

Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2010 – 2014

North 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

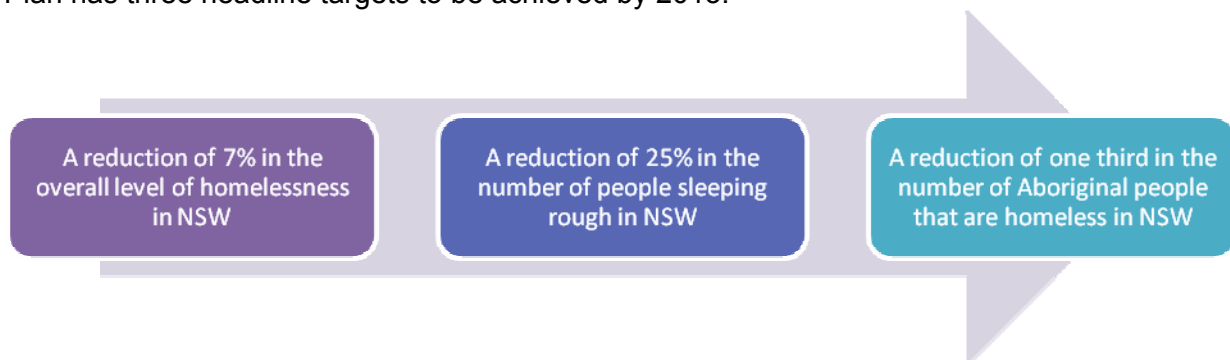
1 REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLANS - OVERVIEW

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.

North Coast Regional Homelessness Committee

The North Coast Regional Homelessness Committee includes the following members:

Paul Dwyer	Juvenile Justice
Brett Paradise	Northern Rivers Social Development Board
TBA	Clarence River Women's Refuge
Diane Crosdale	Dept Premier & Cabinet
Tim Jones	Legal Aid
Judith Addleton	Community Services
Julie Webber	Corrective Services
Karen Clegg	Housing NSW
Lym Langill	Community Services
Lesley Cunin	Centrelink
Meena Johnstone	NGO rep
Phil Webber	Housing NSW
Ruth Edwards	Police
Ruth Thompson	Mid North Coast Social Development Board
Stuart McPherson	Clarence Valley Council
Trent Taylor	Mental Health
Valerie Appleby	Aging Disability and Home Care

3 NORTH COAST HOMELESSNESS PROFILE

3.1 OVERVIEW

The North Coast region consists of 13 LGAs:

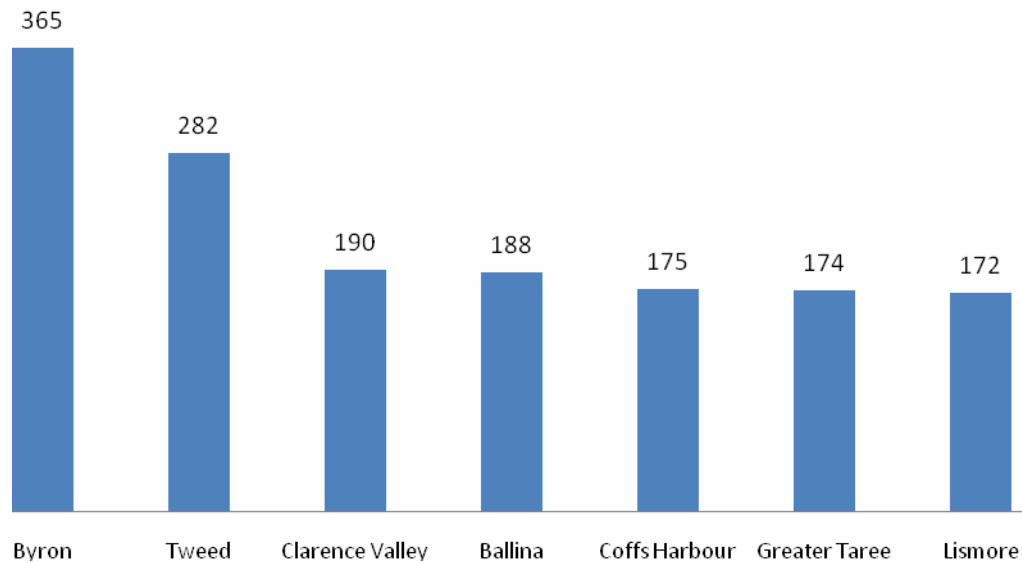
Ballina
Bellingen
Byron
Clarence Valley
Coffs Harbour
Greater Taree
Hastings
Kempsey
Kyogle
Lismore
Nambucca
Richmond Valley
Tweed

At the 2006 Census North Coast had a population of 504002 persons. The 2006 Census counted 3138 persons as homeless in the North Coast (excluding marginal residents of caravan parks - see section 3.2 below). The total included 281 Indigenous homeless. The North Coast accounted for 11% of the NSW homeless population in 2006.

As shown in Figure 1 below, the 2006 Census counted 365 homeless households¹ in Byron LGA followed by 282 in Tweed, 190 in Clarence Valley and 188 in Ballina with lower numbers in Coffs Harbour, Greater Taree, Lismore and other LGAs. The figure below shows the LGAs with the highest numbers of homeless households 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 NORTH COAST



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

The rate of homelessness in North Coast in 2006 was 62 persons per 10,000 persons compared to 42 per 10,000 persons for NSW as a whole.

