

Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2010 – 2014

Central Coast



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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

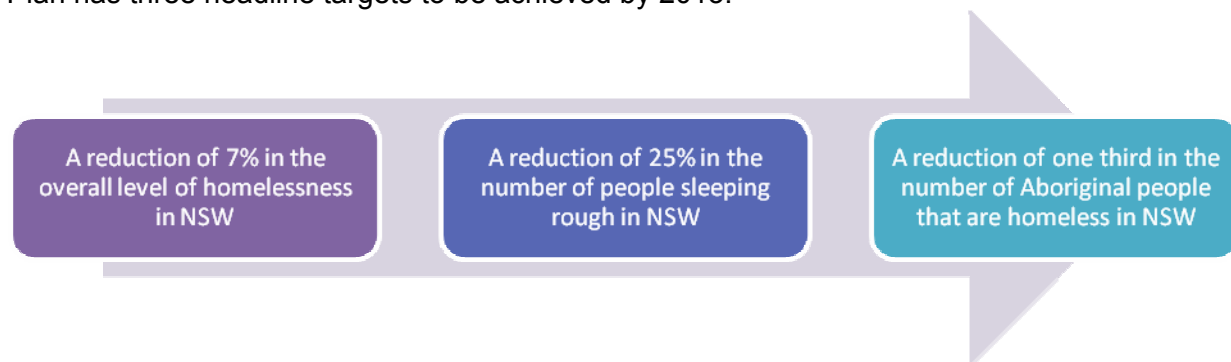
1 REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLANS - OVERVIEW

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.

Central Coast Regional Homelessness Committee

The Central Coast Regional Homelessness Committee includes representatives from the following agencies and organisations:

- Aboriginal Affairs
- Ageing, Disability and Home Care
- Community Housing Division
- Juvenile Justice
- Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service
 - Drug and Alcohol Services
 - Adult Mental Health
- NSW Police
- Premier and Cabinet
- Centrelink
- Community Services
- Probation and Parole
- Fair Trading
- Gosford City Council
- Wyong Shire Council
- Katakudu Women's Housing
- Bungree Aboriginal Association
- Coast Shelter
- Regional Youth Support Service
- Woy Woy Women's and Children's Refuge
- Central Coast Community Legal Centre

3 CENTRAL COAST HOMELESSNESS PROFILE

3.1 OVERVIEW

The Central Coast consists of two Local Government Areas, Gosford and Wyong. At the 2006 Census the Central Coast had a population of 297,957 persons.

The 2006 Census counted 817 people as homeless in the Central Coast including 63 Indigenous people. Gosford and Wyong LGAs each accounted for 50% of the homeless population. Central Coast accounted for the smallest proportion of the NSW homeless population at 3%, excluding marginal residents of caravan parks (see section 3.2 below).

The rate of homelessness in the Central Coast in 2006 was 27 per 10,000 persons compared to 42 per 10,000 persons for NSW as a whole.

Data analysis in relation to homelessness in the Central Coast is constrained by the Central Coast being included within the Sydney Statistical Division by the Australian Bureau of Statistics rather than being treated as a separate region. The experience of the Central Coast Regional Homelessness Committee suggests that the extent of homelessness in the Central Coast may be greater than indicated by the data. There is a need to collect local data and evidence in order to determine the full extent of homelessness in the region and the resources required to address it.

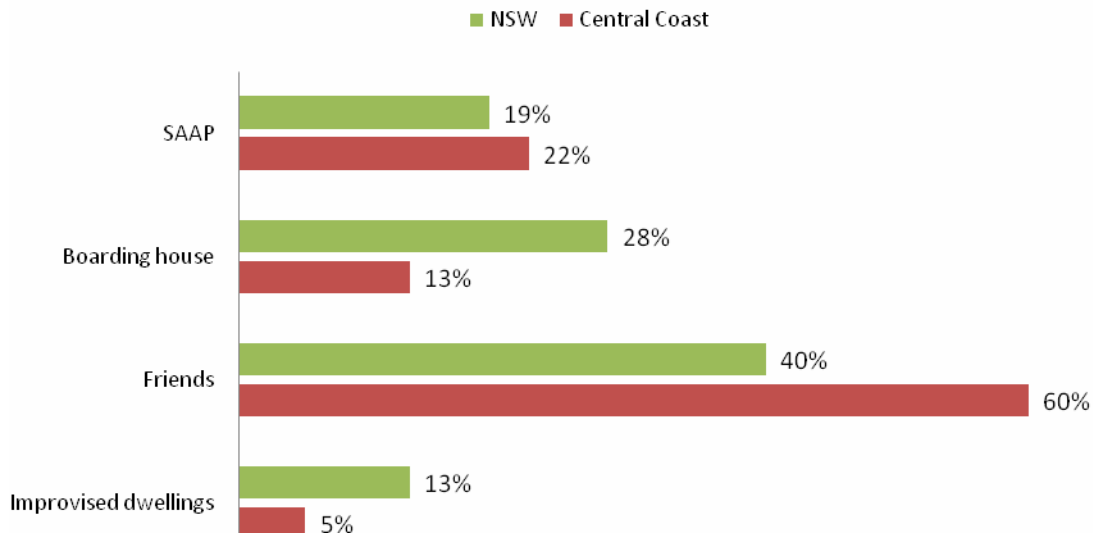
3.1 TYPES OF HOMELESSNESS

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 1 below shows the distribution of these types of homelessness in the Central Coast based on the number of homeless persons in each type.

