

Unmet Need Amongst People Experiencing Homelessness in the Loddon Mallee Region

A Preliminary Study

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ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CAP	Crisis Accommodation Properties
CCP	Community Connections Program
CHARMS	Community Housing Agency Reporting and Management Service
CLDC	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities
DHS	Department of Human Services
EASE	Emergency Accommodation and Support Enterprise
ER	Emergency Relief
HEF	Housing Establishment Fund
HIR	Housing Information and Referral
LGA	Local Government Area
LOMA CRS	Loddon Mallee Client Referral System
NDCA	National Data Collection Agency
OoH	Office of Housing
RHSP	Rental Housing Support Program
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
THM	Transitional Housing Management

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Crisis Accommodation

Most crisis accommodation that is offered to homeless people in the Region consists of caravans, motels and hotels. It is purchased with HEF. Of the limited number of crisis specific accommodation properties that are available, only some are used for crisis purposes. This is due to lack of exits resulting from bottlenecks in transitional housing and a shortage of affordable long-term housing.

There was a widespread view that the current crisis accommodation options available were an inadequate response to the needs of homeless people due to problems of availability, suitability, location and affordability.

Recommendation 1

That the level of unmet need and the inadequate nature of current 'ad hoc' crisis accommodation justify a significant increase in crisis specific accommodation. Features of such accommodation should include:

- **immediate access;**
- **quick turn around;**
- **no rent for crisis period;**
- **supply of necessary household items for a crisis stay; and**
- **adequate resourcing of the managing agency.**

SAAP workers generally supported examining the possibility of transitional housing fulfilling a dual role of crisis and medium term accommodation, especially in the Region's smaller centres. There was also support for crisis-specific accommodation, especially in the larger centres.

Recommendation 2

That all possible means of increasing the supply of crisis accommodation be explored, including:

- **the use of transitional housing for both crisis and transitional functions; and**
- **the acquisition of new crisis accommodation properties.**

According to the available data sources, Bendigo, Mildura and Echuca had the highest numbers of homeless people seeking crisis accommodation. Consultations revealed that Robinvale had an extreme shortage of all types of housing.

Recommendation 3

That the areas of Bendigo, Mildura, Echuca and Robinvale should be given priority in the allocation of new crisis accommodation resources due to their high level of unmet demand.

The diverse nature of the Region and the needs of various target groups requires a range of crisis accommodation and management models. Various issues were identified, including the need for live-in adult support for youth, self-contained units for families and single people and accommodation that responded to the particular situation of Koori people and to people with a psychiatric disability.

Recommendation 4

That multiple models of crisis accommodation as well as different management structures need to be developed that acknowledge:

- **the work that has already been done in the Region by housing and other agencies as well as in the broader community;**
- **the needs of all target groups;**
- **the economic and social diversity within the Region; and**
- **the need for equitable consultation between housing support agencies and housing providers.**

Many SAAP and THM workers identified the shortage of after-hours services for homeless people as a significant problem. At present, there are only 2 after-hours crisis accommodation services. The difficulties of establishing and operating these services in small centres was acknowledged.

Recommendation 5

That more after-hours services for homeless people requiring crisis accommodation be established across the Region. Innovative models need to be developed to meet the needs of small population centres which are currently without after-hours services of any kind.

Target groups

While there was general support for increased access to better quality crisis accommodation for all homeless people, five target groups were identified as having the most urgent need.

Recommendation 6

That while all target groups need greater access to better crisis accommodation, the numbers and/or degree of severity of problems with current crisis options justify priority in the allocation of new resources to:

- youth,
- single women with children, including women escaping from domestic violence,
- single people,
- Kooris, and
- people with a psychiatric disability.

Housing Establishment Fund

The current level of HEF allocated to the Region was identified by most SAAP workers and some THM workers as insufficient to meet the needs of the increasing number of homeless people in the Region. Most SAAP agencies that accessed HEF through HIR found this system cumbersome, invasive and time consuming. SAAP agencies with their own allocation of HEF found the guidelines for its expenditure too restrictive.

Recommendation 7

That the increase in the numbers of homeless people should be reflected in an increased Regional allocation of HEF to meet their crisis accommodation needs.

Recommendation 8

That the following changes be made in the way HEF is managed and distributed:

- Each SAAP agency should receive and manage its own allocation of HEF;
- Rigid formulas for the expending of HEF should be set aside to allow greater discretion and flexibility for agencies; and
- Paperwork associated with using HEF should be streamlined to allow better use of agency worker time and information required from clients should be restricted in line with privacy considerations.

In some remote areas in the Region housing agencies are virtually non-existent. Progress has been made, but needs to be extended, to fund crisis accommodation in these areas.

Recommendation 9

That in isolated areas where access to housing agencies is difficult or impossible, systems need to be further developed to enable a more widespread distribution of HEF through other services.

Housing and homelessness

The shortage of transitional housing and long-term affordable housing in the public and private sectors was identified as the major factor causing housing crisis in the Region. The current level of rent assistance for people on Centrelink benefits and issues in the private rental system were also seen as important in explaining levels of homelessness.

Recommendation 10

That to tackle the causes of homelessness and the bottlenecks in crisis and transitional housing, local, state and federal policy should be directed towards:

- **the provision of more transitional housing,**
- **the provision of more accessible and affordable long term housing;**
- **the setting of rent assistance at a realistic level to enable greater access to the private rental market for low income people, especially single people, and to reduce the number of evictions; and**
- **developing standards and guidelines for private rental accommodation with the Real Estate Industry to enable rent assistance for the private rental market to be more effective and sustainable.**

The service system

SAAP and THM services are under increasing pressure to meet the crisis accommodation needs of more homeless people with the same level of resources.

Recommendation 11

That the service system requires increased resources to provide quality housing and support services to the increasing number of homeless people in this Region.

There was a widespread opinion expressed that there were more people, particularly young people, with complex needs using housing and housing support agencies. Many of these people had to go from service to service to seek help.

Recommendation 12

That the current service system requires greater integration to meet the needs of people presenting to housing services with complex and/or multiple needs.

Data collection

In this project there were problems stemming from the lack of consistency between various data sources and the use of different definitions of homelessness. It also became clear that there was considerable undercounting of homeless people due to workers sometimes neglecting to complete relevant data entries. Concern was expressed about the amount of time spent by workers on data entries that only led to a partial picture of the housing crisis situation.

Recommendation 13

That the lack of comparability of data from SAAP, THM, ABS and Centrelink be addressed to enable greater accuracy in future research projects about levels of homelessness and unmet demand for crisis accommodation in this Region.

Recommendation 14

That housing service workers need to be provided with time and training to enable greater compliance with data collection requirements.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The key purpose of this project is to document the level of need for crisis accommodation amongst people experiencing homelessness in the Loddon Mallee Region. It has been undertaken in the context of the development of the current Victorian Homeless Strategy and as such is intended to assist in regional and local planning activities for the development of responses to this initiative.

The project will seek to have an impact on policy regarding crisis accommodation for homeless people through recommendations regarding redirection of existing resources, the allocation of new resources and the focus on particular target groups.

1.2 REGIONAL OVERVIEW¹

The Loddon Mallee Region has the largest geographical area of any of the DHS regions and covers approximately one quarter of Victoria.

The Region has five significant areas:

- Mildura is the hub of the Sunraysia district which extends into New South Wales and South Australia. It is the main centre for service provision in this district. It serves as the major town for the north-west of the Region.
- Bendigo is the largest city in the Region. The surrounding small country towns such as Dunolly, Wedderburn and Maldon, which were founded on the discovery of gold, are experiencing harsh economic decline. Bendigo is maintaining modest growth and is the centre of regional provision of tertiary education and health services.
- Swan Hill and Echuca are significant Murray River communities with high tourist profiles. They also service their rural hinterlands and small hamlets nearby.
- The southern end of the Region is an area that is rapidly increasing in population with towns such as Romsey, Woodend, Lancefield, Gisborne and Macedon becoming dormitory suburbs of Melbourne.
- There is also a large proportion of the Region which is sparsely populated. The declining populations of the Shires of Buloke, Gannawarra and Loddon are mainly engaged in dry-land farming.

1.2.1 Economic base

While the State and Commonwealth governments are key employers in the major centres like Mildura and Bendigo, the Region has significant economic diversity. In the north-west there is wheat, beef and sheep, grapes, fruit and vegetable growing while in the central area light industry is important. Tourism contributes significantly to both economies. In the southern part of the Region, grazing is still significant, but some holdings are no longer economically viable and hence are being broken up into smaller acreages and hobby farms.

1.2.2 Changes in rural areas

- A number of recent developments has led to significant changes in the Region's rural economy and infrastructure.
- The redevelopment and re-positioning of many government organisations, such as schools and hospitals to reflect demographic changes and best practice principles.
- Changes to the way that public and private sector services are provided in many country towns, such as banking services.
- Changes in the agricultural sector, such as the increasing emphasis on developing and supplying export markets, a renewed focus on ecologically and economically sustainable farming practices, and the increasing diversity of agricultural operations.
- The restructuring of the human services system to provide greater opportunities for professional health and welfare workers and better support for general practitioners and dentists.

¹ This Regional overview is drawn from the following sources: Loddon Mallee Regional Women's Health Report (1998) Bendigo, DHS; Heather Holst (1999) The Housing Needs of Low Income Single People in the Loddon Mallee Region. Bendigo, Tenancy Support and Consultancy Services; A Socio-Economic Profile of the Loddon Mallee Region Interim Report (1999) Bendigo, DHS; and ABS (DHS, Information Management Group).

Although these factors have had an impact right across the Region, they have had a more significant effect on the economies and infrastructure of small towns.

1.2.3 Major transport links

Road transport provides the major links between towns in this Region. A highway links Melbourne, Bendigo and Mildura. Most residents require a car to have access to services outside their town. Country rail services have been replaced by buses on uneconomic routes such as the Melbourne to Mildura service. Bus services operate infrequently between country towns.

1.2.4 Population growth and spread

The estimated population of the Loddon Mallee Region was 286,034 in 2000. The Region has approximately 6 per cent of the State's population living within its boundaries. This represents 22 per cent of the total non-metropolitan population.

**Table 1.2.1 Estimated population, 2000
in Loddon Mallee Region**

LGA	2000
Buloke	7,716
Campaspe	35,676
Central Goldfields	13,041
Gannawarra	12,447
Greater Bendigo	86,747
Loddon	9,090
Macedon Ranges	35,445
Mildura	47,687
Mount Alexander	17,075
Swan Hill	21,110
Regional total	286,034
Metropolitan total	3,424,163
Non-metro total	1,312,773
Victorian total	4,904,762

Source: ABS 1996 (DHS, Information Management Group)

The population is not evenly spread across the Region. The southern portion has the largest concentration of people. The main population centres are Bendigo, Echuca, Maryborough, Kyabram, Castlemaine and Kyneton, the last serving the rapidly expanding commuter districts around Romsey, Gisborne, Woodend, Macedon and Lancefield. The northern sector of the Region is sparsely populated. The cities of Mildura and Swan Hill are the only major population centres. The largest of the other towns in this sector are Robinvale, Kerang, Ouyen and Wycheproof. Along the Murray River, the population concentrates in pockets that have grown due to tourism and irrigated farming.

**Table 1.2.2 Changes in estimated population and projections
1996-2000 and 2000-2004, in Loddon Mallee Region**

LGA	1996-2000	2000-2004
Buloke	-2.8%	-4.3%
Campaspe	2.8%	1.8%
Central Goldfields	1.0%	0.9%
Gannawarra	-0.9%	-1.5%
Greater Bendigo	2.7%	2.0%
Loddon	-0.1%	-1.6%
Macedon Ranges	4.0%	3.0%
Mildura	4.1%	3.8%
Mount Alexander	2.1%	1.3%
Swan Hill	1.2%	0.6%
Regional total	2.4%	1.8%
Metropolitan total	4.3%	3.6%
Non-metro total	2.9%	1.7%
Victorian total	7.6%	2.8%

Source: ABS 1996 (DHS, Information Management Group)

The Region's population growth rate is comparable to other rural regions, and is predicted to continue. Growth is particularly evident in the areas surrounding Bendigo and those to the south which are within commuting distance to Melbourne. The LGAs of Macedon Ranges, Mildura, Campaspe and Greater Bendigo are experiencing steady growth while other LGAs such as Buloke, Gannawarra and Loddon are undergoing a gradual decline in population.

1.2.5 Population groups

The Loddon Mallee Region has a significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) population of 3045 people (ABS, 1996). The ATSI population figures vary widely across the Region. The largest communities are concentrated along the Murray River. The LGAs of Campaspe, Mildura and Swan Hill are collectively home to over 65 per cent of ATSI people in the Region.

The Region also has a small but diverse range of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CLDC). While many CLDC people have lived here for many years, there are a growing number of people newly arrived from Tonga and Turkey, particularly in the north of the Region.

1.3 INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

1.3.1 Income

The following table gives the income spread for all types of households in the ten local government areas of the Loddon Mallee Region.

**Table 1.3.1 Median weekly income by LGA,
1996, in Loddon Mallee Region**

LGA	Median income
Buloke	\$300-\$499
Campaspe	\$500-\$699
Central Goldfields	\$300-\$499
Gannawarra	\$300-\$499
Greater Bendigo	\$500-\$699
Loddon	\$300-\$499
Macedon Ranges	\$700-\$999
Mildura	\$300-\$499
Mount Alexander	\$300-\$499
Swan Hill	\$300-\$499
Victoria	\$500-\$699

Source: ABS, 1996 (DHS, Information Management Group)

Apart from Campaspe, Greater Bendigo and Macedon Ranges, all the Region's LGAs have a lower median income compared to the median income for the whole of Victoria. These figures indicate a reasonably common pattern of median income across the ten LGAs with the notable exception of Macedon Ranges, which is higher.

1.3.2 Unemployment

One of the main factors affecting income levels in the Region is the amount and type of employment available to people in any area. The following table gives the unemployment figures and rates for 1999 and 2000 for each LGA in the Region.

