

Homeless Young People and Commonwealth-State Policies and Services: A Victorian Case Study

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Homeless Young People and Commonwealth-State Policies and Services: A Victorian Case Study

by

Sheila Shaver and Marina Paxman



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES

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Foreword

In 1992, the Social Policy Research Centre published the report, *Homelessness, Wardship and Commonwealth-State Relations*. That report by the authors of the current report was the outcome of a study commissioned by the Department of Social Security in which the Centre was asked to examine the changing balance and fit between Commonwealth and State programs in meeting the needs of homeless young people, with a particular focus on wards of the state. It reviewed changing policies and practices at that time, and featured policy case studies of Queensland and South Australia.

This report is the result of a further study of policies and services affecting young people, again commissioned by the Department of Social Security, focused this time on the situation in Victoria.

The study has used similar procedures to those used earlier, including the examination of policy documents and legislation in the area and the analysis of data on programs available to young people. Interviews were also conducted with people in relevant government and non-government bodies. In addition, the research reported upon here, the authors conducted interviews with a number of homeless young people themselves. Their responses help to confirm the picture of their needs and circumstances that has been built up in research conducted over the last two years or so. This picture helps us to better understand the role of services in their daily lives and how these services can be made more effective.

The shifts in responsibility between Commonwealth and State and between government and non-government bodies, with the ambiguities they present, are thus seen both at the policy level and as they affect young people personally. The suggestions for improvement made by the young people, which are included as the last section of this report, while made without reference to policy or fiscal constraints, none the less make interesting reading for anyone concerned with the welfare of young people and their preparation for adult life.

Peter Saunders
Director

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Cathy Thomson, a researcher at the Social Policy Research Centre has made a substantial contribution to the project component concerned with interviews with homeless young people. She was involved from the initial stage of questionnaire design, interviewed half the participants, prepared the data for analysis and assisted with data and policy interpretation and draft report writing. Other important contributors have been Claudia Hirst and others in the Victorian Department of Health and Community Services and the Office of Youth Affairs; Susan Devereaux, Alan Jordan, and others from the Department of Social Security; Peter Jubb from the Department of Employment, Education and Training; and Jenny Doyle from the Social Policy Research Centre.

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List of Abbreviations

ACP	Adolescent Community Placement, H&CS
ABSTUDY	Commonwealth education allowance for Aboriginal people, DEET
AYPAC	Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition
AUSTUDY	Commonwealth education allowance, DEET
CAP	Crisis Accommodation Program, SAAP
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service, DEET
COAG	The Council of Australian Governments
DEET	Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training
DSS	Commonwealth Department of Social Security
HRD	Commonwealth Department of Housing and Regional Development
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
H&CS	Victorian Department of Health and Community Services (formerly known as Community Services Victoria, CSV)
IDC	Inter Departmental Committee
IHR	Independent Homeless Rate - rate of payment, DSS
JPET	Job Placement Employment Training, DEET
JSA	Job Search Allowance, DSS
NSA	New Start Allowance, DSS
SA	Sickness Allowance, DSS
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, HRD
SB	Special Benefit, DSS

SHR	Student Homeless Rate of AUSTUDY, DEET
SPP	Sole Parent Pension, DSS
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
YAC	Youth Access Centre, DEET
YHA	Young Homeless Allowance - rate of payment, DSS
YSU	Youth Service Units, DSS
YTA	Youth Training Allowance, DEET and DSS
YTI	Youth Training Initiative

Glossary of Accommodation Terms

Lead tenant	Medium- to long-term housing accommodating up to four or five young people with one or two adult lead tenants. Lead tenants are usually volunteers who receive free rent in return for their supervisory role.
Emergency	Refuge accommodation for periods of up to three to six weeks only.
Independent supported	Medium- to long-term accommodation, single or shared, with a youth worker visiting regularly or living in.
Independent	Private rental accommodation.
Informal or private	Accommodation secured through relatives, friends, squatting, private hotels and similar.
Case management	Defined in SAAP as 'a planning approach to the achievement of individual client outcomes, and includes assessment. It may also include appropriate referrals, provision of direct assistance and the use of mainstream services for each client as appropriate. It may involve the development of a personal plan or support agreement developed in consultation with each client following assessment. It may include linking clients with the range of supports that they will require after leaving SAAP. Case management operates from the initial point of contact with the client to exit from the SAAP program. It may involve some follow-up of clients' (Commonwealth of Australia <i>Gazette</i> , 1995: 807).

Text Notes

State Government	Includes the two Territory Governments unless otherwise specified.
AUSTUDY	Includes ABSTUDY unless otherwise specified.

1 Youth Homelessness and Commonwealth and State Policies and Services

1.1 Introduction

Homelessness among young people is now recognised as a significant and continuing social problem in Australia. The numbers of young people who are unsupported by their parents and lacking stable and secure accommodation has been rising steeply for a decade. One indication of this has been increasing numbers of homeless people under 15 years approaching the Commonwealth Department of Social Security (DSS), crisis refuges and other community and charitable organisations for support (House of Representatives, 1995: 20-1). In the short term homelessness may have ill effects on young people's immediate health and well-being, while prolonged homelessness may have serious and lasting consequences for their education, employment prospects and full participation in Australian society. Youth homelessness is also associated with crime, substance abuse and sexual exploitation. Social policy concern about youth homelessness is thus well placed.

Homelessness among young people is not a single phenomenon, nor has it a single cause. It must be viewed in the broad social, economic and political context. Some young people have always left the family home at a young age, yet current homelessness in part reflects the disappearance of unskilled jobs, boarding houses and other resources which sustained early independence in past generations. Some who might have left used to be prevented from doing so through the intervention of police and welfare authorities, often enough at the behest of their parents. There is now greater reluctance to treat young people this way, and greater recognition of their right to leave situations of conflict and abuse. By no means are all homeless young people living on the streets, though an unacceptable number of them are. Neither are all homeless young people out of contact with their parents, though many are. What homeless young people have in common is circumstances in which their parents cannot or do not provide the financial and emotional support and adult guidance a young person requires. The result, for many, is an insecure lifestyle in which they may have somewhere to stay but not necessarily somewhere to live, and in which they lack access to a broad range of resources to assist their transition to adulthood.

This report examines the nexus between Commonwealth and State policies addressing youth homelessness. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of

the Child affirms the responsibility of the Commonwealth and State Governments to ensure that the rights of the child are protected. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs has put inadequacies in the support of homeless young people in the context of the Convention.

Despite Australia's adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there has also been criticism about the failure of Australia to comply with the requirements of the Convention and for the failure of either Commonwealth or State/Territory laws to be enacted to incorporate the provisions of the Convention. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Report into Homeless Children, in 1989, commented about Australia's failure to meet its obligation to homeless youth. (House of Representatives, 1995: 47-8)

The Committee believes that the responsibility for the young people involves the State, the community, families and individuals themselves. It requires establishing an effective balance between these institutions and interests. It is not a matter of moving this responsibility towards the family alone, nor one of trying to delineate which level of government bears full responsibility. (House of Representatives, 1995: 49-50)

In the post-war period trends in education, employment and housing markets have changed dramatically. The circumstances in which young people move from childhood to adulthood have changed, affecting their ability to afford housing, to remain at school or find employment. The last two decades have seen an extensive development of social policy measures in these areas. Though many of these measures had earlier foundations, new provisions such as income support, job training, youth refuges and other specialist youth facilities have grown up in this period. The most far reaching development is the entrance of the Commonwealth into the field, through programs for income support, accommodation and health. These Commonwealth initiatives, some jointly funded by the States, have greatly expanded the support available to homeless young people. It is now difficult to remember that 'child' welfare was once understood as the responsibility of the States alone. Indeed, it is now difficult to imagine a youth service system in which the Commonwealth did not play a fundamental part.

In the result, homeless young people now find themselves at the boundaries of responsibility dividing Commonwealth and State Governments, and it is with such boundaries that this study is concerned. In an earlier report on this subject

(Shaver and Paxman, 1992), the authors examined the role of wardship in demarcating the responsibilities of the Commonwealth and the States. Building on earlier work by Taylor (1990), the research reported a trend toward more narrowly prescribed and reluctantly used powers to place a young person under orders for guardianship, protection or control. The retraction of wardship, sustained over more than two decades, was part of a wider shift in child welfare philosophy and practice narrowing the focus of state intervention to situations of serious abuse or neglect of a child or young person. Case studies of Queensland and South Australia suggested trends to deinstitutionalisation in the placement of children and young persons in out-of-home care and the devolution of service delivery to non-government organisations. The Commonwealth has entered into the provision of youth welfare in the context of this retraction.

