision of transport and support to families attending funerals).
- Outreach – working in clients’ ‘spaces’ as well as the services.
- Working with the extended family both in the sense of providing assistance/referrals to them and of engaging them in the support of the client.
- Providing assisted referrals to other services (providing transport, reminders, accompanying clients) to develop client confidence in accessing services.
- Providing support to workers in their community development activities (e.g. involvement in planning for and participating in cultural events, including ‘Just Too Deadly’ awards for Indigenous primary and high school graduates).
- Using community development activities (e.g. a healing day, health day, living skills day) to build social capital (connections and trust) while increasing clients’ wellbeing and capacity.
- Developing relationships through participation in local forums and committees enabling the ‘fast-tracking’ of referrals.
- Assisting families to develop strategies to respond to kinship obligations, reducing the likelihood of tenancy risk.
- Providing some form of support or response to all referrals even if inappropriate for the program.
- Retaining contact with clients after official case closure (e.g. visiting to provide Christmas hampers, Easter eggs to children).

Wodlittinattoai workers have developed a set of protocols and principles for providing culturally appropriate services to guide Centacare and other mainstream agencies in their approach to providing appropriate services to Indigenous clients. This has led to an increase in Indigenous clients accessing other services within the organisation.

Challenges

Kinship connections are extensive in the local Indigenous community and family names identify relationships and traditional lands. Workers estimate that they have some knowledge or connection to approximately 80 per cent of clients/client families, which can place strain on their relationships within the community. They address this by being scrupulous in maintaining client confidentiality.

Anecdotally, Indigenous workers are seen to be always accessible within their communities. This is certainly the case for the Wodlittinattoai workers. It is managed through acknowledging the person and arranging a time to meet more formally, ‘you got a lot to talk about – let’s catch up’.

Community support workers in any service risk clients developing a dependency relationship with them. The Wodlittinattoai workers have used coaching to prevent extended family members withdrawing their support once workers are engaged. They encourage other family members to remain in a support network. Use of case conferencing and case plans is important.

The modifications to the program model, which ensures its effectiveness with Indigenous clients, did not necessarily fit with the initial funder expectations. Longer support periods and working with extended families meant that formal client numbers were lower than expected and the Indigenous community’s expectation of participation and ‘giving back’ also contributed to this.

While of great benefit to the service delivery, location outside of the Centrelink office risks isolation as a Centrelink employee and places an onus on the worker to ensure he or she remains connected and informed of changes. However, boundaries risk being blurred, and this has been managed by the social worker who ensures clarity about his or her role when working with clients.

Conclusion

The Wodlitinattoai service is a successful example of an Indigenous-specific service operating within a mainstream organisation and within a larger program context. It provides learnings for mainstream services that want to improve service delivery to Indigenous clients. These include:

- Recognition of the need for non-Indigenous workers to understand the impact of Indigenous history and traditions in order to develop appropriate ways of working with Indigenous clients.
- Acceptance of the need for Indigenous workers to contribute to the wider community in which they work.
- Willingness to modify the physical environment of services to make it welcoming for Indigenous clients.
- Recognition of the stresses of community obligations on Indigenous workers and the provision of support for them.

4.3 Same House Different Landlord case study

Introduction

This case study is based on two interviews conducted in July 2008: one with two officers working in the Community Housing area of the Queensland Department of Housing ('Community Housing'), and the other with the Chief Executive Officer of Bahloo, a Supported Accommodation Assistance Program service in inner city Brisbane.¹²

The case study is intended to:

- Provide a description of the Same House Different Landlord Program which was developed, and is now funded and administered by, Community Housing in Queensland.
- Provide a view of Same House Different Landlord from the perspective of both funder and funded organisation.
- Tease out the benefits and limitations of the program for funder and funded organisation.
- Identify the elements of best practice in relation to sustaining Indigenous tenancies for a particular SAAP target group.

The Same House Different Landlord Program is an amalgam of two programs formerly located in the Queensland Department of Housing's Community Housing and Public Housing respectively. An existing pilot program – the Crisis and Transitional Housing Pilot – and the Youth Headlease Scheme were brought together and piloted as a single entity in 1998. In 1999, the pilot received recurrent funding and established

¹² The funder interviews were with Erica Theos and Toni Stroizski, Community Housing, Department of Housing, Queensland. The funded organisation interview was with Elizabeth Davidson, CEO, Bahloo, Woolloongabba, Brisbane, Queensland.

as an on-going program. In the same year, a conceptual framework to better integrate the former pilot and program was developed, and the two were incorporated as the Same House Different Landlord Program. The program developed organically, and grew out of a need identified by Community and Public Housing, and opportunities to respond incrementally to that need.

Bahloo is an Indigenous community organisation providing supported accommodation for young women aged between 13 and 25. Bahloo's focus is on the younger group aged between 13 and 17. While it is an Indigenous organisation strongly embedded in the Indigenous community, it describes itself as a *multicultural service*. Bahloo's primary source of funding is through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), which is administered by the Department of Communities in Queensland. Bahloo also receives Crisis Accommodation Program funds through Community Housing, as well as general housing funds as part of the Same House Different Landlord Program.

Program overview

The Same House Different Landlord (SHDL) program is currently a small initiative with only 50 SHDL properties across Queensland. Geographically, SHDL properties are not evenly distributed. Some Department of Housing Area Offices hold a number of SHDL properties, while in other areas there are no SHDL properties. For example, the North West Queensland Area Office located in Mt Isa (discussed in the case study in section 5) does not have any SHDL properties. While the initiative is popular, there has been little support within the Department of Housing for expanding the program to other areas, or by increasing the amount of housing stock available to SHDL.

The organic development of SHDL means that formal program specifications have not been developed. This has led to some inconsistencies between SHDL's two streams. However, the advantage is that the program is flexible enough to take account of local issues and conditions and local networks.

People in 'high need' are eligible for the SHDL program – specifically those in need of public housing and support to sustain a successful tenancy in public housing. Clients who meet the eligibility criteria for SHDL are identified by one of three types of housing providers. These are:

- Supported Accommodation Assistance Program/Crisis Accommodation Program (SAAP/CAP) providers from where the majority of SHDL tenants come.
- Community Rent Scheme (CRS) providers who hold the bulk of SHDL properties.
- The Boarding House Program/Community Managed Housing (CMSU).

Eligibility criteria for SHDL also require participants to be eligible for public housing although until now there has been no need for their clients to be registered for public housing at the time they are accepted into the SHDL. There is an expectation now that clients accepted into SHDL will lodge an application for public housing while they are in the SHDL program.

The Same House Different Landlord operates in two ways. In almost all cases, clients are initially housed and supported by a community-based housing organisation. When the community organisation assesses the clients as needing public housing, the community organisation houses and supports the client until they have the skills to maintain a tenancy successfully. Clients accessing SHDL are housed in properties that are owned by the Department of Housing. Once tenancies become stable, their management transfers to the Department of Housing and effectively become public housing tenancies. Community organisations, which are part of the SHDL, then apply

to the Department of Housing (through their local Area Office) for a property to replace the one that has passed into departmental management.

Less common are those instances where an 'at risk' public housing tenancy is transferred to a community organisation for support, which will stabilise the tenancy. Once the tenancy has been stabilised, the property reverts to the Department of Housing.

The SHDL Program operates across cultural groups without the need for modification, and SHDL is open to Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients. It is possible that access will be inadvertently restricted in cases where community-based organisations are not known to, or not accessed by, Indigenous people.

Bahloo is an Indigenous-managed community organisation that was established in 1993 in response to the scarcity of crisis accommodation for Indigenous women in inner city Brisbane. Bahloo currently operates from a property in the inner city. On the lower storey of the property are offices, a meeting room, and basic amenities. The upper floor is given over to accommodation for the young women who access Bahloo: kitchen, lounge, bedrooms, bathroom and laundry. As well as this property, Bahloo accommodates and supports young women in two Same House Different Landlord properties. Initially these properties were one-bedroom properties, but these have subsequently been replaced with two two-bedroom properties.

The Real Estate Institute of Queensland's (REIQ's) real estate profile for the area where Bahloo is located describes the features of the area as 'Proximity to City, The Brisbane Cricket Ground (The Gabba), good public transport, affordable older-style homes and some new developments. The median weekly rent paid for a 3-bedroom house in this area in the June 2007 quarter was \$335. The median weekly rent paid for a 2-bedroom unit in this area for the same period was \$250.¹³ In this competitive environment, organisations such as Bahloo struggle to compete in the private rental market. Even if they could, they encounter additional discrimination that appears to be linked to their Indigenous identity.

¹³ See <http://www.ourbrisbane.com/suburbs/woolloongabba/reiq> accessed 16 August 2008

Aims and purposes

Funder expectations were that people housed through SHDL would receive the assistance and support they needed to manage their tenancies before 'they were thrown in at the deep end' with the likelihood of being unable to sustain their tenancy. The rationale for funding SHDL on a recurrent basis was that the initiative would:

- Increase the number of successful public housing tenancies.
- Reduce the negative impact of failed tenancies on neighbourhoods.
- Provide the support needed to maintain successful tenancies.
- Ensure that SHDL clients (particularly families) were not uprooted from their local communities with the consequent loss of social and support networks and disruption to children's education.

Bahloo accepts referrals for Indigenous and non-Indigenous young women in need of crisis accommodation and support. Referrals come from the Department of Communities, other agencies and some Bahloo client self-referrals. Workers at Bahloo identify young women who they feel might be ready to live independently with appropriate support provided by workers from Bahloo. Potential clients for accommodation through the Same House Different Landlord must be aged 17 or older to meet the criterion that requires people housed under the program to be eligible to list for Public Housing.

Young women who access housing through the Same House Different Landlord move from Bahloo's crisis accommodation into properties provided to Bahloo by the Department of Housing. Bahloo assumes responsibility for tenancy management and, in effect, 'owns' the property. Clients continue to receive support from Bahloo workers. When workers judge these tenancies are stabilised and the young person's need for support is minimal, the property reverts to the Department of Housing and the young clients become tenants of the Department (without the expense and dislocation of having to move). The department provides another property to Bahloo that can be accessed by Bahloo's clients.

Bahloo sees the Same House Different Landlord program as part of, or an addition to, what it offers clients rather than as separate to Bahloo. Clients identified by workers are offered the opportunity to move to more independent living, while at the same time retaining the supportive relationship developed with workers.

Relationships

Funders identify collaboration and relationships to be essential in the development and successful implementation of SHDL. These partnerships need to exist at several levels, namely:

- Local area partnerships between the local Queensland Department of Housing Area office, other government agencies, and the local community (especially community-based housing providers and Indigenous organisations).
- Good relationships between the Housing Area Offices and the various sections of Central Office (for example, Community Housing) which are involved in the transfer of SHDL properties.
- Community Housing has taken a principled (rather than prescriptive) approach with community housing providers involved in the SHDL program. This may change. SHDL may become more prescriptive as it is integrated into the Transitional Housing Program. This 'formalisation' of SDHL has the potential to provide opportunities for the expansion of the program.

Bahloo's Chief Executive Officer sees the Same House Different Landlord Program as relationship-based rather than reliant on formal protocols. Bahloo's relationship with staff at the local Department of Housing Area Office is described as critical to their ability to access properties and to offer young women an opportunity to make transitions to independent living. The Department of Housing's local Area Office and Bahloo have developed a relationship over time that Bahloo describes as characterised by *mutual respect*. Relationships with program funders/administrators are also seen as important.

Outcomes

There is little data kept by the Department of Housing regarding the Same House Different Landlord Program and certainly none that we were able to access for this study. Lack of program specifications, the result of SHDL's organic development, also makes it difficult to evaluate its effectiveness in achieving the anticipated outcomes. The Housing officers interviewed believe SHDL is popular with community-based housing providers which does produce positive outcomes for clients, including Indigenous clients.

The Same House Different Landlord program as operated by Bahloo was consistent with funder expectations and required no specific modifications for Indigenous clients. However, outcomes for Bahloo clients were limited by their clients' youth. Another of the funders' anticipated outcomes – allowing tenants to stay in their local area – was also often not always possible for Bahloo clients, some of whom achieved positive outcomes by moving away from family and/or moving to pursue work or study opportunities.

Bahloo identified several characteristics of SHDL that contributed to their view that it was a successful program. These included:

- The flexibility SHDL provided by allowing the organisation to exchange properties for more suitable properties.
- The capacity of SHDL to provide varying levels of support (from intensive support to tenancy management) without clients having to move.
- The relationships of mutual respect and understanding developed between Bahloo and the Department of Housing as a result of the program. These relationships facilitate the resolution of difficulties with the Department of Housing.
- The opportunity to assist SHDL clients to develop strategies for independent living and to deal positively with kinship obligations, thereby reducing the likelihood of tenancy risk.

However, some groups do not benefit from SHDL. While Bahloo values the Same House Different Landlord properties it has had access to, the ages (and relative inexperience) of their primary client group often means that clients are not ready for independent accommodation. Those who are unable to maintain their tenancy in the Same House Different Landlord usually return to family, move in with friends, or return to Bahloo. Many of the Indigenous young people (particularly those between 13 and 17 years of age) accommodated by Bahloo lack the life experience and the skills necessary to maintain a successful tenancy.

Learnings

Funders are positive about the SHDL Program. However, the way the program has developed means that Community Housing has had to respond to challenges as they emerged, and has had to rely largely on the relationships developed between Housing's Area Offices and community housing providers.

Department of Housing Area offices are required to manage the process of transferring and replacing SHDL properties. Considerable effort is required by the Area Office, which must identify replacement properties from existing housing stock and manage the process of transferring the properties between community-based housing providers and the Department of Housing. The internal processes involve a number of different areas of the Department of Housing and formal approval from the General Managers of all the relevant sections, as well as Director General and Ministerial sign off. The onerous administrative requirements mean that an Area Office must be committed to the program and must see that there are clear benefits for the Area Office as well as to the community organisations and their clients.

Inconsistencies in the operation of the two 'streams' of SHDL (generally the result of the history and characteristics of the two original programs) have also caused some challenges which the department has had to manage. The application of different criteria was seen by some community organisations as advantaging some agencies and client groups. Inconsistencies in the operation of the program have also been caused by the operation of local private rental markets that can affect the ability and willingness of local Area Offices to source and replace suitable properties. However, Community Housing sees the lack of formal program specifications and the inconsistencies in operation as a challenge and an opportunity to develop a coherent approach and align processes.

How well the model works in specific locations depends largely on:

- Local knowledge and relationships.
- Area Managers who are strongly involved in the local community, including with community organisations and housing providers.
- Local Area Offices seeing their role as part of the local housing network.
- Area Offices' commitment to manage Housing's internal processes, which mean that the transfer and replacement of properties can be a protracted process taking up to two months (although this time can be significantly reduced).

From Bahloo's perspective, its model of relationship-based work and the characteristics of its workers contribute significantly to the successful outcomes of its clients, including maintaining tenancies. The Bahloo Chief Executive Officer identified the worker characteristics and skills that make a good worker. They include:

- The ability to act as a good role model, especially for young Indigenous women.
- The ability to keep expectations of clients realistic and to work at the client's pace, often by supporting small steps towards a larger goal.
- Feeling good and proud about being an Indigenous person.
- The capacity to work across cultural groups (with an inclusive target group).
- Knowledge about what is going on in the community (including who is *playing the system* and who is connected to whom).
- Information and knowledge about opportunities and options, for example, about education, training and employment opportunities.
- A willingness to 'stick with' people.
- The capacity to manage the expectations and demands from the Indigenous community, for example, the expectation that workers in community organisations be on call 24/7.

A major challenge for workers at Bahloo is a result of Bahloo's work with young women, many of whom are *very young* to be in SAAP services or attempting independent living. Bahloo's philosophy acknowledges that many of their clients are children, and should be treated like children, arguing that most children did not have to manage practical matters like finding accommodation. Workers also need to be mindful of the need to prevent dependency while considering their clients' ages.

Independent living – and the isolation that can go with it – posed considerable challenges for Bahloo clients. Initially, the housing available to Bahloo was two one-bedroom properties but these properties have since been exchanged for two two-bedroom properties. Bahloo's experience is that placing a young woman in a one-bedroom property placed them in a situation where they were often lonely and had to carry the costs and responsibilities of a tenancy alone. Their isolation contributed to their inability (or unwillingness) to sustain solo tenancies. Bahloo's experiences suggest that the chances of successful tenancies are improved by shared tenancies, although shared tenancies present their own challenges, both for Bahloo and for its young SHDL tenants.

Another challenge is what was described as a *depth of sadness* found in Bahloo's clients. Many of the young women who access crisis accommodation have experienced a lifetime of grief and loss before seeking help. Some have been sexually abused and/or neglected by their families. They have no feeling of self-worth and few hopes or expectations that their lives can improve. In working with these young women, a major challenge for staff is changing the way their clients view, and think about, themselves. This involves building up self-esteem, encouraging people to take responsibility for their own lives, and nurturing hope and a positive vision of the future. These tasks require staff to *stick with people* and to provide *nurturing and support* until they develop self-esteem and the confidence and skills they need to live independently and take control of their own lives. Workers at Bahloo understand their role as providing hope, and the Chief executive Officer identified part of workers' roles as *painting the light at the end of the tunnel*.

The relationships that Bahloo's clients have with their families can be supportive, but are often exploitative. This too presented staff with a dilemma about whether to allow young women to continue to be exploited, or to encourage them to make the best decisions for themselves (knowing that this often means leaving the area and their families).

In summary, the learnings provided by Bahloo's approach to service delivery, including its approach to the SHDL Program, point to the importance of:

- Understanding the impact of dysfunctional family life on young women accessing Bahloo.
- Understanding the history of pain and trauma that many of these young women have experienced.
- Acknowledging and working to rebuild low self-esteem, lack of pride and lack of goals.
- Providing opportunities for clients to identify and achieve small steps which lead towards their eventual goals.
- Being prepared to work with clients over an extended period of time.

4.4 Ruah - Tenancy Support in Western Australia¹⁴

Background

This section describes four tenancy support services operated by the Ruah Community Services in Perth and examines the role these services play in assisting at-risk Indigenous tenancies. Ruah is a not-for-profit community service agency operating in Perth. Each service operates under a tenancy support program administered by a Western Australian Government tenancy support program.

The oldest of these services is Ruah Tenancy Support-South East (RTS), which provides tenancy and other support services to households at imminent risk of homelessness who are experiencing difficulties sustaining their tenancies in the private rental market.

As part of the SAAP Innovation and Investment Fund (I&IF), Ruah established the Fast Track Tenancy service which seeks to fast track those families at risk of homelessness into private residential tenancies.

Ruah also operates a service in the Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP), which provides tenancy support to those entering private residential tenancies from homelessness through the Homeless Advisory Service (operated by the Western Australian Department of Housing) and other referral sources. In this case, tenancy and personal support is provided from the beginning of the tenancy.

Finally, Ruah and the newly established Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support service, which provides intensive tenancy support to former residents of the Gngara and Cullacabardee town-based Aboriginal communities to transition into Department of Housing tenancies across the Perth metropolitan area.

The focus of our review is the Ruah Tenancy Support-South East (RTS) service. The RTS service delivery model provides a template for Ruah's subsequent tenant support services and represents a useful model for other tenancy support services around Australia.

Ruah Tenancy Support-South East (RTS)

The Ruah Tenancy Support-South East (RTS) service is a homelessness early intervention program providing tenancy and other support services to households at imminent risk of homelessness experiencing difficulties sustaining their tenancies in the private rental market. It operates in Perth's south-east suburbs and is one of seven private rental tenancy support services funded and administered through the Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP) in Western Australia.

Before July 2007, the RTS service and other private rental tenancy support services were funded and managed as part of the Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program (PRSAP) administered by the Department for Child Protection (DCP) (formerly the Department for Community Development). The PRSAP was a product of the 2002 Western Australian Government's Homelessness Strategy, which introduced a range of new programs and measures designed to prevent the occurrence and reoccurrence of homelessness, and thereby reduce pressures on both crisis accommodation services and the social housing system. Households at risk of homelessness in the private rental market were identified in the 2002 WA

¹⁴ Some of the material included in this case study was published in Flatau and Paris (2009). This section was based on a series of interviews with Ruah staff, including with the Executive Manager, Anna Paris, and draws on reports to relevant program administrators from the various Ruah tenancy support services.

Homelessness Strategy as a group in need of assistance but for whom no support services existed.

