

Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2010 – 2014

Riverina/Murray



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The development of Regional Homelessness Actions Plans has been funded by the Australian Government and the NSW Government through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

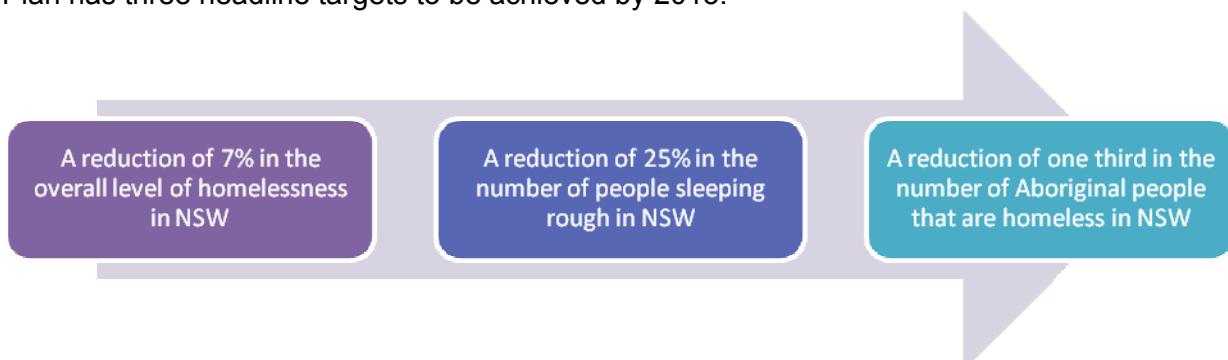
1 REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLANS - OVERVIEW

Regional Homelessness Action Plans (RHAP) are the regional implementation mechanism for the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*. The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* sets the direction for state-wide reform of the homelessness service system to achieve better outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The NSW Homelessness Action Plan is based around three strategic directions:

1. **Preventing homelessness: to ensure that people never become homeless**
2. **Responding effectively to homelessness: to ensure that people who are homeless do not become entrenched in the system**
3. **Breaking the cycle: to ensure that people who have been homeless do not become homeless again**

Consistent with the National Partnership on Homelessness, the NSW Homelessness Action Plan has three headline targets to be achieved by 2013:



Actions to address homelessness take account of different forms of homelessness:

- *Primary homelessness*. Primary homelessness applies when a person lives on the street, sleeps in parks, squats in derelict buildings, or uses cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.
- *Secondary homelessness*. Secondary homelessness is used to describe people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. Secondary homelessness applies to people using emergency accommodation, youth refuges or women's refuges, people residing temporarily with relatives or with friends (because they have no accommodation of their own), and people using boarding houses on an occasional or intermittent basis (up to 12 weeks).

- *Tertiary homelessness.* Tertiary homelessness is used to describe people who live in premises where they don't have the security of a lease guaranteeing them accommodation, nor access to basic private facilities (such as a private bathroom, kitchen or living space). It can include people living in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis (more than 13 weeks) or in caravan parks.

Through the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* and *Regional Homelessness Action Plans* the NSW Government will realign existing effort, increasing the focus of the service system on prevention and early intervention and long-term accommodation and support.

The RHAP should be read in conjunction with:

- *The NSW Homelessness Action Plan*
- *Regional Homelessness Action Plan Planning Framework*
- *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*
- *National Partnership on Homelessness NSW Implementation Plan 2009-2013.*

2 SCOPE OF REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLANS

The NSW Homelessness Action Plan identifies a number of strategies and actions aimed at implementing reform directions in relation to preventing homelessness and moving responses to homelessness towards a greater emphasis on long term housing with support rather than crisis accommodation. A key aim of Regional Homelessness Action Plans is to translate these reform directions into action at the regional level.

Experience suggests that the most effective homelessness plans combine approaches to addressing systemic issues while also supporting place-based initiatives that take account of local homelessness needs. Best practice in the national and international context also suggests that the most effective responses to homelessness involve a collaborative local plan – a framework that guides community-wide efforts to prevent homelessness, provide appropriate support to people who become homeless and stop people from re-entering the homeless system.

Regional Homelessness Actions Plans have been developed to identify effective ways of working locally to respond to local homelessness issues. Regional Homelessness Actions Plans also include local level implementation mechanisms for State-level policy responses to support reform of the homelessness service system as well as regionally-specific projects that reflect the characteristics of local homelessness, informed by evidence about successful strategies.

Regional Homelessness Actions Plans have been developed in the NSW Regional Coordination Program (RCP) regions. There are ten Regional Homelessness Action Plans in NSW, one in each of the nine Regional Coordination Program Regions, with two plans for Western region – Riverina/Murray and Western NSW. RHAPs have been developed in:

1. Central Coast
2. Coastal Sydney
3. Greater Western Sydney
4. Hunter
5. Illawarra
6. New England/North West
7. North Coast
8. South East
9. Riverina/Murray
10. Western NSW

Regional Homelessness Action Plans cover a four year period, 2010-2014.

2.1 REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

Regional Homelessness Action Plans aim to:

1. Identify actions for implementation at the regional level that reflect the principles and reform directions of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*
2. Ensure that identified actions reflect the particular characteristics of homelessness in the region and build on successful local strategies and partnerships
3. Identify regional projects for funding under the National Partnership on Homelessness for 2010-2013.

Regional Homelessness Action Plans also aim to play a number of other roles:

- Supporting the implementation of local priorities and actions
- Facilitating regional service reform and more integrated service system responses
- Providing a process to document effective local approaches to add to the evidence base
- Providing a tool to collect regional homelessness data and descriptions of the service system
- Building cross sector and cross agency cooperation in responding to homelessness and contributing to raising the profile of homelessness as a central concern for the community

2.2 REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN WORKSHOPS

In NSW no one agency is responsible for delivering responses to homelessness, rather a wide range of agencies and services are part of the homelessness service system including:

- **Specialist homelessness services** with expertise in providing crisis and ongoing support services to homeless people.
- **Specialist services** providing support for people with particular issues such as mental health issues or drug and alcohol issues or disability.
- **Mainstream services** used by everyone in the community and provided predominantly by government agencies.

To support the regional planning process, representatives from across the homelessness service system were invited to participate in Regional Homelessness Action Planning Workshops. An electronic submission process was also available for stakeholders who were unable to attend workshops.

Workshops were held in each of the RCP regions, with two workshops held in Western region.

Four Aboriginal specific workshops were held in:

- Coastal Sydney
- Greater Western Sydney
- North Coast
- Western NSW

The workshops focused on identifying:

- priority homelessness target groups in the region
- issues and gaps in the regional service system within a homelessness reform context
- existing effective responses and initiatives to homelessness in the region that could be expanded or duplicated
- key strategic actions and partnerships to support reform directions at the regional level
- potential projects for funding under years 2 to 4 of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

The workshop outcomes and comments received through the submission process were key inputs into the development of the Regional Homelessness Action Plan. Plans will be further refined by Regional Homelessness Committees, over the four year implementation period.