FIGURE 1: TYPES OF HOMELESSNESS CENTRAL COAST



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Counting the Homeless*, 2009 Canberra. Data has been aggregated into the RCP Central Coast region

As shown above Central Coast had a higher proportion of homeless people staying with friends and family (60%) compared with the State average (40%) and a slightly higher proportion in SAAP accommodation at 22% compared to the state average of 19%.

There were 383 marginal renters of caravan parks in the Central Coast counted in the 2006 Census which was 8% 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 no 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 residents are included in the definition of homeless, the number of homeless people in the Central Coast would increase by 32%. The experience of the Committee suggests that a significant proportion of caravan park dwellers do not live in this form of accommodation by choice.

3.2 INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS

AIHW analysis indicates that in 2006¹ 3% of the NSW Indigenous homeless population was located in the Central Coast. The rate of Indigenous homeless in the Central Coast is 106 per 10,000 persons compared to 26 per 10,000 persons for non Indigenous.

Indigenous homeless people in the Central Coast are much more likely to be in SAAP accommodation (36%) and improvised dwellings (23%) compared to non Indigenous homeless

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Counting the Homeless*, 2009 Canberra

people (14% and 6%)². Central Coast also has a higher proportion of Aboriginal SAAP clients – 17% of SAAP clients in the Central Coast are Aboriginal compared to the State average of 15%.

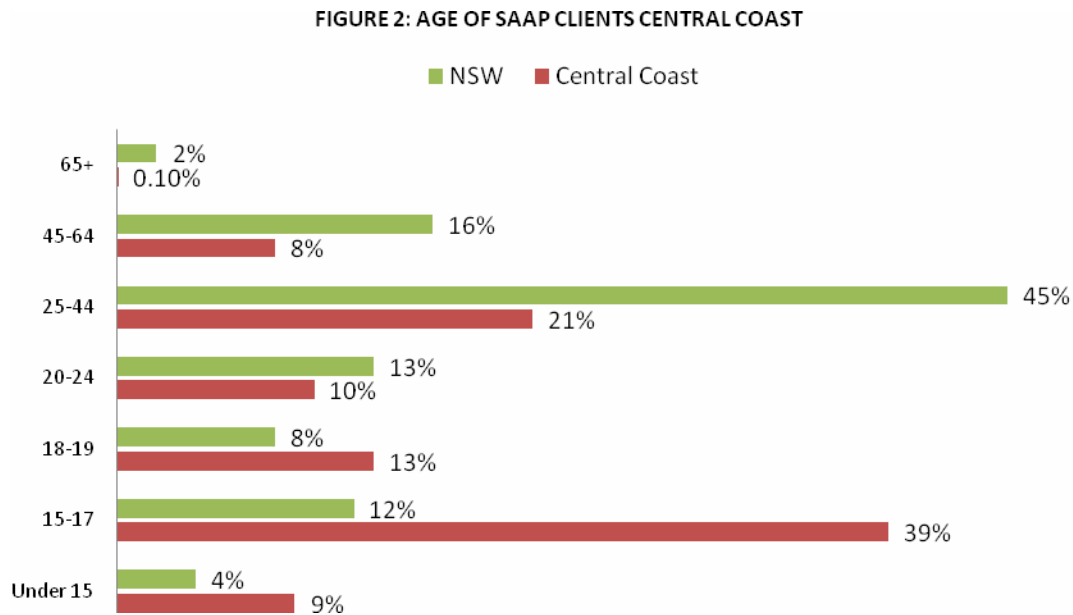
3.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF SAAP CLIENTS

About 19% of people defined as homeless use SAAP services. The following tables compare data on SAAP clients in the Central Coast compared to NSW as a whole based on the SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008³.

Age of SAAP clients

Figure 2 below compares the ages of SAAP clients in the Central Coast with SAAP clients in NSW as a whole.

As shown below, SAAP clients in the Central Coast clients are younger than the State average particularly in the 15-17 years age band - 39% of Central Coast clients are aged 15-17 years compared to 12% for the state. Thirteen per cent of Central Coast clients are aged 18-19 compared to 8% for NSW as a whole.