The RTS service model

The RTS Service Agreement between Ruah Community Services and the WA Department for Community Development (and now Department for Child Protection) specifies the terms under which RTS is funded and the broad parameters of its operation.

Under the latest RTS Service Agreement (2006-2009), the RTS service is funded to a level of three full-time equivalent staff members. It provides mobile case management assistance over a three to four month period to the following client groups:

- Families/individuals in private residential accommodation who are at risk of eviction or who are experiencing difficulties maintaining their tenancy.
- Families/individuals who have been homeless and require ongoing support to maintain their new accommodation and avoid further episodes of homelessness.

Tenants eligible for support are private rental tenants who have received a breach or termination and where a legal eviction process has commenced with respect to their tenancy. Also eligible are tenants who are finding it difficult to manage their tenancy responsibilities and are concerned they may be at risk of legal action. Immediate presenting issues include the emergence of rental arrears, property standards concerns, and anti-social behaviour notifications.

The RTS service model has a focus on clients setting goals that reflect their own specific life circumstances. It places importance on clients contributing actively to their own solutions. The key components of the RTS service delivery model are:

- Assessment of the client's needs
- Mobile case management.
- Tenancy support plans.
- Personal support plans.
- Negotiation and advocacy with property managers and landlords.
- Information and referral to community resources.
- Provision of assistance to clients to access affordable housing or crisis accommodation as the case may be.
- One-to-one in-home practical assistance and/or skill building activities.

Of the above elements, the structured and comprehensive nature of tenancy and personal support plans and the engagement of RTS with property managers and landlords represent the most distinctive features of the RTS service model.

Tenancy support plans address what needs to be done from a tenancy perspective to stabilise the tenancy or, at the very least, 'end the tenancy on the best possible note'. Stabilising a tenancy means that the relevant parties (tenants, property managers) agree that the risk of eviction has fallen below some critical point and the presenting tenancy issue has been rectified. Indicators that a tenancy has been stabilised include:

- There is no threat of eviction.
- Utilities are connected and there is no threat of disconnection.
- A budget plan is in place addressing rent, rental arrears and utility payments.

- The property manager and the tenant report that the tenancy is stabilised.
- The property manager and the tenant report that there are no complaints concerning the behaviour of the tenants, that property standards have been addressed, and that there are no signs of conflict with neighbours and caretakers.
- The tenant reports that he/she has no problems maintaining or protecting their space.

The goal of 'ending the tenancy on the best possible note' refers to the fact that a tenancy may not be able to be sustained and that, in these circumstances, it is important that the tenancy end on the best possible note. This means that tenants are able to move to alternative arrangements with as few outstanding issues and barriers as possible.

Tenants may enter support following the issuing of a 60-day notice and in the full understanding that their tenancy cannot be sustained. Alternatively, they may find themselves in this position after a period of support, or determine that the tenancy should end because it is not financially viable to maintain it. In these conditions, ending a tenancy on the best possible note is the best possible outcome.

More specifically, the goal of 'leaving on the best possible note' is achieved when a number of the following indicators are met:

- The property manager has agreed not to list the tenant on a tenant database.
- Key items on the Final Inspection Report are addressed as far as practicable and the property manager reports that tenant liability is reduced.
- The bond is returned.
- A repayment plan is developed with the property manager addressing outstanding debts and rent arrears.
- A limited written reference is supplied to the tenant.

An important feature of the development of the RTS Tenancy Support Plan is that property managers and landlords are invited to propose solutions to the tenancy problem. Negotiated versions of solutions between tenants and property managers are included in tenancy support plans that are put in place within forty-eight hours from the initial request for the service. Both tenants and property managers are invited to sign/authorise the tenancy support plan. The joint involvement of tenants and property managers in the development of the tenancy support plan is a unique feature of the RTS service model. It is founded on the basis of active networking on the part of the RTS service with property managers and landlords in the local area (see below for a further discussion).

A close relationship between the RTS service and property managers is critical to the success of the model. It enables the RTS service to gain the confidence of property managers and landlords and so work with them to solve tenancy problems to the benefit of both the tenant and the property manager. However, the relationship between a tenant support service and property managers can be a difficult one to navigate. The position taken by RTS is that their role is to try to stabilise the tenancy and that they are advocates for the tenancy rather than the tenant. They provide referrals to tenant advocacy and community legal rights bodies in respect to issues relating to the rights and position of clients who are to lose their tenancy.

This is an effective model for RTS in getting the best outcomes for tenants at risk of homelessness. However, such an approach needs close scrutiny to ensure that Ruah

maintains its commitment to working alongside disadvantaged and marginalised people and those experiencing homelessness or facing a risk of homelessness.

Tenancy-related problems are invariably linked to broader economic, social and health concerns. Personal support plans address the underlying issues contributing to the tenancy becoming vulnerable. They include problematic drug and alcohol use, a history of witnessing or being subject to violence in the home or other contexts, mental illness, social isolation and marginalisation, unemployment or underemployment, lack of community and social supports, low income and a poor financial position, a history of offending, low literacy and numeracy skills, poor parenting skills, family breakdown, racial and other forms of discrimination, and so on.

A particular focus of personal support plans is on building links to community and specialist supports, increasing the confidence of tenants, and increasing the knowledge and skills of tenants. Personal support plans identify the community resources that clients wish to access during and following support from the service. In terms of clients accessing community resources and services, the RTS service aims to work with clients to the point where they can demonstrate competency in accessing community resources and services and understand the steps they need to take to access ongoing support when the need arises in the future.

Tenants are actively introduced and engaged by support workers to attend appointments with community services that allow them the opportunity to develop sustainable connections with local resources and services, as opposed to merely providing them with information. Workers generally meet clients in their home, provide transport to the appointment, introduce the tenant to the new worker/agency, provide support throughout the appointment, and review the benefits of the visit with the client afterwards.

An active engagement strategy with local property managers, landlords and with agencies that RTS provides referrals to is a critical feature of the RTS service model. Gaining the confidence of property managers and specialist support agencies puts RTS in a much stronger position than would otherwise be the case to deal both with tenancy issues and the economic, social and health needs of clients.

Referral sources and client characteristics

Local community organisations represent the major source of referral to the RTS service and have done so throughout its period of operation. Local community organisations include SAAP agencies as well as community groups, such as community legal centres. The real estate sector represents the second most popular source of referrals (18% of all referrals on average) reflecting the success of promotional work in the sector undertaken by the RTS service. This promotional work included the distribution of newsletters/brochures and regular meetings with property managers and reflected the strong work of the RTS service in building sustainable partnerships with the real estate sector.

Other major referral sources include the Department of Housing and self-referrals. The Department for Child Protection (DCP) and Centrelink have also acted as points of referral.

RTS provides case-management support to clients as well as providing information to a large number of casual contacts who may call or be referred to the service for advice or support. The total number of RTS contacts, including casual contacts, runs to around 300-400 per six-month period with a case-managed load of around 60-70 households on average per six-month reporting period.

The average support period lasts for between four to five months. These relatively long support periods allow RTS to work with the client until tenancy-related issues are resolved and the tenancy is put on a sustainable path. The mean duration of support provided to RTS clients is in line with the anticipated length of support in Ruah's service delivery model.

Table 12 shows that those from an Aboriginal and non-English-speaking background (NSEB) access the RTS service in relatively high numbers. Indigenous people comprise around 20 per cent of all household members case-managed by the RTS service.

Table 12: Ruah Tenancy Support – South East, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD/NESB supported individuals

| Support Period | <i>Aboriginal /Torres Strait Islander</i> | | <i>CALD/NESB</i> | | <i>Other</i> | | <i>Total</i> | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>No.</i> | <i>Per cent</i> |
| | 1 Sept 2003 -31 Dec 2003 | 5 | 38.5 | 1 | 7.7 | 7 | 53.8 | 13 |
| 1 Jan 2004 - 30 June 2004 | 27 | 17.8 | 14 | 9.2 | 111 | 73.0 | 152 | 100.0 |
| 1 July 2004 - 31 Dec 2004 | 27 | 14.8 | 25 | 13.7 | 131 | 71.6 | 183 | 100.0 |
| 1 Jan 2005 - 30 Jun 2005 | 8 | 13.3 | 10 | 16.7 | 42 | 70.0 | 60 | 100.0 |
| 1 July 2005 - 31 Dec 2005 | 31 | 19.1 | 28 | 17.3 | 103 | 63.6 | 162 | 100.0 |
| 1 Jan 2006 - 30 Jun 2006 | 13 | 17.1 | 7 | 9.2 | 56 | 73.7 | 76 | 100.0 |
| 1 July 2006 - 31 Dec 2006 | 39 | 20.7 | 14 | 7.5 | 135 | 71.8 | 188 | 100.0 |
| 1 Jan 2007 - 30 June 2007 | 41 | 22.4 | 14 | 7.7 | 128 | 70.0 | 183 | 100.0 |

The two most important drivers for clients seeking assistance are financial and accommodation-related needs.

Financial difficulties are listed as a reason for seeking assistance for a majority of clients. These financial difficulties include budgeting problems (cited by 26.3% of clients), rent too high (21.2%), and other financial difficulties (58.6% of clients). Of these reasons, other financial difficulties is cited as the main reason for seeking assistance for 24.2 per cent of clients, while the first two financial reasons for seeking assistance represented 22.1 per cent of all main reasons. Eviction/asked to leave was listed as a reason for seeking assistance for 37.4 per cent of all clients, while for 22.2 per cent of clients this reason is listed as the main reason for seeking assistance from the service.

Importantly, given the RTS service's emphasis on the role of personal support plans, mental health issues (24.2%) and other health issues (25.3%) are listed as a reason for seeking assistance, indicating the importance of health-related reasons as underlying determinants of tenancy destabilisation. Another important underlying determinant of tenancy problems is relationship/family breakdown, a reason for seeking assistance for 14.1 per cent of clients and domestic/family violence, a reason for seeking assistance for 15.2 per cent of clients.

Indigenous clients of the RTS service were more likely to present to the service with more serious personal debt issues relating to credit cards, small loans, mobile phone contracts and the like. Financial pressures for Indigenous clients were exacerbated as a result of clients taking on board debt for other family members or entering contracts

on their behalf. This was sometimes due to family obligations and sometimes due to threats or coercion and domestic or family violence. Financial pressures were also important for non-Indigenous clients, but those pressures were more likely to be related to sudden loss of income due to the loss of employment or the break-up of relationships. Indigenous clients were more likely than non-Indigenous clients to present with a broader range of underlying issues and needs that were co-occurring.

Client outcomes

As reported in Table 13, the vast majority of closed cases in the 2007-2008 period, ended with the tenancy being stabilised.

Of the 44 cases closed during the first half of 2007-08, 28 sustained their tenancy, representing 63.6 per cent of the client group, but 82.4 per cent of clients who entered with the goal of seeking stabilisation of the tenancy. Likewise, of the 42 cases closed in the second half of 2007-08, 30 sustained their tenancy, representing 71.4 per cent of the client group, but 83.3 per cent of clients who entered with the goal of seeking stabilisation of the tenancy. Across the two reporting periods, 23 households began the support period seeking to end the tenancy on the best possible note, while 24 cases ended on that basis. Four cases out of a total of 86 ended with no outcome recorded due to non-engagement.

The time taken to begin and complete the eviction process in the private sector is typically much shorter than in the public housing sector. As a number of the Indigenous clients in the service presented with a range of complex needs on referral to the service when the eviction process was underway, it was more difficult to stabilise the tenancy by responding to these needs. However, the same was true with respect to non-Indigenous clients with co-occurring needs, such as mental health conditions and alcohol and drug dependency issues.

Some property managers still possess racist attitudes; some landlords even more so. Despite the good record of the RTS service in respect to stabilising Indigenous tenancies, property managers and landlords were reluctant to work in partnership with the RTS service to stabilise Indigenous tenancies.

Table 13: Ruah Tenancy Support – South East, client tenancy outcomes, cases closed during the reporting period

| | Households | | |
|--|------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| | No. | Per cent | Per cent |
| <i>1 July 2007 to 31 December 2007</i> | | | |
| Initial request for service | | | |
| Seeking stabilisation of tenancy | 34 | 77.3 | |
| Seeking to end the tenancy on the best positive note | 10 | 22.7 | |
| Total | 44 | 100.0 | |
| | | | <i>% of initial request</i> |
| Outcome | | <i>% of total</i> | <i>category</i> |
| Tenancy stabilised | 28 | 63.6 | 82.4 |
| Ended the tenancy on the best possible note | 13 | 29.5 | |
| Unknown due to non-engagement | 3 | 6.8 | |
| Total | 44 | 100.0 | |
| <i>1 January 2008 to 30 June 2008</i> | | | |
| Initial request for service | | | |
| Seeking stabilisation of tenancy | 36 | 85.7 | |
| Seeking to end the tenancy on the best positive note | 6 | 14.3 | |
| Total | 42 | 100.0 | |
| | | | <i>% of initial request</i> |
| Outcome | | <i>% of total</i> | <i>category</i> |
| Tenancy stabilised | 30 | 71.4 | 83.3 |
| Ended the tenancy on the best possible note | 11 | 26.2 | |
| Unknown due to non-engagement | 1 | 2.4 | |
| Total | 42 | 100.0 | |

The high proportion of clients stabilising or ending on the best possible note translates into a significant reduction in tenant liabilities for clients. Among households who began support with rent arrears, most had repaid their debt on closure with a significant reduction of tenant liabilities:

- For the period 1 July to 31 December 2007, 31 closed support periods had rental arrears on entry, with 28 having repaid their arrears (i.e. around 90% repaid rent arrears) and tenant liabilities fell by around 88 per cent.
- For the period 1 January to 30 June 2008, 21 closed support periods had rental arrears on entry, with 20 having repaid their arrears (i.e. around 95% repaid rent arrears) and tenant liabilities fell by around 85 per cent.

There were no notable differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients with respect to the above outcomes. What mattered for the success of the RTS service in stabilising tenancies and reducing the level of rental arrears was the point to which the eviction process had progressed when the service got involved, the complexity of the needs of the tenants, and the level of commitment to the program displayed by the property manager. In the case of Indigenous households, responsibilities to other family members affected the ability of some Indigenous clients to prioritise repayment of rent arrears and debt over other family-related commitments, such as helping out with funeral costs.

Conclusion

The RTS service has been successful in targeting clients at risk of homelessness in the south-east corridor of Perth. The client group was sourced from a large range of referral sources and from a variety of backgrounds.

The service has been particularly successful in providing clients with a range of tenancy-related services that have resulted in very positive outcomes. Tenancy-related support provided by the RTS services includes assistance to maintain independent housing; tenancy information/advice/support; negotiation with property manager/landlord; support for property inspections; support to resolve RTA legal processes; property standards assistance; and assistance to resolve property damage matters.

The RTS service has very clearly achieved its key objective of sustaining at-risk tenancies. The vast majority of clients who entered support with the aim of sustaining their existing tenancy were able to achieve this aim. Where tenancies were not in a position to be sustained, they have ended generally on the best positive note and as such provided tenants with a better chance to start new tenancies. The tenancy-related outcomes achieved by the RTS service are outstanding and have saved significant numbers of tenants from homelessness. As a result, the RTS service reduces the cost burden to government and the community associated with the provision of homelessness crisis services and associated mainstream support services.

The Ruah Tenancy Fast Track project

The Ruah Tenancy Fast Track (TFT) project is a SAAP Innovation and Investment Fund (I&IF) pilot project whose purpose is to ensure homeless families have their crisis housing needs met; are assisted to quickly access long-term private rental housing; and are linked into appropriate services and supports to maximise the chances of a successful tenancy. This service also incorporates a temporary housing component where those transiting from homelessness into the private rental market can be housed temporarily if no private rental dwellings are available. This ensures that families maintain local connections to people, schooling, employment, and social support networks.

The SAAP I&IF innovation project is designed to meet a growing demographic of families in Perth that are newly homeless, many for the very first time as a result of the impact of mining and resources boom on affordable/ accessible private rental housing. The project enables families to reduce the impact and extent of their homelessness experience and successfully bypass traditional SAAP services when provided with support to fast-track into a new private rental dwelling.

The service delivery strategies used in the Ruah TFT project rely on much the same strategies as those adopted in the RTS model. These include:

- Intensive, proactive mobile case management focused on addressing previous outstanding tenancy concerns, addressing current tenancy and personal needs; and ensuring a successful transition into the new tenancy.
- Development and maintenance of strong relationships with housing providers.
- Provision of information, strategies and skills development to overcome private rental market barriers.

As with the RTS-South East service, the TFT pilot project has achieved excellent client outcomes. Of the 37 families who had been assisted through 2006 and 2007 and whose cases had been finalised, 22 families in homelessness or at severe risk of

homelessness were assisted to access independent private rental housing, with a further nine assisted to access temporary housing available to the pilot project while waiting to secure private rental accommodation. Three families were assisted to renegotiate a lease continuation after their forced eviction, and a further three families were assisted to access public housing.

There were smaller numbers of Indigenous clients in the TFT pilot service as compared with the two other Ruah mainstream tenancy support services (around 10% of TFT clients were Indigenous). Some prospective Indigenous clients expressed a preference for public housing even if private rental housing was manageable from a financial point of view. A number of reasons were presented for this view. These included the fact that public housing offered more security than private rental accommodation, they knew the public housing system better, and they believed they experienced more discrimination in a private rental context. Some Indigenous clients faced difficulties in accessing private rental accommodation because they did not have the right references or as a result of periods of being transient. They also faced the problem of discrimination on the part of some property managers who thought that they would damage a house or not maintain standards. In this context, the TFT service attempted to make Indigenous clients more competitive in the application process by obtaining previous property condition reports to demonstrate that they managed former properties well.

The pilot project demonstrates that with clear entry criteria and appropriate assessment and established links with private rental agencies, families whose primary need is fast tracking to a private rental can be identified and successfully supported to access appropriate and affordable housing.

The pilot project worked for families in private rental who are at imminent risk of homelessness due to an eviction process and with significant access barriers to obtaining a new private rental. It also worked for newly homeless families as the result of a temporary crisis (e.g. staying in SAAP services, caravan parks etc). However, a fast tracking option does not always work for families with high and complex needs and families who need more flexible property management processes due to their inability to manage tenancy responsibilities. The program is also not suited to families who entered the pilot project wanting public housing because of the service focus on the private rental sector.

Ruah Tenancy Support – Perth Metro

Ruah Tenancy Support Perth Metro, funded by the Department of Housing through the Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP), commenced in 2003 as a recommendation of the Western Australian State Homelessness Strategy. The key outcomes of the service are to:

- Prevent potential tenancy problems.
- Increase housing management knowledge and skills.
- Improve identified tenancy concerns.
- Resolve underlying reasons for housing stress by providing support or links to support services.

The service uses all of the key principles and service delivery model of the other Ruah Tenancy Support models but differs in that it only provides services to people who have a past experience of homelessness or failed tenancies. Intensive case management support commences from the start of a new lease to ensure that the individual or family transition successfully into their new home. The household is also

helped to build their capacity to manage both their tenancy and other life needs in their new community. This increases their opportunity to build a more sustainable tenancy and reduce their potential risk for homelessness in the future.

The service initially started as a private rental initiative, but as the private rental sector has changed in the last five years in Perth, the service has also catered to the needs of people transitioning into public and community housing, when other support services are not able to be available at the immediate start of the tenancy.

It is important to note that there are significant numbers of Indigenous clients in this program with high needs and, while previously, the placement of Indigenous families from homelessness into housing had often failed, with tenancy support many succeeded in sustaining their tenancies.

Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support

The Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support service provides an intensive outreach case-management service to Indigenous families transitioning from the Gnangara Aboriginal town based community to mainstream WA Department of Housing properties. The Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support service is funded by the Department of Housing in Western Australia to support families with significant needs make an appropriate transition.

A number of the families supported by the service have been in Department of Housing properties, but had not been able to sustain their tenancies due to rental arrears and anti-social behaviour notifications. All of the individuals referred to Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support had a history of homelessness or chronic tenancy problems marked by rental arrears, property standards concerns, property damage, and anti-social behaviour notifications.

For the purposes of the program, Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support defines a 'household' as the tenant/s, household member/s, and extended family member/s staying for a period of time less than eight weeks. As part of the service model, the Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support engages with all household members and visitors to ensure that issues surrounding overcrowding and anti-social behaviours are dealt with appropriately and that tenancies are not put at risk as a result. The households receiving support are characterised by high numbers of transient visitors and family members visiting and staying temporarily.