2.3 REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS COMMITTEES

Regional Homelessness Committees have been established to support the development and implementation of Regional Homelessness Action Plans. Regional Homelessness Committees will operate for the duration of the NSW Homelessness Action Plan.

Regional Homelessness Committees will act as a point of referral for existing local homelessness committees and interagency groups on systemic issues. Local committees and groups will also provide advice and information to Regional Homelessness Committees on local service provision and emerging issues.

Regional Homelessness Committees are chaired by Housing NSW and include representation from government, the non-government sector and the broader community. Regional Homelessness Committees will report to the NSW Homelessness Interagency Committee on the implementation of Regional Homelessness Action Plans. This role will include the identification of systemic issues that require consideration and action at regional and central policy levels.

The NSW Homelessness Interagency Committee is a State-level multi government agency group chaired by Housing NSW. It includes the key agencies in the Human Services, Justice and Attorney General's, Health, Education and Premier and Cabinet Departments. The Committee reports to the Justice and Human Services Chief Executive Officers Group and is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the NSW Homelessness Action Plan and the National Partnership on Homelessness NSW Implementation Plan.

Riverina Murray Regional Homelessness Committee

The Riverina Murray Regional Homelessness Committee includes representatives from the following agencies and organisations:

- Juvenile Justice
- Division of Community Housing
- Housing NSW
- Legal Aid
- Community Services
- SAAP sector representative
- NSW Police
- Ageing Disability & Home Care
- NSW Health
- Department of Premier & Cabinet
- Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Riverina Medical & Dental representing a non Government Indigenous service provider

3 RIVERINA/MURRAY HOMELESSNESS PROFILE

3.1 OVERVIEW

The Riverina Murray region consists of 28 LGAs:

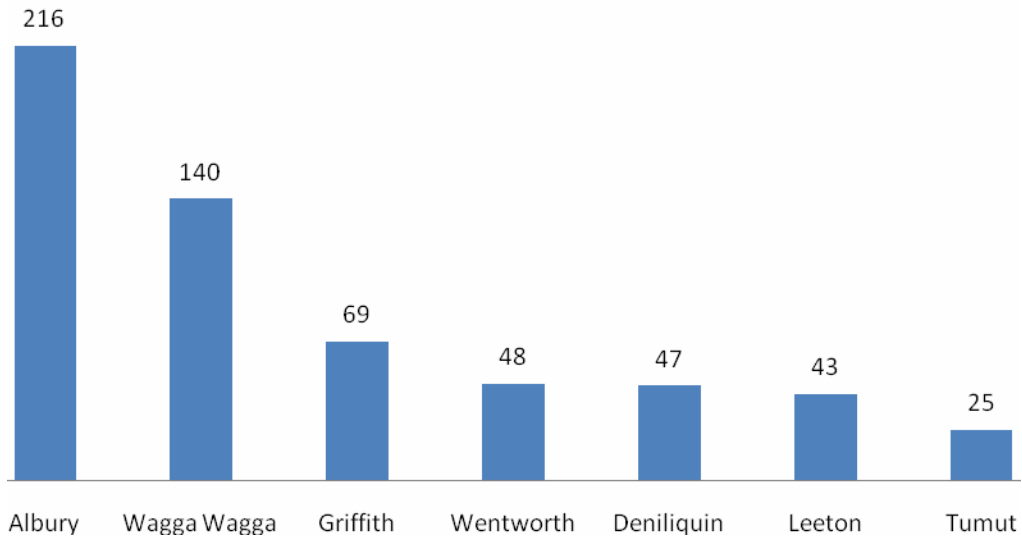
Albury	Greater Hume	Narrandera
Balranald	Griffith	Temora
Berrigan	Gundagai	Tumbarumba
Bland	Hay	Tumut
Carrathool	Jerilderie	Urana
Conargo	Junee	Wagga Wagga
Coolamon	Leeton	Wakool
Cootamundra	Lockhart	Wentworth
Corowa	Murray	
Deniliquin	Murrumbidgee	

At the 2006 Census Riverina Murray had a population of 257819 persons. The 2006 Census counted 1249 people as homeless in Riverina Murray (excluding caravan parks – see section 3.2 below). The total included 264 Indigenous homeless. Riverina Murray accounted for 5% of the homeless population in 2006. The rate of homelessness in Riverina Murray in 2006 was 48 persons per 10,000 persons compared to 42 per 10,000 persons for NSW as a whole.

The 2006 Census counted 216 homeless households¹ in Albury followed by 140 in Wagga Wagga. There were smaller numbers in Griffith, Wentworth, Deniliquin, Leeton and Tumut as shown in Figure 1 below. Small numbers were also counted in other LGAs in the region

¹ Housing NSW has prepared estimates of the number of homeless households based on ABS Census 2006 data which aggregates data on the basis of the number of homeless persons. The total number of homeless households is less than the total number of homeless persons.

FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS BY LGA RIVERINA MURRAY



Source: Housing NSW – estimate of homeless households by LGA based on 2006 Census

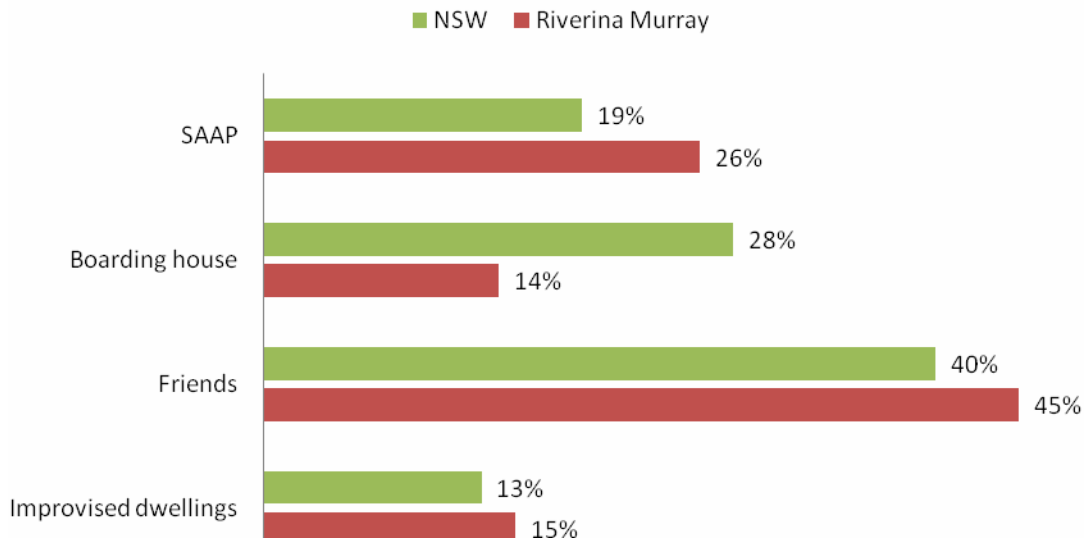
3.2 TYPES OF HOMELESSNESS

The 2006 Census includes the following categories in the definition of homeless:

Improvised dwellings	Sheds, tents, humpies, derelict buildings and people sleeping rough in parks, cars and public places
Friends	People staying with friends and relatives on a temporary basis, sometimes referred to as “couch surfers”
Boarding houses	Single room accommodation without a private bathroom or kitchen or security of tenure
SAAP	Services funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program including emergency shelters, hostels and refuges

Figure 2 below shows the distribution of these types of homelessness in Riverina Murray at the 2006 Census based on the number of homeless persons in each type.