The roles of State and Commonwealth Governments in adolescent welfare have been changing for more than two decades, reflecting among other factors the growing role of the Commonwealth in children's services and the consolidation of income security as a Federal responsibility. Until recently, however, age and wardship status served to define working boundaries between the child welfare responsibilities of State Governments and the income support functions of the Commonwealth. The dividing line between the support and care of 'children' and the support of independent 'adults' was drawn at the age of 16, with some exceptions in the case of homeless young people. These exceptions did not apply in the case of state wards because the State Governments had assumed parental responsibility. The age of 16 was also used in the guidelines of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) to define a lower age limit for specialist services. Both of these boundaries have since become blurred. More importantly, behind the demarcation of the division of labour of Commonwealth and State Governments lie more complex questions about the extent to which services fit together in a larger whole of integrated and appropriate support for homeless young people.

1.2 Youth Homelessness: Issues Raised in the Literature

This study focuses on Commonwealth and State policies and their effectiveness for young homeless people aged 13 to 17 years. This age group is of particular concern because of the age-related divisions of responsibility between the Commonwealth and States regarding income support, accommodation services and other welfare services. The areas given attention in this literature review are the adequacy and appropriateness of services and support for young homeless people in accommodation, education, employment, income and family reconciliation. In 1991 the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Homelessness and Housing undertook to synthesise the findings of the plethora of reports and

evaluations on aspects of homelessness. In the book that resulted, titled *Homelessness in Australia: Causes and Consequence*, Neil and Fopp (1992) provide a comprehensive review of the literature on youth homelessness. The following discussion is drawn primarily from this book, supplemented by further materials which have become available in the last three years.

Defining Homelessness

Young people who do not have access to affordable, safe and secure shelter of an adequate standard may reasonably be regarded as homeless. Homeless young people are those living on the street, in squats, refuges and other supported accommodation services; those moving between relatives and friends; and those living in rooming houses and intermittently in small inner city hostels and boarding houses. Homelessness encompasses various qualities in terms of housing, for example personal safety, security of tenure, affordability, decent standards including facilities for cooking and personal hygiene, social relations, privacy, identity, accessibility, appropriateness, and so on (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 4-8).

A definition needs to take account of the effects of homelessness on the homeless person. Magree and Elkington (1993) define youth homelessness as a continuum of exclusion. That is, homelessness

represents the exclusion of young people from many of society's resources, from family and other significant adult relationships, and from opportunities to participate in the community. Homeless young people can also be excluded from a reasonable income, from education, employment and training opportunities, from the support of family and other significant supportive adult relationships, and from opportunities to participate in the local community. (Magree and Elkington, 1993: 32)

Homelessness is rarely a sudden event, but it may represent a single acute episode in a person's life or multiple episodes over a long period (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 9, 35). Drawing on the work of Snow and Anderson (1987), MacKenzie and Chamberlain (1994: 2) extend the definition of homelessness to incorporate its consequences for personal identity. They conceptualise homelessness as the outcome of a process, or 'career' in which people go through various stages and some acquire a self-identity as a homeless person. Young people often run away from home for short periods of time when they are growing up, but the permanent break denotes a fundamental change in their sense of who they are and where they belong. From this point the young person no longer thinks of himself or

herself as belonging to the family unit, and is unlikely to return 'home' on a continuing basis. A second major transformation along the career path to homelessness is the transition to 'chronicity', when the young person accepts homelessness as a way of life and becomes deeply involved in its sub-culture. At this level of homelessness the primary concern is simply to survive, and the lifestyle is often characterised by petty crime, prostitution, drug dealing, substance abuse and other unsafe practices. It is difficult to help young people who have made the transition to chronicity, because they may no longer express a strong desire to change their lifestyle and are antagonistic towards the system and society that let them down (MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 1994: 2-3).

Estimates of the number of young people who are homeless differ according to the definition adopted. The most easily counted homeless people are those using services or receiving income support, but there are others whose homelessness is hidden because they are living on the streets, with relatives or friends, or in some cases exploitative older people. There is also a high level of turnover in the homeless population. Thus it is impossible to know accurately the number of homeless young people in Australia (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 11, 33). Other dimensions which affect access to services and support, and hence visibility as a homeless person, are gender, race, age, class and mental and physical abilities (Magree and Elkington, 1993: 2).

The Burdekin Inquiry (HREOC, 1989: 69) estimated the number of homeless children and young people across the country (no age group specified) as between 20,000 and 25,000, stressing that this is likely to be a conservative measure. The number in receipt of a homeless rate of income support from either DSS or the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) gives a minimum figure of the number of young people accessing support. In 1993, 10,480 people aged 17 years and under received a DSS benefit at the Youth Homeless Allowance (YHA) rate (DSS, 1994a: 23) and 8,804 people aged under 19 received AUSTUDY at the Student Homeless Rate (SHR) (figures supplied by DEET).¹ The Morris Report (House of Representatives, 1995) presents DSS and DEET figures compiled on a consistent basis at one point in time. In May 1994, 20,846 people were in receipt of either YHA or SHR. Of those 9,640 were in receipt of YHA, of which 1,615 were under 15 years; 11,206 people were in receipt of the SHR. The annual estimates for 1994 were 16,039 SHR

1 DSS figures are for payments current at given points in time, while the AUSTUDY figure refers to total grants in a year.

beneficiaries and approximately 20,000 YHA beneficiaries (House of Representatives, 1995: 29-30).²

Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1994) estimate that 25,000 to 30,000 students experience homelessness over one year.³ Estimates for one point in time indicate that there were approximately 21,000 homeless people aged 12 to 18 of whom 7,700 were school students, 1,200 other students, 12,000 unemployed or not in the labour force. Another 9,000 young people have recently found independent accommodation needing continuing support (House of Representatives, 1995: 33-4).

These definitions and estimates are useful for service providers and policy makers. Data collection on youth homelessness has been difficult and the results poor because of the varying client information data collected across the Commonwealth and States. Urgent attention needs to be given to collecting comprehensive national data (House of Representatives, 1995: 28).

Causes and Characteristics of Youth Homelessness

Homelessness needs to be viewed in the context of changes in the life course of the last two decades extending the dependence of young people on their families. These changes are a result of several factors. One is high levels of unemployment among young people. In 1994 22.9 per cent of young people in the workforce aged 15 to 19 were unemployed (ABS, 1994, Cat. No. 6203.0, September). There are fewer jobs accessible to young people who have not completed secondary schooling, such as unskilled work and apprenticeships, and more of those that are available are casual or part-time (Magree and Elkington, 1993: 35). In part for this reason, school retention rates have risen sharply in the last decade. Year 12 retention rates, for example, were 40.6 per cent in 1983 and 77.1 per cent in 1992 (ABS, 1994, Cat. No. 4102.0). Further factors are the high cost of private rental accommodation and changing societal attitudes away from early

2 The independent rate of JSA is payable to a young person under 18 who has been away from home for a continuous period of 18 weeks and has, while living away from home, been employed on a full-time basis or has been unemployed and registered by the CES for a total of at least 13 weeks. As with YHA, the young person must not be receiving regular financial support from a parent or guardian. Young people who meet these requirements may be able to claim support without disclosing their homelessness or other personal information. For this reason the number of young persons receiving YHA understates the extent of homelessness.

3 These figures are based on type of accommodation only, and include school students of all ages.

marriage (Hartley, cited in Magree and Elkington, 1993: 1; McDonald in DSS, 1994a: 23).

Whether studying, working or unemployed, young people remain in the parental home longer than in the past. The proportion of young people aged 15 to 19 living in the parental home has risen from 84 per cent in 1982 to 89 per cent in 1992, and of those aged 20 to 24 from 41 to 47 per cent (National Council for the International Year of the Family, 1994: 11-12). The trend is more marked among young men than young women.

Homelessness rarely has a single cause, but is usually the outcome of a long-term accumulation of problems (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 88). The background circumstances associated with youth homelessness are now well known. One is economic hardship in the family, making it difficult to sustain prolonged support of younger members. Unemployment is common, of the young person, the parents, or both. Extended educational requirements have prolonged the economic dependence of young people. As well as poverty the family backgrounds of homeless young people include abuse (physical, emotional and/or sexual), mental illness or addictive behaviour. Family conflict, including marital breakdown and problematic relationships with step and de facto parents are also common (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 85-6; Magree and Elkington, 1993: 33-5). In the case of Aboriginal people and refugees there is a sorry history of assimilation and separation from family and culture.

Length of homelessness and access to services and support affect the way in which it is actually experienced in any given case. The shortage of appropriate and affordable accommodation causes homelessness to be more than a brief crisis. One factor distinguishing those who do not become homeless from those who do is access to the resources necessary to compete successfully in the private rental market. Such access may be gained through education, employment or support from the community (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 87-8).