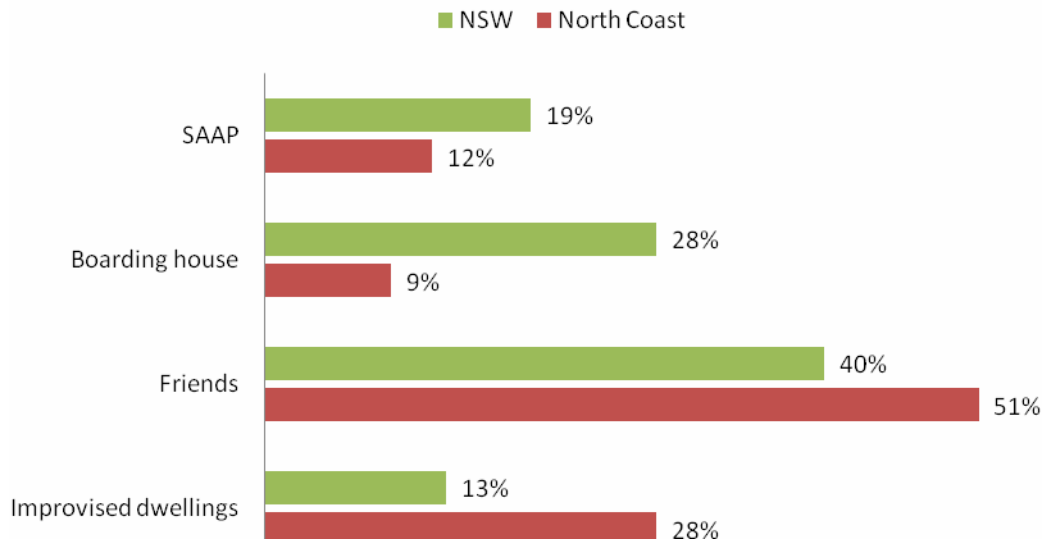
3.2 TYPES OF HOMELESSNESS

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

Improved 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 North Coast at the 2006 Census based on the number of homeless persons in each type.

FIGURE 2: TYPES OF HOMELESSNESS NORTH COAST



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

As shown, North Coast has a greater proportion of homeless people in improvised dwellings than NSW as a whole. Twenty eight per cent of homeless people in North Coast were in improvised dwellings compared to 13% for the state as a whole. North Coast also had higher proportions of homeless people staying with friends than NSW as a whole, 51% of homeless people in North Coast were staying with friends compared to 40% for NSW as a whole.

There were 1912 marginal caravan park renters in North Coast counted in the 2006 Census which was 37% 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 38%² of homeless people in North Coast

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

3.3 INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS

AIHW analysis³ indicates that in 2006 14% of Indigenous homeless people were located in North Coast. In North Coast the rate of Indigenous homeless is 139 per 10,000 persons compared to 59 per 10,000 persons for non Indigenous.

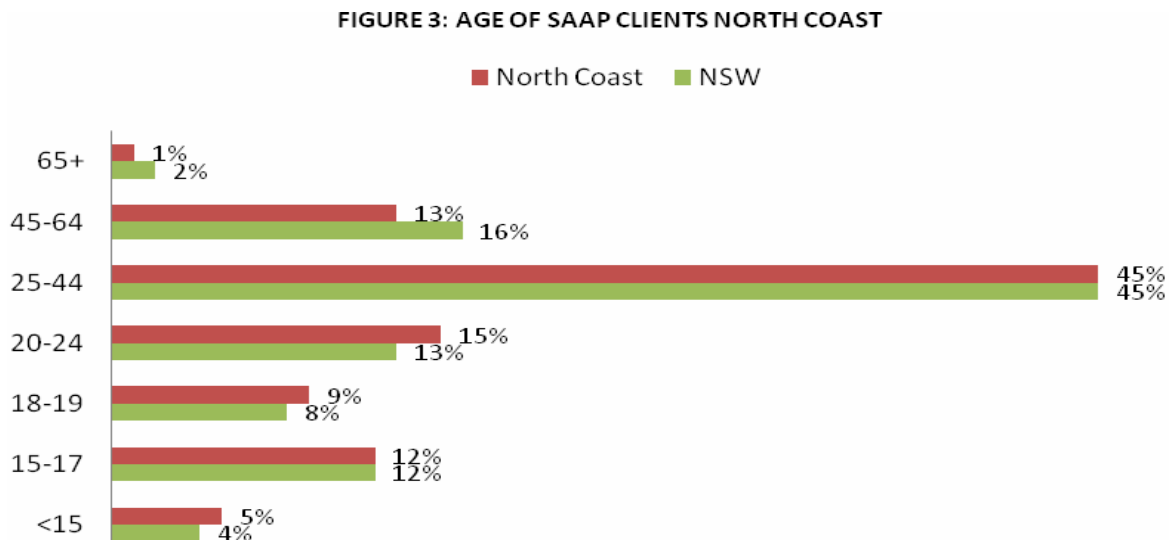
Indigenous homeless people are much more likely to be in SAAP accommodation than non Indigenous. Fifty three per cent of Indigenous homeless in the North Coast were in SAAP accommodation compared to 8% of non Indigenous.⁴ North Coast had a higher proportion of Indigenous SAAP clients compared to NSW as a whole. Twenty three per cent of SAAP clients were Indigenous compared to the state average of 15%.⁵

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 North Coast with NSW as a whole based on the SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008⁶.