FIGURE 2: TYPES OF HOMELESSNESS RIVERINA MURRAY



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Counting the Homeless, 2009 Canberra. Data has been aggregated into the RCP Riverina/Murray region

With the exception of boarding houses Riverina Murray has a greater proportion of homeless people in all forms of dwellings than NSW as a whole particularly SAAP. Twenty six per cent of homeless people in Riverina Murray were in SAAP accommodation compared to 19% for NSW as a whole. Fifteen per cent of homeless people in Riverina Murray were in improvised dwellings compared to 13% for the state as a whole. Riverina Murray also had higher proportions of homeless people staying with friends than NSW as a whole. Forty five per cent of homeless people in Riverina Murray were staying with friends compared to 40% for NSW as a whole.

There were 238 marginal caravan park renters in Riverina Murray counted in the 2006 Census which was 5% of the total number of marginal renters in NSW. Marginal caravan park residents are defined by the ABS as people renting caravans as their usual address with non one in the household having full time work.

Marginal caravan park residents are not generally included in the definition of homeless because of difficulties in distinguishing between people who choose to live in caravans and those who are forced to do so by circumstances. If marginal caravan park renters were included in the definition of homeless, they would account for 18% of homeless people in Riverina Murray.

3.3 INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS

AIHW analysis² indicates that in 2006 13% of Indigenous homeless people were located in the Riverina Murray region. In Riverina Murray the rate of Indigenous homeless is 134 per 10,000 persons compared to 46 per 10,000 persons for non Indigenous.

Indigenous homeless people in Riverina Murray are much more likely to be in SAAP accommodation than non Indigenous. Forty six per cent of Indigenous homeless in the Riverina Murray were in SAAP accommodation compared to 13% of non Indigenous.

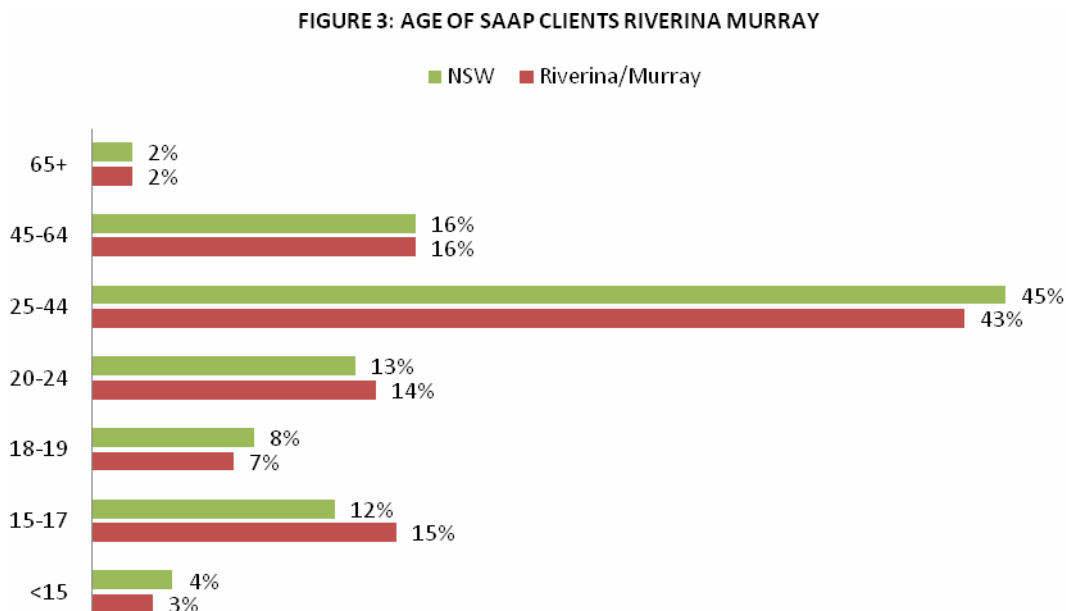
Riverina Murray had a higher proportion of Indigenous SAAP clients compared to NSW as a whole³. Nineteen per cent of SAAP clients were Indigenous compared to the state average of 15%.

3.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF SAAP CLIENTS

About 19% of people defined as homeless use SAAP services. The following tables compare data on SAAP clients in Riverina Murray with NSW as a whole based on the SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008⁴.

Age of SAAP clients

Figure 3 below compares the ages of SAAP clients in Riverina Murray with SAAP clients in NSW as a whole.



Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the Riverina/Murray RCP region

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Counting the Homeless*, 2009 Canberra

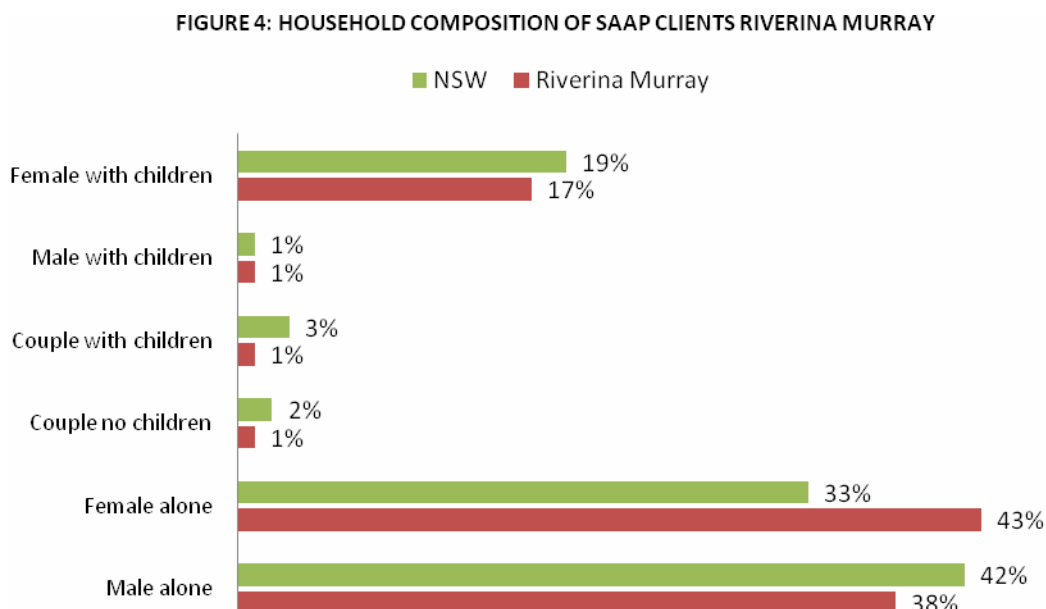
³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Counting the Homeless*, 2009 Canberra

⁴ SAAP NDCA data is generally aggregated by Community Services NSW regions. For this plan data was re-aggregated according to RCP regions

SAAP clients in the Riverina Murray have a similar age demographics to NSW as a whole with the exception of a higher proportion of SAAP clients aged 15-17 years – 15% compared to 12% for NSW as a whole and a lower proportion of SAAP clients aged 25-44 years – 43% compared to the state average of 45%.