The rise in youth homelessness has also been attributed to failures of social care. The Burdekin Report (HREOC, 1989) on youth homelessness found that a high proportion of homeless young people were or had been state wards, and connected their homelessness to failures in state care (HREOC, 1989: 109-17). Linkages between state care and homelessness have since been confirmed by several studies (Hirst, 1989; Taylor, 1990; Magree and Elkington, 1993; Fredman and Green, 1994; Cashmore and Paxman, 1994) and in evidence presented to the House of Representatives Inquiry (1994).

Submissions to the House of Representatives Inquiry (1994) point to significant narrowing in State welfare practices and serious shortfalls of resources leaving young people without the child welfare services they need. Fredman and Green

(1994) found many young people experiencing further victimisation while in out-of-home care (systems abuse), including multiple short-term placements with intermittent periods of homelessness, clients lacking a worker with the responsibility for their on-going welfare, waiting periods for urgent services such as counselling and income support, and unsupported placement into independent arrangements requiring maturity and living skills they had not yet developed. This research referred to Victoria (Fredman and Green, 1994: iv-viii). These developments, in combination with the introduction of Commonwealth income support for homeless young people through YHA and SHR, are resulting in increasing numbers of young people being passed from the State to the Commonwealth (House of Representatives, 1994: 29, 35).

Homelessness affects different people in different ways, so that its consequences and the needs of individuals vary. As a group, young homeless people have distinct characteristics when compared to the general population. Policies to support homeless young people need to take account of a number of ways in which they differ from other young people of the same age.

- Homeless young people leave home at much younger ages and more often lack the approval and support of their parents. The peak age of homeless youth is 16-17 years, and a significant number are under 15. They are often from single parent or blended families, and a history of family conflict tends to weaken their ties to parents and siblings. Sexual abuse exposes young women to greater risk of homelessness and at younger ages than males.
 - Aboriginal people and those who have been state wards are over-represented in the homeless population.
 - Homeless young people are more likely to leave school prematurely, whether voluntarily or non-voluntarily. They are also more likely to be unemployed.
 - Homeless young women are more likely than other young women to become mothers at an early age.
 - Homeless young people are more often isolated and lonely. They are more likely to have poor health, including that caused by poor diets and substance abuse. There is thought to be a link between mental illness and youth homelessness.
 - Homeless young people are more likely than others to participate in criminal activity, for example, theft and prostitution. They are more likely
-

to have spent time in a detention centre (Burdekin, 1993; Cashmore and Paxman, 1994; House of Representatives, 1995).

The mobility of homeless people makes research into the causes of homelessness and the consequences of long-term homelessness very difficult. Consideration needs to be given to the perpetuation of homelessness through generations. There is a lack of longitudinal studies and a dearth of studies using control groups (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 27-30).

Accommodation

Although homelessness cannot be reduced simply to a matter of housing, accommodation is central to the problem. Poverty and accommodation crises often form part of the family background to homelessness. Poor families are more likely than others to have inadequate housing, which in turn may put pressures on the young person to leave home. Once having left, young people face an acute shortage of appropriate, low cost accommodation. Daniel and Cornwall (1993) found that housing was a problem for young people across Australia, particularly in cities and tourist towns, in terms of the high cost of rent and consequent overcrowding. In the absence of affordable housing, young people move in and out of temporary arrangements, many of which are inappropriate (Daniel and Cornwall, 1993: 22). MacKenzie and Chamberlain (1994: 8) found that homeless students were staying on the streets, or moving from place to place, including SAAP accommodation and community placements. Young people often utilise cheap private hotels, rooming or boarding houses and urban caravan parks, often with poor access to community facilities, insecure tenure, overcrowding and a lack of privacy (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 42-3).

There is a shortage of emergency accommodation for those in crisis, and inadequate medium- to long-term supported accommodation available to those exiting from emergency accommodation (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 75). The accommodation of young people under 16 in crisis accommodation designed for those aged 16 and over is of concern (Green, 1993; House of Representatives, 1994; MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 1994). Young people under 16 years of age are being placed in SAAP services, and in at least some cases are being placed there by State welfare authorities. The House of Representatives Inquiry (1994) has called for urgent review of the operation of SAAP guidelines with respect to the accommodation of these very young people. The lack of exit accommodation puts a further strain on crisis accommodation, felt by both those wishing to enter and those wanting to leave. This is one cause of bottle-necks, high turn away rates, 'refuge-hopping' and inappropriate accommodation (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 43-4). It appears that many who are at risk of homelessness are ready for independent living if secure, affordable and appropriate housing was available

(Neil and Fopp, 1992: 58). Independent living skills programs and ongoing support for those who have moved to independent arrangements are important to the success of the transition. At discharge from care they report there is no planning and any assistance is ad hoc and passive (Freedman and Robinson, 1993: 4).

Employment and Education

Unemployment and premature school leaving are closely related to homelessness; it is difficult to afford private sector housing without employment and it is difficult to work or study without secure housing. Young people experience high unemployment rates compared to other age groups, and government sponsored labour market programs may be an important factor in preventing homelessness in the long term. More immediately, however, they offer limited help to young people who are homeless (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 57). It is difficult for homeless people to commit themselves to a course while their living conditions are unstable and their environment unsupported. Shrapnel (1992) was critical of the value of labour market schemes for homeless people because of their lack of integration into to other aspects of life and poor post-program follow up support.

Most teenagers first experience homelessness while they are at school, and most homeless young people drop out of school. There is no nationally co-ordinated policy on homelessness among school students (MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 1994: 1). The House of Representatives Inquiry (1994) has found a lack of integration between the State education and welfare systems. Its *Discussion Paper* recommends that the Commonwealth and State Governments include educational assessment and the provision of education and accommodation services to young people in the Case Management Protocol, which governs the assessment and support of homeless young people under 18 (1994: 33-5). Schools could be an effective site for early intervention in the career process of homelessness. When homeless students drop out of school and break their local ties they are likely to make the transition to chronicity, by which stage the opportunity for early intervention has passed (MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 1994: 3-24). The House of Representatives Inquiry (1994) has called for a preventative role for schools, stressing the importance of young people remaining in their social network and continuing their education.

The Burdekin Report (HREOC, 1989) found that a range of school factors contribute to homelessness, including curricula irrelevant to their needs and interests, poor teacher-student relationships, inflexible and alienating institutional structures, rejection or neglect of 'under-achievers', and the suspension or expulsion of difficult students. A Select Committee into Youth Affairs found that school policies which expel at-risk students compound their likelihood of ending

up on the streets or becoming involved in a criminal lifestyle (reported in Beresford, 1993: 17). Working with homeless young people is a time consuming job and most schools do not intervene effectively at the present time. Homeless students often need intensive counselling and support, and if they cannot return home or do not want to do so, they will usually need assistance with accommodation, income support and other services (MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 1994: 15-20). McLean (1992) argues that young people need secure, affordable housing before they can study, and that they must be offered a more flexible curriculum, part-time study options, and subsidised study materials.

Income Support

Income support policies which encourage young people to stay at school and age-related benefits for unemployed people under 18 years assume young people have continuing parental support, when homeless young people do not (Neil and Fopp, 1992; Morris and Blaskett, 1992; MacLean, 1992; Thomson, 1993). Addressing this assumption are provisions to homeless young people through YHA and SHR.⁴ These have, however, been criticised for providing inadequate levels of support, entailing difficult application processes, and for the barriers and inconsistencies in the criteria defining eligibility across the departments administering them. Research studies have identified a number of problems:

- Benefit levels were too low to enable young people to rent accommodation and pay bills. Some were regularly going without food, and were unable to pay for transport, medical and dental costs, clothing and school books. Some become involved in illegal activities in order to obtain life necessities (Thomson, 1993: 7).
- DSS clients experienced delays, difficult and intimidating application processes (i.e. establishing identity), long waiting periods and unfriendly staff (Daniel and Cornwall, 1993: 11; Thomson, 1993: 5).
- DEET was said to use application forms and eligibility criteria that were difficult to understand, to allow long delays before payments, to be prone to overpayment and underpayment problems, and for problems with the continuation of benefits from one year to the next. DEET offices are not as numerous or conveniently located as those of DSS, and its reliance on

4 These are described in detail in Section 3.

telephone contact is difficult for claimants who lack accommodation and telephones (Thomson, 1993: xii).⁵

- Workers in accommodation services believed that without their assistance many young people would not have approached DSS or DEET and would not be on income support (Thomson, 1993: 65).

In its *Discussion Paper* the House of Representatives Inquiry (1994) summarised widespread criticisms concerning differences and inconsistencies between YHA and SHR with respect to policies, guidelines and levels of support. The issues concern the more restrictive guidelines used by DEET⁶; the role of professional social work staff in interviewing and assessing claimants for support as homeless, and the possibility that the greater flexibility and higher support of YHA than SHR will act as a disincentive to homeless young people remaining in education or training. These issues have gained urgency with the replacement of Job Search Allowance (JSA) with YTA, administered through the AUSTUDY framework.⁷

Transport

The importance of low cost transport to homeless young people has gained increasing recognition. The expense of transport can be a barrier to homeless young people continuing in education or work, and keeping in contact with friends and family while moving from one short-term accommodation placement to another. The closure of refuges during the day means that young people need reliable, affordable and safe public transport so they can be mobile (Daniel and Cornwall, 1993: 25-6).