Age of SAAP clients

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



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

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

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Counting the Homeless*, 2009 Canberra

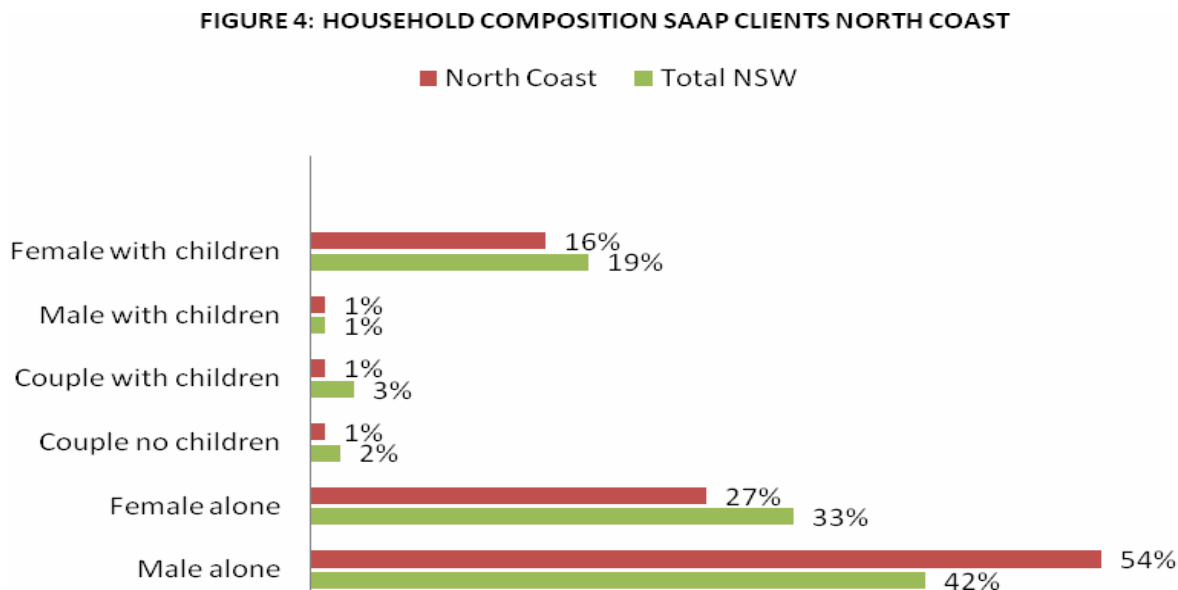
⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Counting the Homeless*, 2009 Canberra

⁶ SAAP NDCA data is generally aggregated by Community Services NSW regions. For this plan data was re-aggregated according to RCP regions.

As shown in Figure 3, North Coast SAAP clients have a similar age profile to NSW as a whole with the exception of a slightly greater number of younger SAAP clients. Seventeen per cent of SAAP clients in the North Coast are under 17 compared to 16% for NSW. Twenty four per cent are aged 18-24 compared to 21% for NSW as a whole.

Household composition of SAAP clients

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



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

As shown above, North Coast has a much higher proportion of single males compared to the state average. 54% of SAAP clients in North Coast were single males compared to 42% for NSW as a whole. There were lower proportions of single women and single women with children than the state averages.

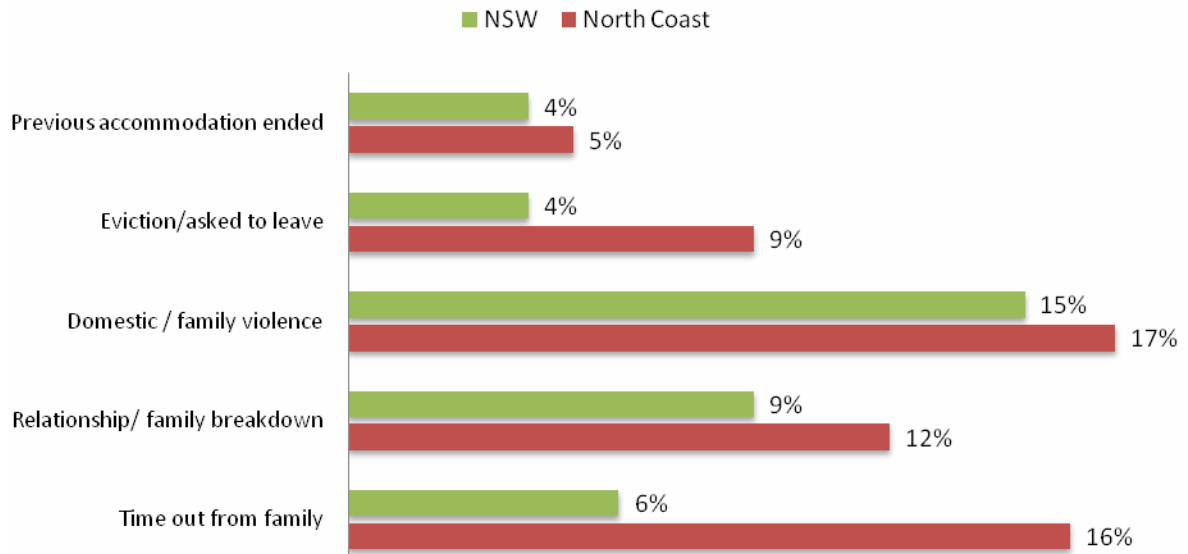
Main reason for seeking SAAP assistance

Figure 5 below shows the top five reasons for seeking SAAP assistance in North Coast compared to NSW as whole.

As shown in Figure 5, the primary reason for seeking assistance in North Coast is domestic and family violence at 17% compared to the state average of 15%. North Coast also had higher rates of “time out from family” and “relationship/family breakdown” than NSW as a whole. Taken together, family-related reasons for seeking assistance accounted for 45% of the main reason for seeking assistance in North Coast.