Household composition of SAAP clients

Figure 4 below compares the household composition of SAAP clients in Riverina Murray with SAAP clients for NSW as a whole.



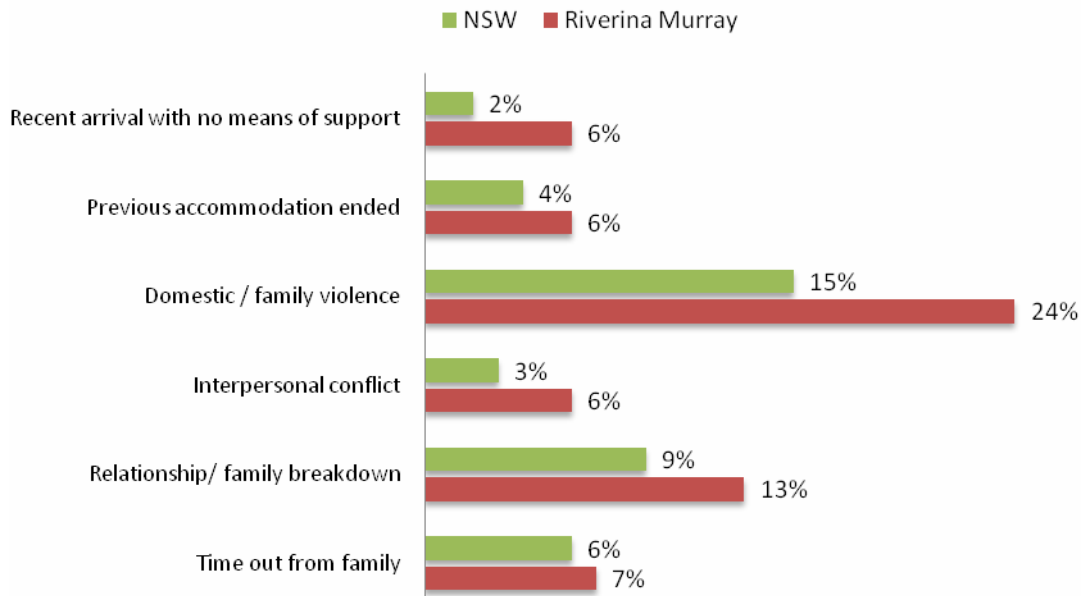
Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the Riverina/Murray RCP region

Riverina Murray has a much greater proportion of single females compared to the state average. Forty three per cent of SAAP clients in Riverina Murray were single females compared to 33% for NSW as a whole. There were lower proportions of single males and single women with children than the state average.

Main reasons for seeking SAAP assistance

Figure 5 below shows the top six reasons for seeking SAAP assistance in Riverina Murray compared to NSW as whole. As shown, the primary reason for seeking assistance in Riverina Murray is domestic and family violence at 24% compared to the state average of 15%. Riverina Murray also had higher than average rates of “relationship breakdown” and “interpersonal conflict” than NSW as a whole. Taken together, family-related reasons for seeking assistance accounted for 50% of the main reasons for seeking assistance in Riverina Murray. Previous accommodation ended was the main reason for seeking assistance in 6% of cases in Western NSW compared to 4% for NSW as a whole.

FIGURE 5: TOP SIX REASONS FOR SEEKING SAAP ASSISTANCE RIVERINA MURRAY

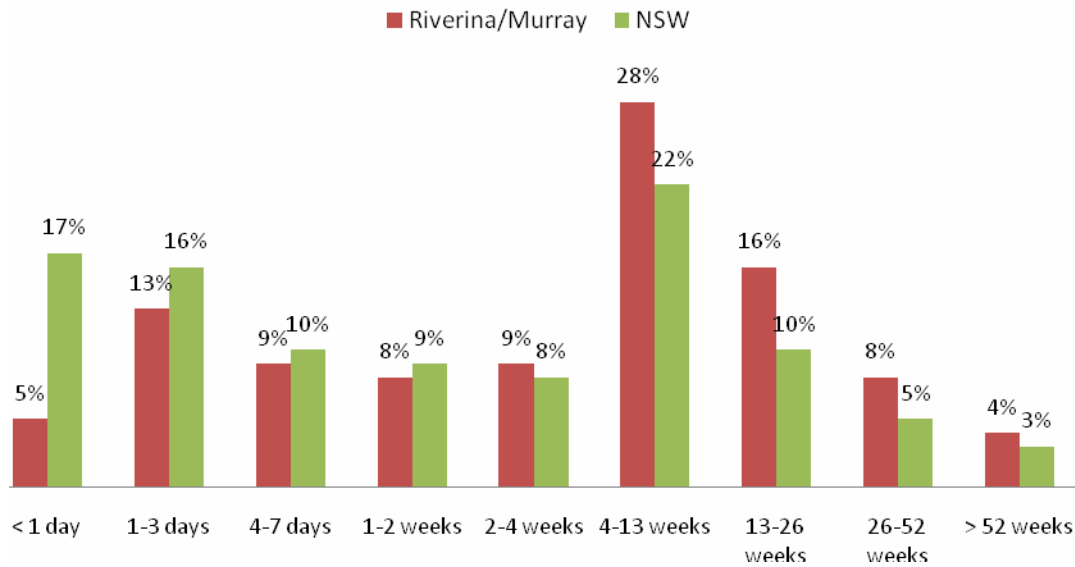


Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the Riverina/Murray RCP region

Length of support period by SAAP services

Figure 6 below compares the length of support period for SAAP clients in Riverina Murray with NSW as a whole.