Table 1.3.2 Unemployment, 2000 and 1999, in Loddon Mallee Region

March 2000	Number of unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Buloke	168	4.3%
Campaspe	1168	6.6%
Central Goldfields	776	14.5%
Gannawarra	259	4.2%
Greater Bendigo	4127	10.2%
Loddon	306	7.3%
Macedon Ranges	929	5.4%
Mildura	2059	8.9%
Mt Alexander	859	11.9%
Swan Hill	697	6.9%
Region	11,348	8.4%
Metropolitan Regions	122,363	6.9%
Non-metro Regions	43,428	8.0%
Victorian total	165,791	7.2%

March 1999	Number of unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Buloke	148	4.0%
Campaspe	986	6.1%
Central Goldfields	667	13.4%
Gannawarra	278	4.9%
Greater Bendigo	4142	10.9%
Loddon	310	7.9%
Macedon Ranges	848	5.3%
Mildura	1843	8.5%
Mt Alexander	774	11.5%
Swan Hill	631	6.7%
Region	10,627	8.4%
Metropolitan Regions	134734	7.7%
Non-metro Regions	43338	8.3%
Victorian total	178,072	7.8%

Source: DEETYA Small Area Labour Markets - Australia - March Quarter 2000

The Region had a similar unemployment rate to other non-metro Regions and a slightly higher rate than for the whole of Victoria in 1999 and 2000. The Victorian rate decreased between 1999 and 2000 (7.8% - 7.2%) whereas the rate for the Loddon Mallee Region remained the same (8.4%).

There are a number of LGAs within the Region which had higher than 10% unemployment levels. In 2000 these were:

- Central Goldfields: 14.5%
- Greater Bendigo: 10.2%
- Mount Alexander: 11.9%

1.4 CURRENT HOUSING SERVICE SYSTEM

Two major programs within the Department of Human Services, jointly funded by Commonwealth and State governments, provide the majority of assistance to homeless people in the Loddon Mallee Region:

- Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP)
- Transitional Housing Management (THM) Program

SAAP and THM are designed to be largely complementary services. The SAAP services provide case management and housing information referral to people with housing crisis, manage a limited number of crisis accommodation facilities and provide access to Housing Emergency Funds (HEF). THMs manage transitional housing accommodation as well as offering a range of housing assistance including housing information, assistance and referral and access to HEF.

THM and SAAP providers play a significant role in assisting people to access public housing, in particular through Segment 3 (Special Housing Needs) and Segment 1 (Recurring Homelessness) of the Public Housing Segmented Wait List.

2 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 UNDERSTANDING OF HOMELESSNESS

The definition of homelessness proposed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) needs comment in the context of this report. This definition identifies three segments in the homeless population:

Primary Homelessness

People without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.

Secondary homelessness

People who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. It covers: people using emergency accommodation (such as hostels for the homeless or night shelters); teenagers staying in youth refuges; women and children escaping domestic violence (staying in women's refuges); people residing temporarily with other families (because they have no accommodation of their own); and those using boarding houses on an occasional or intermittent basis.

Tertiary homelessness

People who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis. Residents of private boarding houses do not have a separate bedroom and living room; they do not have kitchen and bathroom facilities of their own; their accommodation is not self-contained; and they do not have security of tenure provided by a lease.

There are some serious omissions in the secondary homeless segment that mean statistics using this definition only give a partial record of homelessness in this Region. In particular, caravans, motels and hotels are an extremely significant form of accommodation used by people who move frequently from one temporary shelter to another.

Since this project's key concern is **crisis/emergency housing** provision, the main focus is on the **primary** and **secondary** homelessness segments. People in tertiary homelessness segment, although technically homeless under the Chamberlain and MacKenzie definition, would not generally be seeking crisis/emergency accommodation. Consideration of the tertiary segment is therefore outside the boundaries of this project.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING OF CRISIS ACCOMMODATION

Crisis accommodation is understood as accommodation that is available to homeless people immediately upon becoming homeless. Short to medium term accommodation, such as transitional housing, is relevant to the report, but since it cannot be accessed immediately, it is not a central focus.

2.3 KEY FEATURES OF THE LODDON MALLEE REGION THAT IMPACT ON HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING SERVICES.

The following factors are important in understanding homelessness and housing and support services in this Region.

- The level of economic disadvantage in the Region and pockets of high unemployment increase the likelihood of homelessness.
- The immense size of the Region, the isolation of some areas and the lack of adequate transport creates barriers for homeless people accessing services.
- The tension for housing workers between service delivery on the one hand, and policy development, training, planning and networking on the other, is accentuated by the distance between housing organisations and levels of resourcing.
- Bottlenecks created by the severe shortage of affordable long term accommodation mean there are few housing options for people leaving crisis accommodation.
- Most agencies are cross-target which means they are required to meet a range of support needs and/or make referrals to specialist services.
- There are no youth refuges or large supported accommodation providers in the Region.

3 HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

3.1 SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SAAP)

SAAP is a Commonwealth-State Program providing services to people who are homeless, enabled by the Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994, under which Commonwealth/State five year agreements are established. The program has a national plan, a national steering body of Commonwealth and State officers, and an extensive national data collection and research program.

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994 uses the following definition of people that are homeless:

- people who are in crisis and at imminent risk of becoming homeless; and
- people who are experiencing domestic violence and are at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

SAAP services are targeted to:

- women and accompanying children;
- women and children experiencing family violence;
- independent young people above school leaving age;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- families;
- single men; and
- single women.

Housing/housing support provided by SAAP in the Region

There are 23 SAAP programs auspiced by 18 agencies in the Loddon Mallee Region. It is the service system with the greatest coverage of all the housing services. As with other rural regions, the majority of services are cross target. The specialist services that do exist are in the regional centres of Bendigo, Swan Hill, Echuca, Robinvale and Mildura. They focus on youth, Kooris, women escaping domestic violence, and people with a psychiatric disability. All areas in the Region are covered by one of the domestic violence services. Appendix 1 provides a list of SAAP services in the Region.

Crisis Accommodation Properties

There is a limited number of properties allocated for short term crisis accommodation across the Region. These particular properties are managed by SAAP. Prior to the formation of the THM in 1997, SAAP agencies managed a significant number of crisis properties across the Region. With the formation of THM, these properties were converted to transitional housing and managed by THM.

In Mildura there are 3 properties that are managed by Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach which are used for women escaping domestic violence. There is also 1 property managed by the Mallee Accommodation and Support Program which can be used for crisis by students.

In Bendigo there are 3 properties that are managed by EASE and used as crisis accommodation for women escaping domestic violence. Annie North Inc., also in Bendigo, manages a domestic violence refuge, which is used for short to medium-term accommodation for women escaping domestic violence who come from outside the LGA of Bendigo.

Across the Region, there are also a number of properties set aside for use by Aboriginal people seeking crisis accommodation. There is one property in Mildura and 2 properties each in Robinvale, Swan Hill and Echuca. All of these are managed by the Aboriginal Co-operatives in the respective towns.

Finally there are a number of agency-owned caravans in Kyneton and Echuca.

3.2 TRANSITIONAL HOUSING MANAGEMENT (THM) PROGRAM

The broad aims of the THM program are to:

- provide housing assistance to households in crisis as a result of homelessness or impending homelessness; and
- assist households in housing crisis to establish and/or maintain appropriate, secure and sustainable housing through the provision of transitional housing services.

The THM program was initiated in 1997 and now funds 15 agencies throughout Victoria, servicing various client groups requiring support including young people, people with disabilities, low income families and people with drug & alcohol problems.

There is one THM provider in the Loddon Mallee Region with workers located in Bendigo, Kyneton, Swan Hill and Mildura. The THM also provides outreach services to Echuca, Ouyen, Castlemaine, Maryborough, Robinvale and Kerang.

The 3 main services provided by THM are listed below.

Transitional Housing provides medium term accommodation in which residents enter into an occupancy agreement for a determined period and are subject to the provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). Properties are either owned or leased by the Director of Housing to THM agencies.

Housing Information and Referral (HIR) provides housing information and referral services and, where appropriate, housing advocacy to households in housing crisis.

Housing Establishment Fund (HEF) is designed to assist eligible clients with crisis accommodation or to move into and/or maintain themselves in longer term housing in the private sector

3.3 OTHER SERVICES THAT PROVIDE HOUSING/HOUSING SUPPORT

The provision of housing support and housing services is not limited to SAAP and THM. Other agencies play a role by providing housing information, funds for crisis accommodation and free emergency accommodation to homeless people. These services include

Rental Housing Support Program

Tenancy Support and Consultancy Services provides the Rental Housing Support Program (RHSP) in the Loddon Mallee Region. The core business of this service is to provide independent information, advice, advocacy and referral to existing and potential public housing tenants through the Public Tenants Advice and Referral Service. The service also provides community education and development activities and community facility management. The second main focus of Tenancy Support is the Housing Research and Policy Development Program. This is concerned with researching and promoting the issues and needs of low income households across the Region.

St Luke's Consumer and Tenancy Advisory Service

This service provides independent advice, information and advocacy for all housing tenants.

Other Youth Substance Abuse Services (YSA) and Future Connections

These 2 Bendigo-based organisations play a major housing role with homeless youth in Bendigo by providing support and funding for crisis accommodation

3.4 NEW GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

There are two important new government initiatives in this Region: **Reconnect** and the **Community Connections Program**.

Reconnect

The Reconnect program seeks to improve the level of engagement of homeless young people or those at risk of homelessness with family, work, education, training and the community. St Luke's, in partnership with Future Connections, provides an early intervention program that targets young people who are at risk of becoming disconnected from school and or family in 4 secondary schools. Two St Luke's workers are based part-time in schools. The program provides a range of services to young people including case management, counselling, outreach, life skills and mentoring programs, referral and advocacy.

Community Connections Program

The Community Connections Program (CCP) is joint venture between Loddon Mallee Housing Services Ltd, Cobaw Community Health Services and Mallee Family Care. The program is designed to improve the health and well being of people with complex needs who are homeless or at housing risk. As part of this program, outreach services will be placed in Mildura, Swan Hill, Bendigo and Kyneton.

CCP is designed to 'pick up' people who slip through the housing service net through 'assertive outreach'. Many of these people may be hesitant about contacting housing agencies due to privacy issues and feelings of stigmatisation associated with contacting what they view as welfare agencies. They are more prepared to contact workers in the health sector. Therefore CCP works with hospitals and other health agencies and professionals to make contact with these people.

To assist with this program a flexible care fund has been made available for such people and can be used in the event that mainstream/specialist service providers are unable to adequately meet client need.

4 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE, TARGET GROUP AND SERVICES PROVIDED TO TARGET GROUP

4.1 LIMITATIONS OF DATA SOURCES

There were serious limitations in the data sources required for this project which made it difficult to provide an accurate estimate of the number of homeless people with unmet need and to describe target groups in the Region.

The data provided is what we were been able to access within the timeframes of the project. It is often suggestive rather than conclusive. We recognise that there is a strong need to make data consistent across the housing sector in order to accurately quantify and analyse unmet need crisis accommodation.

A limitation that is common to all the agency data sets is that they only provide a partial record of homelessness. Many homeless people do not contact housing agencies.

Specific limitations of each data source are listed below. The list is not exhaustive.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

- As mentioned earlier, people living in caravans, hotels and motels were not assessed as homeless in ABS data. A significant proportion of residents of caravan parks in this Region use these for crisis accommodation. These people should be included in Chamberlain's secondary category of homelessness.
- It is known that there was an underestimation of people sleeping rough (primary homelessness) on Census night.

SAAP National Data Collection Agency

This is the national agency which collects and publishes data from all SAAP agencies. Since September 1995, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has managed this data set. Some of its limitations are listed below.

- NDCA uses limited time frames to quantify unmet demand. The accuracy of the extrapolations is open to question, especially in smaller rural and regional areas.
- Some of the tables are difficult to interpret.
- There is known to be undercounting due to housing workers not always making data entries.
- There is limited compatibility with other data sources.

SAAP Network on-line client referral system

Another data set that contributes to building a statistical profile of unmet need for crisis accommodation is the Loddon Mallee SAAP Network on-line client referral system. This system is used by all the Bendigo district housing and support agencies and is a mechanism for locating THM housing vacancies, making on-line applications for those vacancies, and registering a detailed demand for THM housing even when there is no vacancy. The statistics from this data set that are used here are the registrations of demand for transitional housing by people who were classified as 'absolutely homeless'.

This data set was particularly valuable because it was the only one that provided a breakdown by LGA and town. It also contained information on the target group that was not available elsewhere. It is referred to as 'LOMA CRS' (Loddon Mallee Client Referral System) in the following pages.

Limitations of this data are listed below.

- SAAP workers do not always make on-line registrations of demand as they are aware that there is no transitional housing vacant in their area. Totals do not accurately reflect the numbers of people using SAAP services.
- There is some double counting as people sometimes access the system more than once a year.
- The development of this data collection is unfunded.

Transitional Housing Management

When using THM data that is that is collected using the Community Housing Agency Reporting and Management Service (CHARMS) data system, a number of problems were encountered.

- There was overlap with SAAP data because requests by SAAP agencies for HEF to purchase crisis accommodation through HIR are included in the CHARMS data.

- The data included information on all people that access the HIR, not just those that require crisis accommodation.
- There was no breakdown of the data by LGA.
- It is known that data entries are not always made by workers.

The THM has recently completed a report which uses data that has been collected manually. This data is expected to be more accurate and accessible than data collected by CHARMS. As with other HIR derived data, it also overlaps with SAAP data. Unfortunately this report was not available for use in this project. However some information from this data set is presented below in Section 4.2.3. It is referred to as 'Manual data collection, THM'.

4.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN LODDON MALLEE REGION

When attempting to estimate the number of homeless people in the Region, the different definitions of homelessness employed, the different collection methods used, and under reporting by workers need to be taken into account. All the data sources yield different numbers.

It is also known that there are many homeless people who are just not recorded. Many do not access housing agencies either through lack of knowledge or an understanding that, in their area, there is no crisis accommodation.

The information that follows contains statistics on the number of homeless people from all of the different sources.

4.2.1 Australian Bureau of Statistics data

The Loddon Mallee Region data was broken down into the statistical divisions of Loddon and Mallee. Table 4.2.1 shows that on the 1996 Census night there were 1237 homeless people in the Region. This figure consisted of 462 in the Mallee (of which 250 were in Mildura) and 775 in the Loddon division (of which 470 were in Bendigo). The rate of homeless per 10,000 in these divisions was 54 in the Mallee and 52 in Loddon. These rates are both above the regional average of 47 per 10,000 and the whole of Victoria average of 41 per 10,000.

**Table 4.2.1 Number of homeless by statistical division, 1996
Loddon Mallee Region**

Division	Primary homelessness	Secondary homelessness including SAAP accommodation	Tertiary homelessness	Total homeless	Rate per 10,000
Mallee	88	321	53	462	54
Loddon	113	596	66	775	52
Total LMR	201	917	119	1237	52

Source: Adapted from Chamberlain, 2000, Appendix 2

4.2.2 National Data Collection Agency data

Table 4.3.3 gives SAAP client data for 1998/99. In interpreting this table, it should be noted that some clients have more than one support period. In 1997/98 (the latest year for which a breakdown is available) 90% of clients with one support period, 7.6% had 2 support periods, 1.6% had 3 support periods and 0.9% had four or more support periods. The 1998/99 percentages for numbers of support periods are likely to be similar.