Youth Services

A recent trend is the move away from specialised youth services to services that provide a range of advice and assistance through case management. Referral services have links to housing, medical, employment, training and community services. Non-government agencies in Melbourne such as Hanover, Crossroads, the Brosnan Centre and the Brotherhood of St Laurence have implemented holistic programs for homeless young people making the transition from

5 At the time of our study perhaps the most significant criticism of AUSTUDY concerned the ineligibility of homeless claimants for rent assistance. Recipients of SHR have been eligible for rent assistance since 1 January 1995.

6 The Morris Report (House of Representatives, 1995) records DSS as believing the differences are not as great as is often claimed.

7 These measures are described in detail in Section 3.

unemployment to employment or dependence to independence (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 57-58). Some Commonwealth Government departments⁸ also are adopting a case management approach as illustrated by the broad based information, advice and referral services provided to young people through Youth Access Centres (YACs) and the Youth Pilot Program (DSS). A Melbourne example is Frontyard, where the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES), a youth health service and housing referral are all located together; Frontyard was one of the DSS Youth Pilot Projects. From the Youth Pilot Program, DSS established ten Youth Service Units (YSU) operating in rural and urban locations.⁹

While family mediation or therapy is not appropriate in all cases, there is increasing recognition of the importance of services assisting young people to maintain or re-establish relationships with their parents or other relatives. Research indicates that for some families, early access to this support will prevent young people leaving home, facilitate their return, or improve relationships and communication between parents and young people even if the young person is living outside the family home. At present there is a dearth of these services. In many places there are no services to call upon, and in those communities where these services do exist, waiting lists are long (House of Representatives, 1994: 25).

In the brief overview above we have tried to draw attention to issues relevant to this study that have been identified in previous research. The remainder of this section discusses the objectives of the research project, notes current developments in policy and programs for homeless young people and presents an overview of our findings with respect to youth homelessness and Commonwealth-State relations.

1.3 The Research Objectives

The aim of this research was to assess the access to and appropriateness of services provided to homeless young people, and in particular to reflect on the co-ordination or otherwise of services provided by Commonwealth, State and non-government agencies. Greatest emphasis has been put on the experience, needs and problems of young people aged between 13 and 17 years who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and on the use of services by this group, the pathways they use to reach them, and the coherence and integration of the

8 Examples of policies are the recent Commonwealth and State Case Management Protocol for Young People Under 16 years and SAAP III.

9 YSU are described in detail in Section 3.

support provided. The research has had a particular concern with the level of assistance and co-ordination of services provided by and through Commonwealth and State levels of government, and with the roles of government and non-government providers, in meeting the needs of this group. Since two recent studies of Commonwealth-State relations in this policy field (Taylor, 1990; Shaver and Paxman, 1992) had looked at the intersection of government services in the case of wardship, this project gave attention to the situation of young people who though lacking parental support are not subject to guardianship orders. Concern about homelessness among young people is most acute with respect to those who have left home at very young ages. There is particular concern about those aged 15 and under.

The research was conducted in Victoria, primarily in Melbourne but also briefly in Morwell, in September 1994. It was appropriate to conduct the study in a State in which the numbers of homeless young people are relatively large, and in which legislation, policies and practices have been reviewed, rethought and revamped very recently. There has been a good deal of turbulence and political controversy surrounding these developments. While these have added to the difficulty of the research, they have also served to expose the issues to public view. The research consisted of three different components: interviews with policy makers and advisers at the various levels of the Victorian and Commonwealth Government and non-government organisations; interviews with 42 homeless people about their experiences and use of a variety of support services; and interviews with 12 youth workers at accommodation services.

At the outset we should also note some important limitations to the research. One concerns the timing of this study. It took place immediately before the implementation of the Commonwealth and State Territory Case Management Protocol for Young People Under 18 Years, governing the responsibilities of both levels of government welfare authorities with respect to young people away from home and potentially at risk. It also took place at a time of ferment in policies affecting homeless young people. Important issues had been identified in the many reports on youth homeless since the Burdekin Report, *Our Homeless Children* (HREOC, 1989), and by the national inquiry into aspects of youth homelessness being conducted by the House of Representatives, chaired by Allan Morris MP (known as the Morris Report, House of Representatives, 1995). This inquiry commenced in December 1993 and was in progress at the time of our study. Interestingly this concern about the number of studies was raised during the House of Representatives inquiry:

Some organisations [making submissions to the Inquiry] questioned the need for another inquiry into youth homelessness, expressing frustration at the wealth of

information already gained about youth homelessness and arguing strongly for action and implementation of previous findings. (House of Representatives, 1995: 14)

This study was based on a small and non-random sample of homeless young people and a general overview of government and non-government programs. Its focus has had to be limited and we are aware that we have been unable to consider the needs of individual groups, in particular differences between young men and women, and the specific concerns of Aboriginal and ethnic young people.

Though the study findings necessarily reflect on the practice of adolescent welfare in Victoria, it must be emphasised that this research does not constitute an evaluation of youth services in Victoria. The study was never intended to be such, and has not covered essential ground for an evaluation, such as resource levels and resource allocation, policy implementation, or the achievement of measurable outcomes. Our aims have been much more modest. This said, the research has shown both that effective assistance has been provided to some homeless young people and that there remain substantial unmet needs and serious inadequacies in the nature and standards of care being provided to homeless young people. We in no way resile from these findings. We have no evidence with which to compare the performance of adolescent welfare functions in Victoria with that in other States. It is important to recognise that the literature and other evidence make it clear that failures in youth welfare are also to be found elsewhere. As a case study, the purpose of our research in Victoria is to observe patterns and draw lessons which can inform policy and practice in all States of Australia.

1.4 Current Developments in Commonwealth and Commonwealth-State Programs for Homeless Young People

At the time of the field study there were a number of new policy initiatives underway which will reshape relationships between Commonwealth and State provisions for homeless young people in the future. While some have been introduced only very recently and others were implemented after fieldwork for the present research was undertaken, it is important to recognise the effects they will have in the near future. These initiatives are discussed in greater detail in the body of the report, and require only brief mention here.

- The Commonwealth and State Territory Case Management Protocol for Young People Under 18 Years is an attempt to clarify the roles of these
-

two levels of responsibility for the needs of very young people who are unsupported by their parents. The Protocol refers to responsibility for both assessing needs for protection from actual harm or risk of harm and for the provision of income and other support. It began to take effect in the last months of 1994.

- The Youth Training Initiative (YTI) was introduced as part of the *Working Nation* (Australia, Prime Minister, 1994) program of employment and training measures. Beginning 1 January 1995, income support to unemployed young people was replaced by a Youth Training Allowance (YTA) under the same framework of provisions as govern AUSTUDY allowances. Rent assistance became available to AUSTUDY recipients.
- The current agreement between the Commonwealth and States funding SAAP expired in December 1994, and new funding agreements and program were being negotiated at the time of writing. The SAAP Evaluation Steering Committee (1993: 3) recommended that the framework of five target groups, including homeless young people as a specific target group, be replaced by a generic orientation to all those who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness and in crisis. A new agreement, gazetted on 15 March 1995, incorporated a strong case management role for SAAP services.
- The Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs conducted a national inquiry into aspects of youth homelessness. The Committee issued a *Discussion Paper* in September 1994. The Report of this Inquiry (House of Representatives, 1995) was published in May.
- The Department of Housing and Regional Development's National Youth Housing Strategy released a *Discussion Paper* in February 1995 and a final report will be released later this year.
- The Industry Commission's Inquiry into Charitable Organisations will release a final report later this year.
- The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is holding ongoing discussions between the Commonwealth and State Governments which address the roles, structures and coordination for the delivery of community services and health programs throughout Australia.

The remainder of this Section provides an overview of our findings concerning the interactions of Commonwealth and State provisions and policy developments from the perspective of the needs of homeless young people.

1.5 An Overview: Youth Homelessness and Commonwealth-State Relations

Historically, responsibility for child welfare, including that of adolescents, has lain with State Governments. This role was once conceived in the holistic term of substitute parenthood when the parents of a young person were unable or unwilling to care for them. In the last decade, however, the function of State welfare authorities has come to be seen in the narrower terms of protection from abuse or other harm. In the same period the Commonwealth has come to take an increasing role in the support and assistance of homeless young people, including those below the minimum ages for school leaving and supporting themselves through employment. The Commonwealth income support function, once limited to adults, has been extended to homeless young people aged 15 and below, while the Commonwealth and States together have extensive involvement in the provision of emergency shelter and associated assistance. The Commonwealth has become in part a supplementary provider, and in part a substitute provider, of resources to this group.