The key outcomes sought by the program are that:

- Families remain housed.
- Regular rent paying systems are established and maintained.
- Rental arrears are reduced/prevented.
- Antisocial behaviour is prevented/reduced.
- Complaints from neighbours are prevented/reduced.
- Property standards are maintained.
- Property damage is prevented/resolved.
- A positive relationship with the Housing Service Officer is established.

Over the first period of operation of the program, 1 November 2008 to 30 April 2009, 12 households received support, representing 15 tenants and 81 individuals in total supported by the Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support service. Two tenants self-identified as no longer needing support from Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support.

The main forms of tenancy-support provided to tenants included:

- Advocacy/Negotiation Housing Service Officer (13 tenants; 256 instances of support).
- Assistance to deal with anti-social complaints (4 tenants; 18 instances of support).
- Assistance to deal with breach notices (6 tenants; 11 instances of support).
- Assistance to develop homemaking or management skills (4 tenants; 5 instances of support).
- Assistance to end tenancy on best positive note (1 tenants; 1 instances of support).
- Assistance to maintain independent housing (13 tenants; 115 instances of support).
- Assistance to maintain property standards (7 tenants; 33 instances of support).
- Assistance to resolve property damage (6 tenants; 13 instances of support).
- Assistance to set up Centrepay/Direct Debit rent paying systems (5 tenants; 15 instances of support).
- Assistance to deal with termination notices (4 tenants; 17 instances of support).
- Information/advice (13 tenants; 115 instances of support).
- Support for property inspections (5 tenants; 11 instances of support).

A number of client households were in an at-risk position during the reporting period. They included three households for rent arrears, three households for anti-social behaviour notifications, and one for property standards. For all households that move into a risk position, a tenancy support plan is developed between Ruah, the tenant/s, and the Housing Service Officer to successfully resolve the risk, whether this is a breach or termination, or a risk of eviction.

As with all of Ruah's tenancy support services, a range of non-tenancy support is provided to clients in recognition of the importance of underlying sources of tenancy instability. Services were provided in relation to the following needs:

- Parenting.
- Alcohol and other drug use.
- Social, family, domestic violence.
- Mental illness/ physical health issues.
- Non-engagement of adults and children with education, training, employment.
- Income/budgeting issues.
- Family/social/ cultural crisis.
- Legal issues.
- Relationship and family concerns.

Individuals from three households were linked into case management support services including the Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service and Ruah Specialised Support Service (drug and alcohol and mental health support).

Client outcomes

The service was able to successfully transition families into mainstream housing. Households were assisted to sustain their tenancies. In cases where tenancies were

at risk of failure, tenancy support plans were put in place. One household has received a termination notice. In this case, Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support continues to work with the household to end the tenancy on the best positive note and secure alternative accommodation.

The following case study illustrates the issues faced by tenants in the program and the outcomes achieved by Ruah through its support services.

Case study

Sarah is a 68-year-old woman, originally from a remote community in the north of WA, who has engaged with the Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support since December 2008. Sarah had several previous tenancies with the Department of Housing that were vacated due to reasons unknown. As a result of ceasing these tenancies, Sarah had a significant debt to the Department. but this debt was erased by the Department of Housing as part of the transition from Gnagarra Community.

Sarah's current tenancy is shared with her adult son and teenage granddaughter. A large number of extended family members stay with Sarah for periods of time, where it is common for relatives from rural and remote communities to stay with her while accessing hospital medical services in Perth. Through initial and on-going assessment of Sarah's and her family's needs, a range of tenancy and psycho-social supports were provided.

When Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support commenced working with Sarah and her family, several tenancy risks were present. These included property standards, overcrowding, outstanding utility bills, and frequent complaints from neighbours due to antisocial behaviour at the property.

Initially a significant amount of time was spent establishing a trust relationship with Sarah and her family. This was crucial to any work undertaken, especially given that some of the family's experiences with previous services had been negative. Further barriers included the family's English language barrier and poor literacy and numeracy. Much work was done with Sarah to increase her understanding of her tenancy agreement and related responsibilities and rights. Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support workers linked the family with local emergency relief agencies where material assistance such as food, clothing and financial assistance to pay outstanding utility accounts was provided. Workers also helped Sarah to set up a Centrepay payments systems for utility accounts to prevent further debts.

To prevent further antisocial behaviour, workers assisted Sarah to identify strategies to address the antisocial behaviour of family members and visitors, a tenancy support plan was developed with input from the Housing Service Officer, Sarah and Ruah. At Sarah's request, the plan includes a family meeting with Ruah and the Department of Housing to take place at Sarah's house. The incidents of complaints regarding antisocial behaviour were reduced and a breach notice was prevented. A critical factor in this outcome was strong communication and partnership between Ruah with the Housing Service Officer, teamed with Sarah's commitment to her tenancy. Sarah has since signed a second fixed term Tenancy Agreement.

Several personal support plans were developed with Sarah; high levels of support were provided to her and to her family to establish links with various community services to address issues such as income problems, lack of accommodation, physical health problems and basic needs. These all affected Sarah and her family's quality of life and ability to manage successfully her tenancy responsibilities.

An example of psycho-social support, provided to address non-tenancy needs, was the facilitation of a referral to a culturally appropriate Home and Community Care

(HACC) service for Sarah. Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support provided a significant amount of advocacy with various medical services to ensure a positive referral outcome. Practical support such as transport to medical appointments was provided in the two-month time period between when the referral was made and when HACC were able to commence support, to ensure that Sarah had access to crucial medical services. HACC support is integral to Sarah's life now, and Ruah works in collaboration with HACC to ensure Sarah's tenancy and non-tenancy needs are met.

It is anticipated much work with the family is required over the coming months to continue to address issues affecting Sarah and her family's ability to successfully manage their tenancy responsibilities. These include problematic substance use, accommodation issues, antisocial behaviour, family violence, and income issues. However, given Sarah's demonstrated commitment to maintain her tenancy (evidenced by the fact that her rental account is in credit), along with a strong relationship with Ruah and positive relationship with the DH, the future of the tenancy looks to be a sustainable one. Intensive support from Ruah Aboriginal Tenancy Support has led to breaches being prevented at the time of writing.

4.5 Conclusion

In spite of their apparent differences, the case studies in this section reveal some commonalities that are instructive in better understanding the elements of effective tenancy support for Indigenous clients.

The case studies show that the outcomes expected by funders (and understood by service providers) include both tangible and measureable outcomes and intangible, less easily measured, outcomes. For example, the ultimate goal of the programs covered by the case studies is that of sustainable housing for at-risk tenancies. Achieving this goal frequently means working with clients to increase their skills and capacity to maintain a tenancy. This work entails both developing and enhancing measureable skills as well as also developing self-esteem and self-belief among clients. This points to the importance of service providers having a holistic approach in working to sustain Indigenous tenancies.

For this reason, the best outcomes seem to occur when funders understand the need for holistic approaches. This understanding is demonstrated when funders adopt a principled, rather than prescriptive, approach to the services they fund. In a principled approach, funders explicitly articulate the ultimate outcome/s they expect, but allow funded services to determine how best to deliver tenancy support services. Successful outcomes are achieved when providers of tenancy support do so within the context of their local communities, and with consideration of the particular needs of their clients.

Sustaining Indigenous tenancies requires support services to be flexible to respond to a range of issues that may impact negatively on tenancies. Thus, support services discussed in this chapter show an awareness of the importance of addressing (either directly or via referrals) issues beyond strictly housing ones – for example, family violence or substance misuse – and a willingness to work on these issues. The case studies also show that service providers are sensitive to Indigenous cultural issues, including family structure and dynamics, and are culturally competent in working through these issues.

These case studies also highlight the importance of purposeful working relationships. Relationships between funders and providers are important as they foster trust and mutual respect, both of which are fundamental in negotiating changes to service delivery, securing properties and/or accommodating changes in local housing markets

and emerging trends. Purposeful relationships are also important as the foundation of the work between support providers and their clients.

However, these case studies do not reveal how, in a specific geographic location, the day-to-day realities of sustaining Indigenous tenancies are negotiated. The case study in the following chapter explores the assumptions, relationships, approaches and practices that underpin work to sustain Indigenous tenancies in north-west Queensland.

5 INDIGENOUS TENANCY ISSUES AND SUPPORT IN NORTH-WEST QUEENSLAND: A CASE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This case study describes, explores and compares the challenges and approaches to sustaining Indigenous tenancies in Mt Isa, a major regional centre in north-west Queensland, and Dajarra, a small town 150kms south of Mt Isa. Specifically, we examine approaches to managing Indigenous tenancies adopted by the Queensland Department of Housing North West Area Office (the Area Office) located in Mt Isa and Jimberella, an Indigenous community-managed housing organisation in Dajarra, roughly 100kms from Mt Isa and in the area covered by the North West Area Office.

The location of this case study was chosen for several reasons, including:

- There is a significant Indigenous population in Mt Isa and Dajarra.
- The contrast between Mt Isa and Dajarra, with one a transit route and a gathering place for local and non-local Indigenous groups, and the other a more discrete community base.
- The prevalence of homelessness among Indigenous people in Mt Isa and the implications of this for tenancy support.
- The investment made in addressing homelessness in North West Queensland through the Queensland Government's Response to Homelessness.
- The established links that members of the research team had with the local communities and with services providers there.

The case study draws heavily on the expertise and work of Paul Memmott and Steven Long, both of whom were recruited as part of the research team specifically because of their existing connections with Indigenous communities in the Mt Isa/Dajarra areas, and their previous work in these communities.

Interviews were conducted between November 2007 and November 2008 with staff from the Queensland Department of Housing Area office, and Directors and tenants of the Jimberella Housing Cooperative.¹⁵ Formal briefing questions in relation to tenancy support were pre-circulated to the Mt Isa Department of Housing staff. They related to the history of tenancy access and support programs or responses; the reasons the program or response was established; the modifications made to the program both for services working with Indigenous people and for services which are not Indigenous specific, but which work with Indigenous clients; and the approach taken by the Department of Housing towards funded services. Interviews that followed were semi-structured allowing people to outline what they considered relevant to the overall aims of the project.

¹⁵ A preliminary interview was carried out with Jimberella Directors, Mick Marshall (who is also the Jimberella Administrator), and Henry Dempsey, (Chairperson) at Dajarra, by Stephen Long on 15 November 2007. Paul Memmott interviewed the Jimberella Directors at Dajarra on 5 May 2008 and then again on 12 August 2008, namely Henry Dempsey, Robert Dempsey, Mick Marshall and Robert Fell. A further interview with another Jimberella Director, Keith Marshall, occurred on 13 November 2008.

The first meeting with the Department of Housing staff of the North West Queensland area was on 8 May 2008 with Geoff Schafferius, Area Manager, and Alan Neilan, Community Housing Resource Worker in their Mt Isa office. The first main interview with Department of Housing personnel was again with Geoff Schafferius and Allan Neilan on 14 August 2008, together with Team Managers, Alece Weeks, Diana Roper and Ron Bendemann. The second interview with Departmental staff was on 29 September 2008 with Alece Weeks (Client Services Manager) and Ron Bendemann.

The Mt Isa/Dajarra case study differs from the other case studies undertaken as part of this research, which focused on discrete tenancy support services or programs. In contrast, this case study focuses on a specific region and examines the issues facing housing providers in the region. It explores, in depth, the way services are provided in regional/remote areas, and how two housing providers (i.e. the Queensland Department of Housing Area Office and the Jimberella Housing Cooperative) engage and work with tenants. Neither of these agencies has the maintenance of Indigenous tenancies as their core business, but both, as the case study shows, are aware of the need to sustain these tenancies and are actively engaged in work that can be described as tenancy support. This case study highlights the crucial importance of local responses and options, especially in regional and remote areas.

Interestingly, none of the tenant support programs identified in Chapter 3 operate in Mt Isa or Dajarra. Nonetheless, structured and consistent support to sustain tenancies is available to tenants at risk of homelessness, and to prospective tenants entering housing.

5.2 Context¹⁶

Silver-lead was discovered at Mt Isa in 1923. In 1924, the mine was established and the town surveyed. The first substantial buildings were imported from other mining towns that had foundered and thus the Courthouse, the Hospital, Boyd's Argent Hotel, a tin church and a Bio or open-air theatre were established (Blainey 1970, p.157). Three years later, the population was 3000. The mill and smelter were completed in 1931, but the mine struggled economically and did not boom until the late 1940s. By 1955, Mount Isa Mines was the largest mining company in Australia. It is known from oral history that a small Aboriginal population became established in Mt Isa from its outset, including members of the local traditional owners, the Kalkadoon tribe. They provided services to the mining, exploration and pastoral industries.

The intense growth led to Mt Isa becoming the regional centre for North-west Queensland, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike. It was a holiday or recreation destination for most Aboriginal people in the region and an employment centre for some. In the early 1970s, it provided a range of unique facilities for the surrounding region, including several bars and cafes, a 'late night spot', a supermarket, and the popular annual rodeo, which was the largest in Australia. Most Aboriginal visitors from the region's communities had some sort of kinship tie to at least one or more Aboriginal person in Mt Isa with whom they could stay.

In the early 1970s, the Mt Isa Town Camp on the southern edge of the city contained about 100 people and came to be known as Yallambee. This Camp was distinctive in that it contained designated places for the many visiting campers from the respective communities of the region (a sociospatial structure). There was a place for 'the Boulia mob', 'the Dajarra mob', 'the Camooweal mob', 'the Burketown/Doomadgee mob', 'the Mornington Island mob', etc. The Yallambee camp thus functioned as a regional settlement with residents from numerous language and community groups.

Housing began to be provided for Aborigines in Mt Isa from 1969 as part of a Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement administered by the State Department of Aboriginal Islander Affairs (DAIA) as an instrument of their assimilation policy. Houses were purchased to create a 'scatterisation' effect, aimed at juxtaposing whites and blacks and breaking down Aboriginal enclaves (and hence Aboriginal identity). Despite this program, the Town Camp remained a popular residential centre. Most of

¹⁶ The following section draws heavily on Memmott et al. 2006, pp. 11-12.

the town camp humpies were removed after Mt Isa Mines donated a number of replacement second-hand fibro-clad bungalows in c1973-74.

Relaxation of the Queensland *Aborigines Act* after 1970 brought more freedom of movement of people within the North-west Queensland region. Combined with the advent of welfare payments, pensions and unemployment benefits, Aboriginal people participated more in the mainstream economy. Aboriginal families purchased second hand cars for local travel and hunting. The end of various travel restrictions in North West Queensland, together with increasing cash acquisition and vehicle ownership among Aboriginal people, and improved roads, influenced regional patterns of Aboriginal lifestyle in North-west Queensland. Many of these patterns still persist (Memcott 1996, p.32).

The population of Mt Isa was estimated at the 2006 Census as 19,660. Population estimates of the Aboriginal population of Mt Isa became available from the 1976 Census (1544 persons). Each successive census, until the most recent one, has indicated steady population growth of between about 150 and 800 individuals; the greatest increase in the Indigenous population occurring between the 1981 and 1986 censuses. In 2006, the Indigenous population was recorded as 3268 persons (see Table 14 below) and represented 16.6 per cent of the population of Mt Isa; more than five times the Australia-wide figure.

Table 14: The Mt Isa population, 1976 to 2006

| | <i>1976</i> | <i>1986</i> | <i>1991</i> | <i>1996</i> | <i>2001</i> | <i>2006</i> |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Non-Indigenous | 22,674 | 21,431 | 22,021 | 19,714 | 18,371 | 16,395 |
| Indigenous | 1,544 | 2,496 | 2,714 | 3,025 | 3,265 | 3,268 |
| Not stated | 2,278 | - | - | - | - | - |

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) censuses 1976, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006. Census QuickStats, Mt Isa Statistical Local Area. See www.abs.gov.au.

There are a number of services in Mt Isa established to respond to the needs of people living in public spaces, people at risk of homelessness, and people without safe or secure shelter of their own. These services provide responses to Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients, including Indigenous people from the area and from other regional centres and rural areas.

The Jimaylya (Topsy Harry) Centre is a residential facility for homeless people over the age of 18 operated by the Queensland Department of Communities. The Topsy Harry Centre in Mt Isa is one of the few facilities in the region for people with alcohol problems and maintains a policy of moderation combined with a range of life skill training to facilitate the transition of residents into independent rental housing in Mt Isa (Memcott et al. 2006, p.82). The facility includes single men's quarters, single women's quarters, quarters for couples, a classroom/TV/video room, communal kitchen, a 'wet area', and an administration area.

Many of the clients, who stay at the centre free of charge, are regular users of alcohol. The 'wet area' is an external living area with shade and windbreak structures where clients are permitted to consume alcohol (which they had purchased and brought to Centre) between 10am and 8pm (Memcott et al. 2006, p.66). Alcohol brought back to the Centre is stored in a room where it is under the control of staff. Although outsiders are allowed into the wet area, they are not permitted to consume alcohol there.

In April 2005, clients included people from Doomadgee (8 people), Palm Island (two), Alice Springs (two), and one person from each of Tennant Creek, Mt Isa/Doomadgee (who identified with Doomadgee but spent most of their time in Mt Isa), Boulia,

Cloncurry, Dajarra, Borroloola, Normanton, Thursday Island, Atherton, and Ingham. Many of the clients were related to one another. Some clients returned to their home communities for events such as funerals and then came back to Mt Isa and the Centre. Some people from communities such as Alpururulam (on the Queensland Northern Territory border) have temporarily camped in the wet area during regional events in Mt Isa (e.g. the rodeo).

The Centre runs activities and has rules designed to assist clients to gain independent accommodation. TAFE classes are run daily between 8am and 12pm. Clients are encouraged to spend their money on food and personal items before purchasing alcohol. They are also encouraged to find employment. Staff undertake case management to assist clients with things such as medical appointments (Memcott et al 2006, p.67).

The Kalkadoon Aboriginal Sobriety House (KASH), which deals mainly with alcohol misuse, is situated on a property about 20 kms out of Mt Isa. It caters for single men and women aged over 16 years of age, and families (including single parents with children). The majority of the Centre's clients are Indigenous people/families. Arthur Petersen runs a rehabilitation program (generally round three months in length depending on individual needs) and offers clients living skills, group therapy, individual counseling, on site AA meetings, and work therapy. There is also a strong cultural component to the program. Clients must have been through a detox program before arrival (often through the Mt Isa Hospital or the Arthur Peterson Centre). An Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services (ATODS) worker also visits the Centre regularly. Payment for the program is taken out of clients' Centrelink payments.

Initiatives targeting homelessness in Mt Isa were implemented through the Queensland Government's *Responding to Homelessness* strategy. These include a service hub; brokerage; responses to public space issues; an increase/enhancement of crisis and transitional housing, and proactive tenancy management practices within the Department of Housing.

Dajarra is situated 150km by road south of Mt Isa and about the same distance east of Urandangi and the Georgina River. Dajarra was founded circa 1917 as a railway town and was a large droving and rail-trucking centre for live beef cattle throughout the middle part of the twentieth century. A substantial Aboriginal population from the Georgina River basin was sustained by employment on the surrounding pastoral properties and railway line maintenance. A series of migrations from Aboriginal bush camps, cattle station camps, and settlements to Dajarra occurred in the 1900s with the most significant movements from the Georgina River occurring in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A number of factors triggered these migrations, including:

- Movements enforced by the police under various Acts.
- Forced movements off cattle stations as a result of a decline in the labour required by the pastoral industry and the introduction of equal wages for Aboriginal stockmen.
- Enforced school attendance by government welfare agencies.

The town's economic boom declined after the 1960s with the introduction of road truck transportation for cattle, and then further again in the mid-1980s with the closing down of the railway station (see Memcott 1996; Long in Memcott et al. 1997, Long 2005).

Long (2005, p.67) made the following observation of the Dajarra population:

A unique characteristic of Dajarra is the high proportion of the Indigenous population compared to the non-Indigenous population. In 1991 Indigenous

people comprised 72 per cent of the Dajarra population (ABS 1991) and 84 per cent in 1996 (ABS 1996). In Queensland, a similar proportion of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal residents is only to be found amongst discrete, self-governed Indigenous settlements that are on community title land. In this region [see Table 2] Dajarra has a similar Indigenous population by proportion as Mornington Island, Doomadgee, Marmanya and Alpururulam (Lake Nash, N.T.). But unlike these places, Dajarra is a town, the only town in Queensland in fact, with such a dominant Aboriginal population.