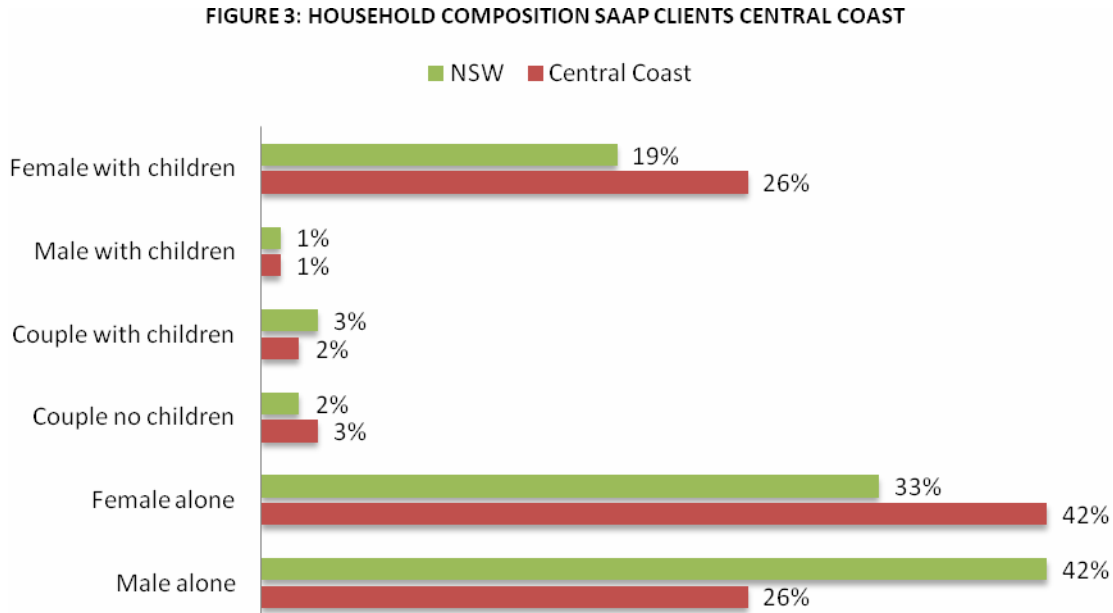
Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the Central Coast RCP region

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

³ SAAP NDCA data is generally aggregated by Community Services NSW regions. For this plan data was re-aggregated according to RCP regions.

Household composition of SAAP clients

Figure 3 below compares the household composition of SAAP clients in Central Coast with SAAP clients for NSW as a whole.



Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the Central Coast RCP region

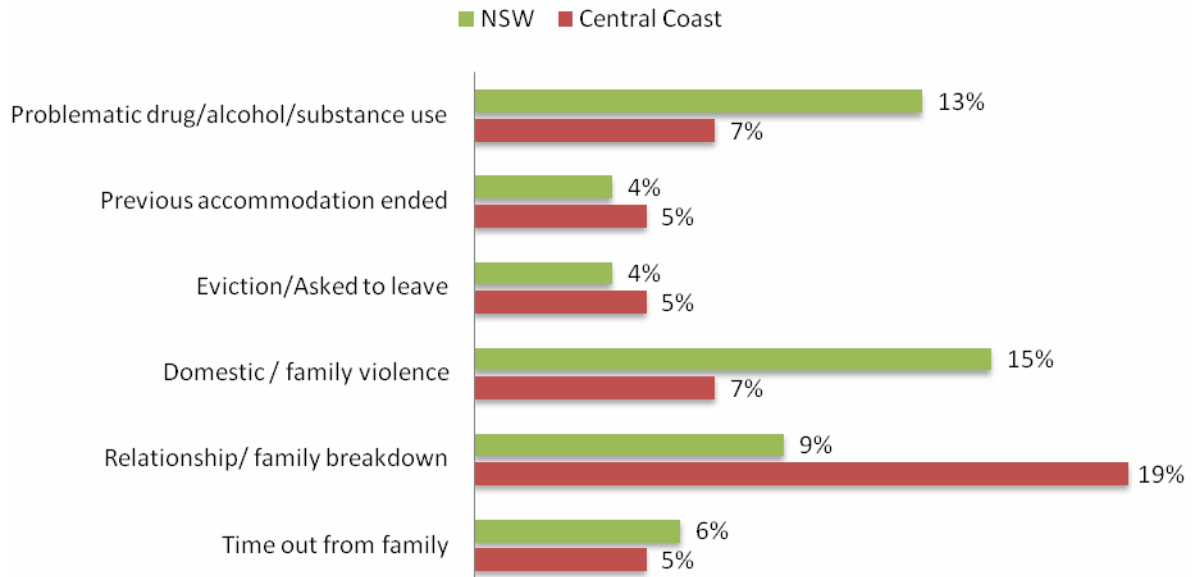
As shown, Central Coast has a higher proportion of single females (42%) and single females with children (26%) than state averages (33% and 19%).

Main reasons for seeking SAAP assistance

Figure 4 below shows the top six reasons for seeking SAAP assistance in the Central Coast compared to NSW as whole. “Family and relationship breakdown” is the primary reason for seeking SAAP assistance in the Central Coast at 19%. Combined with “time out from family” and “domestic violence” these family-related reasons represent 31% of the main reasons for seeking SAAP assistance in the Central Coast.

Being evicted or having accommodation ended for another reason are also significant reasons for seeking SAAP assistance in the Central Coast - these reasons account for a total 10% of SAAP clients in the Central Coast.