**Table 4.2.2 SAAP clients, 1998/99
Loddon Mallee Region**

Type of contact	Number of people
Support periods	3600
Casual clients	4100
One off assistance	1400
Unmet demand	520

Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

The estimated number of children accompanying SAAP clients who had case management was 2,600. For the previous 2 years, the statistics about children were similar (2408 in 1996/97 and 2264 in 1997/8) This means each year the Region has well over 2000 children who are homeless.

4.2.3 Loddon Mallee Client Referral System data

There were 1073 people in the Region who registered a demand for transitional housing and were classified as 'absolutely homeless' for the year between April 1999 and March 2000 (Table & Chart 4.2.3). Almost all registrations were from SAAP.

As mentioned previously, the total figure of 1073 should not be taken as an accurate recording of the number of homeless people in the Region. Rather, this data system is useful for revealing which are the Region's main areas of homeless and the nature of the target group. It also should be noted that the statistics for the LGA of Central Goldfields are artificially low due to the Maryborough District Accommodation Service not being on-line during much of the relevant period.

Of the total registrations of 'absolutely homeless' people, 62 per cent (664) listed their current LGA as Bendigo. The next highest recordings were in the LGAs of Mildura (108), Campaspe (85), Macedon Ranges (68) and Swan Hill (50). Of the 85 registrations in the LGA of Campaspe, 80 were in Echuca.

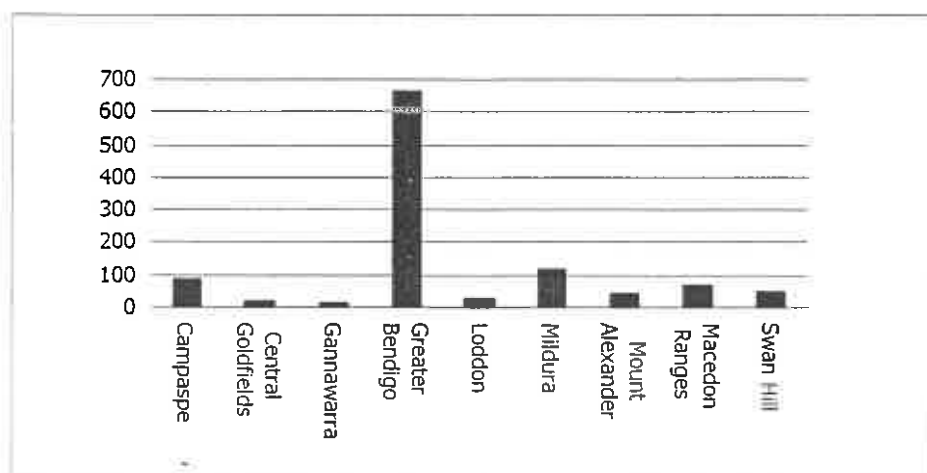
**Table 4.2.3 Loddon Mallee Client Referrals
1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000**

Current LGA*	Total	Percent of total
Campaspe	85	7.9
Central Goldfields	17	1.6
Gannawarra	11	1.0
Greater Bendigo	664	61.9
Loddon	22	2.1
Mildura	108	10.1
Mount Alexander	42	3.9
Macedon Ranges	68	6.3
Swan Hill	50	4.7
Unknown	7	0.7
Total	1073	100

*The LGA of Buloke is not included at all in the tables as this LGA has no local SAAP agencies. Buloke has the lowest population of all the Region's LGAs.

Source: LOMA CRS

**Chart 4.2.3 Loddon Mallee Client Referrals
1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000**



Source: LOMA CRS

4.2.4 Transitional Housing Management data

The following table shows the annual number of clients provided with accommodation through the HIR program. It should be noted that totals include SAAP use of HEF across the Region. According to the provider, 98.08% of clients who requested accommodation were provided with 'an outcome'.

For the 3 years between 1997/8 and 1999/00, the total number of HIR contacts provided with crisis accommodation was 8396. This represents 49.6% of contacts (total contact base was 16,920). In 1999/00 there were 2413 contacts provided with crisis accommodation.

Table 4.2.4 Number of HIR contacts provided with accommodation in Loddon Mallee Region

	1997/9	1998/99	1999/00	3 year total
Clients provided with crisis accommodation	2727	3256	2413	8396
Total client numbers				16920

Source: Manual data collection, THM

4.3 TARGET GROUP AND SERVICES REQUIRED BY TARGET GROUP

The sections below contain information on homeless people from all of the different sources.

4.3.1 National Data Collection Agency (NDCA)

Household unit presenting to SAAP agencies

Table 4.3.1(a) and Chart 4.3.1(a) show that in 1998/99 over half the people (52.9%) presenting to SAAP agencies in the Loddon Mallee Region were single people. The next largest group was single parents (32%). Couples with or without children were both far less common among SAAP clients. There were 2 trends evident over the 3 year period:

- Single people declined as a percentage of total clients (55.8% to 52.9%).
- Couples with children increased as a percentage of total clients (4.9% to 7.5%)

It should be noted that the above trends refer to percentages of total clients and not actual numbers.

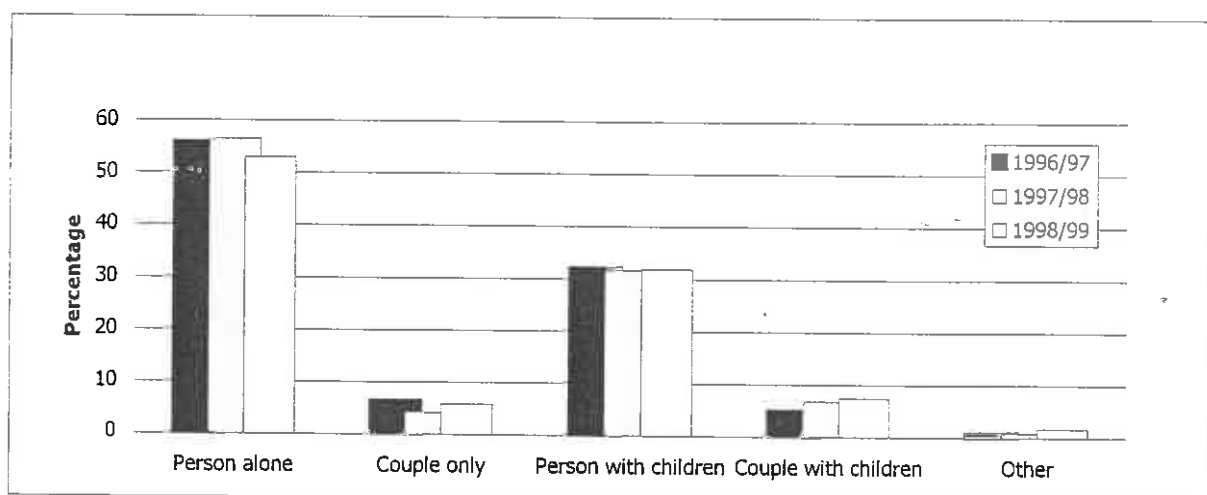
Table 4.3.1(a) Presenting household unit in Loddon Mallee Region

Presenting unit (support periods)	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Person alone	55.8	56.5	52.9
Couple only	6.4	4.2	5.9
Person with children	32.1	31.7	32.0
Couple with children	4.9	6.8	7.5
Other	0.8	0.9	1.7
Total	100	100	100
Total Number	3,187	3,103	3,550
Estimated No. of children *	2,408	2,264	2,600

*Number of children accompanying adults at all valid support periods

Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

Chart 4.3.1 (a) Presenting household unit in Loddon Mallee Region



Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

Age of accompanying children

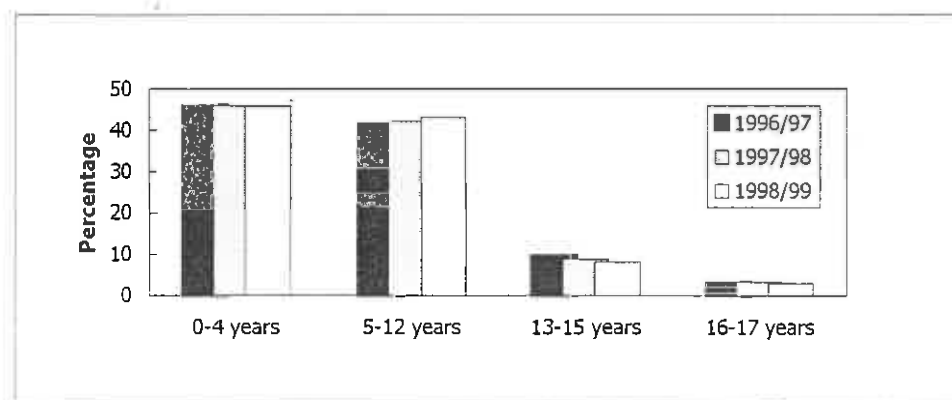
Approximately 90 per cent of the children of people presenting to SAAP agencies between 1996/7 and 1998/9 were under 12 years of age and close to half of these were in the 0-4 year age group [Table 4.3.1(b) and Chart 4.3.1(b)]. The age of the children had not changed significantly over the 3 year period.

Table 4.3.1(b) Age of accompanying children of SAAP clients in Loddon Mallee Region

Age of Accompanying Children	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
0-4 years	46.0	45.9	45.8
5-12 years	41.4	42.2	43.1
13-15 years	9.5	8.7	8.1
16-17 years	3.1	3.2	3.0
Total	100	100	100

Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

Chart 4.3.1(b) Age of accompanying children in Loddon Mallee Region



Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

Support provided and unable to be provided to clients

The most common categories for support, either provided or unable to be provided by SAAP, were 'housing/accommodation' and 'generalist support/advocacy' [Table 4.3.1(c) & Chart 4.3.1(c)]. In 1998/99, 66% of clients had their requests for housing/accommodation provided and 35% did not. Over the 3 year period, the following trends were apparent:

- The percentage of clients provided with 'housing/accommodation' fell. This would in part be related to an increased THM role in making crisis housing/accommodation arrangements.
- The percentage of clients provided with 'counselling' rose. This probably reflects the increasing number of clients presenting to SAAP agencies with complex needs.

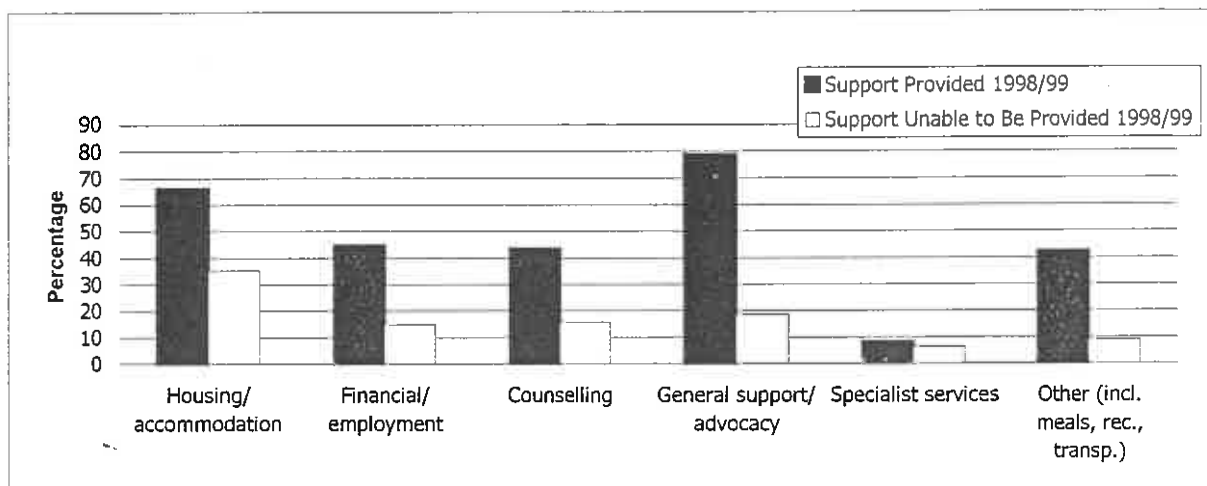
It should be noted again that the above trends refer to percentages of total clients and not actual numbers.

Table 4.3.1(c) Support provided and unable to be provided to clients in Loddon Mallee Region

	Support Provided			Support Unable to Be Provided		
	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Housing/ accommodation	71.8	70.0	66.0	38.6	34.4	35.3
Financial/ employment	48.5	38.0	44.5	13.6	11.5	15.1
Counselling	32.8	40.0	43.4	12.9	15.3	15.8
General support/ advocacy	77.6	81.2	78.7	20.6	22.9	18.6
Specialist services	6.9	8.9	8.1	5.7	7.6	6.3
Other (incl. meals, rec., transp.)	46.3	49.5	42.1	8.7	8.3	8.9
Total Number	3,187	3,141	3,600	529	590	550

Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

Chart 4.3.1 (c) Support provided and unable to be provided to clients in Loddon Mallee Region



Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

Referrals on behalf of SAAP clients made to type of service in Loddon Mallee Region

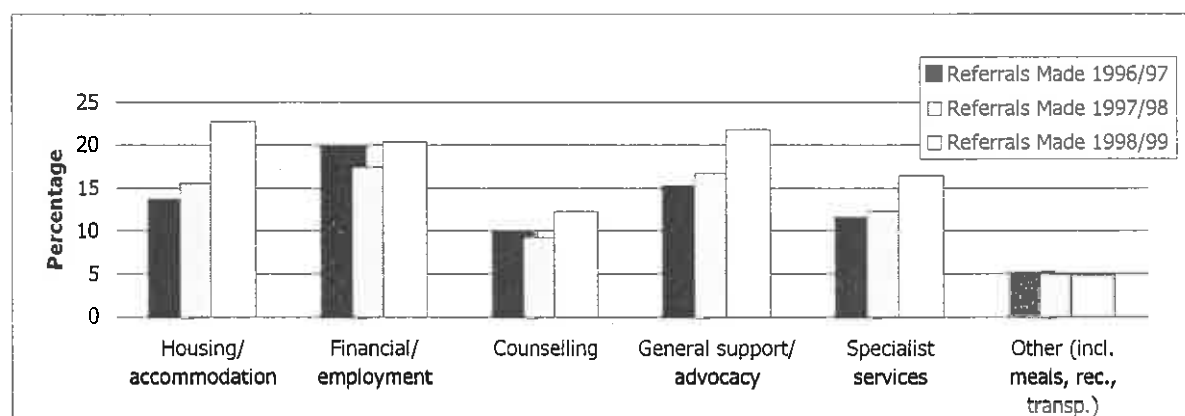
There were 4 categories of referrals of SAAP clients that increased between 1996/7 and 1998/9: 'housing/accommodation', 'counselling', 'general support/advocacy' and 'specialist services' [Table 4.3.1(d) and Chart 4.3.1(d)]. The formation of THM which took over the management of former SAAP properties probably explains the increasing importance of housing/accommodation referrals. The increasingly complex needs of many clients is likely to explain the other 3 increases.