Table 15: The Dajarra population, 1976 to 2006

| | <i>1976</i> | <i>1986</i> | <i>1991</i> | <i>1996</i> | <i>2001</i> | <i>2006</i> |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Non-Indigenous | 50 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 21 | 24 |
| Indigenous | 250 | 146 | 154 | 171 | 163 | 151 |
| Not stated | No data | 4 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| Total: | 300 | 180 | 190 | 204 | 190 | 179 |

Source: Mt Isa Welfare Council (1976), ABS Census data (1986-2006). See www.abs.gov.au

Until the late 1960s, most Aboriginal people occupied self-built camps on the edge of Dajarra. In the late 1960s, the first Aboriginal housing was built by the DAIA and a succession of building programs have occurred since that time. In 2005, the Dajarra community occupied 42 houses: 23 owned by the Jimberella Cooperative; 17 Department of Housing properties; and two privately owned.

The relaxation of the Queensland Aboriginal Acts in the early 1970s permitted freedom of movement by Indigenous people. This resulted in the migration of a portion of the Aboriginal population of Dajarra to the regional centre of Mt Isa. However, since the early 1980s, the Aboriginal population, because of customary and historical connections to the area, has stabilised and at times gradually increased.¹⁷

The Aboriginal population of Dajarra swells during the December to March period when people return for Christmas, school holidays and station breaks. The population also swells during the annual rodeo and when funerals occur. Visitors (related kin) come from Mt Isa, Lake Nash, Boulia and the east coast. There is also significant residential mobility within the town, a common characteristic of Aboriginal settlements. (Memmott 1974; Memmott et al. 1997, pp.24-39.)

The Dajarra Aboriginal community, through its Jimberella Cooperative (established 1974), operates the town's general store (with petrol pump) and a large community hall and associated offices. Non-Indigenous residents operate a hotel and a roadhouse. Government funding and infrastructure support is maintained for a school, police station and health clinic. Dajarra men and women have participated in the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) scheme and been involved in a range of work that includes construction, maintenance and stock work. Aboriginal residents are also employed at the school and clinic as well as with the Cloncurry Shire Council to carry out essential services in Dajarra (rubbish collection, town water supply).

¹⁷ The percentage of non-Indigenous population in Dajarra has been relatively constant from 1976 to 1991 at about 17 per cent and is similar to that found in the larger discrete (or Deed-of-Grant-in-Trust) settlements in Queensland. It seems feasible that in the future, the Indigenous populations and agencies of places such as Dajarra, could carry out more of the towns' infrastructure support functions, rather than depending on non-Indigenous local government authorities (Memmott and Moran 2001).

5.3 Tenancy support services in Mt Isa

The Department of Housing North West Area Office structure

The Department of Housing's North West Area Office in Mt Isa services a geographical area that extends south-west to Birdsville, west to Camooweal, east to Hughenden and Blackall, north to Normanton, Burketown and Karumba, and within this area also includes the further centres of Cloncurry, Dajarra, Boulia, Bedourie, Winton, Longreach, Aramac, Barcaldine and Doomadgee.

There are five teams in the Mt Isa Area Office, each with its own manager and under the overall leadership of the Area Manager. The five teams (described below) are:

- Team 1 – manages the Community Housing Resource Workers Program.
- Team 2 – the Housing Access Team.
- Team 3 – the Housing Services City Team (or Client Services).
- Team 4 – the City/Country Team.
- Team 5 – the Domadgee Community Team.

Team 1 is led by a manager who manages the Community Housing Resource Workers Program, a Queensland Government program administered by the Department of Housing, which funds salaries within Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and other like agencies, and operates brokerage programs on behalf of the Housing Council. More generally, the Community Housing Resource Program:

- Provides assistance and skills development to registered community housing providers.
- Facilitates strategic planning at the regional and sub-regional levels through the Regional Community Housing Councils.
- Identifies and promotes emerging housing and support issues trends and issues.
- Builds local strategic partnerships and networks, and activities to enhance coordination and integration of services (for example, brokerage funds).
- Enhances communication and information exchange between stakeholders across Queensland.

The manager's role is to interface between the Department of Housing and NGOs and to provide the secretariat to the Regional Country Housing Council.

Community Housing is managed by NGOs, including Local Government councils, church groups and Indigenous Housing Organisations (IHOs). There are 30 registered NGO providers that have received funding since 1992, providing a total of 240 properties in the Mt Isa Area.¹⁸

¹⁸ NGOs have requested the Queensland Department of Housing's 'Same House Different Landlord' (SHDL) scheme in this area, but have been unsuccessful to date in gaining Queensland Government support for this. At the time of writing, the impact of the roll out and implementation of the Department of Housing's One Social Housing System is yet to be fully felt, but it is possible that there will be implications for many of the programs funded and/or administered by the Department of Housing, including the Same House Different Landlord Program. Department of Housing officers in Community Housing, who receive frequent requests from communities wanting access to the SHDL Program, considered the implementation of the One Social Housing System as a potential opportunity to re-examine and expand the SHDL (see the separate case study in Chapter 4 regarding the Same House Different Landlord Program for further details). On-going discussions between the Department of Housing and the Department of Communities regarding the relationship between, and the location of, the Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP) and the Crisis Accommodation Program

Team 2. A Senior Service Client Manager heads the Housing Access Team. This team responds to any enquiry from potential or actual housing applicants in Mt Isa. The Team Manager has a Senior Housing Office (an A04) and two Housing Officers (A03s) to assist her provide this service (see below for more detail).

Team 3. The Housing Services City Teams, or 'Client Services' is the landlord over the public rental housing stock, both mainstream and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) housing. This team acts as the real estate managers, handling rent assessment and property management complaints, and monitoring repairs and maintenance and upgrading budgets.

Team 4. This is a second Client Services team that deals with all centres in the region outside of Mt Isa, and called the City/Country Team. The Manager of this team is assisted by four Housing Officers (two A04s and two A05s). This team has responsibilities for the tenancies in Dajarra. However, one of its largest Aboriginal clientele is in Normanton where the Department runs a Tenants Action Meeting on the first Tuesday of every month to which all tenants are invited. These meetings aim to sort out issues arising from the high level of housing management work due to regular house damage and problem tenancies. After these meetings in the afternoon, an Inter-agency Meeting occurs involving every relevant government department and NGO, so that all issues raised in the morning can be addressed that afternoon.

Team 5. The Doomadgee Community Team is a one-community team that has been taking over the management of the Doomadgee housing stock, since this duty was transferred from the Commonwealth to the state in 2008. Doomadgee is a discrete remote Indigenous community, first established as a mission on an Aboriginal Reserve and then run by the Queensland Government as a DOGIT community. It is serviced by a range of state and Commonwealth agencies.

The Mt Isa Area Office operates from a baseline of Departmental mainstream policy within the constructs of the *Queensland Residential Tenancies Act*. However, its staff recognise that there is a need for a culturally-sensitive adaptation of such a formal approach to effectively stabilise Aboriginal tenancies in the regional city of Mt Isa – a city that contains families from the many different Indigenous groups of North West Queensland and Central East Northern Territory. Aboriginal households in Mt Isa vary greatly in their retention of traditional domiciliary practices and there exists strong patterns of circular mobility within the region that impact regularly on household size, composition and harmony when people from the outer parts of the region visit the regional centre. Department of Housing staff have developed strategic approaches to manage tenancies at known seasonal times of such high-impact mobility.

The local department of housing approach to sustaining tenancies

The approach taken by the Area Office is designed to sustain tenancies to benefit both tenants and staff. Rent arrears statistics for the area were well below the state average of four per cent (key performance indicator). This was especially due to the early intervention strategy that involved an Officer contacting tenants as soon as they fell one week behind and counseling and encouraging extra payments to keep them off the arrears sheet. The Housing Services Team was proactive, using a targeted risk-period strategy during the five times of the year when Aboriginal tenants were clearly vulnerable for a range of socio-economic and cultural reasons.

One senior staff member said: "They're a client, a human being. [But some don't have the capacity for running daily affairs. We are helping them with all sorts of problems,

(CAP) may also impact on the configuration and delivery of crisis and transitional accommodation responses in Queensland.

e.g. getting gas connected to the house, talking to Ergon [electrical supplier]. We help them set up through Easypay for power and gas bills.” She added that she had worked in seven country housing offices around the state. “This Area Office employed a more social welfare approach – which involved not looking at tenants as a number but recognising their humanity – than the others”.¹⁹

The Area Manager acknowledged the extra unpaid hours his staff worked to assist Aboriginal tenants. He said: “In a country region you have to do this sort of thing. I will work till 8pm – then visit tenants after hours. When travelling in the region you need to spend extra time to get everything done”.

The Area Office uses a number of strategies and resources to support at risk tenancies (both before the start of a tenancy and during the tenancy), to respond to early signs that a tenancy is at risk, and to take into consideration local events and family/group dynamics. These are:

- Tenancy entry case management.
- Tenancy support.
- The Early Rent Arrears Strategy.
- Integrated case management.
- The Targeted Risk Period Strategy.
- Partnerships with police.
- The Yallambee Town Camp.
- The Jimaylya (Topsy Harry) Centre.

Tenant entry case management

Team 2 of the Department of Housing Area Office services the Department’s front counter in its Mt Isa office and handles any enquiry from potential or actual tenancy applicants. The Team Manager has a Senior Housing Officer (an A04) and two Housing Officers (A03s) to assist her in providing this service. This service package is outlined in some detail, as it is a tenancy entry program that involves aspects of tenancy support (advanced entry case management) that play out into the actual tenancy period.

At the time of interviewing, the Team Manager sat on the Public Intoxication and Homelessness Committee for Mt Isa. This committee includes the Riverbed Action Group, which holds Riverbed Support Days. On these days, the Area Office team participated in the support days to meet applicants for public housing on alternate town sites. Breakfasts for housing applicants were held once a month and were followed by applicants’ meetings. The meetings were often held at the Jamaylya (Topsy Harry) Centre, and attended by Centrelink and representatives from other government departments. This outreach service assisted Aboriginal town campers to lodge housing applications and work through their other needs. People attending were able to access advice and information from the network of NGOs and government officers. Attendees were able to have a free shower, breakfast, and then talk. One of the services worked to provide connections so that people could get back to their homelands, especially those from the Northern Territory.

¹⁹ There are 20 Area Offices in Queensland and it was said that all are different in their operational character.

The river campers have been mostly Northern Territory (NT) people over the last few years. The impact of the 2007-08 NT Intervention in Mt Isa has been obvious to service providers in Mt Isa who have inherited a range of social problems arising from the increased mobility and displacement of people, particularly from the central eastern Territory (Barkly/Sandover/Plenty region). However, some of these visitors took up residency in the Leichhardt River by choice and were not seeking any housing.

Those NT people who were homeless and did apply for housing were having difficulty transiting into conventional rental housing. Being housed also meant coming to terms with rental payment agreements, furniture acquisition and use, and local Queensland tenancy and town laws. By comparison, NT remote community housing was viewed as basic, with relatively unsophisticated housing management practices.

Aboriginal people from remote settlements also clearly had different lifestyles. Some lived in the riverbed for months and were not interested in seeking support from services. Others had come to Mt Isa for medical services. Most riverbed dwellers were single, with only a few being families with children.

The Team Manager explained that before a tenancy commences, her staff undertake a search of an applicant's tenancy history. They often find that the tenant is cycling back after previous intermittent tenancy failures. They may also have outstanding tenancy debts. In the case of an applicant with significant debts, a repayment scheme is set up, which is linked to Centrecare services and includes budget training.

The Mt Isa Area Office requires an applicant with a previous debt to remain for six months on the repayment scheme while in emergency or crisis accommodation. If the tenant manages the repayments, they are then approved for a standard public housing rental property. These applicants were encouraged to pay a little more than necessary, in order to establish a credit account for themselves of seven weeks rent advance before obtaining their rental property. They were effectively case managed – in conjunction with other services – before being housed. These tenants come into their new property still supported, experienced in managing rental payments and household responsibility, and free of debt.

These applicants called into the Area Office every three months, when a statement of their debt repayment progress was printed out, and staff discussed their progress with them. If they cease to attend counselling, housing staff receive feedback from Centrecare. These two are usually linked together as conditional in their agreements.

Tenancy support teams

Team 3, led by the Client Services Manager, acts as the 'landlord' for public housing tenants, both mainstream and Indigenous. Team 3 acted as property managers, handling rent assessment and property management complaints, monitoring repairs and maintenance and upgrade budgets. This team provided or coordinated tenancy support programs during the actual tenancy.

In August 2008 (at the time of the main interview), rent arrears were low for this region (under 1%) compared to other Queensland regions, according to the available statistics. The public housing population in Mt Isa was about 80 per cent Indigenous. This level of arrears was an outstanding achievement especially for the Pioneer area (a suburb of Mt Isa with a high density of Indigenous people in public housing).

Despite entry case management of various incoming tenants, there are always some tenancy failures. Heavy substance abuse was a key factor. Significant problems also resulted from visitors from the large remote Gulf communities of Mornington Island (Gununa) or Doomadgee damaging the house. Tenancies were often placed at risk

when visiting family was staying, and in some cases neighbourhood disputes could start up.

A tenant's previous housing was not always a good predictor of future tenancy problems. Tenants at-risk of homelessness may have been quite good renters in the past. They typically fell into arrears because of a major life crisis, usually coupled with having to leave town for a period.

Another little recognised problem leading to a need for tenancy support is that, in remote country areas, Aboriginal tenants (especially older people) do not like using telephones. For this reason, they can be reluctant to telephone the Area Office if they have a problem, e.g. if they need repairs and maintenance. For this reason, the Area Office has a free phone at the front counter known as 'the QBuild phone'. This is seen as a way of encouraging clients to ring for a service, or to have Area Office staff ring on their behalf, and then once connected, put the tenant on to speak. The aim is to empower the tenant.

The early rent arrears strategy

The approach of the Client Services Team hinges on monitoring and getting at-risk people on agreements via Centrelink in the early stages of their instability period. At the time of interview, this involved an Early Intervention Officer engaging with a tenant when he or she was only one or two weeks in arrears. The Area Office approach is based on the idea that it is easier to solve the problem when clients are one week in arrears than when they are five weeks in arrears. Staff encouraged clients to sign an agreement together with an NGO to receive support including undertaking life skills training.

Integrated case management

The Mt Isa Area Office staff use an integrated case management approach. Housing staff link tenants to other services to assist in resolving their problems. The tenancy problems of tenants are raised with agencies in the area, including Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre, Centrecare, Arthur Peterson Centre, and Kalkadoon Aboriginal Sobriety House.

The Team Manager outlined the typical case of an Aboriginal householder needing tenancy support in a Mt Isa public rental house. Staff would talk to and liaise with at-risk tenants in order to make their tenancy achievable. Various options were explored, e.g. Catholic Church loans, use of Centrecare's early intervention program. A good behaviour agreement was then negotiated, often in Statutory Declaration form. Sometimes the Neighbourhood Centre [group] was used because it offered loans, budgeting skills, and life skills advice.

By way of example, the case was given of a very intoxicated woman who presented at the Department of Housing's front counter with her grandchild to report her house maintenance problems. The child was a very active infant and the grandmother had no control over the infant, especially as she (the grandmother) was intoxicated. The child's parents had left the child with her three days earlier. The Housing Officer drove them home. The client then admitted that she had little food. She did not know where the child's parents were, and said she was feeling 'dumped on'. She wanted to be taken to meet with the regular drinking group at the Hospital lawn to enquire about the whereabouts of her daughter and son-in-law. The Housing Officer persuaded her to rest in her house and then arranged for the KASH Outreach Worker to consult the drinkers' group, to look for the child's parents, and to take food back to the tenant. This example highlights the proactive and welfare-oriented approach of the Housing

staff to Indigenous clients in Mt Isa, who go beyond the expected call of duty as practiced in metropolitan centres.

The targeted risk period strategy

Department of Housing staff have identified five critical times to provide targeted support when Aboriginal tenancies are most likely to be vulnerable. These times are:

- (i) Children going back to school (January).
- (ii) Easter (April).
- (iii) Mt Isa Show (June).
- (iv) Mt Isa Rodeo (August).
- (v) Christmas (December).

At these five critical times, tenants are encouraged to come into the Office to check their rental credit and agreements.

Client Services staff implemented a pre-show and a pre-rodeo preventative campaign for households. Staff warned all at-risk tenants: 'don't miss rent, and visitors must be quiet and no damage or abuse'. During these events, there is maximum Aboriginal mobility in the region. Departmental staff suspect (and possibly know from past patterns) that an excessive number of relatives will arrive to stay with certain tenants, which may violate their tenancy agreements. Tenants are warned to control their visitors and keep them quiet and they will not have visits from police. By way of a positive outcome, staff noted that during the August 2008 Rodeo only one street 'blew up' in a brawl.

There is also much intra-regional travel for royal shows due to kinship linkages between families in different towns. Thus, kinship linkages mean that certain Mt Isa tenants will go to the Cloncurry and Normanton shows, and vice versa. All of these movements can exacerbate visitor problems.

The Housing Services Team also became proactive before Christmas. Tenants were encouraged and managed to build up rental credit before Christmas so they could spend more of their normal income than usual on alternative things (presents; food; travel) at this time. But the principle was that they could not stop paying their Centrelink payments because it was too difficult to get back on to this payment scheme. This approach was seen as a form of financial planning education. Refunds into their bank account were possible under special circumstances (it took two days for the Department to credit their bank account or Head Office could do an emergency transfer if requested). The Department also had a moratorium at Christmas when staff did not take immediate action over arrears.

Partnership with the police

Housing staff, especially the Area Manager, worked closely with the Mt Isa Police and had an understanding with them with respect to dealing with Aboriginal family violence and other anti-social behaviour that affected tenancy stability and housing stock.

For example, if a tenant was reported for anti-social behaviour, the police phone the Area Manager who would go with the police to assist in resolving the problem, even if it was late at night. Area Office staff waited while the police dealt with the problem, then they talked to the tenant (who often could not easily step in to stop a relative's behaviour because of their kin's relationship and/or obligations. Staff found that often tenants could not stand up to their visitors, and that they appreciated the Area Manager and the police evicting them. They would tell the officer: "We can't get rid of

our relatives". Sometimes clients even confessed in the street to Housing staff about having had a party in their house the night before, so that some action could result to rid them of their visitors. Nevertheless, after these incidents, the tenant had to come in to the Housing Office where they were warned that their 'tenancy was in jeopardy'.

The Area Office regularly provided the police with a list of its vacant rental properties. The police patrolled these properties and moved people on (e.g. drinkers at Yallambie Town Camp who break-in and party in vacant properties) or charged them. In one instance, Area Office staff took drinkers to Jimaylya to drink in order to alleviate the threat of house damage and tenancy disruption. Transporting illegal occupants to an alternate destination was an irregular, beyond-the-call-of-duty service, which was seen to support the actual tenant's tenancy and to minimise the potential for damage to housing stock and neighbourhood disputes.

Another example was cited of such a tenant whose property was vacant while he was away from Mt Isa. He signed forms saying nobody was to be in his house in his absence. While he was away, 'visitors' moved in. Area Office staff then gave notice to those squatting in his house. The police and Area Office staff secured the property and then boarded it up until the tenant's return. In this case, the partying and damage to his property had no repercussions for the actual tenancy.

The Yallambie town camp

The Yallambie Town Camp area has a reputation for heavy drinkers and partying, raising the risk of house damage, violence and sexual assault.

Housing staff identified town housing tenants who regularly joined the Yallambie drinkers' group, especially those who were seen to be perpetrators of trouble. Area Office staff were prepared at times to say 'we saw you [in Yallambie] causing trouble' even when the complaint was made by another tenant. This prevented payback to the tenant who made the report.

Jamaylya (Topsy Harry) Centre

One of the Housing Officers instigated a meeting with the Jimaylya Manager regarding an ex-tenant with high needs who no landlord wanted to house. The tenant had a disabled member in her household and received many heavy drinking visitors. A transitional house was offered at the Jimaylya (Topsy Harry) Centre. The tenant was located there for twelve months initially until she could maintain her own tenancy. This family had been moving around from house to house in Mt Isa destabilising other tenancies.

