



Southern Youth and
Family Services

SOUTHERN YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES (ASSOCIATION INC.)

Family Services Youth Outreach Support Services Youth Out of Home Care Services
Youth Employment, Education and Training Services Family Support Services

Submission Inquiry Public Social Affordable Housing Supplementary Questions May 2014

29th May, 2014

The Director
Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

**Re: Correction to Supplementary Questions
Southern Youth and Family Services
Hearing: Wollongong, 1st May 2014.**

Dear Select Committee,

We have posted our response to the Supplementary Questions asked of Southern Youth and Family Services containing data requested.

We would like to alert you to a significant typing error in one of the pieces of data presented. We have included a new copy of the response with the error corrected as well as a copy of the original document sent with the error and correction highlighted in red pen in the margin.

The error is:

In the Illawarra / Shoalhaven District on Census night (2011) there were 1,198 homeless people, or approximately one in every 2017 residents.”

This should read: “.... one in every 207 residents”.

Thank you for using the correction version, enclosed.

Respondents:

Ms Narelle Clay, AM
Chief Executive Officer
Southern Youth and Family Services

Ms Helen Backhouse
Policy Advisor
Southern Youth and Family Services





Southern Youth and Family Services

Submission Inquiry Public Social Affordable Housing Supplementary Questions May 2014

26th May, 2014

The Director
Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Correction on page 2

Dear Select Committee,

**Re: Supplementary Questions
Southern Youth and Family Services
Hearing: Wollongong, 1st May 2014.**

Thank you for requesting further information through the supplementary questions of the Select Committee. Please note, in responding we have attempted to keep the answers brief. However, we would be happy to provide fuller detail or make arrangements to discuss these issues further, should that be helpful.

1. Do you have an indication of the number of people that are in need of emergency services and or accommodation eg. youth, aged, homeless, domestic violence?

One source of data is from Specialist Homelessness Services and is collected through an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) website called Specialist Homelessness Online Reporting (SHOR). AIHW has released data from the 2012-13 financial year in the report: Specialist homelessness services 2012-13, available at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129545638>

A summary of the findings is one indication of the numbers of people in need of homelessness services nationally:

- An estimated 244,000 Australians accessed homelessness services in 2012/13 period
- From the previous year the number of clients supported by specialist homelessness services increased in all states and territories except for NSW, Tasmania and the ACT. Victoria accounted for 81% of the overall national increase due to the commencement of a number of newly-funded specialist homelessness agencies.
- 46% of clients presenting to SHS were homeless and 54% were at risk of homelessness.
- Of those who were homeless (approx. 112,240 people): 22% had no shelter or were staying in improvised dwellings and 35% were in short-term accommodation.
- Although representing 3% of the total Australian population, Indigenous people represented 22% of specialist homelessness services clients.
- 32% of all clients receiving assistance from homelessness agencies were escaping domestic or family violence. The majority of these were adult females (63%) and 19% were children under 10 years of age.
- Each day, nationally an average of 417 people's requests for service were not able to be met. In the 2012/13 period this amounted to 152,103 people.



- Other than children aged 0-14 years the highest proportion of unassisted requests for services were from people aged between 18 years and 24 years (20% of all unassisted requests).
- Overall, 80% of average daily unassisted requests included a need for some type of accommodation support, either short-term / emergency accommodation or other type of housing assistance.

Information drawn from AIHW and the Review of Government Service Provision Report shows:

- In 2012/13, NSW had the lowest real recurrent homelessness expenditure per person of any jurisdiction (at \$18.45, or 29% below national average)

In NSW over the 2012/2013 period:

- An estimated 51,953 people accessed homelessness services. 70.9% (36,846) were alone and not part of a family and 28.8% (14,902) were in a family group and the remainder were another group.
- 63.6% of clients presenting to SHS were homeless and 36.4% were at risk of homelessness.
- Of those who were homeless (approximately 33,025 people): 11.7% had no shelter or were staying in improvised dwellings, 30% were in short term temporary accommodation and 19% were couch surfing and had no tenure.
- 21.4% identified as Indigenous and 65.5% were not indigenous. The remainder not stated.
- Reasons for seeking assistance included financial difficulties (53.8%), the need for accommodation and housing crisis (50.1%), domestic and family violence (29.6%), family breakdown and relationship problems (48.4%), mental health issues (17.3%) and other health issues (28.8%).
- There were over 33,080 that were unable to be assisted. The actual number is higher due to approximately 7,000 instances being excluded due to missing information.
- The highest number of unassisted requests for services were from people aged 15 to 24 years (40.4) and children aged 0 – 14 years (20%).

The national Census collects data on homelessness and recognises the potential for undercounting. In the ABS definition, homelessness is more than 'rooflessness', only 6% of homeless people sleep rough. Homeless people may be living in inadequate dwellings, temporarily with friends or families, with insecure tenure in caravan parks or on boats or in severely overcrowded dwellings. On Census night (2011), in Australia there were 105,237 people counted as homeless. This is approximately one in every 200 people.