Table 4.3.1(d) Referrals on behalf of SAAP clients made to type of service in Loddon Mallee Region

	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Housing/ accommodation	13.6	15.6	22.8
Financial/ employment	19.9	17.4	20.4
Counselling	9.9	9.2	12.3
General support/ advocacy	15.1	16.8	21.8
Specialist services	11.5	12.4	16.5
Other (incl. meals, rec., transp.)	5.0	4.9	4.8
Total Number	3,187	3,141	3,600

Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

Chart 4.3.1 (d) Referrals on behalf of SAAP clients made to type of service in Loddon Mallee Region



Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

SAAP primary target group by agency

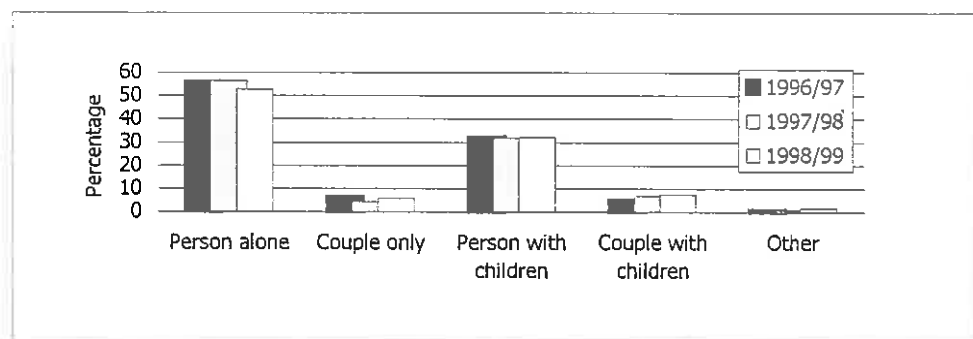
Table 4.3.1(e) and Chart 4.3.1(e) show the proportion SAAP agencies using the various SAAP service delivery systems between 1996/97 and 1998/99. Approximately two thirds of agencies in the Region are cross target/multiple/general. This contrasts with the whole of Victoria where this proportion is approximately 30 per cent. The targeted services in the Region that do exist are domestic violence services (Bendigo, Mildura, and Swan Hill), Aboriginal Cooperatives (Mildura, Swan Hill, Echuca and Robinvale), a service for youth (Bendigo) and a service for people with a psychiatric disability (Bendigo).

Table 4.3.1 (e) SAAP primary target group by agency in Loddon Mallee Region

Primary Target Group	Agencies		
	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Young people	9.1	8.3	8.7
Single men only	0.0	0.0	0.0
Single women only	4.5	4.2	4.3
Families	0.0	0.0	0.0
Women escaping domestic violence	18.2	16.7	21.7
Cross target/ multiple/ general	68.2	70.8	65.2
Total	100	100	100

Source: NDCA (Council for Homeless Persons)

Chart 4.3.1(e) SAAP primary target group by agency in Loddon Mallee Region



Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

Type of accommodation before and after support

Table 4.3.1(f) shows that over the three years recorded there was a greater percentage of people accessing SAAP services in private rental after support than before support. However in the last year recorded (1998/99) the percentage dropped markedly: there was only 2.3 per cent more people in private rental after support than before support. This change probably reflects increased discrimination in the private rental market, rent increases and less private rental stock being available.

In terms of public housing, there were also a greater percentage of people accessing SAAP services in public housing after support than before support. The last year recorded shows the biggest percentage increase, from 9.9% to 17.7%. When compared to the before and after support data for Victoria, the pattern of public housing after support is fairly similar although in 1998/99 there was a significantly greater percentage increase in Loddon Mallee Region. As discussion later in Section (4.3.5) there were high numbers of priority applications approved in this year.

Table 4.3.1(f) Type of accommodation before and after support in Loddon Mallee Region

	Before Support			After Support		
	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
SAAP/CAP Crisis/ short-term	8.1	5.2	3.7	2.7	3.3	2.7
SAAP/CAP Medium/ long-term	2.1	2.0	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.4
SAAP/CAP other	2.3	2.3	1.4	6.6	5.7	14.0
Non SAAP emerg.	0.8	0.6	1.7	n/a	n/a	n/a
Private rental	51.9	57.1	52.7	68.1	66.3	55.0
Owner-occupied	6.8	5.6	5.0	3.6	3.7	2.3
Public Housing	8.3	10.1	9.9	11.6	13	17.7
Institutional	2.5	1.7	3.8	n/a	n/a	n/a
Car/tent/ park/street/ squat	4.6	4.5	9.6	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other	12.4	10.7	11.1	6.3	6.8	6.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total Number	1,535	1,904	n/a	1,113	1,384	n/a

Source: NDCA (Council to Homeless Persons)

4.3.2 Loddon Mallee Client Referral System (LOMA CRS)

As discussed earlier the Loddon Mallee SAPP Network has developed a data set from the on-line client referral system which locates and makes applications for THM housing vacancies. Information from this data source is confined to the category of 'absolutely homeless' people.

Clients by gender

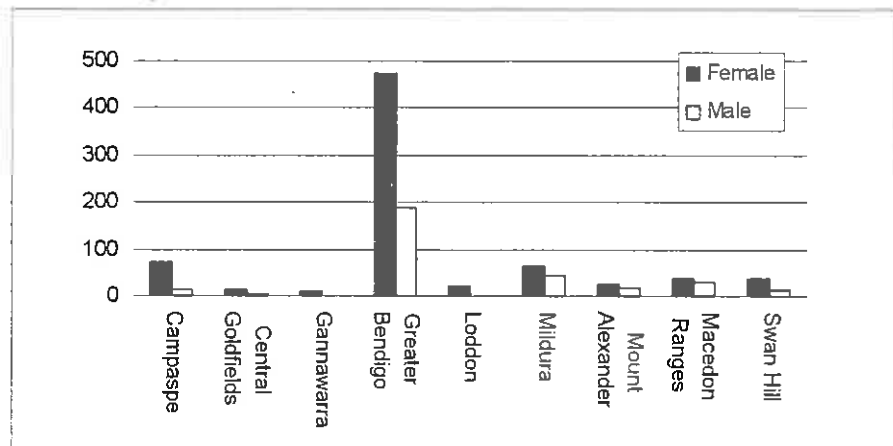
There were many more women than men in all the LGAs [Table 4.3.2(a) & Chart 4.3.2(a)]. In Bendigo there was over 70 per cent women. These figures probably exaggerate the actual gender difference among homeless people. It is known that some of these women would have male partners who are also homeless and that, within households, women are more likely to make contact with housing services.

**Table 4.3.2(a) Clients by gender by LGA in Loddon Mallee Region
1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000**

Current LGA	Female	Male	Total
Campaspe	71	14	85
Central Goldfields	13	4	17
Gannawarra	9	2	11
Greater Bendigo	476	188	664
Loddon	20	2	22
Mildura	65	43	108
Mount Alexander	27	15	42
Macedon Ranges	40	28	68
Swan Hill	39	11	50
Unknown	6	1	7
Total	766	307	1073

Source: LOMA CRS

**Chart 4.3.2(a) Clients by gender by LGA in Loddon Mallee Region
1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000**



Source: LOMA CRS

Age of clients in Loddon Mallee Region

Across the Region, the most common age group amongst homeless people was 17-19 years (231) and the next most common was 25-34 years (224). Figures for 55+ years were relatively low.

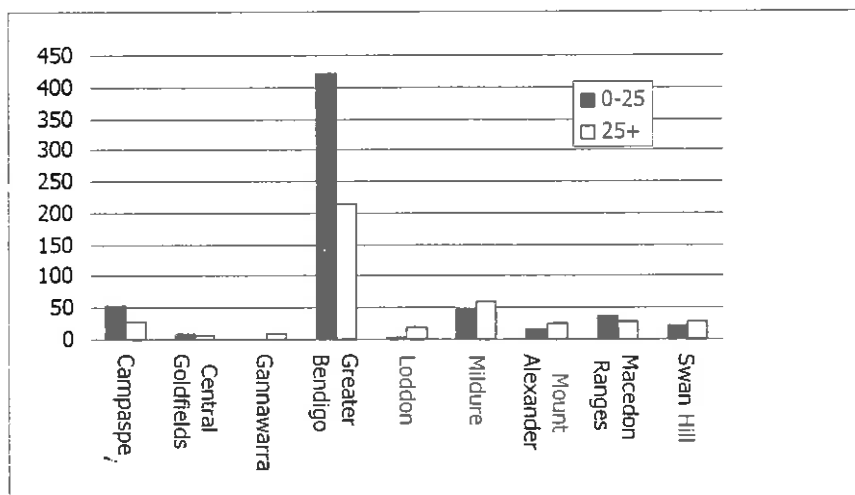
**Table 4.3.2(b) Clients by age by LGA in Loddon Mallee Region
1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000**

LGA	0-14	15-16	17-19	20-24	25-34	35-54	55+	Total
Campaspe	1	13	18	23	14	15	0	84
Central Goldfields	0	2	9	0	5	1	0	17
Gannawarra	0	0	0	1	8	2	0	11
Greater Bendigo	83	96	158	84	119	81	16	637
Loddon	3	0	0	1	7	10	1	22
Mildura	13	5	17	12	26	25	9	107
Mount Alexander	0	0	7	9	11	12	1	40
Macedon Ranges	0	9	19	11	19	10	0	68
Swan Hill	2	3	3	14	15	11	1	49
Unknown								35
Total	102	128	231	155	224	167	28	1073

Source: LOMA CRS

Chart 4.3.2(b) divides people into under 25 and 25 and over years of age. It illustrates the predominance of young people among the homeless, particularly in the LGA of Bendigo. Youth also outnumbered those over 25 in the LGAs of Campaspe, Central Goldfields and Macedon but the comparison was less pronounced. In the remainder of the LGAs, there were marginally more over people 25 and over than under 25.

Chart 4.3.2(b) Clients under 25 and 25 years and older by LGA in Loddon Mallee Region, 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000



Source: LOMA CRS

Clients by primary target group in Loddon Mallee Region

The main target groups are shown in Table 4.3.2(c). This table should be treated with caution as it is known there is under counting of Kooris and people with a psychiatric disability. For example, one Aboriginal Cooperative is known to be not on line. Another point to be taken into account, is the overlapping of categories. For example, some in the 'youth' category also experienced domestic violence and/or were Koori and/or had a mental illness.

The data indicates that the 2 largest groups are youth (42.4%) and domestic violence (20.7%).

**Table 4.3.2(c) Clients by target group in Loddon Mallee Region
1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000**

Target group	Number	Percent of total
Youth	455	42.4
Domestic violence	222	20.7
Koori	31	2.8
Psychiatric disability	26	2.5
Unknown or not in the above categories	339	32
Total	1073	100

Source: LOMA CRS

Number of children of clients

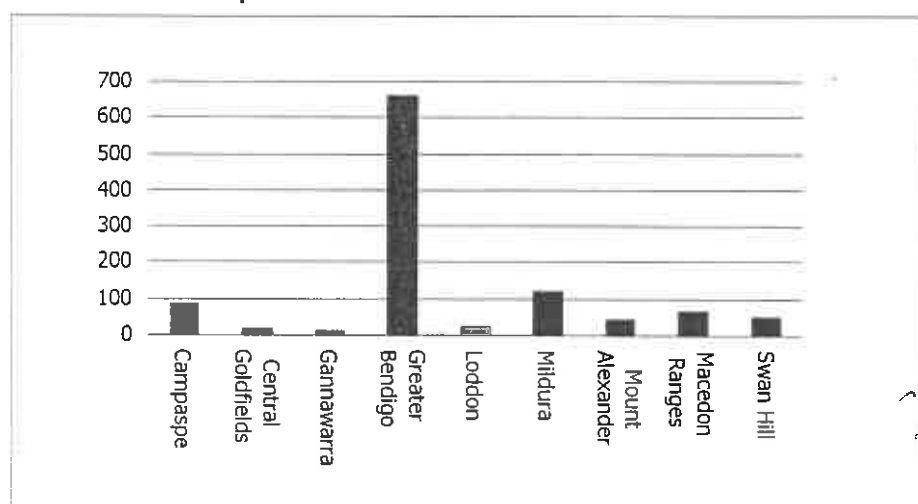
Slightly over half of clients had children (550). Twenty per cent had one child, 15 per cent had 2 children, 11 per cent had 3 children. Six per cent had 4 children or more. Five hundred and twenty-six (49%) of clients had no children.

**Table 4.3.2(d) Number of children of clients in Loddon Mallee Region
1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000**

LGA	Number of children							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Campaspe	56	8	7	2	0	0	11	84
Central Goldfields	11	3	1	1	1	0	0	17
Gannawarra	1	1	4	4	1	0	0	11
Greater Bendigo	326	138	97	75	14	10	2	662
Loddon	3	5	7	3	2	2	0	22
Mildura	47	29	14	18	7	2	1	118
Mount Alexander	26	7	5	2	1	0	1	42
Macedon Ranges	42	11	12	3	0	0	0	68
Swan Hill	11	12	11	9	4	1	1	49
Grand Total	523	214	158	117	30	15	16	1073

Source: LOMA CRS

**Chart 4.3.2(d) Number of children of clients in Loddon Mallee Region
1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000**



Source: LOMA CRS

4.3.3 Transitional Housing Management data

As explained in Section 4.1, HIR data that is collected using CHARMS includes people with a range of housing difficulties. Approximately 48 per cent are homeless across the Region using the definition employed in this report. As with the THM manual data collection system, HIR data collected using CHARMS also includes information on SAAP clients. It should also be noted that the statistics collected using CHARMS differ from those that are collected in the manual data collection system also used by THM.

Information from this data set is outlined in the section below.

Household type of HIR contacts

Table 4.3.3(a) shows a similar ordering (although with varying percentages) of household type of contacts using HIR compared to SAAP services [see section 4.3.1(a)]. The most common household type was singles (42.4%) and the next most common was sole parents (28%). There was over double the percentage of couples with children compared to those presenting to SAAP services [see Table 4.3.1(a)].