One consequence of the development of a new and more complex division of labour between Commonwealth and State Governments is a qualitative change in the nature of the assistance provided to young people. Support is increasingly understood in the terms of the adult individual in market society, with needs defined as specific and material ones: for income, housing, health care and the like. These terms fail to recognise less tangible kinds of support needed by a person still maturing and preparing for adulthood, such as advice and guidance, emotional security, and the opportunity to test boundaries and explore personal identity. The support young people need from adults might be categorised as the formal, the instrumental and the emotional, with formal support referring to powers such as legal guardianship and instrumental support to help in using the resources of the social service system.¹⁰ It is needs for emotional support above all which risk falling through gaps in the emerging contours of Commonwealth and State responsibilities, in which cash allowances and concrete services take the place of family support.

It should be said, however, that though homeless young people may have some of the needs of children, welfare arrangements must not treat them as children incapable of making choices of their own. The factors inducing them to leave home and the experiences of surviving in premature independence quickly dislocate homeless young people from more usual stages of adolescence. Young people themselves tend to see their needs and to seek solutions in adult terms.

10 This categorisation was suggested by Alan Jordan in comments on an earlier draft of this report.

Where a return home is not possible or not desired, they have no option but to learn to survive in an adult world. Young homeless people are not a homogeneous group and must be given choices and empowered to make their own decisions.

Nor should it be assumed that there was ever a time when State welfare authorities provided ideal care. The history of adolescent welfare arrangements is largely institutional, consisting mainly of orphanages, reformatories and boys' and girls' homes designed to instil virtue in the lost children of the working class (Dickey, 1980; Barbalet, 1983; Garton, 1990). In Victoria, child welfare practice began to be preventive and family-oriented only in the 1950s, when the Social Welfare Department took on professionally qualified social worker staff. It was overshadowed even then by the joining of child welfare and adult criminal justice functions in a single department (Jaggs, 1986). Although state provided child welfare has never been ideal, it is important to recognise that there have been children taken into care with successful outcomes nevertheless.

In principle, the Case Management Protocol represents the joint commitment of the Commonwealth and the States to achieving a close, secure and effective nexus of roles and services with respect to the needs of very young people away from home and unsupported by their parents. It commits each level of government to do its job, and if the promises made in principle were to be fulfilled in practice the needs of very young people for both protection and for income support might indeed be met. But its potential cannot be achieved if governments at both levels do not provide the necessary resources, and this was clearly not the case at the time the Protocol was taking effect. Unfortunately our research was conducted immediately before it commenced operation, and hence is not able to show what outcomes it may have.

The Protocol re-specifies the role of age and wardship status in marking the boundaries of Commonwealth and State responsibility in the support of homeless young people. The role of wardship in marking these boundaries has been retained in the Protocol, which reaffirms the responsibility of State welfare authorities for protective functions including assessment of the protective needs of young people even over the age of 16, and for the support of state wards under the age of 16. In general, State welfare departments are taking on the functional responsibilities of wardship in ever decreasing numbers.¹¹ In and of itself the move, common to all States, to use the powers of wardship very carefully might be a good thing, but only if it does not mean abandonment of protection and

11 This is the long term trend in all States (Taylor, 1990; Shaver and Paxman, 1992). As discussed below, numbers of young people on protective orders have recently increased slightly in Victoria following public controversy over lack of support to young people.

support. The responsibilities of wardship are fundamental, representing a standard of care against which state welfare authorities can be judged. Policy redevelopment of the kind taking place in Victoria, making the provision of support and care independent of wardship status, may make it more difficult to hold these authorities accountable for the well-being of unsupported young people. Shallowly interpreted, the obligations undertaken under the Protocol may also be met in dilute form.

The age boundary in the division of responsibility between the Commonwealth and the States in adolescent welfare has been lowered in the Protocol, effectively becoming 15 in the case of homeless young people. In all likelihood the Protocol has simply given form and recognition to what had become accepted practice. It was often said to us in the course of the research that young people of 15 were much like those of 16, and that differences in chronological age could be misleading with respect to the capacity of a young person to manage independent living. At the same time it should be recognised that 15 is very young, and it would be unfortunate for the lower age limit simply to become a new point for arguments about relative responsibility and cost shifting.

A parallel issue exists in the place of young people under 16 in SAAP services. These services regularly accommodate young people under 16 when no more appropriate placement is available. It would appear that although no one is happy about it, this is a very common situation. The terms of the new SAAP agreement, recently negotiated, preclude the funding of services exclusively intended for unaccompanied young people under the school leaving age in each State (Commonwealth of Australia, *Gazette*, 1995: 810). Specialist services for this group are clearly the responsibility of State welfare authorities, and this provision was not questioned in the 1993 SAAP evaluation. The common practice of accommodating very young people in youth refuges is undesirable, and is only justified by the lack of more suitable alternatives. The reasons for this lack of alternatives need to be given more attention.

Any discussion of the relative responsibilities of Commonwealth and State Governments in the welfare of young people must take note of the wider context of federalism. Behind the specific responsibilities of Commonwealth and State Governments lie the more basic relations of federalism in the management of the national economy and the sharing of costs and revenues. The Commonwealth Government holds greater power and responsibility than the States to manage macroeconomic conditions governing employment, price stability and the redistribution of income through the tax/transfer safety net. These conditions set the terms under which families seek to achieve stable family life and young people attempt to make the transition to adult independence. Employment,

education, housing and access to services necessary for personal well-being are fundamental to the autonomy expected of citizens in ordinary circumstances.

Similarly, tax sharing arrangements negotiated at national level largely determine the levels of resources available to State Governments. These levels in turn set the terms under which State governments must fulfil their constitutional roles. Ultimately the division of revenues between Commonwealth and State Governments sets limits to the resources available to the States for child and adolescent welfare. Governments of both levels claim the rights of sovereignty, a corollary of which is fiscal responsibility for the allocation of resources among their respective functions. This report has not dealt with fiscal issues. It is nonetheless clear that the need for resources in child and adolescent welfare has grown significantly in recent years. It is also patently obvious that inadequate resources are being devoted to adolescent welfare functions.

The extension of income support to homeless young people has occurred in contradiction with the more general trend of extended dependence of young people with longer periods of education and training necessary in post-industrial economy. Income support alone does nothing to address this contradiction with respect to the education needs of homeless young people. Problems with education and literacy play an important part in the processes through which young people become homeless, and their futures, as much as those of other young people, depend on lengthening participation in education and training. Schools and education institutions also seem to be a key point for early intervention in processes of homelessness and instability, both for preventing avoidable departure from the family home and for supporting family reconciliation when the young person has left.

Our data do not constitute an evaluation of the support services provided to homeless young people, whether at the level of State or of the Commonwealth. They do, however, let us make some comments on the state of play in the development of services to this group and the integration of services in a coherent larger system of care and assistance.

The research has reviewed the support and assistance provided to homeless young people from three different and distinct perspectives: 42 homeless young people themselves, the policies of the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments, and 12 workers in youth accommodation services at the 'coal face' in between. There were significant conflicts and contradictions in the pictures that they gave. The perspective given from the vantage point of the young people interviewed for the study emphasised the objective reality of being away from home and without support. Because they are young and vulnerable, their needs are immediate and continuing. They were greatly concerned with the practical

problems of housing, emotional support, income and education and employment, and little concerned with issues about the appropriate role of government and the relative responsibilities of Commonwealth, State and non-government service providers. The perspective given by youth workers was also shaped by the immediacies of day-to-day exposure to the needs of homeless young people. It is often said that such workers are 'too child centred' because their views do reflect this situation. The workers, however, were also affected by the concerns of their agencies and in particular by the conflicts surrounding funding relationships and cutbacks in support. The perspective of Commonwealth and State policy makers is of necessity different. They were concerned with the way the system is intended to work, and with the countervailing forces of community interest, including political pressures mobilised by parents and taxpayers. In this report we have presented each body of information from within its own perspective, subject to its own methodological and data limitations. We reflect on some of the disparities between them in the discussion to follow.

Greatest differences were found between the accounts of homeless young people and youth workers on one side and the view from the Victorian Department of Health and Community Services (H&CS) on the other. Some of these differences were matters less of fact than of interpretation. Others were legacies of the rapid and tumultuous changes in child and adolescent welfare in Victoria in recent years in which perceptions had not caught up with changes in policy. Nevertheless the experiences of the young people interviewed for the study clearly show that serious needs among homeless young people were continuing to go unmet. This report provides direct feedback to social policy makers from the young people about support and problems they have experienced and the report concludes with their suggestions for better practice in Section 6.