FIGURE 4: TOP 6 REASONS FOR SEEKING SAAP ASSISTANCE CENTRAL COAST

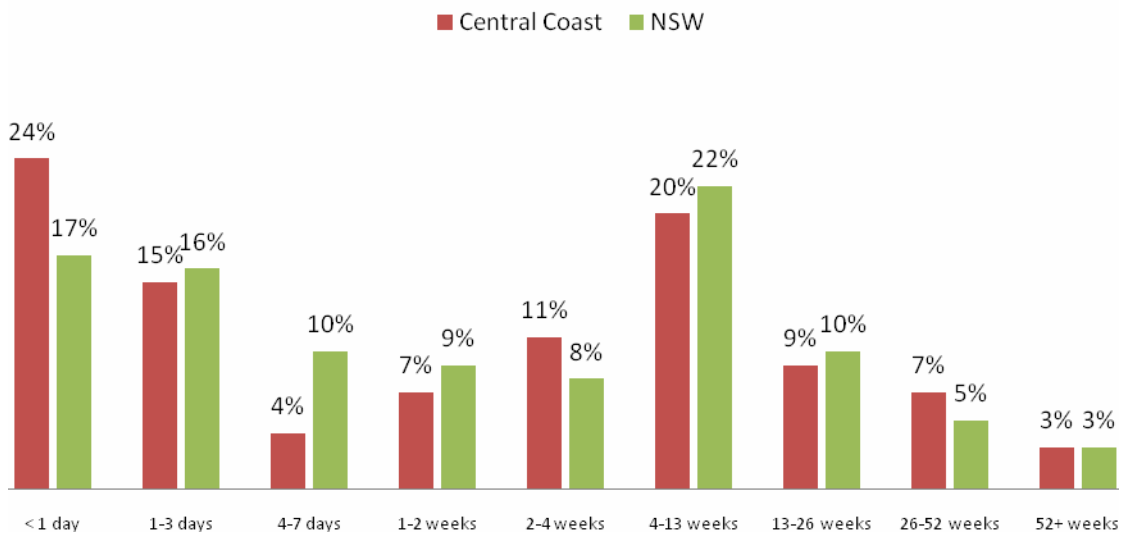


Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the Central Coast RCP region

Length of support period by SAAP services

Compared to State averages, clients generally use SAAP services for shorter periods with the main exception of clients who use services for less than one day. In the Central Coast, 24% of clients used SAAP services for less than one day compared to 17% for the State as shown in Figure 5 below.

FIGURE 5: LENGTH OF SAAP CLIENT SUPPORT PERIOD CENTRAL COAST

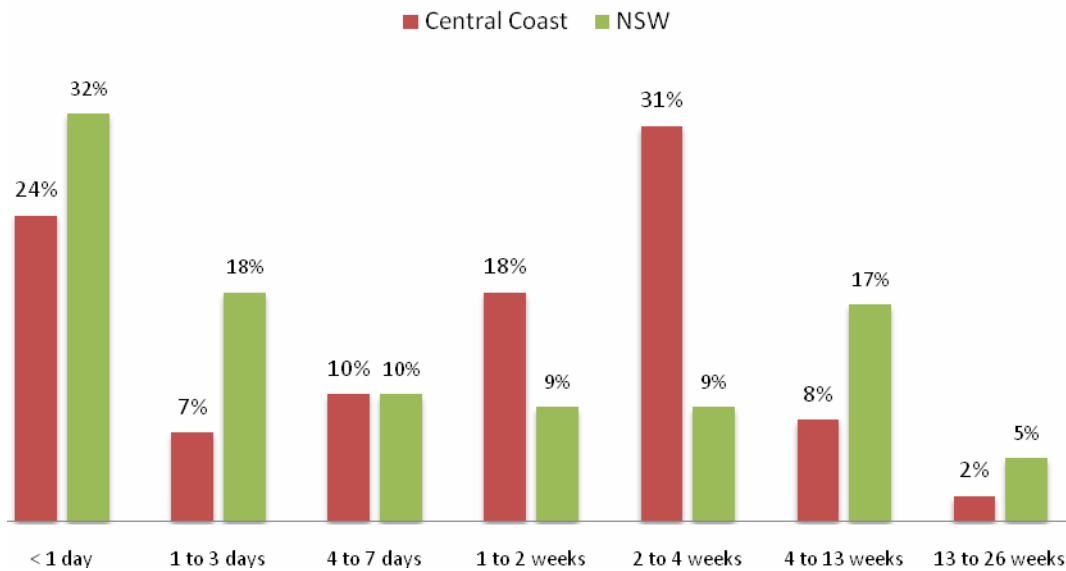


Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the Central Coast RCP region

Length of SAAP accommodation⁴

As shown in Figure 6 below, SAAP clients in the Central Coast are fairly concentrated in the 1 to 4 week period - 18% of clients stay for 1 to 2 weeks compared to 9% for NSW as a whole. Thirty one per cent of SAAP clients in the Central Coast stay in SAAP accommodation for 2 to 4 weeks compared to the state average of 9% as shown Figure 6 below.