(Note that Jimaylya has a fully managed drinking area with divided drinking spaces, toilets, showers and capacity for drinkers to sleep the night in basic facilities as described above in Chapter 5.2).

5.4 Tenancy support services in Dajarra

Social rental housing in Dajarra is provided by the Queensland Department of Housing and Jemberella, an Indigenous community-managed housing organisation.

The Department of Housing has 18 properties in Dajarra. In September 2008, rents for these Dajarra houses were around \$80 per week, with a five-bedroom house over \$100. As is the usual practice in Department of Housing rental properties, there was a sliding scale for rent based on the combined household income. An upper threshold limit, if exceeded, renders tenants ineligible for public housing. In 2008, three Department of Housing properties in Dajarra were vacant. No formal Department of Housing tenancy support programs or measures operated in Dajarra, but few tenancy

issues arose in the area. It can be assumed that Department of Housing Area Office staff used the same proactive tenancy management and support approaches employed in Mt Isa.

As with general public housing rental practices in Australia, Queensland Department of Housing tenants did not receive rent assistance. A Commonwealth subsidy (Commonwealth Rent Assistance) applied in relation to tenants in housing administered by IHOs and NGOs. Community Housing tenants were eligible to apply for Commonwealth rent Assistance, e.g. a tenant might pay \$100 a week rent then claim \$30 rent assistance. However, stakeholders interviewed in Jimberella believed that the Commonwealth was intending to change the rent assistance scheme soon. But it was also claimed that Aboriginal IHOS in the region may not know if their tenants were getting rent assistance as the organisations were often unaware of their clients' income.

The stock held by the Jimberella Cooperative in October 2008 comprised twenty-five houses, plus one in Mt Isa which is rented out by a real estate agency. Jimberella rents ranged from \$55 (one-bedroom) to \$75 (three-bedroom) a week. There were no vacant houses in the Jimberella stock in October 2008.²⁰

Jimberella use part of their rental income to keep a bus running. The bus is used to drive tenants 150kms into Mt Isa to shop and to access government and other professional and commercial services.

One of the Jimberella Directors said that Jimberella gave preference to local applicants as tenants. People on the Jimberella Waiting List were said to be Dajarra residents who were either (i) waiting to move from smaller to bigger houses (most in this category); (ii) waiting to move from a Queensland Housing rental house to a Jimberella house; or (iii) involved a couple sharing with a larger family wishing to start their own household.

The Directors commented that a small number of people move back to Dajarra from Mt Isa, due to the cheaper rent. At the time of interview, however, there was only one young man from Mt Isa who wanted to move back, but he worked in Mt Isa. (In November 2007, one Jimberella Director said that a number of people were phoning from Mt Isa on a regular basis, looking for a Jimberella house to rent in Dajarra.)

Budgeting and rent arrears

The Jimberella Directors acknowledged that in the past they may have been a little '...too slack' with rent arrears. They said, however, that previously rent payments were more difficult to monitor and manage because the Directors relied on monthly bank statements to check up on payments. Thus, rent arrears would not be picked up for a month. Some tenants would agree to regular rent deductions, but then (unknown to Jimberella) cancel the agreement. Now that Jimberella and its tenants participate in Internet banking, the Directors can check at-risk tenants at any time to make sure their rent payments are up to date.

Those on Centrelink payments had their rent payments automatically withdrawn from their accounts. If they opted out of this arrangement, the Administrator could check it online. It was said that these tenants did not miss their payments if the rent was automatically deducted from their income support payment or salary. However, if left to themselves to pay the rent in cash, they would 'hum and ha' and say "I'll pay half now and then the rest later", but then often did not deliver on the second payment.

²⁰ In November 2007, all of the Jimberella houses were reported to be also full, whereas there were a few empty Department of Housing properties indicating consistency across time in the Dajarra housing market.

Those who did not have their rent payments direct debited had the greatest problems with rent arrears. People who got into arrears were usually in the old practice of going to the Jimberella store to pay their rent. The Administrator and President were not aware of the effect of bill payments on rent arrears or the compounding effect of late bill payments on rent arrears.

The Directors reported that tenants in Dajarra did have problems at times with budgeting. There were not many things that caused people to fall behind in their rent payments except budgeting as, when there was a problem with rent arrears, in most cases it was due to budgeting issues. One problem Jimberella encountered was people who were behind in their rent but who still persisted in buying “good things” (i.e. costly items such as a motor car or motor bike).

The Jimberella Directors said that they and their Administrator did not talk to people about financial management. If they did try to talk to tenants about financial management issues, they would get annoyed with the Board and the Administrator for lecturing them.

Other problems that could arise and affect rental payments were death and sickness in the tenant’s family, especially if the tenant had to go to Mt Isa (or Townsville) for a couple of weeks. However, it was said that if a tenant was absent for these reasons, although it would put them behind in their rent, they should be able to catch up with repayments. However, one Director noted that it does depend on how long they had to stay away and the costs of travel, which could be fairly high in the case of travelling to Townsville Hospital if their relative was a specialist emergency evacuation and they had to follow quickly.

It was also said that police or court fines did not greatly affect the ability of people to pay rent. This was because people could pay their fines in instalments through the State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) and could nominate the amount they wished to pay and whether they wish to pay SPER on an instalment plan or through deductions through Centrepay (direct debit through Centrelink payment).

Other issues impacting on tenancies

The Directors said it was a rare occurrence in Dajarra for people to “chuck in” a house (that is, to break a tenancy agreement) because of social problems. However, on those occasions, some did “chuck in”, as in the case of a husband and wife having a fight. Both might go different ways, leaving town to start afresh somewhere else.

In October 2008 one of the Directors cited a recent case of August 2008. At that time, the house was still locked up, empty, with rent in arrears. The tenant’s belongings remained in the house, but neither partner was paying rent. In this case, the wife (a Waluwarra woman from the Georgina) recently came from Mt Isa and collected the whitegoods and valuables, but left all her old clothes. She had returned to Mt Isa and was living with another Alyawarr man from Alpururulam (Lake Nash). The Director said Jimberella would “wait a while” and see what this couple intended doing before taking any action. In November 2008, another Director reported that the couple “had got back together” and were living in Alpururulam (NT) and even visited Dajarra for two or three days. But when they visited they did not stay in their own house, but with another relative; nor did they discuss the matter of their broken tenancy with Jimberella.

The Jimberella response is a very different approach to that of Queensland Housing in that it involves an Aboriginal approach to time and a sensitivity about social relations.

Tenancies and alcohol

The Directors said that alcohol was not necessarily a problem affecting tenancies in Dajarra. Some of the best Jimberella tenants for keeping their rent payments up to date were the “drinkers”. This was especially the case if they had their rent payments direct debited from their accounts.

Dajarra’s heavy Aboriginal drinkers all imbibed in one or two areas of the town. Intoxicated people knew they were not to venture into non-drinking households in such a state. Seeing people fighting in Dajarra is rare because people are frightened of going to jail. The only people drinking who might occasionally have a fight are young people who’ve been drinking rum, but as soon as there was any suggestion that police were coming, they sober up straight away (again to avoid going to prison).

Property damage

The Jimberella Directors reported that people do not smash up, or seriously damage, houses in Dajarra. Occasionally there was some minor damage, such as the odd hole in the wall. However, the damage was never significant enough to warrant evicting someone. People with alcohol problems did not have a reputation of smashing their houses up. Only an odd one might do this, but very rarely. When serious damage did happen, one Director attributed the damage to people outside the Dajarra community (namely visitors or Public Housing tenants). The Directors contrasted Dajarra to the discrete remote settlement of Doomadgee (which was formerly a Mission and is now a DOGIT community) where they said extensive widespread house damage did occur due to alcohol abuse.

Neighbourly strife

The Jimberella Cooperative has had tenants who complain about their neighbours’ noise. However, people tend to ring the police if they have a problem with noise. If any problems occurred with tenants riling or upsetting their neighbours, Jimberella Directors usually stay out of the matter. Serious “dramas”, however, were reported to be rare. Tenants in dispute were given a week or two to cool down. The Directors stressed that everyone has got to get on in Dajarra. The police were relied upon to sort out any extreme problem. It was said that anti-social behaviour did not have any serious impact on tenancies in Dajarra. An exception, pointed out by one Director in November 2008, was one person – a Department of Housing tenant – who had a reputation for persistent loud late-night music from sunset to sunrise.

Household size and rent structure

Jimberella had a standard clause in its tenancy agreement regarding the number of people permitted to stay in each house, but they did not police these rules.²¹ The Directors recognised that residential mobility was high with respect to young Aboriginal people in Dajarra and the wider North West Queensland region and that Aboriginal people were obliged to accommodate visiting kin (see Memmott et al. 2006).

The Jimberella Directors added that most tenants did not want to stay on their own, preferring to live in big families. When asked whether this meant that people were stressed by overcrowding (given that most Jimberella houses were two or three bedrooms), the Directors replied that the households were generally happy living in high densities – as long as everyone paid their share for food and rent. That is, the

²¹ Jimberella uses Form 18a, General Tenancy Agreement of the Residential Tenancies Authority (under the Qld *Residential Tenancies Act* 1994). Item 14 reads “Number of persons allowed to reside on the premises: ...”

problematic issue with close kin was not spatial density, but rather whether everyone made a fair contribution to household finances. This was generally said to be the case in Dajarra. The Directors contrasted the circumstances of many in Mt Isa where there was a more complex social organisation characterised as "... lots of people in houses – but they don't chuck in money and then they piss off".

Managing rent arrears the Jimberella way

The Jimberella Administrator and Directors said they approached people who were having difficulties with their tenancy, and talked to them. They then wrote to them if there was a problem. Jimberella tried to avoid "kicking people out" of their houses. Tenants in arrears usually came into the Jimberella office and had a talk with the Administrator and they worked out how the tenant could pay a bit more to reduce the rent arrears. For example, Jimberella had one person recently doing this and they had progressed to be \$500 ahead in their rent payments. If Jimberella had to evict people with rent arrears then, they believed, they would have a small number of empty houses and overcrowding in other houses. When Jimberella got people into the office for a talk about their rent arrears, they were usually cooperative. They did not get annoyed or angry, and most people set up a direct debit so that they were paying extra rent to make up for the arrears. Nevertheless, some people did stop the direct debit after a while when they identified another need, so the Administrator had to monitor the payments to ensure that the debt was fully cleared.

When tenants had rent arrears and came into talk about it, it was up to them to decide how much extra they wanted to pay. However, Jimberella wanted a minimum of \$20 extra per fortnight, although some people might choose to pay \$50. One Director said that the size of repayment should be proportional to the size of debt, and that tenants in most arrears should make the highest repayments, the bigger their debt. No agreements were signed regarding the extra payments. People operated on trust: the tenants just filled out the paperwork for direct debit.²²

In summary, the Jimberella process for dealing with rent arrears was to (1) talk to the tenant, (2) write to the tenant, (3) get the tenant to come into the Jimberella office to negotiate a repayment scheme, (4) rely on trust and respect that those tenants will clear the debt eventually. This worked most of the time – but not always.

If a tenant left Dajarra with rental arrears and went to Mt Isa, they knew that the Jimberella Directors would be waiting to collect the arrears when they came back.

Current arrears problems

Despite this liberal and trusting approach, in October 2008 (time of the last interview), there were three tenants who were substantially behind in their rent. They had all made repayment arrangements but had stopped paying after half a dozen or so payments. The Directors all agreed that they should be evicted. They talked about the need to put a scare into them, saying there was no point in writing a letter any more. The Directors felt compelled to evict them and take them to court. The Administrator said he was happy to do this, and indicated that he had the necessary Small Claims Tribunal papers to initiate a formal process of rent retrieval. But one Director was sceptical about the prospects of recovering the arrears, saying "they'll go to jail and still won't pay". One of the three in arrears was said to have won \$15,000 playing Bingo but, despite this, did not pay off her tenancy debt.

²² Directors saw this way of doing business as a major contrast with Department of Housing practice.

One Director observed that Jimberella tenants with high arrears sometimes “jumped boat” and took a state rental house, hoping to leave their debt behind them.

Past lack of eviction practice

The Jimberella Administrator and President were not aware of Jimberella evicting any of their tenants in the past. In fact, no one had ever been evicted from a Jimberella house, though some may have been evicted from Queensland Housing houses in Dajarra. If Jimberella evicted people, they would then be faced with the problem of collecting the moneys owed. Their problem was the need to keep people in the house so that they could make up their payments, but the risk was that tenants might take advantage of the situation and not catch up on their payments. If Jimberella did evict people, they would move in with people in another house. And, if a tenant accommodated another family, they would be in breach of the terms of their tenancy agreement. In fact, many people in Dajarra would be in breach of their tenancy agreement due to their household composition. Jimberella uses the standard Residential Tenancies Agreement form²³ whereby people have to nominate who is normally going to live in the house.

Repairs and maintenance

One Director said that the most regularly recurring repairs and maintenance problem in the Jimberella stock was leaking taps (the odd wall hole could be readily filled). This Director was in the habit of fixing these taps himself after repeated problems with plumbers from Mt Isa charging possibly excessive amounts by adding travel fees to every job they did in Dajarra, without spreading their travel cost across the bill for each house. He noted that these plumbers would be working in both jurisdictions (i.e. Jimberella and Department of Housing rental properties).

Summary of the Jimberella Co-op tenancy management approach

Jimberella’s ability to manage at-risk tenancies is influenced by the fact that it knows its clients, most of whom are family, and that Dajarra is a small town comprised of a relatively small number of family groups. According to the Jimberella President, being family affects the tenant/management interaction.

As noted in the ‘Context’ section of this chapter, the population of Dajarra has a majority of Aboriginal people who are largely inter-related and descend from the family groups of the upper Georgina River basin. Households display distinctly Aboriginal lifestyles (externally oriented) and domiciliary behaviour, and there is a strong sense of community and social cohesion that imbues a sense of communal harmony.

The Jimberella Directors, taking advantage of their community leadership status and their intimate understanding of community affairs, were able to address most tenancy problems with counseling and verbal persuasion within Aboriginal timeframes, rather than using the formal approach prescribed within the *Residential Tenancies Act*. They make a clear demarcation of certain social problems that are the domain of the police to resolve (e.g. tenancy noise). This informal Aboriginal approach has worked well throughout the 34-year history of Jimberella. However, there are some exceptional problem tenants accruing sizeable arrears. It was unclear at the time of writing whether the Directors would have the resolve and capacity to switch to formal procedures to recover these debts.

Department of Housing Area Office staff commented on recent changes within Jimberella with respect to the housing management capacities. Their perception was

²³ See also p.75 and footnote 21 re Jimberella lease agreements.

that Jimberella had a strong capacity to carry out repairs and maintenance on houses while it was participating in the CDEP. However, the winding down of CDEP by the Howard Government had a negative impact in Dajarra, mostly because of the lack of alternate employment opportunities.

5.5 The new ICHOs arrangement

Arising from the decision of the Australian Government, Queensland is assuming Commonwealth housing funding formerly granted to Indigenous Housing Organisations (IHOs), and including Regional Indigenous Housing Authorities.

The Queensland Department of Housing's website (accessed on 15 March 2009) notes that Indigenous community housing organisations, previously funded under the Australian Government's Community Housing and Infrastructure Program, are invited to become part of Queensland's one social housing system. Organisations that agree to the transition to the one social housing system will be eligible for upgrades to their properties to bring them to a public housing standard. The Department of Housing has \$60 million funding from the Australian Government to assist with the transition. The Department is planning how these funds can best be used. All ICHOs that own assets have been visited by members of a project team established to guide this work.

The organisation at Cammoweal (Willejuderra) has elected to transfer their assets to the Department of Housing in return for the upgrades and ongoing property management as it does not want to manage its assets any more. Other organisations around the state have decided to join as registered providers, but most continue to delay their decision until the Australian Government resolves its position in relation to the discharge of its interests.²⁴ The Jimberella Cooperative has not yet decided.

The Department of Housing north-west area office perspective

In early 2008, Area Office staff in Mt Isa were concerned about the prospects of taking over the housing management of the Commonwealth-funded housing in the entire region, especially the large Doomadgee stock, without a Commonwealth subsidy. The arrangements only unfolded gradually throughout 2008.

According to the Area Manager, some IHOS who were operating well (e.g. the Birdsville Coop) had said that they did not want the state's money. Some of these tenancies may have high incomes and tenants may not be eligible for Public Housing through the department due to income limits. Widespread discrimination in their small rural town and limited private rental stock mean tenants have no chance of accessing the private rental market. Therefore, they prefer to stay with their Coop. On the other hand, there were at least two dysfunctional or non-functional IHOs in North West Queensland that were the 'strugglers' (specifically the Boulia and Camooweal Co-ops) and which would have their stock fully taken over. In between these two extremes were other IHOs that had demonstrated varying degrees of capacity. At the time of the author's interviews (2008), these IHOs were uninformed as to whether they would have any collaborative role with the state in the management of their housing stock. One of these was the Jimberella Housing Co-operative in Dajarra. With respect to Dajarra, Area Office staff in Mt Isa were aware that there were three dysfunctional Jimberella tenancies in serious arrears. One issue identified by the North West Area Office staff was how their debts would be settled if Jimberella decides to hand over their properties to the state.

²⁴ The Australian Government wants to leave the service delivery arena for these organisations, but has legislative holds on the use of some properties and caveats on some others, depending on when they were funded.

Another issue was about repairs and maintenance. In August 2008, the Area Office staff agreed that there was potential for a repairs and maintenance contract with Jimberella Cooperative if it could demonstrate its capacity. However, Jimberella needed to find a suitable tradesman/builder to employ. There is a general problem of shortage of all types of tradesmen in Mt Isa –the mining companies on very high salaries absorb them.

The Jimberella perspective

Initially the Queensland Department of Housing was due to take over the management of the Jimberella houses in early 2008. The Indigenous Consultative Council agreed to fund the housing organisations to December 2008, and the ‘takeover’ time was extended. In August 2008, the Jimberella Directors believed that the first thing that the Department of Housing would do would be to increase the rent on the Jimberella houses. The Department claims that this is not their intention, and that all IHOs will have to make a choice about whether they retain their housing stock or ‘hand it over’ to the Department of Housing, and whether their housing stock will become part of the Department’s one social housing system.

Jimberella Directors were acutely aware that Queensland Housing had a different approach regarding rent arrears to Jimberella. One Director said that if a state tenant was two or three weeks behind, the department would put you straight into court.

The problem from the Jimberella perspective was that if you were strict with tenants then you would be evicting people out onto the street and IHOs such as Jimberella are really the last option for people looking for rental accommodation. Jimberella was purposefully a little bit easier on the financial side of tenancy management, whereas Queensland Housing was stricter. However, the Jimberella Administrator said that it is getting to a stage where Jimberella would have to start getting stricter with tenants (referring to the current arrears cases). The Coop attempted to be fair with tenants but may have to get stricter.

In August 2008, there were three or four vacant state houses in Dajarra. Most state tenancies were on direct debit arrangements. The Jimberella Directors believed that Queensland Housing tenants could obtain rent concessions. The Directors said that if a state tenant fell two weeks behind with their rent, they received a notice, and were told to move on. However, if they had a reasonable excuse, they could pay extra rent to catch up. If they were evicted, they would move in with other relatives in another house in Dajarra (possibly another Coop house).

The Directors were aware that the rent charged for Department of Housing properties depended on household income. Jimberella Directors noted that the Department “go on the number of people” in the household in their rent calculation, i.e. has a sliding scale for rent, dependent on combined household incomes. If the household made too much money, they had to look at moving out into private rental or into a Jimberella house.

The Jimberella Directors were not aware of the Department of Housing policing the numbers of tenants in their houses. The Department only sent someone down now and again to visit the tenants and check up on the houses.

5.6 Case study

In this section, we present a case study of an Indigenous tenant, ‘Belinda’ – a tenant of Jimberella Housing Coop.

Belinda and her husband had been living in their house for ten years since 1998. Before that, another couple who had grown old and moved into an old person’s home

and passed away had lived there for many years. Belinda's rental level was subject to income assessment; her partner worked in the Phosphate Hill Mine and receives a substantial income.

Belinda and her spouse had a five-bedroom house. They had two children in boarding school, as well as one who had just finished grade 12, and who was working with the Respite services in Dajarra. Two younger children were at the Dajarra Primary School. When all the family were at home, there was a maximum of seven people in the household. There were occasional visitors, but Belinda added: "not many visitors – just for a night or two."