Table 4.3.3 (a) Household type of HIR contacts

Household type	Total	Percent
Singles	2240	42.4
Couples Only	510	9.7
Sole Parent/1 Dep	610	11.6
Sole Parent/2 Deps	367	7.0
Sole Parent/3 Deps	302	5.7
Sole Parent/4+ Deps	190	3.6
Couple/1 Dep	182	3.5
Couple/2 Deps	220	4.2
Couple/3 Deps	280	5.2
Couple/4+ Deps	188	3.5
Group 2/RP/URP	129	2.4
Group 3/RP/URP	64	1.2
Total	5282	100

Source: THM (CHARMS)

Income source of HIR contacts

Only 3.8% of HIR contacts were in the 'wages/salary/own business' category. Nearly 4% had no income and the rest were receiving some form of government allowance. The most common form of allowance was Newstart Allowance (42.6%) followed by Sole Parent Pension (27.8%).

Table 4.3.3(b) Income source of HIR contacts

Income source	Total	Percent
No Income	206	3.9
Age Pension	92	1.7
Sole Parent Pension	1469	27.8
Disability Support Pension	942	17.8
Newstart Allowance	2248	42.6
Workcover/Compensation	24	0.5
Wages/Salary/Own Business	201	3.8
Other	100	1.9
Total	5282	100

Source: THM (CHARMS)

Current housing type of HIR contacts

There were 2521 (48%) of the total contacts that could be considered as homeless under the definition employed in this report. Of these 1000 described their housing as 'Temporary Family/Friends', 921 as 'Homeless', 500 as 'Temporary Caravan Park' and 100 as 'Temporary Rooming House/Hostel/Hotel'.

Housing difficulty of HIR contacts

Table 4.3.2(c) gives the reasons people sought help with their housing difficulty. It should be noted that people often present with more than one housing difficulty so the overall totals are higher than the number of people presenting.

Table 4.3.3(c) Housing difficulty of HIR contacts

Housing Difficulty	Total	Percent
Eviction/Eviction Pending	1698	24.0
Affordability	870	12.3
Accommodation Inadequate	2062	29.2
Tenancy Disputes	160	2.3
Relationship/Family Breakdown	478	6.8
Domestic Violence	235	3.3
New to Area	808	11.4
Harassment	98	1.4
Discrimination	38	0.5
Discharge From Institution	71	1.0
Other	541	7.8
Total	7059	100

Source: THM (CHARMS)

These statistics show some interesting patterns in the difficulties experienced by people with housing:

- The most common single reason for housing difficult is given as 'accommodation inadequate' (29.2%) with the second most common being 'eviction/eviction pending' (24%).
- Other significant difficulties were 'affordability' and 'new to area'.
- The figures for discrimination in the private rental market are surprisingly low and are not borne out by the consultations in the Region.

Service requests of HIR contacts

Table 4.3.3(d) Service request of HIR contacts

Service request	Total	Percent
Information	5658	37.8
Financial Assistance	2114	14.1
Referral	4235	28.3
Advocacy	1088	7.3
Crisis Accommodation	1794	12.0
Other	71	0.5
Total	14960	100

Source: THM (CHARMS)

The main relevant statistic in the above table that is that there were 1794 requests for crisis accommodation. As with the previous table, people often present with more than one service request so the overall totals are higher than the number of people presenting.

4.4 HOUSING ESTABLISHMENT FUND

The following table shows the annual amount expended by THM on crisis accommodation. These statistics include requests for HEF by SAAP agencies across the Region. The 3 year total for 1997/98, 1998/99 and 1999/00 was \$301,011.

The percentage of total HEF expended on crisis accommodation increased over the 3 year period, from 45% in 1997-8 to 64% in 1999-00. This in part reflects the increase in the cost of crisis accommodation and the growing numbers of HIR contacts who are homeless.

Table 4.4 THM regional HEF distribution for 1997-98-1999-2000

	1997-8	1998-99	1999-00	3 year total
HEF expended on crisis accommodation*	71,596.6023	122,025.23.	107,389.18	301,011.01
Total HEF	159,803.43	229,157.53	167,487.70	56,488.86
Percentage of HEF used for crisis accommodation	45%	52.2%	64.1%	54.1%

*Crisis Accommodation can be split into two areas:

Accommodation is purchased in hotels/motels/caravan parks to overcome and immediate crisis.

Accommodation is secured longer term using HEF until clients next payday.

Source: Manual data collection, THM

A number of SAAP agencies manage their own HEF (EASE, CADARG, St Luke's Youth Service, COBAW, MDAS, Echuca SAAP and MASP). These agencies spend approximately \$24,000 per year of their HEF on crisis accommodation.

If we add together HIR HEF expenditure and the HEF expenditure by SAAP agencies that manage their own allocation, the total annual HEF expended on crisis accommodation in the Region would be in the vicinity of \$131,000. (In actual fact there would have been considerably more than this spent on crisis accommodation as consultations revealed that agencies, due to demand, used categories of HEF for crisis accommodation that were otherwise designated.)

HEF is not the only government funding of crisis accommodation. Emergency Relief and other government funding is used extensively for crisis accommodation by SAAP and other agencies throughout the Region. Two important examples of agencies that fund crisis accommodation for young people in Bendigo are YSAS and Community Connections. Between them, these two agencies spend \$22,000 per year on crisis accommodation. As well, an unknown number of agencies diverted program funds to pay for crisis accommodation.

4.5 TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

The following table outlines all the THM stock in the Region. Information on requests for transitional housing by homeless people is contained in Appendix Two.

Table 4.5 Transitional Housing in Loddon Mallee Region, September 2000

LOCATION	11br	5br	4br	3br	2br	1br	Total
MILDURA	1	1	2	9	20		33
ROBINVALE				1	1		2
SWAN HILL			1	6	8		15
DONALD				1			1
KERANG				1	1		2
KYNETON			1	3		4	8
GISBORNE			1				1
WOODEND				1			1
ROMSEY				2			2
MACEDON				1			1
CASTLEMAINE				3	1	1	5
BENDIGO			6	16	32	1	55
MARYBOROUGH			1	3			4
ECHUCA				3	4		7
TOTALS	1	1	12	50	67	6	137

4.6 OFFICE OF HOUSING

The next table shows the number of households and the number of public tenants in each LGA. It is significant that in Loddon Mallee Region a greater proportion of all households are public tenants (4.6%) compared to the whole of Victoria (3.3%). This reflects the Office of Housing's recognition of the comparatively low socio-economic status of the Region. The LGA of Mildura has the highest percentage (6.4%) of public tenants out of all households in the Region, followed by Campaspe (5.2%), Central Goldfields (4.9%) and Swan Hill (4.7%). The percentage figure for Macedon Ranges is the lowest (1.6%).

Table 4.6(a) Number of households and number of public tenants by LGA in Loddon Mallee Region

LGA	Number of Households	Number of Office of Housing dwellings	Number of Current public tenancies, November 1999	Current public housing tenancies (% of households)
Buloke	2891	106	98	3.3
Campaspe	12,032	721	627	5.2
Central Goldfields	4844	320	238	4.9
Gannawarra	4439	226	203	4.5
Greater Bendigo	29,668	1619	1509	5.0
Loddon	3292	86	64	1.9
Macedon Ranges	10,744	192	176	1.6
Mildura	16,219	1055	1047	6.4
Mount Alexander	6048	208	200	3.3
Swan Hill	7134	537	342	4.7
Loddon Mallee Region	97,311	5070	4504	4.6
Victoria**	1,554,454	70,566	51,343	3.3

** Victorian figures from DHS Table B25 CDATE 96, adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996 census and OoH Housing Assistance Program data June 1996.

Source: Regional Victoria in Fact and Office of Housing Head Office statistics.

Table 4.6(b) shows that the majority of people currently housed in public housing are classified by the Office of Housing as single parent households, followed closely by those classified as older single people who are usually people on aged pension incomes.

Table 4.6(b) Public Household classifications by numbers of households in Loddon Mallee Region

Household classification	Number of households	Households with a Centrelink income (%)
Couple	205	71.8
Couple + children	628	80.4
Single parents	1245	99.2
Singles	545	91.4
Older single	1151	98.5
Older couple	274	94.5
Group	414	88.1
Youth	39	92.3
Unknown	3	100.0
Total	4504	92.8

Source: Office of Housing data, November 1999.

From July 1996 to June 1999, there were no major increases in stock numbers, and the number of tenancies has remained fairly stable. Table 4.6(c) shows that the numbers of applications and allocations varied significantly from 1996 to 1999. The applications increased significantly in 1998/1999 after a period of relative stability.

Table 4.6(c) Loddon Mallee region stock, applications and allocations last 3 years for Rental General Stock and Rental Movable Units

Financial year	1996/1997	1997/1998	1998/1999
Total stock numbers	4535	4526	4652
Applications	1323	1300	1717
Tenancies (June)	4361	4382	4498
Waiting list (June)	2156	2110	2157
Number of allocations	951	799	1089

Source: Department of Human Services, Office of Housing, Summary of Housing Assistance Programs (1997, 1998 & 1999).

Table 4.3.5(d) shows the number of allocations made over the last four years, and illustrates a significant rise in priority allocations. In the year 1996/1997, 86% of allocations were wait turn, and 14% were priority. In the year 1999/2000, the numbers of wait turn allocations fell to 51%, and priority allocations rose to 49%. More detail on public housing allocations can be found in Appendix 3.

This rise in priority applications and allocations can be directly (but not exclusively) attributed to the introduction of the Segmented Wait List. There has been an increased demand on the previous priority system, which has led to the development of a system of fast tracking allocations for households most in need. If the Segmented Wait List system continues the tighter targetting of available stock will result in a rise in applications for, and allocations to, available stock through high needs segments. Appendix 4 provides more detail on public housing waiting list segments for 2000.

Table 4.6(d) Allocations for the Loddon Mallee Region

	Priorities	Wait turn	Total allocations
1996/1997	128	823	951
1997/1998	261	538	799
1998/1999	493	596	1089
1999/2000	499	515	1014

Source: DHS, Office of Housing (1997, 1998 & 1999) and ISIP

Table 4.6(e) shows the waiting list for public housing in towns in the Region. Bendigo district had the highest number on the waiting list (769) and this was followed closely by Mildura (652). The total number of people on the list was 2011 people. The household groups with the highest numbers in the waiting list were small families (27%), medium families (22.4%) and singles (18.2).

If we add together 'singles' and 'older singles' which are the groups requiring single bedroom accommodation, the total is 599. This statistic underscores the need for more single bedroom accommodation in the public housing system. There is also a clear need for more 2 and 3 bedroom properties for small to medium families. The low numbers for 'youth' on the waiting list can probably be attributed to young people being unaware of public housing as an option.

Table 4.6(e) Public housing waiting list (as of 30.6.00)

	Youth	Singles	Older Singles	Older Couples	Small Families	Medium Families	Large Families	Groups	Total
BENDIGO DISTRICT	38	183	96	28	211	132	42	40	769
BOORT	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
CALDER SOUTH DISTRICT	1	7	11	0	10	11	3	6	48
CHARLTON	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
COHUNA	0	2	5	0	3	1	0	0	11
DONALD	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
DUNOLLY	0	2	1	1	0	2	1	0	6
ECHUCA DISTRICT	8	26	17	5	29	22	9	8	124
GISBORNE DISTRICT	1	3	5	2	6	5	0	0	22
HEATHCOTE	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	4
KERANG/MALLEE DISTRICT	0	0	0	1	4	4	1	0	9
KOONDROOK	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
KYABRAM	4	2	5	0	6	11	2	3	32
KYNETON DISTRICT	2	10	9	2	18	16	4	5	65
MANANGATANG	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
MARYBOROUGH DISTRICT	2	4	6	3	11	5	3	4	38
MILDURA DISTRICT	26	102	53	21	196	173	43	39	652
NYAH WEST	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	3
OUYEN	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
ROBINVALE DISTRICT	9	8	3	0	31	42	13	3	108
ROCHESTER	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
RUSHWORTH	0	0	4	1	0	1	1	0	6
SEA LAKE	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
SWAN HILL DISTRICT	4	14	12	0	30	24	7	5	96
TONGALA	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
WEDDERBURN	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
WYCHEPROOF	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Group Total	97	366	233	65	558	450	127	115	2011
Victorian total	1399	7878	4584	2067	10881	9902	2188	2052	40951
Loddon Mallee (% of total)	4.8%	18.2%	11.6%	3.2%	27.7%	22.4%	6.3%	5.7%	100.0%
Metro Regions (% of total)	3.0%	19.1%	11.2%	5.4%	26.4%	24.6%	5.4%	4.9%	100.0%
Non-metro Regions (% of total)	6.1%	20.2%	11.3%	3.2%	27.9%	21.1%	5.3%	4.9%	100.0%
Victoria (% of total)	3.4%	19.2%	11.2%	5.0%	26.6%	24.2%	5.3%	5.0%	100.0%
MOVABLE UNITS	0	0	0	1	11	56	0	44	112

Source: ISIP

Note:

This table includes both New and Transfer clients.

Movable Units are shown as actual numbers Victoria-wide.

4.7 CONSULTATIONS WITH REGIONAL SUPPORT AND HOUSING SERVICES

The following information is derived from consultations in the Loddon Mallee Region with SAAP and THM agencies. They were asked to comment on the profile of people seeking crisis accommodation, to describe the crisis accommodation situation in their local area over the last 3 years and to outline any changes that had taken place. They were also asked to comment on any factors inhibiting their ability to meet the needs of people seeking accommodation, and to suggest ideas for improvement in services.

These consultations were supplemented with information from a paper entitled 'The Crisis Accommodation Situation' by Heather Holst, SAAP Network Co-ordinator in the Loddon Mallee Region. This paper was written for a regional forum on crisis accommodation that took place in Swan Hill on 8 August 2000. Some discussion points raised at this forum have also been included. As well, a discussion paper by John Bonnice, 'Youth Housing in Bendigo' (June 2000) was used.

Comments from SAAP services that are targeted at youth, women escaping domestic violence, Kooris and people with a psychiatric disability are contained in separate sections at the end of the list of SAAP services by area.

Bendigo

SAAP

Loddon Mallee SAAP

St Luke's Youth Housing Service (see page 44)

Whirakee Housing (see page 46)

EASE (see page 45)

THM

Loddon Mallee Housing Services

Existing crisis accommodation

Only HEF funded accommodation in caravan parks and motels is available.

Changes observed over the past 3 years

There are fewer caravan parks and motels available in the Bendigo region. This is due to a large caravan park closing and to discrimination against 'agency people'. One THM worker commented that, 'three years ago we had plenty to choose from, now it's very difficult.'