FIGURE 6: LENGTH OF SAAP ACCOMMODATION PERIOD CENTRAL COAST



Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the Central Coast RCP region

⁴ Based on closed support periods

4 HOMELESSNESS SERVICE SYSTEM STRENGTHS, ISSUES AND GAPS

The Central Coast regional homelessness workshop was attended by over 50 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

Target groups identified through the workshop reflect those groups with high levels of demand for support services (for examples the data demonstrates high levels of need among women with children escaping domestic violence) as well as groups who were harder to reach or where service system gaps prevented effective responses to homelessness.

Target groups identified through the workshop included:

- Couch surfers and 'transient' homeless
- Young homeless people
- Indigenous homeless including rough sleepers
- Single females and females with children who were homeless as a result of domestic violence
- People with complex issues including dual diagnosis, disability, drug and alcohol problems, mental health problems
- People at risk of homelessness through termination of tenancy
- Unsatisfactory former public housing tenants
- Single Men (unemployed)
- People aged 50 +years

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

- Young homeless people
- Indigenous homeless including rough sleepers
- Single females and females with children who are homeless
- People at risk of homelessness through termination of tenancy
- Couch surfers

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 Central Coast SAAP funded projects

The SAAP V Plan for the Hunter Central Coast region identified a fairly even split between early intervention and prevention, crisis, post-crisis and medium-term transitional support SAAP funded services in the Central Coast⁵.

There are currently 17 SAAP funded projects in the Central Coast Region, with 8 services located in Wyong LGA (47%) and 9 in Gosford LGA (53%). Almost half (47%) of the services are targeted towards young people and almost one quarter (24%) are targeted towards women. Half of the projects that support women are specifically aimed at women escaping domestic violence (12% of total services).

Other models and approaches

Workshop participants identified a number of existing models and approaches to address homelessness on the Central Coast that reflect homelessness reform objectives. These include the following examples:

Interagencies and networks

Interagencies and network meetings were seen by workshop participants as supporting better coordination of the homelessness service system. It was noted that interagencies could potentially be built upon to support reforms of the homelessness service system. Some examples of Central Coast networking and cross sector partnerships include:

- SAAP network meetings
- Homelessness Interagency
- Wyong Housing Access Meeting
- Centrelink Community Support Unit
- Central Coast Domestic Violence Committee
- Juvenile Justice case management involving a partnership between Regional Youth Support Service Inc and Pacific Link Community Housing Association

⁵ Data on the distribution of SAAP funded services in NSW was supplied by Community Services NSW. This data was aggregated into the RCP regions.

Responses to Domestic Violence

There are a number of local responses and initiatives to address homelessness due to domestic violence involving cross sector collaboration including:

- Domestic Violence Intervention Response Teams
- Domestic Assault Response Team
- Central Coast Domestic Violence Committee (with approximately 40 service providers)
- Violence Abuse & Neglect (VAN) supports people with physical and other disabilities
- Staying Home Leaving Violence project in Wyong (see below)
- Safe Start Private Rental Subsidy Scheme pilot project at Wyong (see below)

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 form part of 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.

Housing NSW Safe Start

The Safe Start Private Rental Subsidy Scheme (Safe Start) helps women with children escaping domestic violence to move into the private rental market. The Safe Start trial project provides time limited (up to 12 months) financial assistance to assist eligible clients to access appropriate and affordable housing in the private rental market and provides financial relief until the client's situation is stabilised after leaving violence. The subsidy is linked to an integrated support program, other existing private rental assistance products and domestic violence services.

Staying Home Leaving Violence

Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) is a specialised domestic violence program lead by Community Services aimed at preventing victims of violence (and their children) from becoming homeless by enabling them to remain in their home safely.

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.

Nation Building Economic Stimulus Program

The Australian Government is investing \$1.9 billion as part of its Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan to deliver around 6,000 social housing homes in NSW. Approximately 268 new properties will be added to Central Coast affordable housing stock through this program.

Housing Pathways

Housing Pathways provides a single access point for social housing. It represents a shift in the way people apply for social housing, with one common application form and one housing register. This represents a shift in the way that Housing NSW and their community housing provider partners undertake business - Housing Pathways is a cooperative approach that has required a change in work practices for Housing NSW and community housing providers.

Financial assistance

Crisis Payments available through Centrelink

Crisis Payments assist people experiencing severe financial hardship due to 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.

Housing NSW Rentstart

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.

Emergency Relief

Charities such as The Salvation Army, Samaritans and St Vincent de Paul Society as well as Coast Shelter provide a range of services including financial relief, in order to assist people to maintain their accommodation.