FIGURE 6: LENGTH OF SAAP CLIENT SUPPORT RIVERINA MURRAY



Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the Riverina/Murray RCP region

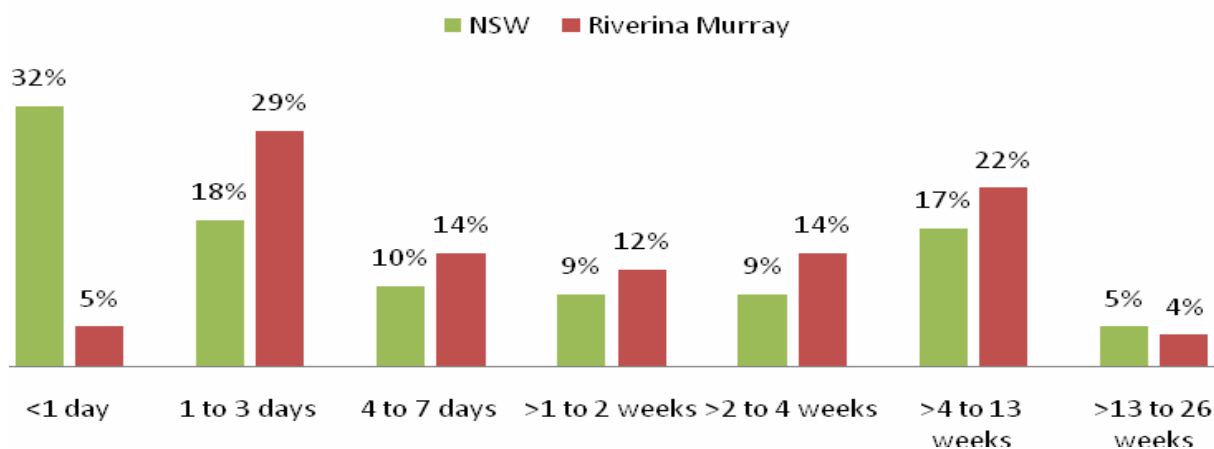
SAAP clients in Riverina Murray tend to use services for longer periods compared to state averages. Twenty eight per cent of SAAP clients receive services for 4 to 13 weeks compared to 22% for NSW as a whole. Sixteen per cent of SAAP clients in Riverina Murray receive services for 13-26 weeks compared to 10% for NSW as a whole.

Overall, 56% of SAAP clients in Riverina Murray receive services for more than 4 weeks compared to 40% for NSW as a whole.

Length of SAAP accommodation⁵

As shown in Figure 7, people using SAAP accommodation in Riverina Murray stay for longer periods than the state average. 22% of SAAP clients in Riverina Murray stay for 4 to 13 weeks compared to 17% for NSW as a whole. Overall 66% of people using SAAP accommodation stay for 7 days or longer compared to 50% for NSW as a whole.

FIGURE 7 LENGTH OF SAAP ACCOMMODATION RIVERINA MURRAY



Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the Riverina/Murray RCP region

⁵ Based on closed support periods

4 HOMELESSNESS SERVICE SYSTEM STRENGTHS, GAPS AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The Riverina Murray workshop was held in four venues simultaneously through video link. These venues were Wagga Wagga, Albury, Griffith and Deniliquin.

Across the four venues there were a total of 35 representatives from local agencies and services with a role to play in preventing and responding to homelessness. A list of organisations and agencies who attended the workshop is included at Appendix 1.

The workshop identified key target groups as well as the role of local and state-wide responses to homelessness as outlined below.

4.1 TARGET GROUPS

A number of target groups were identified through the workshop process. Target groups identified included:

- Young people
- Aboriginal homeless
- Families escaping domestic violence
- Single homeless women
- Rough sleepers
- People with complex needs
- People exiting institutional care, particularly corrections

Based on discussion at the workshop and the data analysis, key target groups are:

- Young people
- Aboriginal homeless
- Families escaping domestic violence
- Single homeless women
- Rough sleepers

4.2 LOCAL RESPONSES TO HOMELESSNESS

Local responses to homelessness include a range of SAAP funded projects as well as initiatives focused on strengthening service relationships and improved service coordination. These projects and initiatives are outlined below. State wide initiatives that have local benefits in relation to homelessness are also outlined.

Overview of Riverina Murray SAAP funded projects

There are currently 16 SAAP funded projects in the Riverina/Murray Region⁶. Most of the SAAP services are located in Albury (31%) and Wagga Wagga (31%) LGAs.

Thirty one per cent of SAAP services in this region are targeted towards women with/without children escaping domestic violence. Similarly, 31% of services support young homeless people and services targeting single men account for 19% of all projects in the region.

There are more services targeting youth in Albury and Wagga Wagga than in the other LGAs; 40% of services in each of these LGA's are aimed at young people. Services providing support to women with/without children escaping domestic violence are distributed evenly across the different LGAs in the region.

The distribution of SAAP services across the Riverina/Murray region according to target group is shown in the Table below.

Target Group	No. of services	%
Women and women with children escaping domestic violence	5	31
Young people	5	31
Single men	3	19
Families including single parent families	2	13
Single women	1	6
Total	16	100

NB: The percentages shown above relate to the number of projects not the distribution of funding to target groups
Source: Community Services NSW, SAAP funded services have been aggregated into the Riverina/Murray RCP region

In addition to SAAP services it was noted that there are a wide range of charitable, non-government and government services providing assistance to people at risk of homelessness in the Riverina/Murray region.

Other models and approaches

Workshop participants identified a number of existing models and approaches to address homelessness in the Riverina/Murray that reflect homelessness reform objectives. Examples of these include the following:

Peppers Illicit Drug Program

A therapeutic community residential setting for people recovering from drug abuse (part of Calvary Health Care Riverina). Funding has been provided through the National Illicit Drug Program.

Centacare Family Services

Centacare Family Services Wagga Wagga provides a range of family support services including the Family Relationships Services Program, School Liaison and Family Support Service, Children and Separating Parents service, Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Scheme, Personal Support Program, Parent Consult Service and a Parenting Development Project. These services aim to contribute to early intervention and prevention of homelessness.

⁶ Data on the distribution of SAAP funded services in NSW was supplied by Community Services NSW. The data was aggregated into the RCP regions.

Interagencies and networks

Interagencies and network meetings were seen by workshop participants as supporting better coordination of the homelessness service system. Some examples of these mechanisms include:

- Riverina SAAP Interagency
- Albury Supported Accommodation and Women's Health Network
- Child and Family networks and interagencies in Tumut, Balranald, Albury, Wagga Wagga, Deniliquin, Griffith
- Corowa/Rutherglen Interagency
- Dareton/Wentworth Two Rivers Interagency
- Greater Hume Interagency Network

4.3 STATE WIDE PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Addressing homelessness requires a range of strategies and approaches. State-wide programs and partnerships have been developed over time to provide responses to particular target groups such as people with mental illness or to provide particular forms of support such as financial assistance. Each of these programs and partnerships support the NSW Homelessness Action Plan.

The workshop and submissions highlighted the following examples of existing programs and partnerships:

Accommodation and support

The NSW Housing and Human Services Accord Agreement

The NSW Housing and Human Services Accord Agreement was developed as a shared policy commitment by NSW Housing and NSW Human Services Agencies to help mutual clients with complex needs to live independently and maintain their tenancies including people with disabilities, people with mental health problems and vulnerable families needing access to secure housing.

The Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI)

HASI is a partnership program funded by the NSW Government that facilitates access to long-term housing linked to specialist support for people with mental illness. HASI was identified by workshop participants as a model that represented an effective cross-agency response that could potentially be expanded locally.

Housing NSW Temporary Accommodation

The Temporary Accommodation program provides short term accommodation in low cost hotels, motels and caravan parks for people who are experiencing a housing crisis.