Belinda said their rent had gone up every year. It was \$175 a week in 2008 and was \$165 in 2007. She said that if they fell one week behind in rent, they received a letter from the department straight away. But, she added, they paid rent monthly and were usually always ahead, paying with a keycard at the Mt Isa Post Office. Belinda never had Housing Department people visit her. She used to get field officers coming regularly once – some years back. But, in 2008, they had only turned up once in a while for an inspection (without notice).

Belinda phoned QBuild for repairs and maintenance. They used to come out straight away but, she said, they "had slackened right off lately – got to keep reminding them". She said they sometimes said they would not come to Dajarra for R & M unless three or four other people needed them at the same time. She finally got the kitchen and bathroom upgraded after many years of requests. Belinda now had termites in the laundry. If QBuild did not do anything in response to her requests, she said she complains to Mrs Betty Kiernan (Local State Member and ex Publican of Dajarra Hotel).

Concerning budgeting practices, Belinda said that she always paid all bills in full, including car-repayments. She said she always seemed to have enough money to do this. When asked further about budgeting practices, she said she used to do calculations ("add up all bills"), but she did not bother to do this anymore. It would appear she had low numeracy skills, but carried out a form of intuitive budgeting. Belinda added that her family did not go anywhere much – and so they had few extra expenses. They had an annual trip to Rodeo/Sports Carnival in Mt Isa, and sometimes went to the Northern Territory for land meetings with the Central Land Council. These were about her father's country, which is *Atnwarle* near Huckitta (*Arkita*) Station on the Plenty Highway.

Recently Belinda and her husband were given six months by the department to find another house or, alternatively, to buy this house. Belinda said they were not ready yet to make this decision. Nevertheless, she said that she was interested in home ownership and wanted to talk to Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) about this. The state is happy to sell houses if the tenant has been in tenancy for a number of years.

Belinda said that her house was "scary" – there were old spirits there. No one had ever smoked the house to chase out the spirits after the last couple had lived there (since deceased), but said she liked it that way. She added that these "spirits look after me – warn me of strangers". She recounted an adverse experience one night: a schizophrenic person went to five households trying to break into the windows in order to steal a car. But, as 'Belinda' slept on a mattress on the lounge floor with her youngest two children, she heard him and chased him. She implied that the spirits helped warn her.

Belinda said she liked Dajarra, and would always stay here. She said Mt Isa was not a safe place to live now – "too many fights. Kids get picked on in the streets from passing cars". She and her family would rather stay in Dajarra.

She agreed for Jimberella to do repairs and maintenance as a possible future arrangement. Belinda pointed out that there was a builder living in corner house finishing the three Jimberella houses – she thought that he liked Dajarra and that he could take over.

Conclusion

Exploration of the Area Office and Jimberella approaches to sustaining tenancies reveal similarities and differences in approach – though a shared understanding of the importance of sustaining Indigenous tenancies drive both approaches. Sustaining tenancies are commonly understood to prevent homelessness; ensure better outcomes for tenants; minimise property damage; prevent rental arrears; and contribute to neighbourly relationships and community amenity.

However, the approaches adopted by these two housing providers are based on different views of the world. The Jimberella approach to sustaining tenancies is to adopt – for as long as possible – a non-intrusive stance, reflecting a culturally based sense of timing (and a willingness to wait). The Area Office staff have to balance their awareness of cultural sensitivities with their need to produce competitive outcomes consistent with the Department of Housing's expectations. The approach adopted by the Area Office indicates that it is possible to sustain Indigenous tenancies and to reduce rental arrears, costly evictions, and damage to property using a proactive tenancy management approach.

On the basis of this case study alone it is not possible to determine how significant the unique qualities of the Mt Isa and Dajarra communities contribute to the different approaches. For example, Area Office staff frequently dealt with high levels of alcohol consumption and related disputes as part of their work, while Jimberella directors reported little drinking in Dajarra that affected tenancies negatively. In Mt Isa, the presence of many different family groups and groups from different areas contributed to the challenges of sustaining Indigenous tenancies, while in Dajarra the Jimberella Directors dealt mainly with family members and people with whom they had long-standing relationships.

Some of the differences identified in this case study are rather perceptions of difference. The case study illustrates the need for clear and open communication between key stakeholders. It also shows how easily misinformation can spread when communication breaks down, or is not managed in a timely way. Communication is important between organisations 'on the ground', but also between the various levels of large agencies such as the Department of Housing. It also illustrates the way in which organisations work together in rural and remote areas to cover the gaps in service that would otherwise occur, and to sustain Indigenous tenancies.

6 SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In recent years, Australian jurisdictions have implemented tenancy support programs and generalist homelessness early intervention programs aimed at sustaining tenancies and preventing people from becoming homeless. The Australian Government's White Paper on homelessness, *The Road Home, A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, has placed further emphasis on the role of early intervention programs in reducing the rate of homelessness. New homelessness early intervention programs will be rolled out through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. *The Road Home* also identifies the closing of the gap in the rate of homelessness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as an important indicator of the success of its homelessness reform agenda.

On 2006 Census estimates, homelessness is eight times higher in the Indigenous population as compared with the non-Indigenous population. Tenancy support measures and programs represent critical components of a reform agenda designed to reduce Indigenous homelessness.

This report maps the structure of tenancy support programs and early intervention programs in Australia and describes what these programs do to assist Indigenous tenants at risk of homelessness to sustain their tenancies. It also examines how effective these programs are in sustaining tenancies to the extent that the data permit this.

Most Australian programs assist existing tenants to sustain their tenancies, primarily in public housing and community housing. However, new programs designed to assist tenants in private rental housing have also been implemented. Recent years have also witnessed the introduction of programs and measures targeted at those who are homeless or at high risk of homelessness, access accommodation with appropriate supports.

What does our review of Australian tenancy support programs tell us about what they do to assist Indigenous tenants and the impact they have on client outcomes?

First, it is clear that all Australian governments have recognised the importance of early intervention programs in reducing homelessness and have implemented a wide range of programs to support tenants to sustain their tenancies, both at the point of entry into support and at the point of possible loss of the tenancy. There is widespread recognition that programs must not only address the immediate tenancy-related issues that led to referral to the program, but also the underlying needs of clients, such as mental health concerns, drug and alcohol dependence issues, and the like. All tenancy support programs encourage agencies to link clients with community resources, mental health and other health services, and drug and alcohol support services.

We have also seen the branching out of tenancy support programs from their public housing origins to other tenure types, including private rental accommodation and community housing. The Western Australian private rental support programs show the benefit of intervention in the private rental market, particularly against the fact that discrimination still exists on the part of some owners and property managers. The NSW 'street-to-home' programs have been successful in effectively transitioning people from the streets and crisis accommodation into community housing. Finally, the HOME Advice program is completely tenure neutral.

Second, Australian governments have established tenancy support programs largely independently of one another and without a common framework under which support is provided. Nor have they established common data collection systems and evaluation frameworks. Consequently, it is difficult to aggregate information across programs to provide an Australia-wide picture of what tenancy support programs do and how effective they are. The absence of a common framework has also possibly meant that different jurisdictions may not be fully aware of the range of programs available elsewhere, how they operate, and what they achieve for their clients. Each jurisdiction has developed innovative and effective ways of supporting at-risk tenancies and their experiences can provide useful guidance to other jurisdictions. Moreover, not all programs have established data collection systems that enable a differentiated analysis based on the Indigenous status of clients. There are, of course, exceptions. The South Australian Supported Tenancy Program and the HOME Advice program are two examples of programs that have sufficiently flexible data collection systems enabling them to report on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes in the context of a mainstream program.

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness under which the Australian Government and state and territory governments have committed themselves to new services and capital projects designed to contribute to an overall reduction in homelessness and, in particular, to early intervention programs designed to sustain tenancies, may change all this. The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness can act as the vehicle for the development of a more integrated and common response to tenancy support and encourage the development of common data collection systems and reporting frameworks. Such a development would provide a stronger basis for policy development, future research in this area and a greater ability to set and monitor progress on key indicators in respect to tenancy support. A number of programs use such indicators already. Possible indicators include the percentage of households supported who were in an at-risk of eviction position who were able to sustain their tenancies following support, and mean percentage reduction in rent arrears and tenancy liabilities for households who entered support with identifiable issues in this area.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing also has implications for the sustainability of tenancies in remote Indigenous communities. It includes a number of key performance indicator benchmarks relevant to the sustainability of tenancies, particularly, that “Tenancy management, rent collection and tenancy support services in place for all existing and ‘repaired and replaced’ houses in remote Indigenous communities by 2015. All prospective tenants of new houses to be offered Living Skills support training as part of tenancy management”.

Third, it is evident that Indigenous households at risk of losing their tenancy are gaining access to tenancy support programs and receiving support roughly in line with what might be expected, given their overall representation in various tenure categories, and in light of the prevalence of homelessness in the Indigenous population.

Fourth, it is evident that tenancy support in Australia is not limited to specialist tenant support programs. There exists a large range of tenant support measures that lie outside these types of programs. Indeed, most generalist homelessness early intervention programs have, as their central component, the provision of supported accommodation.

Fifth, both funders and housing providers identified the importance of relationships in delivering services and programs intended to sustain Indigenous tenancies. While it is difficult to quantify, these relationships – trust and mutual respect – are important in

delivering these services in a way that not only meets funders' expectations (and agreed outcomes) but also ensures genuine outcomes for clients whose tenancies are at risk.

Lastly, while there is less information available than we would like, the evidence that is available suggests that the vast majority of Indigenous clients who do receive support under tenancy support programs remain housed, are saved from homelessness, and are linked to external support programs to meet their non-housing needs.

REFERENCES

- Altman, J. and Hunter, B. (2003), 'Evaluating Indigenous Socioeconomic Outcomes in the Reconciliation Decade, 1991-2001', *Economic Papers*, 22, 1-15.
- The Australian Government (2008), *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2007a), *Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, Australia, 2006*, Cat. No. 4710.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- (2007b), *Population Distribution, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006*, Cat. No. 4705.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- ABS and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2003), *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.
- AIHW (2005a), *Indigenous Housing Indicators, 2003-04*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.
- (2005b), *Indigenous Housing Needs 2005: A Multi-Measure Needs Model*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.
- (2006a), *Public Rental Housing 2005–06, Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, National Data*, AIHW Cat. No. HOU 153, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.
- (2006b), *State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing 2005–06, Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, National Data Reports*, AIHW Cat. No. HOU 154, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.
- (2007), *Homeless People in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report 2005-06*, AIHW Cat. No. HOU 156, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.
- Baulderstone, J. and Beer, A. (2003), *Evaluation of Successful Tenancies Demonstration Projects and Initiatives*, South Australian Housing Trust, Adelaide.
- (2004), *Evaluation of the Supported Tenancies Demonstration Projects*, South Australian Housing Trust, Adelaide.
- Beer, A., Slatter, M., Baulderstone, J. and Habibis, D. (2006), *Evictions and Housing Management*, Final Report No. 94, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Blainey, G. (1970), *Mines in the Spinifex: the Story of Mount Isa Mines*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney (1st edition 1960).
- Burgess, L. and Roberts, C. (2003), 'The Centrecare National Family Homelessness Project: A Family and Community Services (FaCS) Funded Project under the National Homelessness Strategy', *Parity*, 16 (9), 6-9.
- Chamberlain, C. and MacKenzie, D. (1992), 'Understanding Contemporary Homelessness: Issues of Definition and Meaning', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 27, 443-56.
- (2003), *Counting the Homeless, Census 2001*, ABS Cat. no. 2050, Swinburne University, RMIT University and ABS, Canberra.

- (2008), *Counting the Homeless, Census 2006*, ABS Cat. no. 2050, Swinburne University, RMIT University and ABS, Canberra.
- Coleman, A. (2000), *Sister, It Happens to Me Every Day: Exploring the Needs and Issues of Indigenous Women in Public Spaces*, report for Queensland Government and Brisbane City Council, Brisbane.
- Commonwealth of Australia (2008), *The Road Home, A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, the Australian Government's White Paper on homelessness, Canberra.
- Cooper, L. and Morris, M. (2005), *Sustainable Tenancies for Indigenous Families: What Services and Policy Supports Are Needed*, Final Report No. 81, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Crane, M., Fu, R. and Warnes, A. (2004), *Building Homelessness Prevention Practice: Combining Research Evidence and Professional Knowledge*, Sheffield Institute for Studies on Ageing, University of Sheffield.
- Department for Communities and Local Government (2006), *Anti-Social Behaviour Intensive Family Support Projects*, London.
- Department of Human Services (DHS) Victoria (2006), *Support for High Risk Tenancies, Strategic Project*, Department of Human Services, Melbourne.
- Dillane, J., Hill, M., Bannister, J. and Scott, S. (2001), *Evaluation of the Dundee Families Project*, Final Report, Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.
- Equal Opportunity Commission (Western Australia) (EOCWA) (2004), *Finding a Place. An Inquiry into the Existence of Discriminatory Practices in Relation to the Provision of Public Housing and Related Services to Aboriginal People in Western Australia*, Equal Opportunity Commission, Perth.
- Flatau, P., Cooper, L., McGrath, N., Edwards, D., Hart, A., Morris, M., Lacroix, C., Adam, M., Marinova, D., Beer, A., Tually, S. and Traee, C. (2005), *Indigenous Access to Mainstream Public and Community Housing*, Final Report no. 85, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Flatau, P., Zaretsky, K., Brady, M., Haigh, Y. and Martin, R. (2008), *The Cost-Effectiveness of Homelessness Programs*, Final Report, Vols. 1 and 2, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Flatau, P., Slatter, M., Baulderstone, J., Coleman, A., Long, S., Memmott, P. and Sheppard, L. (2008), *Sustaining at-risk Indigenous Tenancies*, Positioning Paper, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Flatau, P.R. and Paris, A. (2009), Homelessness Early Intervention Programs in the Private Rental Market, *Parity*, 22, 3, 42-44.
- FOCUS Pty Ltd (2000), *Rental Market Failure: Investigating the Failure of the Private Rental Housing Market in Meeting the Needs of Indigenous Households, Proposed Methodology and Preliminary Observations*, Report Prepared for State and Territory Housing Authorities, Mt Crosby, Qld.
- Fopp, R. et al. (2004), *Getting Out and Staying Out: Pathways to Independent Living*, Department of Human Services, Adelaide.
- Habibis, D., Atkinson, R., Dunbar, T., Goss, D., Easthope, H. and Maginn, P. (2007), *A Sustaining Tenancies Approach to Managing Demanding Behaviour in Public Housing: A Good Practice Guide*, Final Report no. 70, AHURI, Melbourne.

- Healy, B. et al. (2005), *What Factors Impact on People's Capacity to Maintain Long Term Tenancies? Did the SAAP Experience Help Them?*, Merri Outreach Service and La Trobe University School of Social Work and Social Policy, Melbourne.
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2001), *We Can Do It! The Needs of Urban Dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, at:
<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/urbandwelling/inquiryreport.htm>.
- Housing Ministers Advisory Council Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing (2001), *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*, at:
http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/indigenous/indigenous_housing_2010.htm.
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) (2003), *Social Justice Report 2003*, Aboriginal and Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Canberra, at:
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/sj_report/sjreport03/index.html.
- Jones, A. E., McAuliffe, D., Reddel, T., Marston, G. and Thompson, A. (2004), *Sustaining Tenancies in Public Housing: Understanding and Supporting Public Tenancies-at-Risk in Queensland*, Final Report, Queensland Department of Housing, Brisbane.
- Jones, R. (1994), *The Housing Needs of Indigenous Australians, 1991*, Research Monograph no. 8, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, Canberra.
- Kolar, V (2003), *The Hanover Longitudinal Study of Family Outcomes*, Paper presented at the Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Brisbane.
- Keys Young (1998), *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Context and its Possible Implications for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.
- LenMac Consulting Pty Ltd (2005), *Sustaining Housing After Homelessness*, Final Research Report to the National Coordination and Development Committee, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.
- Long, S. (2005), *Gidyea Fire: A Study of the Transformation and Maintenance of Aboriginal Place Properties on the Georgina River*, PhD Thesis, Department of Architecture, University of Queensland.
- Long, S. (2007), Notes from a meeting with Mick Marshall, Administrator, Jimberella Cooperative, and Henry Dempsey, Chairperson, Jimberella Cooperative, 15 November 2007.
- Long, S., Memmott, P. and Seelig, T. (2007), *An Audit and Review of Australian Indigenous Housing Research*, Final Report no. 102, AHURI, Melbourne.
- MacKenzie, D., Desmond, K., and Steen, A. (2007), *Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program Evaluation Report 2007*, Department of Families, Communities and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.
- Memmott, P. (1974), [Letter to Virginia Braden, Secretary of Aboriginal Housing Panel, RAI, Canberra, on Aboriginal housing development and proposals at

Dajarra, Mt Isa, Normanton and Mornington Island], *Mornington Island*, 1/9/74 [typescript copy held at Aboriginal Data Archive, Department of Architecture, University of Queensland.

- Memcott, P. (1996), From the 'Curry to the 'Weal: Aboriginal Town Camps and Compounds of the Western Back-Blocks, *Fabrications*, 7, 1-50.
- Memcott, P., Kelleher, P., Stacy, R. and Long, S. (1997), *South-west Queensland to Mt Isa Gas Pipeline, Social Impact Assessment – Aboriginal Sector: Central and Northern Components*. Report prepared for Australian Gas Light Co P/L, in conjunction with Aboriginal Environments Research Centre, Department of Architecture, University of Queensland, 31 January.
- Memcott, P., Long, S., Bell, M., Taylor, J. and Brown, D. (2004), *Between Places: Indigenous Mobility in Remote and Rural Australia*, Positioning Paper no. 81, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Memcott, P., Long, S., Chambers, C., and Spring, F. (2003), *Categories of Indigenous Homeless People and Good Practice Responses to their Needs*, Final Report, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Memcott, P., Long, S. and Thompson, L. (2006), *Indigenous Mobility in Rural and Remote Australia*, Final Report no. 90, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Memcott, P. and Moran, M. (2001), *Indigenous Settlements of Australia*, Environment Australia [Technical Papers], Canberra, at <http://www.ea.gov.au/soe/techpapers/indigenous/introduction.html>.
- Neutze, M. (2000), 'Housing for Indigenous Australians', *Housing Studies*, 15 (4), 485-504.
- Newman, T. and Samoiloff, J. (2005), *Sustaining Tenancies*, paper presented to National Housing Conference, Perth, 26-28 October
- Nixon, J., Hunter, C. and Parr, S. (2006), *Anti-Social Behaviour Intensive Family Support Projects: An Evaluation of Six Pioneering Projects*, Department for Communities and Local Government, London.
- O'Brien, A., Inglis, S., Herbert, T. and Reynolds, A. (2002), *Linkages between Housing and Support*, Final Report no. 25, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Pholeros, P., Rainow, S. and Torzillo, P. (1994), *Housing for Health: Towards a Healthy Living Environment for Aboriginal Australia*, Healthhabitat, Newport Beach, NSW.
- Productivity Commission (2007), *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007*, Productivity Commission, Melbourne.
- Queensland Department of Housing (2006), *Annual Report 2005-06*, Queensland Government, Brisbane, at: <http://www.housing.qld.gov.au/>.
- Queensland Department of Housing (2008), *Community Housing Resource Worker Program*, at: www.housing.qld.gov.au/programs/ch/support/worker/htm [accessed 16 October 2008].
- Queensland State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) (2007), 'What is SPER?', http://www.sper.qld.gov.au/how_sper_works.htm [accessed 5 December 2007].