4.3 SERVICE SYSTEM ISSUES AND GAPS

The regional homelessness workshop and submission process identified the following Central Coast homelessness service system issues and gaps:

- There is a lack of integration of services and between sectors for example between GP's, social workers and SAAP services. The SAAP V Plan for the Central Coast highlighted the need for improved linkages between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services and between 'first to know' services and specialist service providers.
- There are gaps in service provision, particularly around service provision to people with complex needs and linkages. There is a need for better coordination and improved case management practices for this client group.
- There is a lack of affordable housing and lack of housing supply.
- Linkages with the private housing sector need to be developed to assist with responses to homelessness
- There is a need to better coordinate the collection of data from all services including HNSW, SAAP services and mainstream services to better understand the needs and trends in homelessness on the Central Coast.
- There is a continued role for Local Government with respect to planning for and regulating the quality of lower cost accommodation including caravans.
- Crisis services are increasing their provision of prevention and early intervention services, however this is not well documented and current pressures on services limits the capacity to further develop prevention services.
- Growth in the social housing sector offers significant opportunities to leverage expansion of affordable housing but improved access to housing stock and effective partnerships with support services are needed.
- There is a need to establish linkages between the work of the Regional Homelessness Committee, non government and charitable organisations that have recently received funding under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (i.e. The Salvation Army & Benevolent Society).

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 Central Coast RHAP 2010-2014:

- Sustaining tenancies
- Service system coordination
- Increase access to sustainable social housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Data and evidence

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

5.1 Sustaining Tenancies

Helping people to sustain their tenancies through provision of support (that can include financial advice, counselling, living skills training and strategies to engage in education and employment) are recognised as key strategies that can help to prevent homelessness. Preventative approaches are also more cost effective interventions, delivering support to greater numbers of people compared to the intensive, higher cost strategies required to help people exit the cycle of homelessness.

Research undertaken by AHURI⁶ found that:

- Post-housing support is critical for maintaining stable accommodation and beginning the processes of social re-integration.
- Permanent supportive housing is more effective than transitional accommodation.
- Building a trusting support relationship takes time; six months may be a minimum threshold for establishing relationship based support. More than 20 contacts and around 12 months may be a threshold for achieving improved housing and employment related outcomes. It is preferable that these contacts take place in the context of stabilised long-term housing.

Workshop participants identified a lack of intensive support services focused on helping sustain tenancies on the Central Coast. Participants identified potential opportunities to trial new ways of working through improved service coordination and collaboration around case management and more flexible service delivery through brokerage arrangements.

⁶ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute *Evidence to inform NSW homelessness action priorities 2009-10*, 2009

Target groups highlighted as priorities for support to maintain tenancies included families escaping domestic violence, young people aged between 16-18 years who were seen to 'fall through the gaps' between out of home care arrangements and access to social housing and people with complex issues such as mental health or drug and alcohol problems.

5.2 Service Coordination

Prevention of homelessness and effective responses to homelessness are supported by an integrated and coordinated homelessness service system. According to the AHURI research prevention and early intervention responses to homelessness are most effective when they:

- Involve mainstream agencies,
- Support a good understanding of risk factors and danger signs, and
- Involve coordination between government, non-government and emergency agencies in providing housing and support.

Workshop participants rated the need to improve coordination of the broader Central Coast homelessness service system as a priority. While it was acknowledged that coordination amongst some specialist services, for instance those relating to domestic violence had improved in recent years, the inclusion of mainstream agencies and services in the homelessness service system prompted a need to better understand the range of services included in the Central Coast Homelessness Service System. In this context there is also a need to better understand the target groups catered for and the areas where collaboration between services was most likely to contribute to reduced rates of homelessness and better responses to the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

5.3 Access to sustainable housing for Aboriginal people

Aboriginal people are over-represented in homelessness statistics in NSW and on the Central Coast. Data shows 3% of Indigenous homeless people are located in the Central Coast. Indigenous homeless people are much more likely to be in SAAP accommodation and improvised dwellings compared to non Indigenous homeless people and the Central Coast also has a higher proportion of Aboriginal SAAP clients compared to the State average.

Workshop participants identified a number of strengths in relation to how services were currently responding to the needs of Aboriginal communities on the Central Coast. These included:

- The Anti-Social Behaviour Pilot Program
- Aboriginal specific services who had a presence on the Central Coast
- Opportunities in the next 6-12 months to allocate housing to Aboriginal clients as a result of the expansion of social housing.

What the research says

→ Greater investment in effective responses is needed as Indigenous people disproportionately experience homelessness.

- Different concepts of homelessness may aid in responding more effectively, including understandings of kinship structures and connection to place.
- Actions to prevent the breakdown of Indigenous social housing tenancies can prevent homelessness.
- Social housing administrative processes can negatively and unnecessarily impact on the success of Indigenous tenancies.
- Indigenous housing careers are often shaped by high rates of life-crises including experienced violence and material disadvantage.
- Indigenous over-crowding in social housing may be a significant direct and indirect cause of homelessness.

5.4 Data and evidence

The NSW Homelessness Action Plan commits to improving responses to homelessness and further developing our understanding of what works by:

- Implementing a data development agenda and data collection strategy to assess and measure interventions and outcomes
- Undertaking collaborative research that leads to best-practice models
- Mapping and disseminating best practice.

Building the evidence base - *what the research says*

According to the AHURI research:

- Qualitative, ethnographic methods including longitudinal studies lead to an understanding of people's strategies, resources and processes of recovery from homelessness,
- Increased methodological rigor in program evaluations would aim in assessing the real impact on client outcomes over time, and identify the mechanisms of effective practice and the contexts which facilitate better outcomes.