North Coast also had a higher rate of “eviction” and “previous accommodation ended” than NSW as a whole as a main reason for seeking SAAP assistance. “Eviction” accounted for 9% of the main reason for seeking assistance and “previous accommodation ended” 5%.

FIGURE 5: TOP 5 REASONS FOR SEEKING SAAP ASSISTANCE NORTH COAST

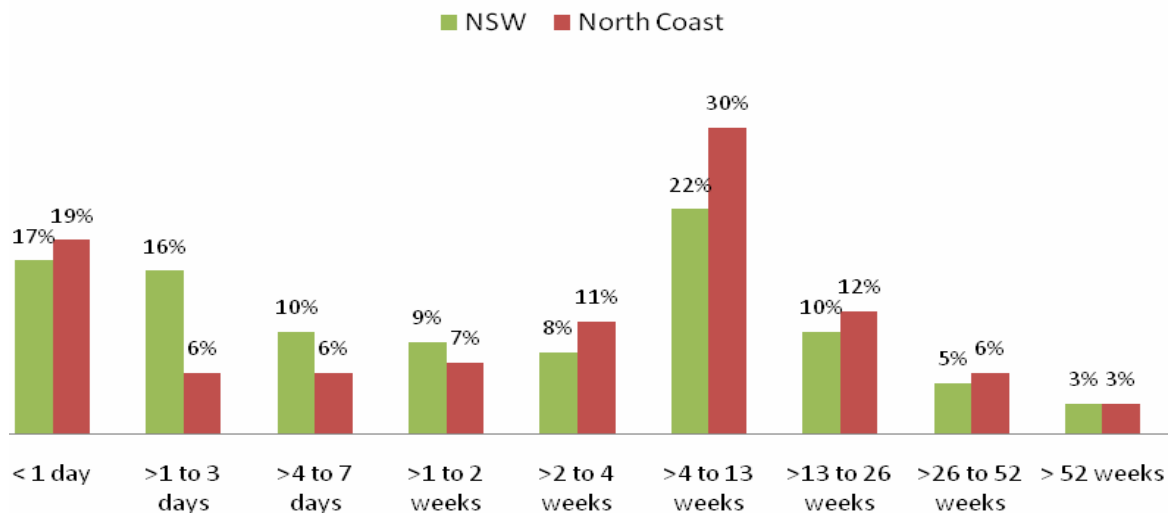


Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the North Coast RCP region

Length of support period by SAAP services

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

FIGURE 6: LENGTH OF SAAP CLIENT SUPPORT NORTH COAST

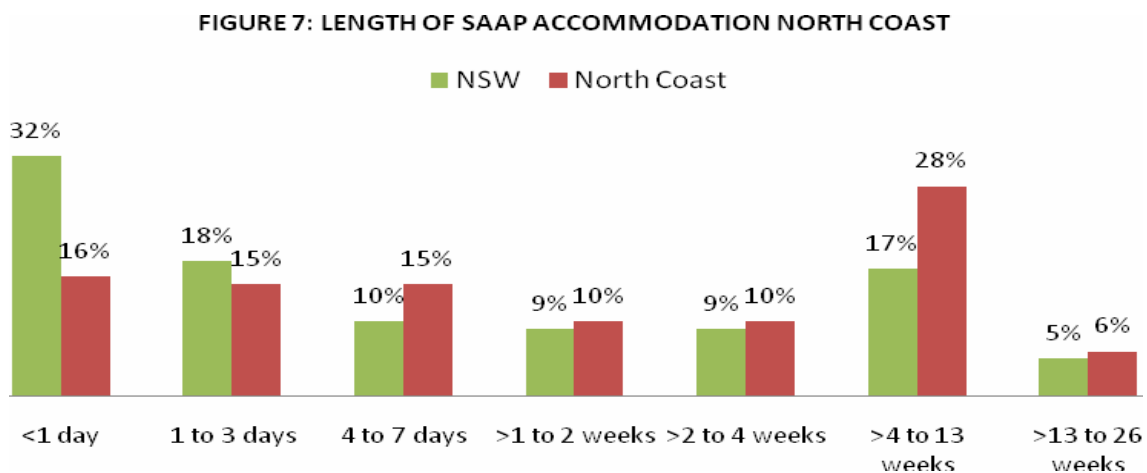


Source: SAAP National Data Collection June to December 2008. Data has been aggregated into the North Coast RCP region

SAAP clients in North Coast tend to use services for longer periods compared to state averages. 30% of SAAP clients receive services for 4 to 13 weeks compared to 22% for NSW as a whole. Fifty one per cent of SAAP clients in North Coast receive services for more than 4 weeks compared to 37% for NSW as a whole.

Length of SAAP accommodation⁷

As shown in Figure 7 below, people using SAAP accommodation in the North Coast stay for longer periods than the state average. Sixty nine per cent of SAAP clients in the North Coast stay for more than 4 days compared to 50% for NSW as a whole. Twenty eight per cent of SAAP clients in North Coast stay for 4 to 13 weeks compared to 17% for NSW as a whole.



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

⁷ Based on closed support periods

4 HOMELESSNESS SERVICE SYSTEM STRENGTHS, GAPS AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The North Coast regional homelessness workshops were attended by over 65 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 in 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 reflect those groups with high levels of demand for support services as well as groups who were harder to reach or where service system gaps prevented effective responses to homelessness.