Private Rental Brokerage Service (PRBS) and Tenancy Guarantee

The Private Rental Brokerage Service helps people who have support arrangements in place, to find and sustain accommodation in the private rental market. People who have a physical or mental illness, drug or alcohol problems, a physical or intellectual disability or other complex needs may be eligible for this service. The Tenancy Guarantee is a surety issued to agents/landlords against damage or arrears to encourage them to grant tenancies to people who might otherwise be denied access to the private rental market.

National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS)

The National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) is an Australian Government initiative to stimulate the supply of new affordable rental dwellings by up to 50 000 by June 2012. Subsidies will be used to increase the supply of affordable rental dwellings. Dwellings will be rented for 20% below market rents.

A Place To Call Home

A Place To Call Home is a joint initiative by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments which assists homeless people to move directly into permanent housing. They receive tenancy and other support services for the first 12 months to help them address the issues that led to homelessness, and reintegrate with the broader community.

Homelessness Prevention

The Anti Social Behaviour Pilot Program (ASBP)

The ASBP Project is intended to improve case coordination across ASBP Participating Agencies and management of complex cases and crisis cases involving children, young people and families. This Program was seen to represent a successful model for effective cross-sector collaboration.

Keep Them Safe

Keep Them Safe is a five-year cross agency Action Plan that aims to re-shape the way family and community services are delivered in NSW to improve the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. Keep Them Safe includes actions to enhance the universal service system, improve early intervention services, better protect children at risk, support Aboriginal children and families, and strengthen partnerships with non-government organisations (NGOs) in the delivery of community services. Strategies and protocols put in place at the local level as part of Keep Them Safe were seen by workshop participants as successful in strengthening joint planning and collaborative responses.

Headspace

Established in 2006 under the Federal Government's Promoting Mental Health – Youth Mental Health initiative, headspace is Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation. The headspace mission is to deliver improvements in the mental health, social wellbeing and economic participation of young Australians aged 12-25. It aims to be the focal point for youth mental health issues across the country.

CommuniCare 5000

CommuniCare 5000 is a program funded under the Mental Health Community Based Program – a Commonwealth Government initiative to support individuals, families, carers and communities who are affected by mental health issues. Using a case management approach, this program provides flexible support tailored to the needs of families, individuals and carers using targeted brokerage funding.

Reconnect

Reconnect is an initiative funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs as a community based early intervention program for young people aged 12 to 18 years, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families. Reconnect uses family focused early intervention strategies to help the young person achieve family reconciliation and improve their level of engagement with work, education, training and the community.

Brighter Futures

Delivered by 14 lead agencies across NSW and DoCS caseworkers, the Brighter Futures program helps connect families to the services they need by providing targeted support to vulnerable children and families. The program aims to build the resilience of families and children that are at risk.

Financial assistance

Crisis Payments available through Centrelink

Crisis Payments assist people experiencing severe financial hardship because of extreme circumstance such as domestic violence or a natural disaster, release from gaol or psychiatric confinement, or new arrivals to Australia on a qualifying humanitarian visa.

Rentstart (Housing NSW)

Rentstart provides financial assistance for people who have found private rental accommodation but need financial assistance to meet bond payments and in some cases, advance rent.

4.4 SERVICE SYSTEM ISSUES AND GAPS

The regional homelessness workshop and submission process identified the following homelessness service system issues and gaps for Western Riverina/Murray:

Service Coordination

- Uniform approaches to identifying and responding to accommodation issues are needed. Practical responses and referral pathways need to be developed incorporating all relevant services in the region.
- Service integration and communication could be improved as there is often confusion about the range of supports available to people at risk of homelessness for example some participants reported confusion around HNSW policies and procedures, particularly in relation to access and entitlements.
- There is a shortage of support services in the region and current services are stretched. The location of services in the major service centres results in poor service access for communities in smaller LGAs.

Institutional Exits

- A gap in transitional housing was identified by workshop participants for people exiting institutional care, particularly Corrections. It was noted that permanent housing for people exiting prison is a growing area of need in many regional areas that include prison populations.
- Early discharge planning including access to outreach support services is needed to develop the service system network and exit pathways for people leaving correctional facilities.
- A multi-disciplinary approach providing flexible, diverse, in-house and practical support is needed for young people exiting care/institutions. Individual care plans are needed which can be supported 24 hours.

Domestic Violence

- Women and children escaping domestic violence continue to be a high needs group in the Riverina Murray area. It was noted that families leaving public housing due to violence need support that is tailored to their immediate and long-term housing needs.

Access to Affordable and Appropriate Long-Term Housing

- Access to affordable housing is a key issue in the Riverina/Murray region, particularly for aged single men who live in poor quality caravan parks and those who rent privately in a market where housing stock is limited and rent rises are common.
- A lack of support services for young people with complex needs (including domestic violence) has resulted in high numbers of runaways and those that self-harm. There is a lack of appropriate accommodation options for children over 14 years of age who are accompanying adults in a family experiencing domestic violence and are at risk of becoming homeless.

- There is a need for more integrated responses to homelessness through for example, developing linkages between homelessness services and real estate agents

Mental Illness

- Responding to the housing needs of people with complex issues is a key challenge which is intensified by distance between services and geographical isolation in some areas of the region.
- A shortage in appropriate health services and a lack of understanding of the needs of people with mental illness has been identified as contributing to homelessness for this client group. Clinical psychiatric services are not readily available and access to these is restricted to a limited number of bulk billing doctors.
- There is a shortage of accommodation options for single men with complex needs, particularly those with drug and alcohol, mental illness or trauma issues.

Preventing Homelessness

- Early intervention and prevention approaches in the Riverina/Murray need to be strengthened.
- Prevention and early intervention needs an increased focus on providing assistance to Aboriginal women with children, and providing tenancy support to reduce rates of eviction.
- Improving relationships with Real Estate agents needs to occur in order to assist people with a poor tenancy history who may be listed on the Tenancy Information Centre of Australia (TICA) database to gain access to and sustain private rental housing.

Youth Homelessness

- There is a shortage of youth specific housing stock and limited tenancy support services available to assist young homeless men.
- The region is lacking dedicated outreach workers to provide early intervention and outreach support to young people who are in need of assistance to sustain their tenancy.
- Accommodation and support strategies are needed to assist young people exiting juvenile justice re-engage with their families or establish independent and sustainable living arrangements.

5 PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION 2010-2014

Through a process of prioritisation of issues, the Regional Homelessness Action Plan Workshop identified the following four priorities for the Riverina Murray RHAP 2010-2014:

- People with complex needs
- Access to long-term and affordable housing
- Young people
- People exiting institutions

These priority areas aim to give effect to homelessness reform directions and targets set out in the NSW Homelessness Action Plan.

5.1 PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

Assisting homeless people with complex needs sustain their tenancies through access to appropriate supports are recognised as key strategies that can help to prevent homelessness. Preventative approaches are recognised as cost effective, delivering support to greater numbers of people compared to the intensive higher cost interventions required to help people exit entrenched cycles of homelessness.