Workshop participants identified the need to improve local data collection and knowledge around effective responses to homelessness on the Central Coast. This would help develop a better understanding of the homelessness profile on the Central Coast, including seasonal impacts on homelessness rates and would support better targeting of responses to local needs.

The Central Coast is a high growth population area and forward planning needs to recognise the impacts of population growth on social issues in the region.

6 ACTIONS TO ADDRESS PRIORITY AREAS

Actions under this plan focus on the below four priority areas:

- Sustaining tenancies
- Service system coordination
- Increased sustainable housing for Aboriginal people and
- Data and evidence.

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 Sustaining Tenancies

A key action identified to focus on sustaining tenancies in the Central Coast funded under the National Partnership on Homelessness⁷ is the **Central Coast Homeless Family Brokerage Project**

2006 Census data and SAAP NDCA data indicates that families and in particular, Aboriginal families and young people represent a significant proportion of homeless people in the Central Coast either accessing SAAP services or staying with friends and family. This project provides a brokerage model of support including long term accommodation (including social housing and private rental), integrated case management, material support and early intervention in order to support tenancies for homeless families and families at risk of homelessness. The project will prioritise young people with children or expecting children, large Aboriginal families and women and children escaping domestic violence, including Aboriginal women and children. The initiative will assist in the reform of the homelessness service system in the region by supporting the shift by homelessness specialist and other services from focusing on a crisis response to supporting families and individuals in long term accommodation and by supporting families at risk of homelessness. Estimated client numbers: 20 families

Additional Areas for Action

A number of strategies aimed at sustaining tenancies were identified:

- Develop relationships between specialist homelessness services, community housing providers and the private sector to raise awareness of the range of supports available to tenants.
- Provide integrated housing and support for young people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness
- Deliver tenancy support to assist families secure and maintain their tenancies

⁷ National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness NSW Implementation Plan 2009-2013, Years 2 – 4

- Develop cross sector training and development approaches to improve identification of people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness

6.2 Service System Coordination

Areas for Action

- Establish formal linkages and information sharing arrangements between the Regional Homelessness Committee and local homelessness services
- Review and develop cross agency assessment and case management practices. Improve joint-case management practices between specialist and mainstream homelessness services
- Develop universal client consent forms, to support improved referral practices and integrated service delivery between specialist homelessness and mainstream services.
- Continue to strengthen the homelessness service system through interagency networking, improved referral processes and sharing of relevant data and research
- Identify where knowledge of the service system is limited and research is required such as services for particular target groups or issues
- Use brokerage funding to deliver appropriate, flexible and coordinated services to people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness

6.3 Increase access to sustainable social housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Areas for Action

- Matching of support services to the growth in social housing to ensure tenancies could be sustained
- An Aboriginal service presence in Gosford and Wyong areas
- Extension of the Staying Home Leaving Violence project to Aboriginal communities
- Working with Aboriginal organisations and services to enable them to improve linkages between housing and support services
- Working with non-Aboriginal organisations and services to increase the provision of culturally appropriate services
- Developing relationships between community housing providers and Aboriginal organisations to improve access to social housing for Aboriginal people
- Increasing the numbers of Aboriginal people employed in mainstream services

6.4 Data and Evidence

Areas for Action

- Develop a process to capture local datasets to assist in building a picture of the Central Coast including seasonal analysis of eviction data
- Establish linkage with spatial data project being done with Centre of Urban and Regional Studies
- Develop ways to collect informal/learning from small projects/projects e.g. home based assessments

7 CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN SUMMARY ACTIONS

This section summarises agreed actions for priority areas to be implemented over the four year period to 2014. A number of actions are in addition to or build on those identified in the NSW Homelessness Action Plan. It is noted that the agreed actions are an initial response to the issues identified in this Plan. Actions will be further developed and refined over time.

Priority Focus Area (1): Sustaining Tenancies					
NSW Priorities					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent eviction from all kinds of tenures • Identify people at risk of eviction in social housing, the private rental market, boarding houses and caravan parks and link them to support • 					
Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
			6 months	1 year	2-3 years
1.1 Implement Central Coast Homeless Family Brokerage Project (<i>National Partnership on Homelessness project</i>) providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brokerage wrap around support • Assertive case management and coordination approach for families in need • Adoption of a 'Housing First' model with a proportion of NBESP properties. Estimated client numbers: 20 families ⁸	Community Services	Social housing providers SAAP services Mental health services	Develop project specifications Conduct service provider selection process Commence project	Monitor project implementation	Evaluate project outcomes

⁸ For National Partnership on Homelessness projects, the number of clients refers to the number to be assisted at any one time based on a full 12 months of operation