At the time of the study H&CS policies for the support and assistance of homeless young people were undergoing a process of redevelopment, as described in Section 4 below. According to Victorian policy makers, the key terms of this redevelopment were a commitment to ensuring that all young people away from home and not supported by their parents have both stable housing and a person available to provide continuing support and guidance. Those who need protection from abuse or harm were to be provided such protection, while others who need only support and assistance from a case manager were to have it without being subjected to the legal machinery of wardship. Policy viewed government and funded non-government services as working in 'partnership', as parts of a single system of support and care. The redevelopment of policy began only recently, and is still underway in important areas. At the same time it should be noted that homeless young people were recruited to the study through the channels of accommodation services, so that the bias in the sample is in favour of those young people who were receiving support.

without food, stealing and being further at risk. Some of the young people said the amount of income support was inadequate for the cost of independent living.

The YTA is intended to bring unemployed young people back into education and training. As it bears on homeless young people, however, we are concerned that its integration with narrower DEET-based AUSTUDY provisions may deprive homeless young people of income support. This concern has been expressed in submissions to the House of Representatives Inquiry, and the Standing Committee has called for greater clarity in this area (House of Representatives, 1994: 13-14). The tightening of eligibility, narrower grounds and longer waiting periods associated with the introduction of YTA are likely to raise these barriers higher. The changes to privacy rules accompanying the introduction of the Case Management Protocol have caused further concern, and in particular apprehension that they may deter young people from seeking assistance. Another problem to be seriously considered by the changes to income support is that the reciprocal obligations concerning training may be unrealistic for homeless people. In Victoria these changes have interacted with the introduction of mandatory reporting, potentially making workers as well as young people reluctant to participate in the application process.

The interview data contradict the often heard claim that the availability of services serves to draw young people away from home. Before they left home the majority of the homeless young people interviewed for the study did not know about income support, and about half did not know about supported accommodation. Nor did the provision of support necessarily undermine relations with parents. While none of those participating in the research received any regular financial support from parents or relatives, the majority had family contact. For almost half, leaving home the first time was a permanent decision; the remainder had turbulent histories of returning to and leaving their parent's home. They were unlikely to be 'experimenting' with premature independence. Most had left their parents' home permanently, and now needed alternative support to the family. The research does indicate that young people would benefit from more ready access to information about assistance with supported accommodation, income support, family counselling and family mediation, especially in the first period after leaving home.

There is a dearth of supported accommodation for homeless youth, especially longer-term accommodation providing stability and support. One result is transience as young people move around the system. Although 36 of the 42 people interviewed for the study had been homeless for more than one month (the current incident), almost a third had been at their place of accommodation for one week or less; all but one had been there no longer than six months. Only six people were in housing arrangements where they were happy and five people had

By and large, the key components of the improved service system then being put in place were not yet in evidence in the accounts of homeless young people. Among a small sample, the following were found:

- young people who had been discharged from wardship too early and without aftercare, and who were in unstable and unsupported circumstances;
- young people under 16 and even under 15 who had been accommodated in refuges and private hotels, in some cases, having been referred there by child protection workers; and
- that few of those interviewed had a stable and continuing relationship with a youth or protective worker, and very few indeed had a relationship meeting the standards of case management.

Comment should also be made with respect to the Victorian policy claim that government and non-government services work as partners in support of homeless young people. It was argued that non-government agencies are funded on a full-cost basis, and hence such funding entailed responsibility for the case management of agency clients. On one side, our evidence shows services being provided to both state wards and non-state wards under both H&CS and non-government auspices. On the other, non-government agencies did not see themselves as playing the part which H&CS policy assigned them. What policy saw as the case management responsibilities of funded agencies, non-government workers saw as the dumping of clients for whom H&CS had primary responsibility. Behind these everyday matters lay deeper conflicts over agency autonomy, funding levels, and issues of service type and quality. Non-government agencies saw the policy shift from institutional to family-based accommodation programs as the cynical pursuit of cost savings, with 'bums on beds' replacing the delivery of stable rounded support as the criterion of services standards.

There were also visible gaps between the policies of Commonwealth authorities and the experiences of homeless young people. While almost all of the young people we interviewed were receiving Commonwealth income support or expected to do so soon, the young people and the youth workers assisting them claimed that the process of getting it was often difficult. Over a fifth had incurred debts through DSS or DEET overpayments, back rent from accommodation services accrued during waiting periods, cancellation of benefits, gaps when transferring between benefits (e.g., SHR and YHA), and transit fines. Two thirds said they had difficulties making ends meet, and that these had led to their going

intentions to return home in the future. The clear message from the young people was that safe, secure and affordable housing was their priority, and that they needed this before they could begin to embark on further commitments to education or work. Their lack of stable accommodation had implications for continuity in education and relationships with established support networks of youth workers, friends and others. The young people who had accessed accommodation services appeared to have a better quality of life, e.g. were better able to access support and to make ends meet, than those living independently. Victoria's 'lead tenant' housing appeared particularly successful (see Glossary for explanation).

About a third participated in education, employment and training. The remainder had left school prematurely, affecting their employment and training opportunities in the future. Schools could be a source of information and support for these young people. The majority of those unemployed would have preferred employment. The barriers to employment were the lack of stable accommodation, high level of youth unemployment, low education levels, and insufficient work experience. The CES and YAC had little success in securing traineeships or jobs for the young people interviewed. Mobility was reported to be a barrier to accessing services and support. Many said they had accumulated transit fines for fare evasion because they could not afford to buy a ticket.

Finally, several recent innovations in service delivery seemed to be found useful by homeless young people and effective in assisting them. These included the Youth Pilot Projects conducted by DSS and the YSU that have resulted. The YACs operated by DEET were also very well regarded. Young people said they preferred comprehensive services, for example Frontyard in Melbourne, where health services were located with income and accommodation services.

Overall the homeless young people were extremely vulnerable, and the failure to provide adequate resources was making their vulnerability greater. The young people's knowledge about services and support for the homeless was very poor. For services to be utilised young people need to know what is available. Many departments at both Commonwealth and State levels are currently adopting the case management model, and it has been noted repeatedly that young people need stability and continuity of support. As the House of Representatives Inquiry (1994) has suggested, however, the potential duplication of case management functions needs to be addressed. Appropriate services and support depend on program evaluations from the young peoples' perspectives. It is also important to stress that child welfare does not operate in a vacuum. The quality of young people's lives depends also on the same full range of policies as do those of other citizens, including those supporting economic management, family life and full social participation.

2 Homeless in Victoria: the Survey of Homeless Young People

The interviews conducted as part of this study focused on the effectiveness of policies for homeless people aged 17 years and under. The aim of the fieldwork was to learn something of the experiences of young people after they left their parental home as these reflect on the provision of appropriate support services. The areas covered were their housing, income and education or employment activities, knowledge about the availability of services, their experiences gaining access to services, who they ask for help and advice, and their ideas about changes to policy that would improve services and support for them. In the course of the research we also spoke to a number of youth workers in accommodation and referral services in Victoria. The aim of these interviews was to get the perspective on youth homelessness and support services of those working at the 'coal face'.

This chapter presents the methodology of the survey of homeless young people conducted in Melbourne and Morwell, Victoria in September 1994. The research method and the resulting sample are described. Young people's use of services provided through the programs of the Commonwealth and State Governments and their views about how these programs might be improved are presented in sections to follow. The discussion also incorporates information collected in interviews conducted with youth workers in the services used by the young people in the study.

2.1 The Research Method

Homeless young people are not an homogeneous group and selecting the sample through a range of services increases the likelihood of achieving a reasonable representation of groups and circumstances. Given sufficient time and resources, we might have found homeless young people to participate in research through diverse sources such as street-workers, crisis centres, prostitutes' collectives, juvenile offender programs, Aboriginal organisations, agencies for people from non-English speaking backgrounds, young parents' support groups, squatters' and tenants' rights groups, schools and friends of friends. However, this would have required resources and time not available to us, and our sample was necessarily selected through the more narrow channels of accommodation services.

Because of their transience, research with homeless young people is problematic and time consuming. Locating them and asking them to confide in a researcher they do not know is difficult, while their homelessness makes follow-up virtually

impossible. The lifestyle of homeless young people is oriented to day to day survival and because it does not bring immediate rewards research is likely to be of little interest to them. Many homeless young people express resistance and aggression towards authority, and are cynical about the outcomes of policy evaluations. Many also desire anonymity from their parents/guardians and from the law, especially where they are participating in illegal activities such as prostitution, theft and drug use.

It is good practice to pay interviewees for their time and contributions to research. Payment is appreciated by the participants and substantially improves the response rate. It is also beneficial to organise a peer support group, or equivalent, to offer the young person interviewed a support network if needed.