What the research⁷ says

- Multi-disciplinary case management involving mainstream and specialist services leads to positive housing and social outcomes for people who are homeless.
- Post-housing support is critical for maintaining stable accommodation, and beginning the process of social integration
- ‘Streets to home’ and ‘housing first’ programs demonstrate that provision of immediate permanent housing for chronically homeless people with complex needs is more effective than treatment-linked temporary accommodation

5.2 ACCESS TO LONG-TERM AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Providing long-term housing, rather than transitional or short-term accommodation was identified as a critical service system change that offered better long-term outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Meeting the demand for long-term housing and support presents a number of challenges including access to appropriate housing stock and development of effective and practical partnerships between housing providers, government and non-

⁷ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute *Evidence to Inform NSW Homelessness Action Plan Priorities 2009-2010*, May 2009

government services to deliver the support an individual needs to sustain their tenancy in the long term.

Access to long-term housing: what the research says

- There is evidence to conclude that programs to assist homeless people, including providing appropriate housing, can result in direct cost-savings to government, and provide broader benefits to the individual and the community.
- Housing affordability is a significant issue for many groups, but particularly for women who are trying to leave violent relationships. Without permanent housing options, women may feel they have to choose between returning to the violent relationship or homelessness
- Permanent supportive housing has greater benefits than transitional accommodation for people who are homeless

5.3 YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people are identified as one of the key target groups of the NSW Homelessness Action.

Youth homelessness - what the research says

- Experiencing homelessness under 18 is a significant risk for longer term homelessness
- Assertive school welfare programs with strong links to community agencies can help prevent homelessness in school children
- Young people without complex needs may benefit from secure accommodation integrated with support to maintain ties with mainstream education and employment, and develop independent living skills and confidence, through for example Foyer models
- Intensive support for independent living programs may be more appropriate for early intervention with young people that have complex needs
- Rural and regional young people have strong connections to place and community

5.4 PEOPLE EXITING INSTITUTIONS

Preventing exits into homelessness from institutional care settings requires effective case coordination and discharge planning to ensure people receive access to appropriate support services and secure long-term accommodation.

Exiting institutions - what the research says

- Coordination and planning prior to an institutional exit are critical to ensure that housing needs are considered and options explored
- Comprehensive support to address the range of issues and challenges faced by the individual is required pre/during/after institutionalisation.
- Support to access housing is critical to an effective preventative response.

6 ACTIONS TO ADDRESS PRIORITY ISSUES

Actions under this plan focus on the four priority areas:

- Access to long-term and affordable housing
- People with complex needs
- Young people
- People exiting institutions

State-wide action on implementing service system reform will be undertaken in parallel to regional actions. This work will support regional efforts and aid in further developing regional plans.

6.1 PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

A key action to support people with complex needs is the Riverina/Murray project funded under the National Partnership on Homelessness⁸: **Rural interagency homelessness project for people with complex needs**

The project will focus on working with chronically homeless people to facilitate their move to long term accommodation with support as well as to provide an early intervention response to homelessness. The project will include coordinated case management and multi-disciplinary teams across locations and agencies, and access to supportive housing. The project also aims to improve health outcomes for homeless people and reduce presentations by homeless people to health facilities.

The project also includes access to outreach legal support. Research undertaken by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre in NSW identified that there is a gap between the legal needs of the homeless population and legal services available. Legal Aid NSW has established Homeless Outreach Clinics across the Riverina/Murray area. These clinics are designed to be accessible and are held in places where homeless people frequent or access other services. Solicitors at these clinics provide free advice, minor assistance and representation where required.

The project will assist 80 people with complex needs in the Riverina. .

Additional Areas for Action

- Develop and implement shared service delivery protocols between health, housing and specialist homelessness services to assist clients with multiple needs
- Adopt early case management approaches utilizing services that target the specific needs of clients such as drugs and alcohol and/or mental health issues

⁸ National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness NSW Implementation Plan 2009-2013, Year 1

6.2 ACCESS TO LONG-TERM AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Areas for Action

- Where appropriate private rental housing is available, provide short term subsidies and support to establish and maintain private rental housing.
- In partnership with specialist services identify appropriate accommodation options and opportunities through the stimulus package for housing for all population groups including for those who are ageing, have a disability or mental illness.
- Engage Local Government in identifying housing supply and development opportunities, for example through local land and environment planning regulations
- Strengthen linkages and assessment processes between mainstream and specialist services and facilitate client access to housing and information about the range of services and housing options available.
- Identify opportunities to adopt a 'housing first' program providing permanent housing to homeless people with complex issues in a supported environment.
- Work with Aboriginal organisations and mainstream services to improve linkages between housing and support services
- Work with non-Aboriginal organisations and services to increase the provision of culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Develop relationships between community housing providers and Aboriginal organisations to improve access to social housing and tenancy support for Aboriginal people
- Through homelessness interagency networks identify opportunities for specialist and mainstream agencies to more effectively target clients who may be at risk of homelessness but who have not yet accessed specialist services.
- Develop cross sector training and development approaches to improve identification of people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness

6.3 YOUNG PEOPLE

Areas for Action

- Provide support and access to services relevant to young people exiting juvenile justice facilities and their families through multi-sector strategic partnerships and brokerage funding
- Facilitate coordinated discharge planning and access to housing with support for young people leaving corrections and care arrangements
- Facilitate access for Aboriginal young people leaving care or exiting correctional facilities to employment and pre-employment programs

6.4 PEOPLE EXITING INSTITUTIONS

A key action to support people exiting institutions is the Riverine/Murray project funded under the National Partnership on Homelessness⁹: **Vulnerable Young People Exiting Juvenile Justice**

2006 Census and SAAP NDCA data indicates that clients in the Riverina Murray are younger than the NSW average and are residing in SAAP accommodation for longer than the NSW average. 13% of Aboriginal homeless people are located in the Riverina Murray. This project will provide intensive support and accommodation to young people with complex needs exiting Juvenile Justice custody or at risk of entering custody while on community based orders due to homelessness; or needing an exit from SAAP services. Priority will be given to Aboriginal young people. Support will include the provision of stable housing, intensive support and a focus on supporting young people to access education and employment and reduce recidivism. The project will also focus on ensuring cross-agency collaboration to improve discharge planning policies and accommodation support processes for the target client group. Estimated client numbers: 35

Additional Areas for Action

- Develop and implement discharge planning procedures identifying transitional or permanent accommodation for people exiting institutional care.
- Strengthen mainstream services to develop discharge plans for Aboriginal people through consultation with specialist Aboriginal services where possible

⁹ National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness NSW Implementation Plan 2009-2013, Years 2 – 4

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase access to legal services for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to prevent legal issues from compounding. - increase collaborative service delivery across government agencies in responding to homelessness - resolve/recommend changes to existing service system for system reform 	<p>Legal Aid NSW</p> <p>Regional Homelessness Committee</p>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify the extent of couch surfers focusing on clients aged 18-24 years and establish referral processes for access to mainstream services. 	Regional Homelessness Committee		Scope methodology	Produce report. Trial referral pathways	Review and adjust trials and recommend model