Key client groups identified through the workshop included:

- Rough sleepers
- Indigenous homeless including those exiting SAAP accommodation
- Young people experiencing or at risk of homeless
- Single homeless males
- Women and families escaping domestic violence
- People at risk of homelessness due to tenancy termination.

4.2 LOCAL LEVEL 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 coordination⁸. These projects and initiatives are outlined below. State wide initiatives that have local benefits in relation to homelessness are also outlined.

Overview of North Coast SAAP funded projects

There are currently 32 SAAP funded projects in the North Coast Region of NSW distributed across 12 LGAs. SAAP services are fairly evenly distributed across the region but with a greater number located in Lismore. The majority of SAAP services in Lismore target women with/without children escaping domestic violence (60%).

⁸ Data on the distribution of SAAP funded services in NSW was supplied by Community Services NSW. This data was aggregated into the RCP regions.

Almost one third (31%) of the services in the North Coast region are targeted towards families, followed by services supporting women with/without children escaping domestic violence (28%). The total number of services targeting young people accounted for 38%.

The following table summaries SAAP projects according in the North Coast by target group.

Target Group	No. of services	%
Women & women with children escaping domestic violence	9	28
Young people	12	38
Single men	1	3
Families including single parent families	10	31
Total	32	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 North Coast 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 North Coast.

Other models and approaches

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

Interagency meetings - Interagency meetings identified through the workshop process that support coordination of the homelessness service system include:

- SAAP network meetings
- Northern Rivers Housing Forum
- Mid North Coast Interagency Networks
- Various locally based human services interagencies
- Locally based multicultural interagencies
- Locally based youth interagencies and network meetings
- Locally based Aboriginal interagencies

Responses to Domestic Violence - There are a number of local responses to homelessness due to domestic violence. Examples noted at the workshop include Staying Home Leaving Violence and Community Partnerships against Domestic Violence (Port Macquarie).

Young People (YP) Space MNC and Christo House (Centacare Port Macquarie) - A youth refuge providing young people in Kempsey with supported accommodation for 24 hours if they are experiencing housing crisis

Kempsey Neighbourhood Centre/Hastings/Maclean Housing Support Service (HMHS) - Partnerships with social housing providers and private agents provide early intervention to assist at risk tenants maintain tenancies. Partnerships exist with employment and other service providers (e.g. Mental Health) to identify those people at risk or requiring early intervention.

Murwillumbah Community Centre - The centre provides programs to assist homeless people particularly targeting rough sleepers including Murwillumbah Accommodation Support Services and Murwillumbah Homeless Support Program.

Reconnect/Youth Connections North Coast Inc— supports young people to stay connected to the community and families.

ACE/TAFE – potential re-engagement of young homelessness people with education and training opportunities

Outreach Legal Aid Clinics - The Regional Outreach Clinic Program is an initiative of Legal Aid NSW aimed at improving access to advice and minor assistance services in rural, regional and remote areas of NSW through partnerships with selected private law firms or Community Legal Centres.

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.

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.

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.

4.3 SERVICE SYSTEM ISSUES AND GAPS

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

Strengthening responses to Aboriginal homelessness

- Access to tenancy support services and renter training for Aboriginal young people was identified as an approach that would help Aboriginal young people gain and maintain their tenancies.
- Aboriginal young people exiting the juvenile justice system were identified as a critical area requiring further action on the North Coast.
- Permanent housing with support and effective discharge planning is required to prevent homelessness among Aboriginal young people exiting out of home care.

Service Integration and coordination

- It was noted that the Mid North Coast and North Coast communities have varying priorities that need to be reflected in service delivery approaches. Improving the integration and coordination of the regional homelessness service system was seen as an opportunity to trial new service delivery approaches and establish stronger cross-sector partnerships.
- Gaps in service coordination have greatest impact on those clients with complex needs for example people with mental illness or drug and alcohol issues.
- There is a need to strengthen existing networks, relationships and links between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and specialist and mainstream agencies. Opportunities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services to work more collaboratively in response to homelessness and to trial homelessness preventative strategies should be developed for example through better representation of Aboriginal networks and organisations in regional housing and support forums.

Preventing homelessness

- Preventing homelessness among families escaping domestic violence continues to be an area of need on the North Coast. Post-crisis housing and support is a particular area for development. There was strong support for adoption of Staying Home Leaving Violence approaches.
- Homelessness prevention was an area for service system development with focus required on developing tenancy support, education and advocacy as well as improved linkages between specialist homelessness services, the private housing sector (including real estate agents) and community housing providers.

Accommodation with support

- Service responses need to include case management support to enable homeless people (prioritising families, Aboriginal families, women escaping domestic violence and people exiting correctional institutions) to establish and sustain a tenancy.
- Services for single homelessness men, especially Aboriginal men were identified as an area for service development. A range of accommodation options were needed for this group, which includes both couch surfers and rough sleepers. Housing First approaches were endorsed for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Housing supply and affordability

- The lack of affordable housing coupled with the impact of seasonal population changes was noted as a key challenge for the North Coast. It was noted that a range of opportunities were currently available to address this issue, for example the expansion of the community housing sector and Local Government planning initiatives for example the introduction of the Affordable Housing SEPP.

Homelessness data

- While it was acknowledged that collection of homelessness data is a challenge across all population groups, the need to improve collection of Aboriginal specific homelessness data was seen as a key issue on the North Coast. Involvement of Aboriginal organisations in the collection of homelessness data, through for example, participation in counts of rough sleepers was identified as an opportunity for follow-up.
- More effective information sharing and shared data collection methodologies are needed to build a better picture of homelessness on the North coast. Data collection needs to involve all services including HNSW, SAAP services, mainstream and Aboriginal services.