- Roberts, C., and Burgess, L. (2004), *A Longitudinal Research Project on Aboriginal Homelessness in Perth, Western Australia*, National Family Homelessness Project, FaHCSIA, Canberra.
- Ryan, P., and Merlo, R. (2005), *Family Homelessness Prevention Pilot – Final Evaluation Report*, Canberra, Department of Family and Community Services.
- Slatter, M. and Beer, A. (2003), *Housing Evictions: A South Australian Study*, Australian Council for Community Services Research, Flinders University, Adelaide.
- Slatter, M. and Beer, A. (2004), *Evictions and Housing Management: Toward More Effective Strategies*, Positioning Paper no. 76, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Solonec, T. (2000), 'Racial Discrimination in the Private Rental Market: Overcoming Stereotypes and Breaking the Cycle of Housing Despair in Western Australia', *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, 5 (2), at:
<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/ILB/2000/11.html>.
- Stanley, J. (2001), *Rental Market Failure: Discriminatory Obstacles Faced by Aboriginal People in the Private Rental Market*, paper presented to National Housing Conference, Brisbane, 24-26 Oct., at:
http://www.nationalhousingconference.org.au/downloads/2001/DayOne/09_jane_stanley.pdf.
- Taylor, J. and Biddle, N. (2008), *Locations of Indigenous Population Change: What Can We Say?* Australian National University: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Working Paper No. 43, at:
<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/system/files/Publications/WP/CAEPRWP43.pdf>
- Victoria, J. (2002), *A House Is Just a House: Indigenous Youth Housing Need in Queensland*, Master of Philosophy thesis, Department of Architecture, University of Queensland, Brisbane.
- Walker, V. and Ireland, M. (2003), *Sustainable Housing for Traditional Living Aboriginal People Moving to Adelaide: Malpa – Kutjara*, Adelaide Central Community Health Service, Adelaide, at:
<http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-malpa-kutjara.htm>.

APPENDIX A: AUSTRALIAN HOMELESSNESS EARLY INTERVENTION MEASURES AND PROGRAMS RELATED TO TENANCY SUPPORT

In this appendix to Chapter 3, we briefly review homelessness early intervention programs and life skill programs in three jurisdictions – WA, NSW and Victoria.

Table A1 presents a profile of generalist early intervention homelessness programs that have tenant support elements, life skills programs, and other programs and measures that include some tenancy support component. Figures A1, A2 and A3 present, diagrammatically, tenant support programs and other forms of tenancy support in these three jurisdictions.

Both Victoria and Western Australia implemented homelessness strategies in the early 2000s, introducing a range of homelessness early intervention programs that incorporated supported transitional accommodation components.

In Victoria, a number of justice-related early intervention programs that include transitional accommodation with support were introduced as part of the Victorian Homelessness Strategy. These programs provide supported accommodation to those in or leaving the justice system who are at risk of homelessness. They include the Transitional Housing Management (THM)-Bail Support Program for offenders eligible for bail and homeless or at risk of homelessness and the Youth Justice Housing Pathways for young people aged 17 and over who are exiting youth justice facilities and who are at risk of homelessness.

There also exist mental health and drug and alcohol-related programs. These seek to provide pathways out of homelessness for people with a serious mental illness and complex needs through the provision of transitional housing and specialist support packages.

Under the Western Australian Homelessness Strategy, the Community Transitional Accommodation and Support Services (TASS) program was introduced. This provides (six-month) transitional accommodation through the WA Department of Housing (33 accommodation units) and support to ex-prisoners leaving jail with identified high needs and a high risk of returning to custody due to a lack of suitable accommodation. The WA Community Re-entry Coordination Service provides support to ex-offenders for up to three months before leaving prison and six months after. Both the TASS and Community Re-entry Coordination Service have significant numbers of Indigenous clients (around 50%) reflecting both the high rate of incarceration of Indigenous people and their risks of homelessness on exit from prison.

Western Australia has a number of Indigenous-specific life skills support programs and private rental access and tenant support services. Included in the former is the In-House Practical Support Program (IHPS), which operates in remote, regional and urban areas and aims to develop the home living skills of Aboriginal people participating in the program.

The Private Rental Access Scheme (PRAS) aims to improve Indigenous people's access to the private rental market within the metropolitan area by supporting Indigenous clients in the rental application process. The Private Rental Aboriginal Assistance Loan (PRAAL) assists Indigenous people in private rental accommodation who are at risk of losing their tenancy and likely to become homeless, by providing a loan for their rental arrears. The Aboriginal Tenants Support Service (ATSS) provides support and information to Aboriginal tenants or prospective tenants in regional areas of Western Australia with little experience in renting housing or tenants with a history

of poor tenancy, to understand their rights and meet their responsibilities. The Indigenous Tenancy Advocacy Service (ITAS) provides advice and education to tenants and casework services to tenants who need additional assistance in managing issues surrounding their tenancy.

Victoria and Western Australia follow a similar model of tenancy support in that they have implemented tenant support programs for public, private and community housing tenants. They also follow a similar approach involving the implementation of specific identifiable homelessness early intervention programs, which target particular sub-populations of at-risk of homelessness individuals. This is particularly so for Victoria.

New South Wales has taken a somewhat different approach to both tenancy support and the delivery of generalist homelessness early intervention support. First, it does not operate separately identifiable specialist tenant support programs assisting tenants at risk of eviction in public housing and in private rental housing. As noted previously, however, it has implemented a range of front-end tenancy support programs for those exiting homelessness. Second, it provides a more limited range of targeted early intervention homelessness programs. What NSW does do, however, is provide support for those at risk of homelessness in public rental housing and community housing under cross-government agency commitments or agreements. The most prominent of these agreements is the Joint Guarantee of Service (JGOS) for People with Mental Health Problems and Disorders Living in Aboriginal, Community and Public Housing.

Under the JGOS, tenancy and other personal support services are provided to public housing tenants with mental health problems and disorders whose tenancy may otherwise be at risk. The JGOS also assists social housing applicants with mental health problems or disorders who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness to successfully establish and subsequently maintain a tenancy in social housing.

Continuing long-term mental health, personal and tenancy supports for those people with mental health problems and disorders requiring accommodation support is provided under the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI).

The Human Services Accord extended the JGOS framework in that it represents a formal agreement between NSW Housing and NSW human service agencies more generally. The Accord provides an overarching framework for human service agencies, both government and non-government, to work in partnership to support social housing tenants with complex needs to receive the support services they need to live independently and maintain their tenancies. A difficulty with assessing the effectiveness of the JGOS and Human Services Accord as against discrete tenancy support programs is in establishing the number of at-risk Indigenous tenancies supported, the services they received, and the outcomes derived from support.

Accreditation processes for Indigenous and mainstream community housing providers have also been considerably strengthened in recent years in NSW leading to stronger guidelines on governance, tenancy management, and tenancy support.

The NSW Partnership Against Homelessness established in 1999 also provides a framework for supporting homeless people. It does so through coordinating government agencies, non-government organisations and local government in specific homelessness initiatives. The Inner City Homelessness Action Plan is the most important of the initiatives under the Partnership Against Homelessness. Both the My Place program and the Allawah Dual Diagnosis Pilot are Inner City Homelessness Action Plan projects.

A recent initiative of the Inner City Homelessness Action Plan is the Homelessness Intervention Project in Inner City Sydney. It provides long-term housing and tenancy, and social and health supports to inner-Sydney rough sleepers through a partnership between the NSW Department of Community Services (support packages), NSW Health (drug and alcohol dependency and mental health support), Housing NSW (houses) and the City of Sydney.

As with Victoria and Western Australia, those exiting prison but at risk of homelessness are eligible for support in New South Wales. Supported accommodation services for recently released male offenders who are at risk of homelessness are provided through Glebe House and the Judge Rainbow Memorial Fund. Offenders are offered individual counseling and case management together with life skills, literacy and numeracy and leisure activities. Guthrie House provides similar services for women offenders and ex-offenders. The Yulawirri Nurai Indigenous Association Inc assists Aboriginal women before and after release with support with housing needs and in terms of employment, education, and training needs within NSW.

Table A1: Selected early intervention homelessness initiatives, life skills programs and other initiatives with Tenancy Support Components: NSW, Victoria, and Western Australia

| Program | *Description |
|---|---|
| <p>NSW</p> <p><i>Joint Guarantee of Service (JGOS) for People with Mental Health Problems and Disorders Living in Aboriginal, Community and Public Housing</i></p> | <p>The Joint Guarantee of Service (JGOS) was established in 1997 and is an agreement between NSW Health, Housing NSW, NSW Aboriginal Housing Office, NSW, the Office of Community Housing, the Department of Community Services, Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW and Aboriginal and community housing providers and non-government mental health service providers. It covers services provided to people with mental health problems and disorders living in or applying for public, Aboriginal or community housing in NSW.</p> <p>The JGOS aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better assist and enhance the well being of existing social housing tenants with mental health problems and disorders whose tenancy may otherwise be at risk • assist housing applicants with mental health problems or disorders who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness to successfully establish and subsequently maintain a tenancy in social housing, and • assist clients with mental health problems, who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness, to establish and maintain SAAP accommodation” (<i>Making JGOS Work: Operations Manual, 2008, p.4</i>). <p>Under the JGOS, local committees of key service providers work together to address the housing and support needs of people with mental health problems and disorders living in, or applying for, social housing.</p> |
| <p><i>Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI)</i></p> | <p>The Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) was developed from the Joint Guarantee of Service and provides a funding base to strengthen partnerships and protocols established between agencies.</p> <p>HASI is designed to assist people with mental health problems and disorders requiring accommodation support to participate in the community, maintain successful tenancies, and assist in their recovery from mental illness.</p> <p>Long-term housing and tenancy management services are provided by public and community housing (funded by Housing NSW). Clinical care and rehabilitation is provided by specialist mental health services. Non-government organisations (funded by NSW Health) provide other support services.</p> |
| <p><i>Human Services Accord</i></p> | <p>The Accord is a formal agreement between NSW Housing and NSW human service agencies. It provides an overarching framework for human service agencies – both government and non-government – to work in partnership to support social housing tenants with complex needs to receive the support services they need to live independently and maintain their tenancies.</p> <p>A number of Shared Access Trials have been implemented under the Accord. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Young people leaving out-of-home care in the Hunter:</i> Young people aged 16-18 years leaving out-of-home care in the Hunter region will be housed and supported over a two-year period. |

| Program | *Description |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dillwynia female ex-prisoners trial partnership:</i> Women prisoners in Dillwynia Correctional Centre who are due for release and are exiting the Centre under the Department of Corrective Services' Throughcare Inside Out program are housed by Housing NSW with support services provided by Wesley Mission. • <i>Housing First:</i> A model for accommodating chronically homeless people in Inner City Sydney. <p>The Partnership Against Homelessness was established by the NSW Government in 1999 to improve services to homeless people through coordinating NSW government agencies responsible for homelessness service provision and working with local government and the non-government sector. The Partnership Against Homelessness provides an overarching vehicle for the development and implementation of homelessness initiatives in NSW. A key initiative of the Partnership Against Homelessness is the Inner City Homelessness Action Plan.</p> <p>The key aims of the Partnership are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping homeless people access services • coordinating support services • improving access to temporary or crisis accommodation, and • facilitating the move to long-term accommodation. |
| <i>Partnership Against Homelessness</i> | |
| <i>Homelessness Intervention Project in Inner City Sydney and the Nepean</i> | <p>The Homelessness Intervention Project in Inner City Sydney (the Inner City Chronically Homeless and Complex Needs Co-ordination Project) and the Nepean commenced in 2008. The Homelessness Intervention Project in Inner City Sydney is a phase 2 initiative of the Inner City Homelessness Action Plan. In the inner city of Sydney project, long-term housing and tenancy, social and health supports will be provided for 20 inner-Sydney rough sleepers through a partnership between the NSW Department of Community Services (support packages), NSW Health (drug and alcohol dependency and mental health support), Housing NSW (houses) and the City of Sydney. The Nepean Youth Homelessness Project will provide social housing and intensive support to 10 young people with histories of sleeping rough and chronic homelessness.</p> |
| <i>Inner City Homelessness Action Plan Phase 1: 2002-2005 Phase 2: 2007-2011</i> | <p>The Inner City Homelessness Action Plan was developed by the NSW Partnership Against Homelessness and includes a number of initiatives including the My Place homeless leases project and the Allawah Dual Diagnosis Pilot Project.</p> |
| <i>SAAP – Innovation and Investment Fund Pilot: Enhancement of the Far North Coast Accommodation and Brokerage Services</i> | <p>Through this project, four crisis brokerage services organisations have been reconfigured from a crisis accommodation brokerage assistance model to a new model of tenancy support involving partnerships with the NSW Department of Housing (called Housing NSW) and private housing providers. The services are in Tweed Heads (Tweed Valley), Ballina (Richmond Valley), Maclean (Clarence Valley) and Lismore (which has a specifically Aboriginal focus).</p> |
| Victoria | |

| Program | *Description |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Victorian Homelessness Strategy: Justice support programs</i></p> <p><i>Victorian Homelessness Strategy: Mental health programs</i></p> <p><i>Victorian Homelessness Strategy: Drug and alcohol programs</i></p> <p><i>Victorian Homelessness Strategy: Youth support programs</i></p> <p><i>Victorian Homelessness Strategy: Multiple and complex needs support programs</i></p> | <p>Justice-related programs developed under the Victorian Homelessness Strategy providing linked transitional housing and support services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Transitional Housing Management (THM)-Bail Support Program</i>: Offenders eligible for bail and homeless or at risk of homelessness. • <i>Court Integrated Services Program</i>: People assisted by Melbourne, Sunshine and Morwell Magistrates' Courts. • <i>Better Pathways</i>: Women assisted in the criminal justice system; primarily those assisted by the Bail Support Program who are homeless, including Indigenous women in rural Victoria. • <i>THM-Corrections Housing Pathways</i>: Coordinated response to address the needs of people exiting men's and women's Victorian prisons who require housing and integrated support. • <i>THM-Drug Courts Housing Pathways</i>: People on drug treatment orders who are at risk of homelessness, referred through the designated Drug Court in Dandenong. • <i>Youth Justice Housing Pathways</i>: Young people aged 17+ who are exiting youth justice facilities and who are at risk of homelessness. • <i>ForensiCare Housing Pathways</i>: Assists people who are at high risk of homelessness. Targets residents of Thomas Embling Hospital and the Acute Assessment Unit at Melbourne Assessment Prison. <p><i>Mental Health Housing Pathways</i>: Provides pathways out of homelessness for people with a serious mental illness and complex needs through provision of transitional housing and specialist support packages.</p> <p><i>Alcohol and Drug Supported Accommodation</i>: Provides residential drug rehabilitation to assist people who have undergone a drug withdrawal program or who need assistance in controlling their drug use to achieve and sustain addiction-free living.</p> <p><i>Young People Leaving Care</i>: Provision of or linkages to stable accommodation and appropriate support to facilitate social participation for young people leaving care.</p> <p><i>Refugee Minors Housing Pathways</i>: transitional housing and support to refugee minors who are at risk of homelessness and leaving Australian Government-funded on-arrival facilities.</p> <p><i>Multiple and Complex Needs</i>: Supports those with complex needs who challenge existing service systems and who are often unable to sustain appropriate accommodation, or require a level of support not available within the broader homelessness service system.</p> |
| <p>Western Australia</p> <p><i>Community Transitional Accommodation and Support Services (TASS)</i></p> | <p>The Community Transitional Accommodation and Support Services (TASS) program provides (six-month) transitional accommodation through the WA Department of Housing (33 accommodation units) and support to ex-prisoners leaving jail with identified high needs and a high risk of returning to custody due to a lack of suitable accommodation. Support is provided to clients one month before leaving prison and six months after leaving prison by non-Government community support agencies in various locations around WA. Support covers</p> |

| Program | *Description |
|---|---|
| <i>Community Re-entry Coordination Service</i> | <p>tenancy management issues, compliance with community release orders, education and vocational training courses, employment placements; development of social and community support networks; increasing social networks; increasing support networks with respect to identified needs; and acquiring permanent accommodation by the end of the transitional period.</p> <p>Support is provided to offenders for up to three months before leaving prison and six months after. The program provides links to accommodation options; improves links to education, training and employment; develops partnerships with services in the community to support prisoners and their families to link them with community organisations.</p> |
| <i>Aboriginal Housing Management Services : In-House Practical Support Program (IHPSP)</i> | <p>The objective of the In-House Practical Support Program (IHPSP) is to improve the sustainability and longevity of Indigenous housing in remote, regional and urban areas by developing the home living skills of Aboriginal people participating in the program.</p> <p>The IHPSP identifies and builds on the existing skills and knowledge in the community to deliver the program. Participants have the opportunity to develop and improve their home living skills, including clean and healthy living practices, family budgeting and knowledge of tenancy obligations, to manage and maintain a healthy home. The IHPSP connects with other programs and services to deliver a joined up approach in addressing environmental health, community development and social issues.</p> |
| <i>Private Rental Access Scheme (PRAS)</i> | <p>The primary aim of the Private Rental Access Scheme (PRAS) is to improve Indigenous people's access to the private rental market within the metropolitan area. The goal is to provide a stepping-stone that enables participants to present themselves as responsible tenants with a vast range of capacities, practical skills, essential knowledge, and necessary references.</p> |
| <i>Private Rental Aboriginal Assistance Loan (PRAAL)</i> | <p>The objective of the Private Rental Aboriginal Assistance Loan (PRAAL) is to assist Indigenous people in private rental accommodation who are at risk of losing their tenancy and likely to become homeless, by providing a loan for their rental arrears. As part of the scheme, financial counselling is compulsory for the applicant/s accessing the PRAAL.</p> |
| <i>Aboriginal Tenants Support Service (ATSS) and Indigenous Tenancy Advocacy Service (ITAS)</i> | <p>The Aboriginal Tenants Support Service (ATSS) provides support and information to Aboriginal tenants or prospective tenants in regional areas of Western Australia to assist them to understand their tenant rights and responsibilities and thereby obtain housing and maintain their tenancy. The objectives of the ATSS program include assisting tenants, especially new tenants with little experience in renting housing, or tenants with a history of poor tenancy, to understand their rights and meet their responsibilities, and advising and assisting tenants to resolve issues in order to maintain their tenancy.</p> <p>Indigenous Tenancy Advocacy Service (ITAS) provides advice and education to tenants and casework services to tenants who need additional assistance in managing issues surrounding their tenancy.</p> |
| <i>Independent Living Program (ILP)</i> | <p>The Independent Living Program (ILP) is a joint initiative between the Western Australian Department of Housing and the Department of Health for the provision of housing and support to those with severe and persistent mental illness to live independently in the community. . The Department of Health provides funding to non-government organisations to undertake a supportive landlord role and provide disability support to ILP consumers while the Public Mental Health Service provides clinical services to support the ILP tenant.</p> |

*Description: Jurisdiction responsible for funding and administering the program; history of the program; aims and objectives of the program; target group; geographical coverage; rental sector/s covered; and whether the program is an Indigenous-specific or a mainstream tenant support program.