For the purposes of this study, homeless young people were defined as those who were not living at home with their parents or adoptive parents, who were not receiving any financial or in-kind support from their parents on a regular basis, and who lacked stable housing arrangements. This included young people who were subject to a partial or full guardianship order, that is, the transfer of guardianship from birth parents to the state as a result of abuse or neglect, the risk of abuse or neglect or the inability of their parents to provide adequate care.

Contact with homeless young people was made through H&CS and peak youth organisations. We sent these bodies information about the research and asked them to place us in contact with accommodation and outreach services for homeless young people in Victoria. We then sent youth workers in these organisations information about the study and asked them about the possible involvement of the young people using their services. We wished to make contact with young men and women who were aged 13 to 17 years and who met the study's criteria of being homeless. The youth workers were asked to explain the purpose of the study to the young people and to invite them to participate in this research. If the young people agreed to be interviewed about their experiences since leaving home the youth workers established the most appropriate way for researchers to meet them. We tried to ensure that a range of services, including those dealing with special needs groups, were invited to participate. Contact was made with:

- a cross section of Melbourne's inner-city and outer-suburban accommodation services (north, south, east and west), to cover the socioeconomic demography of the city;
 - agencies in Morwell, a smaller industrial/rural area about 300 kilometres from Melbourne, in order to include cases of homelessness outside a big city;
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- a range of accommodation services (emergency and medium- to long-term housing) and models (houses with youth workers living in and independent supported accommodation with youth workers visiting only);
- culturally specific accommodation services for young people of Aboriginal and non-English speaking backgrounds;
- young women's accommodation services;
- accommodation services for young mothers; and
- accommodation related workers, such as housing officers at educational institutions, street workers, outreach, crisis and referral services.

This study's interviews were conducted with a group of willing participants during the two-week period 7-21 September, 1994. The hour long interview covered issues related to their experiences of homelessness and current circumstances, income support, accommodation, well-being, education and work, expectations, contact with the police, support networks, and their current perceptions of their time since leaving home and of how policies for homeless young people might be improved. The questionnaire included both quantitative and qualitative questions. It was designed by the researchers and based on a questionnaire developed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence's study on income support for homeless young people by Lisa Thomson (1993). It was circulated for comment amongst the staff of the Social Policy Research Centre, and to colleagues at DSS and H&CS.

Interviews were conducted either at the place the young person was sleeping that night or at a youth service. Before each interview the participant was told about the purpose of the study, that their individual case history would remain confidential and that they did not have to answer any question they did not wish to. All the interviews were conducted in a supportive environment, ensuring the interviewee had access to youth workers if needed. The participants were paid \$15 for their contributions and asked if they would like to receive a copy of the final report; most participants were interested in the findings.

In the course of building up the sample of young people, we also interviewed 12 youth workers from the accommodation and housing services who referred young people to the study. The accommodation services ranged in type from emergency to long-term, were run by H&CS and non-government organisations, and included both culturally specific (NESB) and general services. They were located in Melbourne's outer eastern, northern and inner city suburbs and in the Morwell area. These interviews covered characteristics of the homeless young people accessing their services, changes taking place in Victorian child and

adolescent welfare, and the functioning of income support and accommodation services. They do not, of course, constitute a representative sample of youth workers. Their value lies in the contribution of an additional perspective to the study, that of workers dealing with the needs of homeless young people and wider service system on a daily basis.

2.2 The Sample of Homeless Young People

Forty-two (42) homeless young people in Melbourne and Morwell met the study's criteria and agreed to participate. The majority of the interviews (37, with 20 males and 17 females) were conducted in Melbourne's inner city and outer suburbs, and the remaining five (with two males and three females) in Morwell. The representativeness of the interview sample is unknown, but because the sample was drawn through accommodation and support services it is unlikely to be representative of homeless young people in general. In particular, it may over-represent those who are in touch with services and hence in more stable circumstances than homeless young people generally.

Although most services contacted were willing to participate in the research, time and resource constraints excluded several groups from the sampling process. Accommodation services working with young people in the outer western and outer southern suburbs, culturally specific services, a street-work program, a crisis centre, two referral services, a TAFE housing officer and a service for young mothers unfortunately could not participate. Their inability to participate reduced the diversity of the final sample. In particular, young Aboriginal people and those from non-English speaking backgrounds were under-represented in the study. However, the sample achieved did include young men and women of varying age, social class and duration of homelessness. It gave us a range of opinions and experiences in terms of how young people heard about services and income support, the problems they encountered gaining access to services and support, and the reasons why they have not been able to settle into alternative accommodation.

Table 2.1 shows the profile of the young people participating in the research. The services involved were located in the inner west, east and north of Melbourne; Melbourne's outer eastern and northern suburbs; and Morwell. The gender mix was about equal, with 20 females and 22 males.

Ages ranged from 13 to 17 years with the majority (37:42) aged 15 to 17; note the smaller numbers of young women participating in the oldest age group. The

Table 2.1: Sample by Age, Sex and Where They Slept the Night Before the Interview

Age and Accommodation ^(a)	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
13-14 years						
Refuge	-	-	2	10	2	5
Lead tenant	2	9	1	5	3	7
Sub-total	2	9	3	15	5	12
15 years						
Refuge ^(b)	3	14	4	20	7	17
Lead tenant	1	4	-	-	1	2
Friends	1	5	1	5	2	5
Independent	-	-	1	5	1	2
Sub-total	5	23	6	30	11	26
16 years						
Refuge	3	14	2	10	5	12
Lead tenant	3	14	-	-	3	7
Independent supported	-	-	1	5	1	2
Foster family	-	-	1	5	1	2
Back-packers	-	-	1	5	1	3
Friends	-	-	2	10	2	5
Home	-	-	1	5	1	2
Independent	1	4	-	-	1	3
Sub-total	7	32	8	40	15	36
17 years						
Refuge	-	-	1	5	1	2
Lead tenant	3	14	1	5	4	9
Independent supported	1	4	-	-	1	2
Boarding house	1	4	-	-	1	2
Back-packers hostel	-	-	1	5	1	2
Friends	1	5	-	-	1	2
Squat	2	9	-	-	2	5
Sub-total	8	36	3	15	11	26
Total	22	100	20	100	42	100

Note: a) See glossary for definition of accommodation terms.

b) Includes one young woman who was living on the streets until temporarily placed in emergency accommodation (caravan) whilst more suitable accommodation was found.

sample contained five young people aged below 15 and 11 aged 15 years. The youth workers reported that they were seeing an ever increasing number of very young people.

A range of accommodation types¹² (government, non-government and private) and degrees of stability were represented. For both females and males, not surprisingly because of the method of sample selection, the most common form of accommodation at the time of the interview was a youth accommodation service (29:42 cases). These included emergency accommodation at refuges and a caravan linked to a youth service (15), lead tenant medium- to long-term accommodation (11), independent supported medium- to long-term accommodation (two) and adolescent foster care (one). Slightly more young men than young women had access to accommodation services (16:22 males, 13:20 females).

Young people in private accommodation arrangements were also included in the sample. Contact with these young people was made through an outreach service. In addition, two refuges invited non-residents showering and washing at their service to participate. About one third of the sample did not use any youth accommodation services. These were staying with friends (five), living independently (two), squatting (two), staying in a back-packer's hostel (two), or at a boarding house (one); one young woman had spent the night at her parents' home but left and found a vacancy at a refuge (one). Slightly more young women than young men were in private arrangements (7:20 females, 6:22 males). Five of the young people interviewed were living at Morwell, of whom four were staying in private arrangements including friends (two), independent shared accommodation (one) and with the family of a friend (one). The remaining person had just left home the day of the interview and the regional housing officer referred her to the refuge where she had stayed previously. The three young women interviewed were aged 16 years; the young men were 16 and 17 years old.

The majority of young people in the sample (39:42) came from English speaking backgrounds. Three came from families where English was not the main language spoken at home. One person was born in Iran and two people were Maori from Aotearoa (New Zealand). One young person was born in Malaysia yet English was the main language spoken at home. None of these young people were in culturally specific accommodation services. No Aboriginal people participated in the study.

12 See glossary for definitions of accommodation types.

One young mother at a refuge presented in our sample. Because she was the only person interviewed who had parental responsibilities we have not given specific consideration to the needs of this group. However, we have described her circumstances and needs in a case study (see Section 2.4, Case Study 2).

2.3 Characteristics of Homeless Young People Interviewed

Here we describe the young people's circumstances at leaving home, the length of time they had been homeless, the stability of their circumstances and the possibility of reconciliation with their family. Several individual case descriptions are provided to illustrate the young peoples' experiences of homelessness. The data provide valuable insights into the characteristics and experiences of homeless young people, but the small sample size does not allow quantitative conclusions to be drawn. For the same reason, the analysis does not distinguish between the samples from Melbourne and Morwell.¹³ It is important to remember that these results and discussion are based on a sample likely to over-represent homeless young people in contact with services.