<p>1.2 Deliver support to vulnerable clients to access & sustain privately rented and owned accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify vulnerable clients in rental arrears and provide linkages to support services Conduct information sessions with Real Estate agents 	Housing NSW	<p>Ageing, Disability and Home Care Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service Centrelink Fair Trading</p> <p>Real Estate Institute financial counselling services</p>	<p>Scope project operation and deliverables</p> <p>Develop referral mechanisms</p>	Monitor implementation	Evaluate project outcomes
<p>1.3 Develop an educational strategy focusing on mortgage repossession including how to access Legal Aid assistance & HNSW Mortgage Assistance</p>	Housing NSW	Legal Aid	<p>Scope project operation and deliverables</p> <p>Develop referral mechanisms</p>	Monitor implementation	Evaluate project outcomes
<p>Priority Focus Area (2): Service System Coordination</p>					
<p>NSW Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Deliver integrated service responses</i> <i>Improve identification of and responses to homelessness by mainstream and specialist support services</i> <i>Streamline access to crisis accommodation and specialist homelessness services</i> 					
Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
<p>2.1 Examine local service system based on best practice models in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and minimise work duplication and gaps Experience greater collaboration between services 	Premier & Cabinet	Regional Homelessness Committee member organisations	<p>6 months</p> <p>Scope project</p> <p>Develop data and monitoring systems</p>	<p>1 year</p> <p>Review achievement of objectives</p> <p>Modify operation as needed</p>	<p>2-3 years</p> <p>Evaluate outcomes</p>

<p>2.2 Common entry triage system for homeless people on the Central Coast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkage to Housing Pathways • Linkage to SAAP services • Linkage to support services and the broader community 	Housing NSW	SAAP services Regional Homelessness Committee member organisations	Develop operational model in consultation with key partners	Implement pilot model Review pilot after 6 months	Evaluate outcomes
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Priority Focus Area (3): Increase access to sustainable social housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people					
<p>NSW Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Make services more accessible and responsive to Aboriginal people</i> • <i>Transition people who are homeless to appropriate long term accommodation and support</i> • <i>Increase the supply of affordable and social housing</i> • <i>Promote partnerships between all levels of government, business, consumers and the not for profit sector</i> 					
Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
			6mnths	1 year	2-3 years
<p>3.1 Improve engagement and outreach to Aboriginal people in order to increase their access to long term social housing through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking with Compass Community Housing to secure access to NBESP properties as long term accommodation • Promoting access to and use of HNSW Private Rental Brokerage Service (PBRS) and Tenancy Guarantees as a means of countering private rental market discrimination • Develop partnerships (e.g. MOUs) to support assertive case management • Encourage use of PRBS by Aboriginal SAAP clients. 	Housing NSW	Compass Community Housing SAAP services	Scope barriers to access to long term housing Develop MOUs	Develop system to monitor access to housing and services	Evaluate outcomes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote access to NBESP properties as long term housing for Aboriginal SAAP clients, linked with support services 					
<p>3.2 Engage Local Aboriginal Land Council with local councils to develop affordable housing stock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate local Aboriginal Land Council and local government (Gosford & Wyong) partnerships Investigate the potential application of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) 	Gosford & Wyong Councils	Local Aboriginal Land Councils	Establish formal partnerships	Conduct research and consultation on potential options	Develop and implement pilot of agreed options

Priority Focus Area (4): Data and Evidence					
<i>NSW Priorities</i>					
<i>Improve and better utilise homelessness data and evidence based responses to homelessness about homelessness and effective responses to it</i>					
Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
			6 months	1 year	2-3years
<p>4.1 Review homelessness data collection methods in Central Coast with a view to improving the quality of data and having regard to data collection work being undertaken at a central level</p> <p>Link with the spatial data project to identify any alignment on the needs and complexities of homelessness on the Central Coast</p>	Premier & Cabinet	Regional Homelessness Committee member organisations	Develop project scope and identify key project partners	Research potential data sources and data collection methods	Implement data collection strategy
<p>4.2 Investigate the scale of homelessness related to caravan parks in the Central Coast</p> <p>Develop a counting model and common definitions for use</p>	Premier & Cabinet	Regional Homelessness Committee member organisations	Develop project scope and identify key project partners	Research potential data sources and data collection methods	Implement data collection strategy

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

Central Coast Regional Homelessness Action Plan Workshop
3 February 2010 Mingara Recreation Club, Tumbi Umbi

The workshop was attended by representatives of the following organisations

ORGANISATION
Aboriginal Affairs NSW
Aboriginal Housing Office
Ageing, Disability & Home Care
CCTS
Central Coast Community Council Inc
Central Coast Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service
Wyong Central Community Health Centre
Centrelink
Coast Shelter
Community Housing Ltd
Community Services NSW
Compass Housing
Elandra Women's Housing
Fair Trading
Gosford City Council
Housing NSW regional office
Housing NSW – Homelessness Unit
Katakudu women's housing
Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Services
NSCC Area Health - Aboriginal Youth Health
Pacific Link
Police Service NSW, Tuggerah Lakes Local Area Command
Probation and Parole
RYSS Shop Front
Samaritans
Shelter
St Vincent De Paul
Uniting Care - Burnside Family Services
Western NSW Community Legal Centre
Women's Refuge Movement
Wyong Shire Council
Youth Angle Inc

Department of Human Services
Housing NSW

July 2010