Figure A1: Tenancy support and related homelessness early intervention programs in NSW

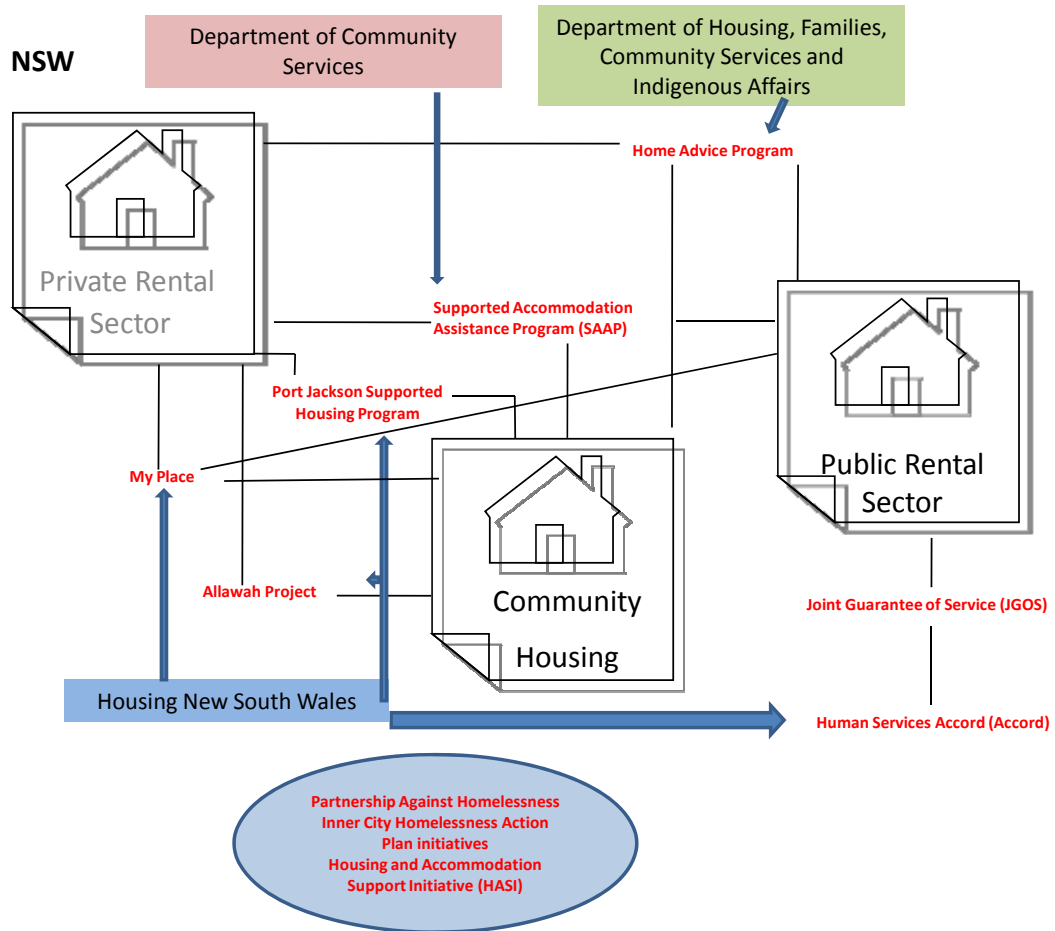


Figure A2: Tenancy support and related homelessness early intervention programs in Victoria

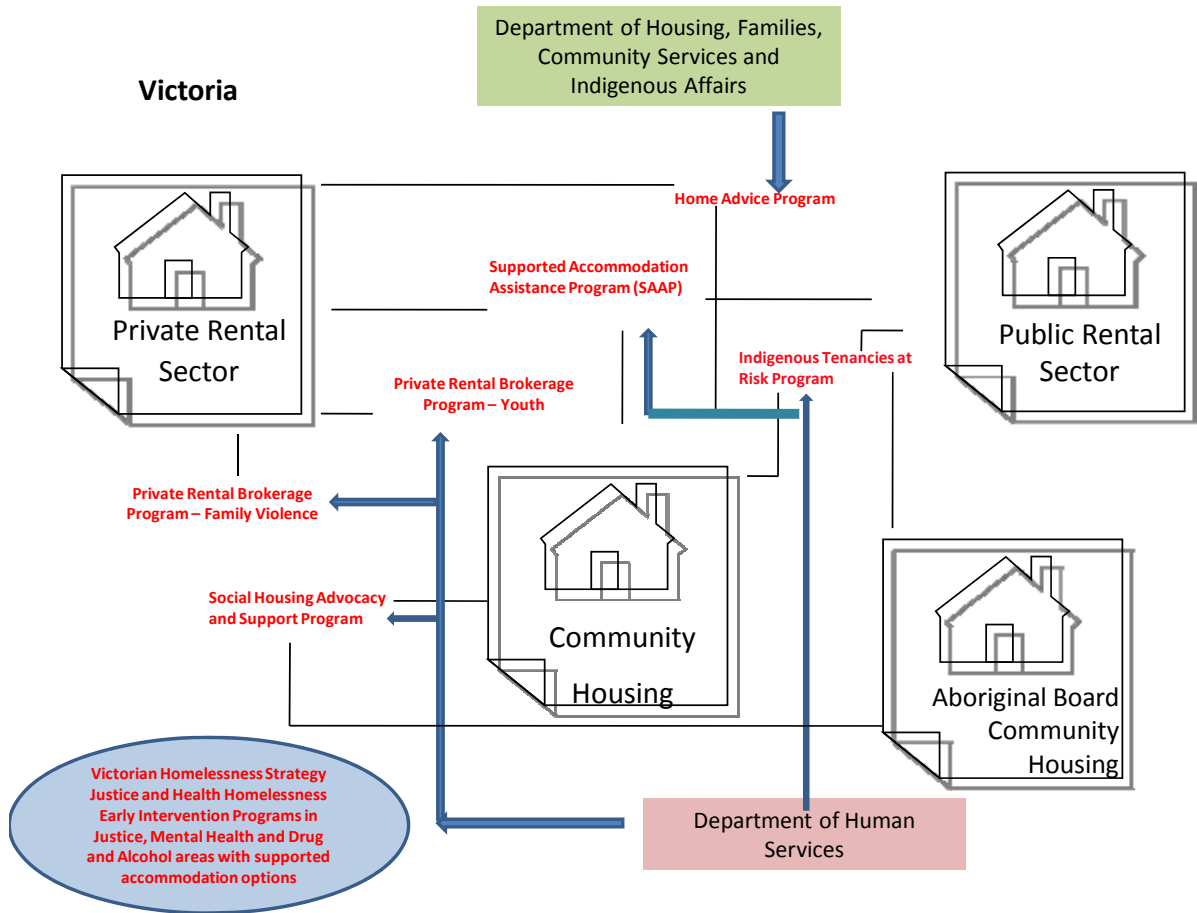
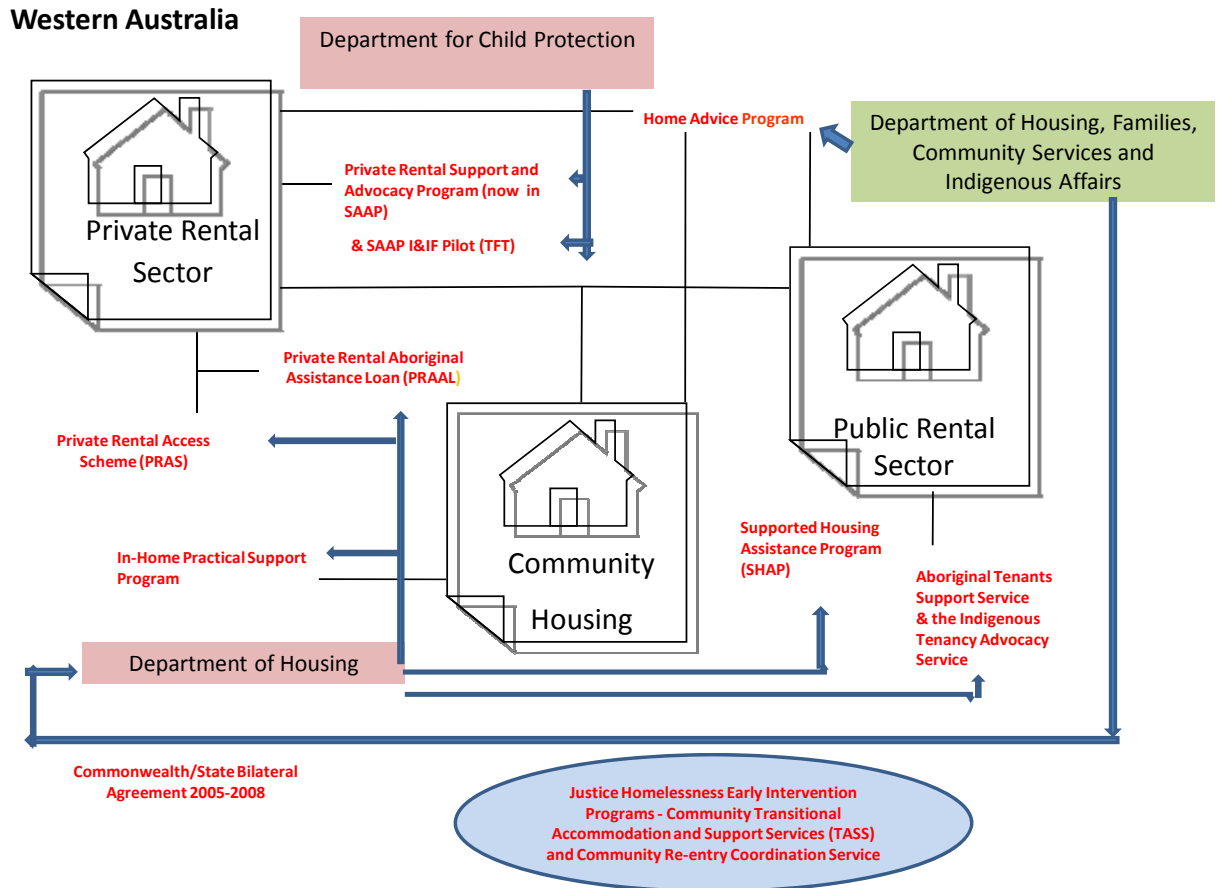


Figure A3: Tenancy support and related homelessness early intervention programs in Western Australia



APPENDIX B: THE AUSTRALIAN TENANT SUPPORT PROGRAM SURVEY

Australian Tenant Support Program Survey

[Name of Program]

Survey signed off by:

Name:

Position:

Department/Agency:

Signature:

Date:

Please return completed surveys to:

Paul Flatau

MBS

Murdoch University

Murdoch WA 6150

A. GOVERNANCE & AIMS OF THE PROGRAM

1. **Program name:** _____

2. **Year program commenced:** _____

3. **Jurisdictional coverage of the program:**

Note: State whether the program is a State/Territory Government program, a joint State/Territory bilateral program, joint State/Territory multi-lateral program, or an Australian Government national program. Indicate which jurisdictions fund the program and which jurisdictions administer the program. List all jurisdictions (States/Territories) in which tenant support services are provided under the program.

4. **Department(s)/agency (ies) responsible for administering the program:**

Note: If the Program is jointly administered by a number of Departments/Agencies, list all relevant Departments/Agencies administering the program.

5. **Rental sector in which the program applies: (e.g. public rental housing, private rental housing, all rental sectors):**

Note: More than one rental sector may be relevant. Tenancy sectors include: public rental housing, State/Territory owned and managed Indigenous rental housing, private rental housing, Crisis and transitional housing including SAAP services long-term community rental housing or Indigenous-specific community rental housing. If the program is administered across different rental sectors, provide a split of clients across rental sectors for 2006-07 and 2007-08.

6. **Aims and objectives of the program:**

B. FUNDING AND PROVISION OF SERVICES AND SCOPE OF THE PROGRAM

7. **Total level of funding provided to the program for the last two financial years**

2006-07: _____

2007-08: _____

8. **Who provides tenant support services to clients?**

a. **Type of organisation:** _____

Note: Indicate whether support services are provided by non-government not-for-profit organisations, by private businesses, by the government agencies administering the program (or other government agencies) or some combination of organisational types

b. **List organisations that provide tenant support services (e.g. Centrecare, Anglicare):**

9. **Is the program an Indigenous-specific program (i.e. established to provide services to Indigenous clients only)?**

(Yes/No) _____

Comment: _____

10. **Is the program operating in discrete Indigenous communities or settlements?**

(Yes/No) _____

14. Reasons for referral of clients to the program (Client presenting reasons)

Complete this section if the program's referral data allows for the identification of all possible reasons for a referral—i.e. clients may be referred for a number of reasons to the program and each of the reasons are identified. If only the main reason for a referral is identified complete Q15.

Questions 14 and 15 should be completed if the referral information system includes both main and all reasons for referral to the program.

| | 2006-07 | | 2007-08 | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Indigenous referrals (No.) | Non-Indigenous referrals (No.) | Indigenous referrals (No.) | Non-Indigenous referrals (No.) |
| Referral reason 1 | | | | |
| Referral reason 2..... | | | | |
| Referral reason 3..... | | | | |
| Etc..... | | | | |
| Reason for referral not known | | | | |

If comprehensive reason for referral data are unavailable, list the main referral reasons below (from highest to lowest):

Make use of the following categories where possible:

1. Rental arrears
2. Property standards
3. Tenant liabilities (other than rental arrears)
4. Debts and/or outstanding fines to utilities, financial institutions etc.
5. Property standards
6. Damage to property
7. Anti-social behaviour
8. History of housing tenancy management problems
9. Client on a tenant database that precludes entry to a new tenancy
10. Housing Termination Notice currently in force
11. Court Orders in relation to eviction
12. Evicted from immediate past accommodation
13. Homelessness
14. Experiences of family and domestic violence
15. Relationship breakdown having a significant effect on the tenancy
16. Incarceration of one or more of those in the household
17. Hospitalisation/rehabilitation
18. Loss of employment
19. Mental health supports
20. Physical health supports
21. Sale of rental property
22. Child management
23. Overcrowding and inadequate allocation of housing to the needs of the household
24. Indigenous cultural supports

15. Main referral reason of clients to the program

Complete this section if the program's referral data allows for the identification of the main reason for a referral. Both Questions 14 and 15 should be completed if the referral information system includes both main and all reasons for referral to the program.

| | 2006-07 | | 2007-08 | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Indigenous referrals (No.) | Non-Indigenous referrals (No.) | Indigenous referrals (No.) | Non-Indigenous referrals (No.) |
| Referral reason 1..... | | | | |
| Referral reason 2..... | | | | |
| Referral reason 3..... | | | | |
| Etc..... | | | | |
| Reason for referral not known | | | | |

Make use of the following categories where possible:

1. Rental arrears
2. Property standards
3. Tenant liabilities (other than rental arrears)
4. Debts and/or outstanding fines to utilities, financial institutions etc.
5. Property standards
6. Damage to property
7. Anti-social behaviour
8. History of housing tenancy management problems
9. Client on a tenant database that precludes entry to a new tenancy
10. Housing Termination Notice currently in force
11. Court Orders in relation to eviction
12. Evicted from immediate past accommodation
13. Homelessness
14. Experiences of family and domestic violence
15. Relationship breakdown having a significant effect on the tenancy
16. Incarceration of one or more of those in the household
17. Hospitalisation/rehabilitation
18. Loss of employment
19. Mental health supports
20. Physical health supports
21. Sale of rental property
22. Child management
23. Overcrowding and inadequate allocation of housing to the needs of the household
24. Indigenous cultural supports

16. Sources of referral

Indicate whether referrals to the program can be made only by the funder/administrator of the program or by a variety of sources including by tenants themselves, landlords, community agencies etc. What are the key sources of referrals? Provide a breakdown of source of referral by Indigenous status where available for 2006-07 and 2007-08.

| | 2006-07 | | 2007-08 | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Indigenous referrals (No.) | Non-Indigenous referrals (No.) | Indigenous referrals (No.) | Non-Indigenous referrals (No.) |
| Source of referral 1..... | | | | |
| Source of referral 2..... | | | | |
| Source of referral 3..... | | | | |
| Etc..... | | | | |
| Source of referral not known | | | | |

If comprehensive source of referral data are unavailable, list the likely main sources of referral (from highest to lowest):

17. Is client participation in the program voluntary or mandatory (if the tenancy is to be maintained)? (Yes/No)

D1 CLIENTS AND SERVICES

In the following tables, use the definitions and counting rules listed below where possible. If the data collection system for the tenant support program uses different definitions and counting rules then supply information on the basis that is most consistent with the listed definitions and counting rules and set out the definitions and counting rules used.

(1) Clients are counted on a household or tenancy agreement basis. Individual members of a household are not counted as separate clients for the purposes of determining the number of clients.

(2) A client may be referred to a tenancy support program and receive support more than once in a given year. Each separate time in a given year a particular client is referred to a program and receives support services they enter a new support period. A client household may therefore have more than one support period a year. However, the client is only counted once in the relevant client-based data.

(3) A support period that begins prior to the relevant financial year for which data is sought is counted as a support period in that financial year and the previous year. In other words, a household receiving support services in a given financial year is counted

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 25-54 | | | | | | |
| 55 and over | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | |
| 2007-08 | | | | | | |
| Under 18 | | | | | | |
| 18-19 | | | | | | |
| 20-24 | | | | | | |
| 25-54 | | | | | | |
| 55 and over | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | |

Note: For the purposes of the above table, exclude accompanying children in client households but include young persons under 18 if they are the target person(s) for support and include any adult member of a household receiving support.

| Year | Number of accompanying Indigenous children | Number of accompanying Non-Indigenous children |
|-------------|---|---|
| 2006-07 | | |
| 2007-08 | | |

Note: For the purposes of the above table, accompanying children in client households refer to any children (persons under the age of 18) who reside in the household receiving support services.

20. **Number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients by household type**

| Household type | Number of Indigenous clients | Number of Non-Indigenous clients |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2006-07 | | |
| Single adult only | | |
| Single adult (groups) | | |
| Couple with no children | | |
| Couple with children | | |
| Sole Parent | | |
| Total | | |
| 2007-08 | | |
| Single adult only | | |
| Single adult (groups) | | |
| Couple with no children | | |
| Couple with children | | |
| Sole Parent | | |
| Total | | |

21. **Number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients by location**

| Location | Number of Indigenous clients | Number of Non-Indigenous clients |
|-------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2006-07 | | |
| Capital city(ies) | | |
| Inner Regional | | |
| Outer Regional | | |
| Remote | | |
| Very Remote | | |
| Total | | |
| 2007-08 | | |
| Capital city(ies) | | |
| Inner Regional | | |
| Outer Regional | | |
| Remote | | |
| Very Remote | | |
| Total | | |

22. **Provide information, where available, on the major needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons receiving support in the program (e.g. mental and/or physical health conditions, disability status, alcohol and/or drug abuse problems, domestic/family violence problems). Provide tables of findings where available.**

24. Services provided to clients

| | 2006-07 | | 2007-08 | |
|---------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | Number of Indigenous clients receiving support services of a particular type | Number of non-Indigenous clients receiving support services of a particular type | Number of Indigenous clients receiving support services of a particular type | Number of non-Indigenous clients receiving support services of a particular type |
| Service type 1..... | | | | |
| Service type 2..... | | | | |
| Service type 3..... | | | | |
| Etc..... | | | | |

Note: An individual client can receive any number of support services.

Make use of the following categories where possible:

1. Visits to tenants
2. Assistance to resolve issues and problems identified by the landlord or real estate agent
3. Assistance to resolve disputes with the landlord or real estate agent
4. Financial assistance/material aid
5. Financial counselling and support
6. Assistance to obtain/maintain Centrelink/government allowance
7. Employment and training assistance
8. Domestic/family violence support
9. Family/relationship support including child management
10. Living skills/home skills/personal development
11. Assistance with legal issues/court support
12. Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client
13. Liaison with schools with respect to children
14. Liaison with child care agencies/workers with respect to children
15. Services provided to children
16. Liaison with family reunification
17. Drug/alcohol support/rehabilitation/intervention
18. Health/medical services
19. Mental health assessments
20. Mental health support services
21. Drug/alcohol support services
22. Education and TAFE services
23. Yard mowing/rubbish collection
24. Organization of restraining orders

- 25. Transport referrals to other agencies
- 26. Indigenous cultural supports

D2 CLIENT EXITS AND OUTCOMES

25. Exit from the program

For all completed support periods list the number of clients exiting the program in each exit category. Only one type of exit should be listed for each support period.

| | 2006-07 | | 2007-08 | |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| | Indigenous clients | Non-Indigenous clients | Indigenous clients | Non-Indigenous clients |
| Exit reason 1..... | | | | |
| Exit reason 2..... | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Make use of the following categories where possible:

- 1. Tenancy sustained
- 2. Client exited the support period
- 3. Service provider discontinued support
- 4. Client eviction/vacant possession
- 5. Client moved to a new tenancy

26. Client outcomes from the program

For all completed support periods identify the key outcomes of the program. Where particular client outcome indicators are utilised provide a breakdown of outcomes by Indigenous status.

| | 2006-07 | | 2007-08 | |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| | Indigenous clients | Non-Indigenous clients | Indigenous clients | Non-Indigenous clients |
| Client outcome 1..... | | | | |
| Client outcome 2 | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Where possible provide information on a broad range of outcome indicators.

Examples follow:

1. Mean dollar reduction in rent arrears during support periods
2. Mean dollar reduction in tenant liabilities during support periods
3. Mean dollar reduction in non-tenant liabilities during the support periods
4. Mean dollar reduction in debts to utilities during the support period
5. Mean reduction in anti-social behaviour notifications during the support period
6. Mean dollar improved income level during the support period
7. Reduction in offences, charges, appearances before court, sentences during the support period
8. Improved mental health outcomes
9. Improved labour market outcomes
10. Improved quality of life
11. Increased social participation

AHURI Research Centres

Queensland Research Centre
RMIT Research Centre
Southern Research Centre
Swinburne-Monash Research Centre
Sydney Research Centre
UNSW-UWS Research Centre
Western Australia Research Centre



Australian Housing
and Urban Research Institute

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
Level 1, 114 Flinders Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000
Phone +61 3 9660 2300 Fax +61 3 9663 5488
Email information@ahuri.edu.au Web www.ahuri.edu.au