How well agencies meet crisis accommodation needs

Purchased accommodation in both motels and caravan parks is often booked out during school holidays, special events and festival times. If accommodation cannot be purchased in Bendigo, it is often arranged in outlying towns such as Bridgewater, Harcourt, Dunolly and Rochester. Emergency Relief is used to purchase a train ticket to these towns. This arrangement is often not suitable for people who are from Bendigo.

The problems with caravan park use for crisis accommodation in Bendigo are similar to the rest of the Region. In some respects, however, these problems are more pronounced in Bendigo. One large caravan park has about 90 per cent 'agency people'. A THM worker commented: 'Awful setting for people in crisis. Vans are chucked on bare pieces of land'. Housing agency people are often allocated 'agency vans' in caravan parks and these tend to be those in poor repair with leaks, cleanliness problems, mould and poor mattresses. As one housing worker commented, for someone who is homeless it does 'nothing to lift morale, they are treated as third or fourth class citizens.' Higher prices are sometimes charged and there are special rules for 'agency people' in some caravan parks such as reporting to the management every morning at 9 am and not allowing children.

Due to the limits on HEF, agencies restrict use of motels to one or 2 nights. The standard of accommodation is better in motels than caravans.

Ideas for improved services

Workers made the following suggestions:

'So that it is not a bandaid, programs should be run involving specialist support. These could cover issues such as living skills, hygiene and anger management'.

'We need self contained units, like a retirement village. Being self-contained, there are no problems with compatibility. No one should have to live communally because they are homeless.'

Other comments

Many workers commented on the level of discrimination that exists in the private rental market:

'the most discriminated against group are Kooris, followed by single mothers with children, particularly if they have a number of them'.

Castlemaine

SAAP Service

Castlemaine and District Accommodation and Resource Group (CADARG)

Existing crisis accommodation

HEF is used to fund accommodation in 2 motels and 2 caravan parks.

Changes observed over the past 3 years

The number of homeless people using CADARG has increased.

How well the agency meets crisis accommodation needs

- There are transport problems for people travelling to one of the caravan parks
- The other caravan park has changed into predominantly tourist accommodation. The relatively affordable vans have been replaced with cabins that are very expensive. The one van reserved for agency people was described as a 'dump'.
- The local motel has had a long history of accepting CADARG referrals and has recently offered to provide breakfasts as a contribution. Sometimes free meals and telephone calls are thrown in.

Ideas for improved services

- Nomination rights to transitional housing would alleviate the crisis accommodation problem.
- CADARG would like to see crisis specific accommodation. The suggested stock requirement is 2x2 bedroom properties (one for adults and one for youth) and a 6 bed rooming house for single adults with one room reserved for crisis access.

Other comments

Rents are increasing in the area and the rental market has continued to be tight.

Echuca

SAAP services

Echuca and District Accommodation Support Service

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation (see page 43)

Existing crisis accommodation

Emergency accommodation in the large area that this service covers is fairly scant. The Echuca and District Accommodation Support Service owns some caravans which are in a caravan park but these are used for medium to long-term stays. A private individual has 8 caravans on their land and these are sometimes used for crisis accommodation. However the Council is trying to close these down. HEF purchased accommodation in motels and caravans is also used.

Changes observed over the past 3 years

There were more people now seeking crisis accommodation compared to 3 years ago.

How well agencies meet crisis accommodation needs

There are several problems with the use of caravans and motels:

- Caravans are mainly suitable for couples and not for single men, families or women with children.
- They are hot in summer and cold in winter.
- Access is difficult in holiday periods.
- Motel accommodation is expensive which means it is normally only used for one night.
- HEF sometimes runs out due to the level of demand for crisis accommodation.

Ideas for improved services

The following suggestions were made:

- Special accommodation house for single men. (This could perhaps be run by the Salvation Army.)
- Supported accommodation with a manager for people with different levels of need.

Gisborne, Kyneton, Macedon, Romsey and Woodend.

SAAP Services

Gisborne Accommodation Service

Cobaw Accommodation

THM

Kyneton Transitional Housing Services

Existing crisis accommodation

HEF is used to purchase accommodation at Kyneton Caravan Park where Cobaw owns 4 vans. Rented vans are also used when necessary. There is a rooming house (6 beds) in Gisborne managed by the Council but this is generally used for long-term residents. The local hotel is used and is affordable (\$25 per night).

Changes observed over the past 3 years

- There were more people now seeking crisis accommodation compared to 3 years ago.
- Recently there has been a small increase in the numbers of older people seeking help.

How well agencies meet crisis accommodation needs

Problems with existing solutions include:

- The hotel in Kyneton is not suitable for people with alcohol problems.
- Caravan accommodation is not suitable for many of target group and the caravan park in Kyneton will not take people under 18 years of age.
- Macedon Caravan Park will not take any people from housing agencies and there are problems with access to the caravan park in Lancefield.
- Sometimes there is insufficient HEF to pay for demand for crisis accommodation as the level of demand means that the allocation runs out.

Ideas for improved services

Suggestions made by SAAP workers include 2 new units in Gisborne and rooming houses in Woodend and Kyneton.

Kerang and Cohuna

SAAP Services

Northern District Community Health Service SAAP

Existing crisis accommodation

Only HEF purchased caravan park and motel crisis accommodation is available.

Changes over the past 3 years

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of homeless people, particularly young people. Many of these young people need intense support. Problems include drug and alcohol, and intellectual or psychiatric disability.

How well agencies meet crisis accommodation needs

- Nearly one-third of clients are Koori. Many Koori families have more members than a caravan is capable of taking. As a result, some families are split up with some children staying with relatives.
- The level of HEF was described as insufficient to keep up with the demand.

Other comments

- Kooris face discrimination in housing as does virtually everyone who is not working.
- Exits from crisis accommodation are a major problem in the area due to an acute housing supply problem. It is especially severe in Cohuna where one transitional house is the only possibility for accommodation.
- Young people are not able to stay in the caravan park beyond the period for which the agency has paid as it is too expensive.

Kyabram

SAAP Services

Campaspe Shire - Kyabram SAAP

Existing crisis accommodation

There are 2 caravan parks and 3 hotels which are used for HEF purchased accommodation.

How well agencies meet crisis accommodation needs

- HEF funds are not sufficient to cover motel accommodation..
- One of the caravan parks is virtually inaccessible due to the need for references and the other one is only useful if people have their own transport.
- Hotels do not have cooking facilities.
- The only option for many homeless people is to stay with friends or family in overcrowded conditions.

Ideas for improved services

Crisis specific units or caravans are needed.

Other comments

The private rental housing situation is very tight and expensive.

Maryborough

SAAP Service

Maryborough District Accommodation Service

Existing crisis accommodation

There is very limited access to crisis accommodation in the Maryborough area. One hotel is available and cheap but unsuitable for many people, particularly those with children. People staying there need to be fairly streetwise as the hotel is well known for fights. There is a disco in this hotel from Thursday to Saturday night which makes it unsuitable for families with children. Another is reasonable priced and will take housing agency people but care must be taken with the selection of people sent there so that the relationship with the manager does not sour.

Changes over the past 3 years.

The caravan park in Maryborough was an option but the new owners will only accept tourists. Dunolly caravan park has also ceased to be available.

How well the agency meets crisis accommodation needs

The shortage of appropriate accommodation for people in crisis is the basic problem. Much time is spent by the SAAP worker in supporting and advising people about possibilities of staying with friends or family as this accommodation is the only available option.

Ideas for improved services

- Crisis facilities are needed for single people. This would need to be purpose built and have a lead tenant.
- Accommodation for families is also needed.

Mildura

SAAP Services

Mallee Accommodation and Support Program (MASP)

Mildura Aboriginal Cooperative (see page 43)

Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach (see page 45)

THM

Mildura Transitional Housing Services

Existing crisis accommodation

Most crisis accommodation is purchased through HEF. Motels, caravan parks and occasionally backpackers' accommodation are used. There is one property that can sometimes take students needing crisis accommodation.

Changes over the past 3 years

- Until very recently one wing of a transitional property known as Deakin Avenue was reserved for crisis access. The situation was not ideal as cooking was confined to communal facilities and the accommodation was not suitable for children accompanying adults and vulnerable single women. However it was the only example of crisis access to transitional properties in the Region. There were 210 separate tenancies in over 16 months. Many of these were households of more than one so the actual numbers who used Deakin Avenue was considerably more than this. This is now no longer used for crisis.
- Before the formation of THM, MASP managed 11 properties which could be used for crisis accommodation as the need arose. These properties were converted to transitional housing and at the same time there was a change in caravan parks in the area. Now it is more difficult to get into the parks during the holidays and many managers are now demanding a bond, deposit for the key, references and insist on seeing people before they admit them. Costs per night have also risen.
- There are now more homeless people and a greater percentage of them have complex needs. There has been a small increase in single males with children.
- There used to be an after-hours arrangement with a local motel but the motel pulled out of this arrangement.

How well agencies meet crisis accommodation needs

Mildura has the common problems with caravan parks that are experienced across the Region:

- There are few vacancies in holiday periods and festival times.
- Many parks are a long distance from town and there is only a limited bus service.

Due to the inadequacy of crisis accommodation women with children are advised to stay with relatives. One SAAP worker commented that by placing them in caravan park they are 'setting them up for failure.' If no accommodation can be found people are given a bus ticket to find accommodation elsewhere.

Ideas for improved services

- MASP supported a return to the pre-THM system of CAP properties for crisis accommodation with management in the hands with the local SAAP agency. These properties would have to be properly resourced for upkeep should be rent free for a crisis period. An advantage of the CAP property system that the SAAP agency knew what properties were available and which ones would soon be coming up.
- MASP also supported the setting up of a rooming house.

Other comments

- A cooperative arrangement has been recently negotiated for after-hours access to a privately run backpackers-type hostel by local SAAP services, the hospital, the Division of Psychiatry and Police.
- There is a severe shortage of rental properties on the private market. The SAAP service knew of one case where a man was living in a converted chicken shed and paying \$85 per week. There was no toilet or stove and the conversion from shed to house consisted of replacing the chicken wire with shade cloth.

Swan Hill

SAAP Services

Mallee Family Care

Swan Hill Aboriginal Cooperative (see page 43)

THM

Swan Hill Transitional Housing Services

Crisis accommodation available

The main options for crisis accommodation are motel and caravan park accommodation purchased with HEF. Sometimes funding is supplemented with Court Poor Box.

Changes over the last 3 years

Crisis accommodation has become less available due to a trend towards caravan parks being used exclusively for tourism and long term stays.

How well agencies meet crisis accommodation needs

- Accommodation is not often available during school holidays.
- Transport is an issue with some of the caravan parks and motels. For example, one caravan park is 30 minutes walk from the town centre.
- The cost of motels means they can only be used for one night.
- Homeless people are generally unable to afford ensuite cabins and vans. Single mothers with children therefore have to use toilet and shower facilities some distance from where they are staying. This creates security problems especially at night.
- Sometimes women are moved from units to caravans during the school holidays so the caravan park can charge maximum rent.
- Motels have no cooking facilities.
- Many transient young/middle aged men travel with their dogs and these are not normally allowed. Many of these people would prefer to not have a bed if they cannot have their dogs with them.

As a result of these difficulties, many people prefer to stay with families and friends until transitional housing is available.

Ideas for improved services

- SAAP workers suggested more crisis accommodation that was self contained.
- One SAAP worker thought that if crisis units were provided then the management of these was an issue. It was felt that SAAP support and SAAP management of crisis accommodation did not sit well together.

Other comments

There were usually long waits for transitional housing and there was a shortage of private rental properties.

Aboriginal Cooperatives

SAAP Services

Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative

Swan Hill Aboriginal Cooperative

Mildura Aboriginal Cooperative

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation (Echuca)

All these Cooperatives offer services to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Many other housing agencies work with a significant number of Aboriginal people. For example, approximately 30 per cent of Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach clients are Kooris.

Existing crisis accommodation

All the Aboriginal Cooperatives experience difficulties in accessing crisis accommodation for the following reasons:

- There are no crisis accommodation providers with vacancies in Robinvale so little HEF is used.
- Mildura Aboriginal Cooperative uses very little crisis accommodation as they find the people who use their service generally find it hard to meet the documentation requirements that are needed to access HEF from Loddon Mallee Housing. Sometimes the Harry Nanya Hostel is used for overnight accommodation.
- Njernda also finds HEF difficult to access for crisis accommodation but it is used where possible to fund accommodation in caravan parks and motels.
- Swan Hill has 2 crisis houses but one is burnt out. They also use HEF for caravan and motel accommodation.

How well agencies meet crisis accommodation needs

Robinvale

There is very little private rental, public housing, transitional properties or community housing in Robinvale. There are many instances of people, including children, living in overcrowded pickers huts. The Robinvale Co-operative has 2 houses that could be used for crisis accommodation but given the lack of exits they are used for longer term accommodation. The extreme housing shortage in Robinvale results in Aboriginal houses becoming refuge houses.

Swan Hill

A worker from the Swan Hill Aboriginal Cooperative commented:

'Even with both crisis houses in operation they do not come anywhere near meeting the demand in the Aboriginal community for crisis housing. Many double up with family and friends which leads to overcrowding. If we had 20 more crisis homes we would not have enough.'

Njernda

Njernda has a number of issues with the way HEF funding is organised. At present they have to apply to THM for access to HEF. This is impossible when the Service sees people after hours or on the weekends and cumbersome the rest of the time. As well, they often work with homeless people who do not have identification documents.

Mildura

Due to knowledge in the Aboriginal community about the lack of crisis accommodation, very few approach the Mildura Aboriginal Cooperative for this. As in other areas with affordable housing options, there is overcrowding in existing dwellings as families double up. The lack of transitional housing was commented upon. Since the introduction of the Segmented Wait List system, there has been more entries into public housing under Segment 1 (Recurring Homelessness).

Ideas for improved services

All services recommended more public housing and transitional housing as the only effective way of tackling homelessness in Aboriginal communities. Some of the Cooperatives felt that there was no use providing crisis accommodation if exits remained virtually impossible.

In Robinvale 2 solutions have been identified:

- A hostel for itinerant workers.
- A lot more 2 bedroom stock would be suitable for most of the remaining demand. Some could be built in cluster formation; it could also accommodate the larger household groups. The Co-operative

has proposed a joint venture to the social Housing Innovations Project to construct this sort of housing on land that is owned by the community.

Other comments.

- Aborigines face discrimination in the private rental market and high rents are also prohibitive.
- Rent arrears and subsequent eviction from public housing was identified as a major cause of homelessness for Aboriginal people in Swan Hill and Mildura.
- There is a chronic and severe housing shortage in Echuca, Robinvale, Mildura and Swan Hill. In Robinvale has become even more pronounced due to new ethnic groups coming to the district with housing need.