5 PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION 2010-2014

Through a process of prioritization of issues, workshop participants identified the following four areas for action.

- Accommodation with support
- Homelessness prevention
- Integrated and sustained service delivery
- Housing supply and affordability

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

5.1 Accommodation with Support

Accommodation and support programs need to be tailored to the individual needs of the person experiencing homelessness and be delivered in the medium to long-term to help achieve significant change. The NSW Homelessness Action Plan identifies the provision of models of supported accommodation suitable for different target groups and increasing the social housing supply as key priorities to help reduce cycles of homelessness.

What the research⁹ says

- Post-housing support is critical for maintaining stable accommodation, and beginning the processes of social re-integration.
- 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.
- Permanent supportive housing is more effective than transitional accommodation.
- It can take many attempts to successfully exit homelessness. It is desirable to minimise the number of attempts.

⁹ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute *Evidence to Inform NSW Homelessness Action Plan Priorities 2009-10*, May 2009

5.2 Homelessness Prevention

The NSW Homelessness Action Plan commits to providing responses to homelessness based on the principles of early intervention and prevention, and focusing on building capacity and resilience in individuals.

Prevention and early intervention - *what the research says*

According to the AHURI research, early intervention and prevention of homelessness is important for the following reasons:

- Homeless people make more use of emergency services (including shelters, hospitals and justice) than the mainstream population.
- Long-term chronic use of emergency services (including emergency housing) is often more expensive to government and society than providing integrated housing and support.
- Experiencing homelessness under the age of 18 is a significant risk factor for long term homelessness.
- Actions to prevent the breakdown of Indigenous social housing tenancies can prevent homelessness.
- Many people develop substance use issues after they become homeless as a means of coping with the experience and reasons for homelessness.
- Key prevention mechanisms include:
 - Involving mainstream agencies,
 - Understanding risk factors and danger signs,
 - Coordinating government, non-government and emergency agencies in providing housing and support.

5.3 Integrated and sustained service delivery

Improving coordination and collaboration between mainstream agencies, specialist homelessness agencies and specialist services is critical to improving outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Flexible integrated service system - What the research says

- Coordination of government, non-government and emergency agencies in providing housing and support is a key prevention mechanism
- Multi-disciplinary case management teams are effective and cost-effective
- Better coordination between drug and alcohol treatment services and residential rehabilitation or other housing options could improve outcomes
- Individualised, responsive, flexible support with a comprehensive focus facilitated by brokerage funds allows case managers to address the full range of issues faced by clients

5.4 Housing supply and affordability

Housing makes a difference - What the research says

- According to AHURI a review of research into the costs and benefits of responding to homelessness finds sufficient 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.
- Indigenous over-crowding in social housing may be a significant direct and indirect cause of homelessness.
- Providing long-term permanent housing has been found to have greater success than transitional models in achieving sustainable outcomes in ending the homelessness cycle.
- There is evidence to suggest that when people are homeless they are at greater risk of developing drug and alcohol dependence.

6 ACTIONS TO ADDRESS PRIORITY ISSUES

Actions under this plan focus on the four priority areas:

- Accommodation with support
- Homelessness prevention
- Integrated and sustained service delivery
- Housing supply and affordability

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 Accommodation with support

A key action focused on accommodation and support on the North Coast is the project funded under the National Partnership on Homelessness:

North Coast Accommodation Project

2006 Census data indicates that 11% of the NSW homeless population and 14% of the Aboriginal homeless population are in the North Coast. This project will complement the Tenancy Support project in the North Coast (see below) by providing multi-disciplinary case management support including access to legal support to enable homeless people (prioritising families, Aboriginal families, women escaping domestic violence and people exiting correctional institutions) to establish and sustain a tenancy in service clusters on the Mid North Coast and Richmond/Tweed.

Support will include generalist support and assistance to access both social housing and private rental, linkages to mainstream services and health services including mental health and drug and alcohol services. The project will also prioritise access to legal services for homeless people. 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 a focus on crisis responses to provision of long term accommodation. Estimated client numbers: 200 per annum

6.2 Homelessness prevention

Key actions to prevent homelessness on the North Coast are the projects funded under the National Partnership on Homelessness:

- **Tenancy support for people at risk of homelessness (Richmond/Tweed and Mid North Coast)**
- **Young People Leaving Care Support Service**
- **Young People exiting Juvenile Justice Centres at risk of entering/re-entering custody**

Tenancy support for people at risk of homelessness (Richmond/Tweed and Mid North Coast)

This project aims to curtail the significant number of people in the Richmond/Tweed and Mid North Coast area currently accessing SAAP services from long term accommodation. The project will also focus on preventing homelessness by assisting Indigenous people to maintain their tenancies. The project will focus primarily on social housing tenants and will identify at risk tenancies at an early stage and put in place time-limited case management to minimise CTTT action and eviction. Assistance may include financial counselling and budgeting, personal counselling, life skills, one-off house cleaning, anger management advice and referral and domestic violence support services. The project will assist 350 people in Richmond/Tweed and 350 in Mid North Coast.

The project will include a research component that will analyse the effectiveness of the model in both Richmond Tweed and Mid North Coast and will establish the predictors or tenancy failure to guide future tenancy support projects¹⁰.