Priority Focus Area (2): Access to long term and affordable housing
<p>NSW Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase the supply and improve the condition of affordable social housing</i> • <i>Provide models of accommodation with support that are suitable for different target groups</i>

Actions	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
			6 months	1 year	3 years
<p>2.1 Establish local homelessness forums in large LGAs. Local forums are to include a range of housing and homelessness stakeholders including REAs/REI, Local council including planners.</p> <p>Strategies to provide administrative support to these groups to be determined.</p>	Housing NSW	<p>Regional Homelessness Committee</p> <p>Local government</p>	<p>Determine potential membership and locations, invite local participation</p> <p>Hold initial meetings</p>	Develop schedule of meetings and work plans	Review operation and outcomes
<p>2.2 Develop strategies to increase access to the private rental market:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and develop relationships with local real estate agents • Establish and develop relationships with 	Housing NSW	Real estate agents Aboriginal services Support providers	Scope project		

<p>local support providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on increasing the capacity of local real estate agents to assist Aboriginal people in accessing this market. • Expand the Private Rental Brokerage Scheme to Griffith 					
<p>2.3 Adopt a 'housing first' approach to a proportion of NBESP properties to provide long term housing for homeless clients including SAAP clients needing to exit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the support needs of these clients. • Develop MOU/SLA with support providers. 	Housing NSW	Community Services	Scope potential application of 'housing first' approach		
<p>2.4 Develop stronger linkages with the Aboriginal community to improve access to affordable housing for Aboriginal people</p> <p>2.5 Actively promote housing services at Aboriginal community events and networks.</p> <p>2.6 Ensure culturally appropriate services</p> <p>2.7 Aboriginal staff to focus on information sharing and identifying culturally appropriate service provision across agencies.</p>	Housing NSW	Aboriginal Affairs Non government Aboriginal services	Scope project		

Priority Focus Area (3): Young people

NSW Priorities

- Support young people to reconcile with their families, where possible
- Support young people to maintain connection with education, training and employment
- Ensure staff from mainstream and specialist support services identify young homeless people, assess their needs and make appropriate referrals

Actions	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
			6 months	1 year	3 years
3.1 Identify the extent of young people (under 18 years) that are couch surfing and establish referral processes for access to mainstream services.	Community Services	Youth services	Scope action and methodology	Produce report. Trial referral pathways	Review and adjust trials and recommend model
3.2 Identify systemic issues with those young people at risk of homelessness or institutional care and design creative, local solutions for presentation to the Justice and Human Service Cluster Group.	Community Services	Youth services	Scope action and methodology	Produce and present report	

Priority Focus Area (4): People exiting institutions

NSW Priorities

- Resource the development of discharge/case plans at point of entry that lead to appropriate, long-term accommodation for people leaving care, custody or health facilities
- Provide accommodation and support, where relevant, to people leaving care, custody or health facilities

Actions	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
			6 months	1 year	3 years
4.1 Implement Vulnerable Young People Exiting Juvenile Justice (<i>National Partnership on Homelessness</i> project) providing intensive support and accommodation to 35 young people with complex needs exiting Juvenile Justice custody or at risk of entering custody or needing an exit from SAAP services. Priority to be given to Aboriginal young people.	Juvenile Justice	Community Services Housing NSW	Develop project specifications Conduct service provider selection process	Monitor project implementation	Evaluate effectiveness of project
4.2 Develop 'discharge' protocols for clients exiting mental health services who are at risk of homelessness to support access to suitable housing having regard to policies and protocols being developed at a central level	NSW Health	Regional Homelessness Committee	Design project	Project implementation	Review protocols
4.3 Scope the demand for support services for people at risk of homelessness who are exiting correctional facilities and returning to the Riverina Murray area.	Corrective Services	Regional Homelessness Committee	Design project	Project implementation with focus on Aboriginal women	Recommend models for clients groups
4.4 Further develop the collaborative approach between Housing NSW and Corrective Services to manage the housing requirements of inmates upon release from Junee Correctional Centre.	Housing	Corrective Services	Review existing arrangements with a view to enhancement	Implement agreed enhancements	Monitor implementation

8. Reporting and Accountability

The NSW Homelessness Action Plan includes a commitment to establish a governance mechanism to oversee the implementation of the Plan that promotes partnerships between all levels of government, the non-government sector, consumer groups and the broader community, including the business sector.

Since that time, a governance framework has been established to oversee the implementation of the NSW Homelessness Action Plan. This framework recognises that effective governance for whole of Government and whole of community planning and delivery of the projects and initiatives under the NSW Homelessness Action Plan requires accountability, consultation and relationships, and that the strength of the overall governance structure relies on the effectiveness of each of these mechanisms.

The governance framework under the NSW Homelessness Action Plan comprises:

- Regional Homelessness Committees
- Regional Manager Clusters
- Homelessness Interagency Committee
- Justice & Human Services Chief Executive Officers Committee
- NSW Premier's Council on Homelessness.

Regional Homelessness Committees, chaired by Housing NSW, are required to report on the implementation of the Regional Homelessness Action Plans to Regional Manager Clusters and the NSW Homelessness Interagency Committee. Progress against the Regional Homelessness Action Plans is reported on an annual basis through the NSW State Plan.

Regional Homelessness Committees are also responsible for ensuring that relevant stakeholders within the region are aware of and have an opportunity to provide input into the ongoing development and implementation of the Regional Homelessness Action Plans.

APPENDIX 1: WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

Riverina Murray Regional Homelessness Action Plan Workshop 24th February 2010 Wagga Wagga

Organisations attending, or invited to attend regional homelessness action plan workshops

ORGANISATION
Aboriginal Affairs NSW
Aboriginal Medical Service
Ageing, Disability and Home Care NSW
Albury City Council
Albury Supported Accommodation Service Inc
Albury Wodonga Community Network Inc.
Albury Wodonga Youth Emergency Services Ltd
Argyle Community Housing
Betty's Place
Community Services NSW
Corrective Services NSW
Department of Education and Training
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Department of Premier & Cabinet
Greater Southern Area Health Service
Homes Out West
Housing NSW
Housing NSW – Homelessness Unit
Indigenous Coordination Centre
Intereach
Juvenile Justice
Kulkuna Cottage Women's Refuge Ltd
Legal Aid
Mission Australia – Wagga Wagga
NSW Police
NSW Women's Refuge Movement Working Party Inc (Western)
Recovery Focused Mental Health Service
Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils
Sisters Housing Enterprise Inc
South West Tenants Advice Service
Southern Riverina Youth Support Services Inc

St Vincent de Paul
St. Lukes Anglicare
The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory Social Work (Western)
Tumut & District Women's Support & Housing Centre
Tumut Regional Family Service
Wagga Refuge
Wagga Wagga City Council
Youth Accommodation Association

Department of Human Services
Housing NSW

July 2010