Youth

SAAP Services

St Luke's Youth Housing Service

EASE

Existing crisis accommodation

Two housing services in Bendigo support homeless young people in the 15 to 19 age group. St Luke's Youth Housing Service is a youth specific service for young people under the age of twenty. EASE works with single young women under 25 years who have children or are pregnant, as well as women including young women who have experienced domestic violence.

EASE has access to 3 properties that can be used for crisis accommodation. However only 30 per cent of homeless young women can be housed in this accommodation due to the current demand. Most young women have to be placed in caravans and motels.

St Luke's Youth Service predominantly uses caravans and motels to meet crisis accommodation needs. The Service also relies on paying a client's friends/relatives to accommodate them.

Changes over the past 3 years

- Both services commented on the increased numbers of young people seeking help with crisis accommodation.
- St Luke's Youth Housing Service commented on the increase in numbers of young people presenting with alcohol and drug problems as well as mental health and behavioural issues. Many had serious offending behaviours.
- Many young people presented with poor connection with family and social networks, and poor self management skills.

How well agencies meet crisis accommodation needs

- Both services were concerned about the absence of adult support in current crisis accommodation.
- Younger clients were struggling to live independently due to their lack of life skills.
- Services were concerned about the situation for homeless young people being further destabilised by inappropriate crisis accommodation options.
- St Luke's Youth Housing Service also commented on the pressure from statutory services to place and support young people who are leaving the care system.

Ideas for improved services

There was support for housing with live-in adult support. Models that have been discussed include:

- Accommodation provided with a lead tenant;
- Trained community accommodation providers; and
- Units staffed on a full time and part time basis.

An EASE model for crisis accommodation is discussed on pages 46-47 of this report.

The Loddon Campaspe agencies have devised a Community Accommodation Providers idea whereby people in the community would be recruited to provide several nights of accommodation. This scheme would require a co-ordinator to recruit, train and support the providers and the co-operation of SAAP

agencies to match people to this type of accommodation. It would provide a level of safety and support for young people and maintain their links with the community and with family and support systems.

Other comments

Both services felt that homelessness needed to be dealt with in conjunction with other issues such as mental health, substance abuse, family breakdown, domestic violence, employment, and education and training. To achieve this, there needed to be linkages between services which could 'enable the homeless young person access to housing, drug treatment, health, employment and training without being bounced between services'.

Domestic Violence

SAAP services

EASE

Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach (MDVO)

Annie North Inc.

EASE and MDVO services cover the whole of the Region. EASE is responsible for the Loddon Campaspe area while Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach is responsible for the Mallee. More information on EASE services is included on pages 46-47.

Annie North Inc. which is also in Bendigo is a refuge for women escaping domestic violence. For security reasons, only women from outside the LGA of Bendigo are accepted.

Existing crisis accommodation

EASE has 3 properties that are used for crisis accommodation. They are used for approximately 2 weeks crisis accommodation. These properties do not meet the demand for crisis accommodation and caravan parks and motels are used. There are also 2 properties available for women with drug and alcohol issues.

Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach has 2 properties in Mildura which are used for short to medium term accommodation and 1 which is used for short to medium stays. The service also uses HEF purchased caravan and motel accommodation.

Annie North has one property which is used as a refuge for women escaping domestic violence. It is used for short to medium term accommodation. They also use motels and caravan parks.

Changes over the past 3 years

- Mallee Outreach commented there were not as many larger families and more people from non-English speaking backgrounds using their service.
- Access to caravan parks is becoming harder.
- EASE commented that people were presenting with more complex needs: psychiatric histories, intellectual disability and drug and alcohol problems.
- Before THM, EASE had access to 7 properties, 4 of which were rented by the agency. The other 3 were part of the CAP program. With formation of THM, EASE lost these properties. St Vincent's Units which were used for crisis accommodation have also been lost as the property was bulldozed.
- EASE clients used to have greater success in the private rental market 3 years ago. Since then rents have increased and a judgemental attitude to 'those kind of people' has reduced access to private rental.

How well agencies meet crisis accommodation needs

The common problems of caravan living were commented on:

- An EASE worker reported on a recent case where due to the cold damp conditions her child who suffered from asthma had a seizure. The child's doctor stated the episode was due to the cold, damp conditions.
- Living in such a confined space with children was difficult: 'It is brain-frying cooped up with children in a caravan'.
- There was considerable concern over safety issues. An EASE worker commented that 'some women can be quite afraid and they often know people there whom they would prefer not to be living close to.' It was often easy for partners whom they were escaping from to find out where they were.

Mallee workers were concerned about the safety issue of children going to the toilet block by themselves in the middle of the night.

- Caravan park accommodation was described as 'a bandaid type of approach'. Many women could not sustain this type of accommodation and returned to the perpetrator. This often led to a feeling of failure.
- The difficulties associated with communal sharing created many problems, and was often inappropriate at a time of crisis in a woman's life.
- Annie North commented on the discrimination that women from agencies faced when seeking crisis accommodation in caravan parks.

The problem with exits was commented upon:

'There is no certainty that there will be a clear exit point at a particular time from the caravan park. Transitional housing is uncertain and public housing takes a long time to access. The impact of hideousness of the situation leads to some women going back to the situation they had been trying to escape from.'

Ideas for improved services

- Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach commented that to overcome the problems of communal living in refuges, self contained units are needed.
- EASE workers commented that the community should be encouraged to take responsibility through community accommodation programs. Holiday accommodation and bed and breakfasts could be asked to donate one night per year free to women escaping domestic violence
- An EASE model for agency-managed crisis accommodation is included in Section 4.6 of this report.
- Annie North has developed an innovative model for crisis and medium term accommodation for women escaping domestic violence that overcomes the current problems with communal living in their refuge.

Other comments

EASE workers found paper work associated with applying for HEF through Loddon Mallee Housing very onerous, especially as they were often simultaneously dealing with a woman in crisis. As well, it was not always practical for women escaping domestic violence to obtain documentation such as two forms of identification which is necessary to access HEF.

People with a psychiatric disability

SAAP

Whirakee

Existing crisis accommodation

There is virtually no crisis accommodation in the Region for people with a psychiatric disability. There is the usual reliance on caravan parks and motels.

How well the agency meets crisis accommodation needs

There is a lack of appropriate crisis accommodation for adults with mental illness who are itinerant. They are mainly men who require 1 to 7 days accommodation until such issues as finances, medication, clinical assessment and family contact can be sorted out. Present crisis accommodation options are not suitable for these people.

Ideas for improved services

A Whirakee worker gave the following suggestions:

- Gender specific staffed group residential services with a short stay focus of 1-7 days to allow some time for the client to recover in a safe environment whilst linkages and supports can be set up.
- The need to be single and two bedroom units that are supported by staff. Crisis accommodation options need to be varied depending on the circumstances of the people involved.

4.8 A CASE STUDY OF AGENCY-MANAGED CRISIS ACCOMMODATION

This case study examines patterns of use of EASE-managed crisis accommodation by women escaping domestic violence. It also looks at outcomes for these women. Although a limited time-frame was used the information does allow for some discussion of a model of crisis accommodation. It would have been valuable to have also done a comparable study of women who used 'ad hoc' accommodation such as caravans and motels, but time frames for this project did not allow for this.

The following table provides a snapshot of 16 women who used the 3 crisis accommodation properties managed by EASE in a 3 months period. It illustrates some of the characteristics of women who use domestic violence services. It should be noted that the table does not describe women who did not use EASE properties.

The current policy of EASE limits the period of time women can use these properties to approximately 2 weeks in order to maximise their use. They are designed to meet the requirements of women and children in a crisis situation with items such as linen, towels and food supplied. Whether the women stay in these properties, rather than other crisis accommodation such as caravans or motels, depends on current vacancies. This model of crisis accommodation is unique in the Region.

Table 4.8 Snapshot of 16 women who used EASE crisis accommodation properties in a 3 month period.

Crisis Accommodation		Support Period	Age	Number of Children	Referral	Exit
First	Second					
1 night motel	1 night EASE	87 days	27	1	Police	Friends
1 night motel	8 nights EASE	8 days	31	3	Child Protection	Renting caravan
2 nights motel	16 nights EASE	31 days	32	3	Unknown	No Information
22 nights EASE	none	60 days	39	4	OoH	Public Housing
1 night motel	11 nights EASE	28 days	31	2	Self	Renting privately
1 night motel	21 nights ESE	Ongoing	30	2	Tenancy Support	Public Housing
1 night motel	8 nights EASE	49 days	32	4	Police	Friends
8 nights EASE	none	7 days	30	3	Self	Returned to partner
4 nights EASE	none	4 days	30	0	Dja Dja Wrung	Unknown
9 nights EASE	none	9 days	24	2	Police	Unknown
8 nights EASE	none	8 days	20	1	Self	Transitional Housing
2 nights motel	8 nights EASE	98 days	17	Pregnant	Unknown	Unknown
8 nights EASE	none	7 days	22	3	Self	Unknown
6 nights EASE	none	31 days	22	2	Self	Unknown
16 nights EASE	5 nights caravan	146 days	19	1	Friends	Public Housing
8 nights EASE	none	Ongoing	24	1	Self	Transitional Housing

In summary, the following points can be made:

- The average stay was 10 nights.
- Half of the women only stayed at EASE properties, 7 also stayed for 1 or 2 nights in a motel and 1 stayed in a caravan park for 5 days.
- The support periods ranged from 4 days to 146 days.
- Fourteen women had between 1 and 4 children, 1 was pregnant and 1 had no children.
- The age range was 17 to 39 years with 7 women under 25.
- Six women referred themselves to EASE, 3 were referred by Police, 1 by Child Protection and the rest by friends and a variety of government and non-government organisations.

- Case notes indicated that 3 women had intervention or restraining orders in place and others had applied unsuccessfully for such orders. Almost all the women relied on the Parenting Payment as their only source of income. The majority had Australia as their birthplace, 2 were Aborigines, and 2 were from England.

At the end of the support period, housing for these women was varied. Only 5 women were in relatively stable housing situations (transitional housing, public housing or renting in the private market). Of the rest, two were staying with friends, one was staying in a caravan, one had returned to her partner and the housing outcomes of the rest were 'unknown'.

Previous experience at EASE would suggest that some of these 'unknowns' fled from Bendigo to escape their violent partners. As well, some of these 'unknowns' probably returned to their partners. It often takes many attempts before women make the final break.

At the same time, it needs to be stressed that the number of women who return to their violent partners (and the number of people who become recurrently homeless) would be less if housing options were available. The practise of EASE (and other SAAP agencies) is to assist all homeless people to apply for transitional and long-term public housing as well as private rental if appropriate. Unfortunately these options are not always available when needed.

Women escaping domestic violence have some of the clearest needs for high quality crisis accommodation which provides security, privacy and reasonable comfort. Short-term accommodation, with accompanying support, clearly has an important role in providing a period of timeout during crisis. It offers the 'change time' which many women need to consider their future living arrangements. As one worker commented, 'the better the crisis response the better position the woman will be in to make good decisions.' Some women only need alternative accommodation for temporary periods. It is not appropriate for them, nor do they wish, to progress from crisis accommodation to transitional housing and then on to public housing.

The same considerations apply to many homeless people other than those escaping domestic violence. By providing insecure, inappropriate and substandard accommodation their crisis can be intensified rather than alleviated.

In summary, the key features of the crisis model of accommodation at EASE are:

- Agency control over occupancy;
- Upkeep organised and managed by agency;
- Period of stay limited to 2 weeks. (This could be longer if there was more accommodation available);
- Everything needed for crisis stay provided; and
- Ongoing support.

EASE estimates that to meet the current demand for crisis accommodation, the service needs the following properties:

- 2 x 2 bedroom units for crisis accommodation for 1 to 2 weeks; and
- 7 x 2 bedroom units for crisis accommodation for 2 to 13 weeks.

5 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the quantitative and qualitative research results of this report.

5.1 DATA-BASED RESEARCH

(Sources are listed in brackets after each point.)

Homeless people in Loddon Mallee Region

- On the night of the 1996 Census there were 1237 homeless people in Loddon Mallee Region. The rates per 10,000 in the statistical divisions of Loddon and Mallee were above those for regional Victoria and for the whole of the state. (ABS)
- In 1998/99, there were 3600 support periods for SAAP clients. As well, there were 4100 casual clients, 1400 clients given one off assistance and 520 clients whose demands for assistance were unmet. (NDCA)
- In 1999/00, there were 2413 HIR contacts who were provided with crisis accommodation. (THM)
- Bendigo was listed as the current LGA of 62% per cent of homeless people. The next highest recordings were in Mildura (10%) and Campaspe (8%). (LOMA CRS)

Target group and services required by target group

- The most common household group presenting to SAAP services was single people (52.9%) followed by single parents (32%) (NDCA)
- More women (70%) than men used SAAP agencies. This gender difference was most pronounced in Bendigo. (LOMA CRS)
- The most common target group was youth (42%) followed by women escaping from domestic violence (20.7%). Other significant groups were Kooris and people with a psychiatric disability. (LOMA CRS)
- Roughly half of homeless people had children. (LOMA CRS)
- The vast majority of HIR contacts were reliant on some form of government allowance as their sole source of income. (THM)
- The percentage of all SAAP clients provided with 'housing/accommodation' fell between 1996/97 and 1998/9. (NDCA)
- Referrals for 'housing/accommodation' on behalf of SAAP clients increased between 1996/7 and 1998/9. (NDCA)
- Referrals for 'counselling and specialist services' on behalf of SAAP clients increased between 1996/7 and 1998/9. (NDCA)
- Most SAAP agencies were cross target apart from agencies for women escaping domestic violence, youth, Kooris and people with a psychiatric disability. (NDCA)
- The percentage of SAAP clients in public housing after support compared to before support increased between 1996/7 and 1998/9, particularly in the last of these years. (NDCA)
- Over the same period, the percentage of SAAP clients in private rental after support compared to before support declined. (NDCA)
- The most common single reason for housing difficulty given by HIR contacts was 'accommodation inadequate' followed by 'eviction/eviction pending'. (THM)
- There were 1794 requests for crisis accommodation by HIR contacts. (THM)

HEF

- In 1999/00, 64.1% of THM's distribution of HEF was expended on crisis accommodation. (Manual data collection, THM)
- Across the Region, at least \$131,000 of HEF is expended annually on crisis.
- Other non-housing organisations such as YSAS and Community Connections spend considerable sums on crisis accommodation.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THEMES RAISED DURING CONSULTATIONS

Comments on current crisis accommodation

Agency workers were aware of a significant number of people sleeping rough. This was mainly in the northern part of the Region where people slept on the banks of the Murray or in parks.