Young People Leaving Care Support Service

2006 Census data indicates that the North Coast region has a slightly younger homeless demographic than NSW. The Aboriginal consultation workshop in this region identified young people leaving care as a priority target group for the region. This project will provide housing and support to young people, including Aboriginal young people, on the North Coast who are exiting, or have exited out of home care, including generalist support, appropriate accommodation and access to health services, where required. The project will increase collaborative service delivery to this client group and identify and resolve systemic issues including early engagement of clients prior to leaving care. Estimated client numbers: 45 per annum.

Young People exiting Juvenile Justice Centres at risk of entering/re-entering custody

The North Coast has a large and increasing Aboriginal youth population which is over-represented in the juvenile justice system. 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. Priority will be given to Aboriginal young people. Support will include the provision of long term accommodation, 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: 18 -24 young people over 3 years and 4-6 families.

¹⁰ NSW Government (2009) National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness NSW Implementation Plan 2009-2013

Additional Areas for Action

- Develop an education campaign targeted to providers and tenants, focusing on tenancy requirements and how to maintain a property following the 'Rent It Keep It' approach.
- Review current practices around people exiting from institutions
- Develop and implement discharge planning procedures identifying transitional or permanent accommodation for people exiting institutional care.
- 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.

6.3 Integrated and sustained service delivery

Areas for Action

- Continue to strengthen the homelessness service system through interagency networking, improved referral processes and sharing of relevant data and research
 - Establish housing forums to deliver information and feedback on different localised projects, providing a repository of information and resources.
 - Establish multi-agency access hubs that provide access to and information about the range of homelessness and support services that are available.
- Improve information exchange across the sector, targeting homelessness and support services using a variety of media directed to different audiences
- Develop cross sector training and development approaches to improve identification of people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness
- Develop and implement shared service delivery protocols between health, housing and specialist homelessness services to assist clients with multiple needs
- Use brokerage funding to deliver appropriate, flexible and coordinated services to people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness

6.4 Housing supply and affordability

Areas for Action

- Engage Local Government in identifying housing supply and development opportunities, for example through local land and environment planning regulations
- 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.
- 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.

7. NORTH 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): ACCOMMODATION WITH SUPPORT					
NSW Priorities					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide models of supported accommodation suitable for different target groups • Provide safe, appropriate, long term accommodation and/or supply to people experiencing domestic violence, relationship and family breakdown and at key transition points • Transition and maintain people exiting statutory care/correctional and health facilities into appropriate long term accommodation 					
Actions	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
			6 months	1 year	3 years
1.1 North Coast Accommodation Project (National Partnership on Homelessness project) Multi-disciplinary case management support including access to legal support to enable homeless people (prioritising families, Aboriginal families, women escaping domestic violence and people exiting correctional institutions) to establish and sustain a tenancy in service clusters on the Mid North Coast and Richmond/Tweed. Estimated client numbers: 200 per annum ¹¹	Human Services	Social housing providers Health services Legal Aid	Develop project specifications Conduct service provider selection process	Monitor implementation	Evaluate effectiveness of project

¹¹ 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

1.2 Increase supported accommodation opportunities specifically for people leaving care or institutional settings	Human Services	North Coast Homelessness Committee Member Agencies	Scope project		
1.3 Improve existing, and examine additional, partnership opportunities between agencies to address the needs of homeless people requiring support to sustain a tenancy	Housing NSW	North Coast Homelessness Committee Member Agencies	Scope project		
1.4 Review existing accommodation with support models on the North Coast and identify gaps in the service network and examine options for addressing these gaps	Housing NSW Community Services Health NSW	North Coast Homelessness Committee Member Agencies	Scope project		
1.5 Examine appropriate housing and support options for Indigenous people and people escaping violence and implement strategies to improve access to services	Housing NSW Community Services	Aboriginal Housing Office	Scope project		

PRIORITY FOCUS AREA (2): HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

NSW Priorities

- Prevent eviction from all kinds of tenures
- Transition and maintain people exiting statutory care/correctional and health facilities into appropriate long term accommodation

Actions	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
			6 months	1 year	3 years
<p>2.1 Tenancy support for people at risk of homelessness (National Partnership on Homelessness project). The project will focus primarily on social housing tenants and will identify at risk tenancies at an early stage and put in place time-limited case management to minimise CTTT action and eviction. Estimated client numbers: 350 people in Richmond/Tweed and 350 in Mid North Coast.</p>	Housing NSW	NGO service providers	Project implementation	Monitor implementation	Evaluate effectiveness of project
<p>2.2 Young People Leaving Care Support Service (National Partnership on Homelessness project). This project will provide housing and support to young people, including Aboriginal young people, on the North Coast who are exiting, or have exited out of home care, including generalist support, appropriate accommodation and access to health services, where required. Estimated client numbers: 45 per annum.</p>	Community Services	NGO service providers	Develop project specification Conduct service provider selection process	Monitor implementation	Evaluate effectiveness of project

<p>2.3 Young People exiting Juvenile Justice Centres at risk of entering/re-entering custody (<i>National Partnership on Homelessness project</i>). 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. Priority will be given to Aboriginal young people. Estimated client numbers: 18 -24 young people over 3 years and 4-6 families.</p>	<p>Juvenile Justice</p>	<p>NGO service providers</p>	<p>Develop project specification Conduct service provider selection process</p>	<p>Monitor implementation</p>	<p>Evaluate effectiveness of project</p>
<p>2.4 Review exiting care processes and implement strategies to improve clients access to affordable housing to coincide with release/discharge</p>	<p>Human Services</p>	<p>North Coast Homelessness Committee Member Agencies</p>	<p>Scope project</p>		
<p>2.5 Improve access to products and services that help people to establish and maintain tenancies in the private rental market</p>	<p>Human Services</p>	<p>North Coast Homelessness Committee Member Agencies</p>	<p>Scope project</p>		
<p>2.6 Social housing providers to review their tenancy support processes and programs to identify gaps in service models or service provision, with a priority focus on sustaining tenancies</p>	<p>Social housing providers</p>	<p>North Coast Homelessness Committee Member Agencies</p>	<p>Monitoring and reporting mechanisms to be developed</p>		