In the Illawarra / Shoalhaven District on Census night (2011) there were 1,198 homeless people, or ²⁰⁷approximately one in every ²⁰⁷ residents.

The ABS discussion paper on homelessness explains succinctly the causes of homelessness:

[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/B4B1A5BC17CEDBC9CA257A6E00186823/\\$File/49220_2012.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/B4B1A5BC17CEDBC9CA257A6E00186823/$File/49220_2012.pdf)

“Homelessness is not just the result of too few houses – its causes are many and varied. Domestic violence, a shortage of affordable housing, unemployment, mental illness, family breakdown and drug and alcohol abuse all contribute to the level of homelessness in Australia Homelessness is not a choice”.

“For some people, homelessness is an isolated event – it happens once and for a short time. For others, a small minority, homelessness is part of a chaotic and uncertain life of poverty and

disadvantage. These people tend to cycle in and out of homelessness and when they do find housing, it tends to be short term”

Homelessness and ‘risk of homelessness’ affects women, children, men, families, young people, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The services needed cover the full range from early intervention and prevention, through crisis supported accommodation to independent living situations. The response to homelessness includes the services provided through Specialist Homelessness Services as well as the mental health service system, child protection, domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol and other service systems.

2. What degree of services and funds would be required to meet the needs of these people?

In our response to the Questions Taken on Notice we have discussed research into lifecourse cost savings achieved by intervening early with support packages and housing / homelessness services. Investment in quality homelessness services represent a long term saving to Government.

In NSW, the Specialist Homelessness Service system is undergoing reform through the Going Home Staying Home process. This reform has been undertaken without an increase in resourcing to the SHS system. Service packages have been developed and funding allocated attempting to achieve near the service levels that were previously provided through both SHS funding and additional funding in NSW through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness whilst only using the amount of funding available through the SHS Program. In other words, the reform is occurring based on less funding than previously.

Under the reform, some Districts and target groups will experience a loss of capacity. In the Illawarra Shoalhaven District, for example, the total packages for young people represent a loss of over \$1million because of the omission in allocating future NPAH funds to the District (noting the NSW Government decision on the use of the recently committed Federal NPAH funds and the matching of State funds has not yet been made clear).

Spreading limited resources thinly across the State is counterproductive to achieving outcomes and these longer term savings. In responding to this question in terms of meeting the needs of people needing services through the Specialist Homelessness Service system and based on the documented shortfalls in capacity in the system, the indication would be that the NSW SHS Budget needs a minimum of a 50% increase.

This Inquiry has also received detailed submissions on the shortfall in Social / Public Housing stock in the State (approximately 86,000 dwellings). Increasing Social / Public and Affordable Housing will reduce some of the strain on the Specialist Homelessness Service System, particularly in providing exit options from the SHS system.

We have provided evidence in our original submission of the importance of intervening early in youth homelessness to break the cycles of lifetime disadvantage and homelessness. Specialist Youth Services require higher unit costs due to the needs for supervision and support, including 24 hour a day staffing for delivery particularly to the younger cohort. The Southern Youth Foyer has been presented as one model of effective accommodation and education, training and employment supports for homeless young people. The funding required for the Foyer Model is approximately \$1mill per annum.

Foyers in other jurisdictions vary in size. The Victorian Government has committed \$30.1 million for three new Youth Foyers in that State. The new Western Australian Foyer accommodates 98 young people and has operational funding of \$10million over 5 years (jointly funded BHP Billiton and WA Government).

3. Can you explain further the complications associated with multiple accreditations? Can you give advice or recommendations as to how this could be improved without diminishing the accountability and oversight?

In our Responses to Questions Taken on Notice we have provided the following information:

As stated in the Hearing, we agree that accreditation, registration and meeting standards are important. SYFS is accredited for the provision of Out of Home Care Services through the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, as a Social Housing Provider in NSW and for the provision of health services through Quality Innovation Performance (QIP). There are similarities and differences in the accreditation processes.

A system that enables an agency to pass accreditation once for matters pertaining to governance and financial management, staffing practices and risk management would assist. Then for additional specific service types, the agency need only go through the process for those additional elements specific to that area.

However the process should be simple and not an onerous and costly process. The processes we already undertake often require a great deal of administration and take up a great deal of time. Often we have experienced unnecessary duplication, rigid timetabling with little consideration to other pressures in the Agency at a given time, and too often are requested to comply with overly prescriptive formats for policy and procedures which may be different from Department to Department and so need to be more general in nature. The process must be undertaken by Staff and Managers in the Agency as it is important they are involved. This requires careful planning and relief staff are often required at key times to ensure the services can still be delivered while undertaking these processes.

The agency resourcing costs of participating in accreditation are high. In addition there can be costs to pay for the accreditation that are often not funded. To illustrate, we have paid up to \$15,000 for a previous accreditation and the costs for that accreditation are running at around \$6,500 per annum for a three year contract.

Thank you for these questions and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss the matters in more detail at any time convenient to you.

Respondents:

Ms Narelle Clay, AM Chief Executive Officer Southern Youth and Family Services	Ms Helen Backhouse Policy Advisor Southern Youth and Family Services
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