Caravan Parks

Most crisis accommodation was funded by HEF and consisted of caravan, hotels and motels.

Caravan parks had problems in terms of availability, location and suitability. Many workers reported that places were difficult or impossible to find in peak tourist seasons. There were cases of families having to walk long distances to shops, and other caravan parks were too distant from town to be a practical option for people without transport. Caravans were commonly described as cold and subject to condensation problems in winter, and hot in summer. Many were substandard and unhygienic.

Many workers reported discrimination against agency people by caravan park managers.

Caravan parks were particularly unsuitable for single women and women with children due to privacy and security issues in the parks. Women with children were often fearful when they or their children had to walk to toilet blocks in the night.

Agency workers reported that at times they advised homeless people not to stay in caravan parks even though this was the only crisis accommodation available. One described purchased accommodation as so 'horrific' that they sometimes advised people to 'push ahead with your housing application and try and stay put where you are.' Many people, when offered the choice of agency funded accommodation, turned it down because they viewed it as worse than their present situation. Many preferred to stay in their cars or on a couch with friends rather than in a caravan.

Motels

Motel accommodation was generally of a higher standard but lacked cooking facilities. Agencies could generally only fund such accommodation for a day or two.

HEF

Many SAAP agencies commented that lack of sufficient HEF periodically limited their ability to purchase caravan park and motel accommodation.

Some SAAP agencies which were without their own HEF reported that the process of applying for HEF from THM was too time consuming and invasive.

After-hour services

There are only 2 areas in the Region offering after-hours services. One is run by EASE and CASA in Bendigo and the other is an arrangement with local SAAP services, the hospital, the Division of Psychiatry and Police in Mildura.

Aboriginal Cooperatives

Areas serviced by Aboriginal Cooperatives and other areas with a high Aboriginal population such as Echuca, Kerang and Cohuna had an acute shortage of housing, and Aborigines faced a high level of discrimination in the private rental market. Due to this, there were very few viable exits from Cooperative properties. As a result, existing CAP crisis accommodation tend to be used for medium term stays. The response by the Aboriginal community to homelessness was to take people into their homes. This has led to serious overcrowding in Aboriginal houses. As the SAAP worker in Robinvale commented, 'Every Aboriginal house is a crisis house.'

Youth

Both St Luke's Housing Youth Service and EASE commented that there were increasing numbers of young people presenting with housing issues during the last 3 years. Many of these young people are presenting with alcohol and drug problems, mental health issues and behavioural issues. Significant numbers of young women are escaping from domestic violence. The placement of young homeless people in caravans, hotels and motels when they are in crisis is an inadequate response to their needs. Many have poor social connections and do not have the life skills to live independently. The agencies were very concerned that young people, including homeless young women with children, do not have access to crisis accommodation where there is live-in adult support.

In a recent paper on youth homelessness this situation was described as 'a recipe for disaster':
'The arrangements will often quickly breakdown and the young people will seek out connections that are often unsupportive, placing them at further risk. Services are seeing situations where young people will return to abusive and unsafe situations rather than stay in a caravan or hotel room by themselves.
... A poor crisis accommodation arrangement in effect maintains a young person in crisis.'

Domestic violence agencies

Agencies stated that the crisis accommodation they currently managed provided the best response to women who were escaping from domestic violence. Use of caravans and motels had similar problems to other target groups but in some respects they were more pronounced. Most women had children and caravans and motels were particularly inappropriate for them. There were also serious security concerns for these women. Many workers reported women returning to their violent partners due to an inability to sustain their lives in caravan parks. Uncertainty about exits added further pressure to the situation.

People with a psychiatric disability

Homeless people with psychiatric disabilities faced particular difficulties in the use of caravan parks and motels for crisis accommodation. For these people, crisis periods were particularly problematic, involving the sorting out medication, clinical assessment, finances and family contact. Caravan parks were not suitable environments for these people.

Changes over the last 3 years

- Agencies reported increased numbers of homeless people seeking assistance at housing agencies over the past 3 years.
- Accommodation in caravan parks was becoming more difficult to access and more expensive. This was largely due to the trend for caravan parks to become tourist parks.

There were many reports of discrimination against 'agency people'. One SAAP worker in Castlemaine made the following comments:

'They are becoming quite aggressive in saying 'no' to us. Weeding out the people they just don't want. It's incredibly judgmental. People have overstepped the mark sometimes and they have refused crisis accommodation to all. It's the nature of our clients that they are stressed, they are in crisis and they are not functioning too well so the caravan park won't have them. What we then have to do is to start going out of the area ... maybe Daylesford way.'

Both SAAP and THM agency workers remarked on the increased numbers of people with complex needs including psychiatric disabilities, intellectual disabilities and drug and alcohol issues. On the other hand, a minority of workers felt that this had always been the case and that this perception arose from the increased recognition of these problems.

Ideas for improvement

- Many SAAP agencies wanted a return to the system where the agency had management of, or at least nomination rights to, crisis properties.
- There was a common feeling among SAAP and THM workers that crisis accommodation needed to consist of self contained units. Exceptions to this were suggestions of rooming houses for single men and young people with in-house support.
- Most SAAP agencies recommended that short-term crisis accommodation should be free.
- There was a view in SAAP agencies that separation of support from property management lessened the effectiveness of support. On the other hand, one SAAP worker commented that this arrangement made support easier as housing workers did not have to combine support with issues such as rent collection.
- There was support for greater integration of services for homeless people. Housing services were often dealing with people with multiple issues needed assistance from a range of agencies.

Other comments

Shortage of private rental properties and high rents were general across the Region, as were long waiting lists for public housing particularly under Segment 4 (Wait-Turn segment). These factors, as well as the spasmodic availability of transitional housing, contributed to homelessness, some of which was recurring.

There were some cases of accommodation providers in the community supporting agencies and offering material aid as well as accommodation. For example, a group of business people had approached

CADARG and offered to give every new homeless person some free shopping vouchers and free movie tickets, and a motel offered free breakfasts and some free meals.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Crisis Accommodation

Recommendation 1

That the level of unmet need and the inadequate nature of current 'ad hoc' crisis accommodation justify a significant increase in crisis specific accommodation. Features of such accommodation should include:

- immediate access;
- quick turn around;
- no rent for crisis period;
- supply of necessary household items for a crisis stay; and
- adequate resourcing of the managing agency.

Recommendation 2

That all possible means of increasing the supply of crisis accommodation be explored, including:

- the use of transitional housing for both crisis and transitional functions; and
- the acquisition of new crisis accommodation.

Recommendation 3

That the areas of Bendigo, Mildura, Echuca and Robinvale should be given priority in the allocation of new crisis accommodation resources due to their high level of unmet demand.

Recommendation 4

That multiple models of crisis accommodation as well as different management structures need to be developed that acknowledge:

- the work that has already been done in the Region by housing and other agencies as well as in the broader community;
- the needs of all target groups;
- the economic and social diversity within the Region; and
- the need for equitable consultation between housing support agencies and housing providers.

Recommendation 5

That more after-hours services for homeless people requiring crisis accommodation be established across the Region. Innovative models need to be developed to meet the needs of small population centres which are currently without after-hours services of any kind.

Target groups

Recommendation 6

That while all target groups need greater access to better crisis accommodation, the numbers and/or degree of severity of problems with current crisis options justify priority in the allocation of new resources to:

- youth,
- single women with children, including women escaping from domestic violence,
- single people,
- Kooris, and
- people with a psychiatric disability.

Housing Establishment Fund

Recommendation 7

That the increase in the numbers of homeless people should be reflected in an increased Regional allocation of HEF to meet their crisis accommodation needs.

Recommendation 8

That the following changes be made in the way HEF is managed and distributed:

- Each SAAP agency should receive and manage its own allocation of HEF;
- Rigid formulas for the expending of HEF should be set aside to allow greater discretion and flexibility for agencies; and
- Paperwork associated with using HEF should be streamlined to allow better use of agency worker time and information required from clients should be restricted in line with privacy considerations.

Recommendation 9

That in isolated areas where access to housing agencies is difficult or impossible, systems need to be further developed to enable a more widespread distribution of HEF through other services.

Housing and homelessness**Recommendation 10**

That to tackle the causes of homelessness and the bottlenecks in crisis and transitional housing, local, state and federal policy should be directed towards:

- the provision of more transitional housing,
- the provision of more accessible and affordable long term housing;
- the setting of rent assistance at a realistic level to enable greater access to the private rental market for low income people, especially single people, and to reduce the number of evictions; and
- developing standards and guidelines for private rental accommodation with the Real Estate Industry to enable rent assistance for the private rental market to be more effective and sustainable.

The service system**Recommendation 11**

That the service system requires increased resources to provide quality housing and support services to the increasing number of homeless people in this Region.

Recommendation 12

That the current service system requires greater integration to meet the needs of people presenting to housing services with complex and/or multiple needs.

Data collection**Recommendation 13**

That the lack of comparability of data from SAAP, THM, ABS and Centrelink be addressed to enable greater accuracy in future research projects about levels of homelessness and unmet demand for crisis accommodation in this Region.

Recommendation 14

That housing service workers need to be provided with time and training to enable greater compliance with data collection requirements.

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APPENDIX ONE

SAAP services in the Loddon Mallee Region

Bendigo

Loddon Mallee Housing Services (SAAP)

For single people or families over 20 years of age.

EASE

Service for all women who are escaping domestic violence and women under 20 who are pregnant or parenting.

Annie North

Refuge for women outside the Bendigo area who are escaping from domestic violence.

Bendigo Youth Housing Services

Service for young people up to 20 years of age

Whirakee Housing

For people with a psychiatric disability

Castlemaine

Castlemaine and District Accommodation and Resource Group

Also EASE for domestic violence

Echuca

Echuca and District Accommodation Support Services

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation

Also Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach

Gisborne

Gisborne Accommodation Service

Also EASE for domestic violence

Kerang

Northern District Community Health Service

Also EASE for domestic violence

Kyabram

Campaspe Shire - Kyabram

Also EASE for domestic violence

Kyneton, Romsey and Woodend

Cobaw Accommodation

Also EASE for domestic violence

Maryborough

Maryborough District Accommodation Service

Also EASE for domestic violence

Mildura

Mallee Accommodation and Support Program

Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach

Mildura Aboriginal Cooperative

Robinvale

Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative

Also Mallee Accommodation and Support and Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach.

Swan Hill

Mallee Family Care

Mallee Domestic Violence Outreach

Swan Hill and District Aboriginal Cooperative

APPENDIX TWO

**Proposed town by housing required by 'absolutely homeless' people who registered a demand for transitional housing
1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000**

	Number of bedrooms					Total
	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4 bedroom	5+ bedroom	
Echuca	33	29	22	2		86
Kyabram		2	2			4
Campaspe	33	31	24	2	0	90
Maryborough	11	3	3	2		19
Central Goldfields	11	3	3	2		19
Kerang	1	5	5			11
Gannawarra	23	11	11	4	0	49
Bendigo	281	271	115	8		675
Eaglehawk		3				3
Golden Square		1				1
Kangaroo Flat		2	1			3
Strathdale		1				1
Greater Bendigo	281	278	116	8	0	683
Loddon		1				1
Loddon	0	1	0	0	0	1
Mildura	42	52	12	4	1	111
Mildura	42	52	12	4	1	111
Castlemaine	24	6	8			38
Mount Alexander	24	6	8			38
Gisborne	5	1	1			7
Gisborne, Sunbury			1			1
Kyneton	22	4	7			33
Macedon			2			2
Macedon Ranges	10	5	3			18
Romsey		1	4			5
Woodend	4					4
Macedon Ranges	41	11	18	0	0	70
Robinvale		1	1			2
Swan Hill	13	9	23	3		48
Swan Hill	13	10	24	3	0	50
Other				1		1
Grand Total	446	397	210	20	1	1073

Source: LOMA CRS

APPENDIX THREE

Public housing allocations (01-07-99 to 30-06-00)

	Youth	Singles	Older Singles	Older Couples	Small Families	Medium Families	Large Families	Groups	Total
Buloke	1	4	4	1	0	2	1	2	15
Campaspe	5	23	29	3	31	36	5	5	137
Central Goldfields	2	6	6	2	11	21	3	4	54
Gannawarra	7	12	4	0	10	7	3	5	48
Greater Bendigo	13	74	32	15	105	111	22	21	392
Loddon	2	8	4	0	6	2	0	1	22
Macedon Ranges	0	4	3	0	8	11	2	5	32
Mildura	6	33	18	4	47	59	10	6	182
Mount Alexander	1	9	14	1	9	7	0	8	48
Swan Hill	5	10	9	1	22	28	5	4	84
Group Total	42	183	123	27	248	281	49	61	1014
Victorian total	361	1816	1791	400	2478	2868	535	802	11051
Loddon Mallee (% of total)	4.1%	18.0%	12.1%	2.7%	24.4%	27.7%	4.8%	6.0%	100.0%
Metro Regions (% of total)	3.1%	16.9%	17.7%	4.4%	19.2%	24.8%	5.2%	8.8%	100.0%
Non-metro Regions (% of total)	3.4%	15.8%	14.1%	2.6%	27.1%	27.6%	4.3%	5.1%	100.0%
Victoria (% of total)	3.1%	16.3%	16.1%	3.5%	22.3%	25.8%	4.7%	7.1%	100.0%

Source: ISIP

APPENDIX FOUR

Public housing waiting list segments (as of 30.6.00)

	Youth	Singles	Older Singles	Older Couples	Small Families	Medium Families	Large Families	Groups	Totals
Recurrent Homeless	2	2	0	0	2	4	1	1	11
Supported Housing	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
Special Housing Needs	4	2	0	2	13	17	6	3	47
Wait turn	92	357	231	63	542	429	120	111	1945
Other Early Housing	0	4	2	0	0	1	0	0	7
Group Total	98	366	233	65	558	451	127	115	2013
Victorian total	1401	7880	4588	2067	10883	9904	2189	2053	40964
Loddon Mallee (% of total)	4.9%	18.2%	11.6%	3.2%	27.7%	22.4%	6.3%	5.7%	100.0%
Metro Regions (% of total)	3.0%	19.1%	11.2%	5.4%	26.4%	24.6%	5.4%	4.9%	100.0%
Non-metro Regions (% of total)	6.1%	20.2%	11.4%	4.2%	27.9%	21.1%	5.3%	4.9%	100.0%
Victoria (% of total)	3.4%	19.2%	11.2%	5.0%	26.6%	24.2%	5.3%	5.0%	100.0%
Movable Units	0	0	0	1	11	56	0	44	112

Source: ISIP

Notes

This table includes both New and Transfer clients.

The Other Early Housing category refers to relocations for property management reasons such as redevelopment