PRIORITY FOCUS AREA (3): INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINED SERVICE DELIVERY

- NSW Priorities**
- *Deliver integrated service responses*
 - *Promote partnerships between all levels of government, business, consumers and the not-for-profit sector*
 - *Improve identification of and responses to homelessness*

Actions	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
			6 months	1 year	3 years
3.1 Review and implement appropriate governance structures and planning processes at a regional and local level between state government, local government and non-government sectors and stakeholders	North Coast Homelessness Committee		Scope project		
3.2 Agencies to adopt a collaborative approach to working together to address identified issues relating to housing and homelessness in the region	North Coast Homelessness Committee		Scope project		
3.3 Review existing services to identify potential service duplication and/or more effective use of resources to address identified needs	North Coast Homelessness Committee		Scope project		

PRIORITY FOCUS AREA (4): HOUSING SUPPLY AND AFFORDABILITY

NSW Priorities

- Increase the supply of social housing
- Upgrade existing social housing

Actions	Lead Agency	Partners	Milestones		
			6 months	1 year	3 years
4.1 Increase the social housing sector by 10% by building up to 1000 new social housing dwellings on the North Coast by 2014	Housing NSW	Community Housing Providers	Ongoing implementation	Ongoing implementation	Ongoing implementation
4.2 Deliver maintenance upgrading services to all social housing properties	Housing NSW	Community Housing Providers	Ongoing implementation	Ongoing implementation	Ongoing implementation
4.3 Improve and streamline access to social housing	Housing NSW Community Housing Providers	North Coast Homelessness Committee	Ongoing implementation	Ongoing implementation	Ongoing 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

North Coast ATSI Regional Homelessness Action Plan Workshop 23rd February 2010 Ballina

Organisations attending, or invited to attend the regional homelessness action plan workshop:

ORGANISATION
Arakwal Aboriginal Corporation (Bundjalung of Byron Bay)
Baryulgil Square Local Aboriginal Land Council
Birpai Local Aboriginal Land Council
Birrigan Gargle Local Aboriginal Land Council
Bogal Local Aboriginal Land Council
Bowraville Local Aboriginal Land Council
Bundjalung Tribal Society
Bunjum Aboriginal Corporation
Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council
Burabi Aboriginal Corporation
Buyinbin Aboriginal Corporation
Casino Boolangle Local Aboriginal Land Council
Coffs Harbour Local Aboriginal Land Council
Forster Local Aboriginal Land Council
Grafton Ngerrie Local Aboriginal Land Council
Gugin Gudduba Local Aboriginal Land Council
Gumbangerrii Aboriginal Corporation
Guri Wa Ngundagar Aboriginal Corporation
Gungyah Ngallingnee Aboriginal Corporation
Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council
Jubullum Local Aboriginal Land Council
Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council
Kurrachee Co-operative Society
Muli Muli Local Aboriginal Land Council
Nambucca Heads Local Aboriginal Land Council
Ngaku Cooperative
Ngulingah Local Aboriginal Land Council
Nungera Co-operative Society
Purfleet Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council
Tweed Aboriginal Co-operative Society
Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council
Yaegl Local Aboriginal Land Council
Yarrowarra Aboriginal Corporation
Unkya Local Aboriginal Land Council
Housing NSW
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
ICC Manager Coffs Harbour
Homelessness Unit – Housing NSW
Housing NSW
Manager New Horizons
Aboriginal Housing Office
Bunjum Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd

**North Coast Regional Homelessness Action Plan Workshop
24th February Grafton**

Organisations attending, or invited to attend the regional homelessness action plan workshop:

ORGANISATION
Aboriginal Housing Office
ACHC
Anglicare North Coast
Ballina District Community Services Association
Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre
Byron Bay Youth House
Byron Emergency Accommodation Project Inc
Byron Shire Council
Casino Neighbourhood Centre Inc
Centrelink
Clarence River Women's refuge
Clarence Valley Council
CNU
Coffs Harbour Accommodation and Housing Support Service
Coffs Harbour City Council
Community Housing Division
Community Housing Limited
Community Programs Inc
Community Services – Far North Coast Network Office
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Department of Community Services
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)
Hastings Womens Refuge
Homelessness NSW
Housing NSW
Juvenile Justice
Legal Aid
Lismore Corrective Services
Lismore Neighbourhood Centre Inc
Lyn's Place
Mid North Coast Regional Council for Social Development
Mid North Coast Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service
Murrurwillumbah Community Centre
Nambucca Valley Neighbourhood Centre
North Coast Community Housing Co Ltd
Northern Rivers Social Development Council
Northern Rivers Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service
Northern Rivers Women's & Children's Services Inc
Northern Rivers Social Development Council Reconnect
NSOA
NSW /ACT FaHCSIA NETWORK Wagga Office
NSW Community Services
On Track Community Programs Inc
St Josephs Youth Service
Tweed Shire Women's Service
Urunga Neighbourhood Centre
Warrina Womens and Childrens Refuge
Women Up North Housing Inc
Youth Connections Inc
Youth Connections North Coast

Department of Human Services
Housing NSW

July 2010