For 18 of the 42 young people interviewed this was the first time they had left home; the others had left home and returned more than once in the past. The majority had left home the first time when they were 15 years or younger (35:42, see Table 2.2). Table 2.2 shows that among this group young women tended to leave home earlier than young men. Nine of the 20 young women interviewed had not lived at home since they were under 15 years compared with four of the 22 young men. However, by the age of 15 years a gender difference was not apparent.

Family Background

A third of the young people had been living with both their birth parents when they left home the last time (Table 2.3). Just under a third were from two-adult families including birth, de-facto and step parents. Another third were from single adult families, and in most cases the parents had been married but were separated, divorced or widowed. Of the 14 sole parent families more young people had been living with their mothers (11) than with their fathers (three) before they left home. The majority had siblings living at home when they left the last time. In comparison, 85 per cent of families in the general population are

13 Differences and similarities in access issues were addressed in the interviews with the youth workers in Morwell.

Table 2.2: Age When Interviewees Left Home the First and Last Time by Gender

Age	First Time				Most Recent Time ^(a)			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1-5	2	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
6-10	1	5	4	20	-	-	1	5
11-12	-	-	3	15	1	5	4	20
13	4	18	1	5	1	5	1	5
14	4	18	3	15	2	9	3	15
15	7	32	6	30	9	42	4	20
16	2	9	3	15	5	24	6	30
17	2	9	-	-	3	15	1	5
Total	22	100	20	100	22^(b)	100	20	100

Notes: a) Eighteen young people (43 per cent) have not returned home since leaving the first time. Data are repeated in the second set of columns.

b) One missing case.

Table 2.3: Parental Circumstances of Interviewees at Time of Last Leaving Home

Family structure	Number	Percentage
Couples		
Both birth parents	14	33
Mother and step-parent	3	7
Father and step-parent	2	5
Mother and de facto	4	10
Father and de facto	2	5
Sub-total	25	60
One-parent		
Never married	1	2
Mother solo (divorced/widowed)	10	24
Father solo (divorced/widowed)	3	7
Sub-total	14	33
Other		
Both step-parents (neither a birth parent)	1	3
Aunt and uncle	1	2
Foster parents	1	2
Sub-total	3	7
Total	42	100

headed by a couple, 13 per cent by one parent (in 84 per cent of cases a female parent) and two per cent are other families (ABS, 1994, Cat. No. 6224.0, June).

The majority of young people left families where the main source of income was employment (25:42). The type of work ranged from professional to unskilled.¹⁴ Over one third left homes where the main source of household income was a government pension or allowance (16:42). In the majority of these families, the fathers had left and the mothers were the primary carers for their children, either in sole or blended family arrangements.

Almost a third of the young people interviewed for the study had been the subject of child welfare intervention at some time in their lives, and a number were subject to a child protection order of some kind at the time we spoke to them. This is discussed in more detail in Section 4.

Leaving Home

The focus of this study was limited to access to services and support and thus the causes of homelessness were not explored in the depth necessary for reliable understanding in a sensitive area.¹⁵ The young people were asked where they slept when they first left home and what they did for money when they left. The majority said they did not know what they were going to do for housing and money at the time they left. About one in four accessed services including H&CS hostels, refuges and in one case an immediate referral to a foster home. The remainder went to friends' or relatives' houses for the first night, or slept on the streets; first night accommodation also included a friend's cubby-house and a boarding house. One in two had access to income or financial support through benefits they were already receiving (AUSTUDY, JSA, wages, refuge or H&CS). The immediate needs of the remainder were met by their friends, or relatives, or through stealing or begging.

Many homeless young people had no knowledge of the role of government in providing alternative support at the time of leaving home. Seventy-four per cent said they did not know about income support, and half said they did not know about refuges and supported accommodation before they left home. Some avoided contacting refuges because they had heard discouraging things about

14 Replies to questions about the type of employment or income support of their parents were often vague. Answers included 'an office job' 'the pension', sole parents, invalid pension, unemployment benefits and unsure.

15 The responses given to a question about the main reason for leaving home most recently were family conflict (23), alcohol or drug abuse by parents (five), violence (type not specified) (five), their parents' financial situation (one), their own behaviour (six), and having problems at school (one). No answer was given in one case.

them. The following are three examples of the young peoples' perceptions of refuges before they left home.

I didn't know about refuges and that I could go to them at 15
- I didn't know there were so many. (female, 15 years)

A friend told me about refuges but I thought they were big
halls with beds and I didn't want to go but I had a look and
they were just like a normal house. (male, 15 years)

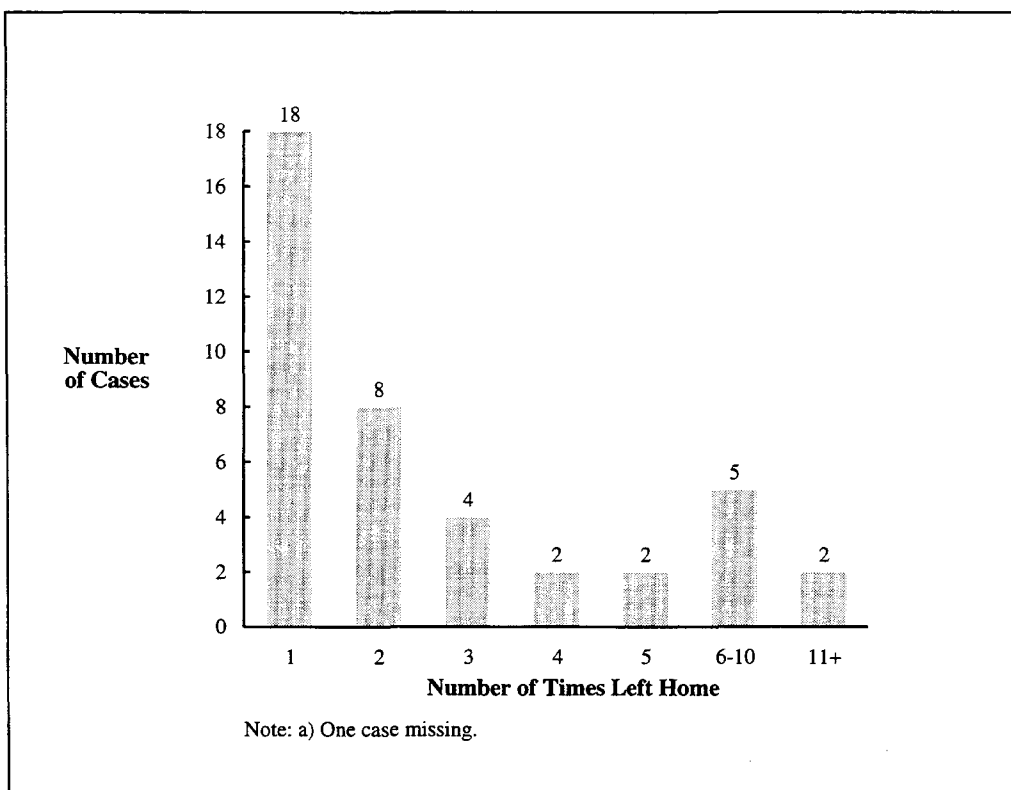
I knew about refuges but I never wanted to go into one
because I heard they were really rough. (male, 15 years)

For a substantial number of young people, leaving home was a permanent decision. As indicated above, just under half of the young people left home once and never returned (18:42). More young women did so, and at younger ages, than young men (ten females, eight males). Most of the young women (eight) interviewed who left home once only were 15 years or younger, compared with only four of the young men.

Stable accommodation and regular income support were of great importance to this group (see Figure 2.1). Eight of the 12 people who left when they were under 15 years and have not returned home were staying at emergency youth accommodation (seven in a refuge or caravan, one at a friend's place). The other four were in medium to long-term accommodation (lead tenant, foster care and independent supported accommodation). Eleven of the 12 were on some form of income support (nine Commonwealth, two H&CS). One person received no regular income. This group were very young when they left home and two out of three had had little success in gaining access to secure forms of alternative accommodation.

It is also the case that many young people leave and return home several times (see Figure 2.1). One in five of the people interviewed had returned home once and left again, often because circumstances at home had not changed. A similar proportion returned home and left again between two to five times, and almost as many had returned home and left six times or more. The nine young people who left home five or more times ranged in age from 14 to 17 years. Only two of the nine were in contact with accommodation services (one refuge, one lead tenant housing), the majority staying in short-term private arrangements. All but two received income support on a regular basis (five Commonwealth, two H&CS). There were no gender differences in this group.

Figure 2.1: Number of Times the Young People Returned Home and Left Again
(n = 41)^(a)



Length of Homelessness

The number of months since they left their parental home the last time varied greatly among the people interviewed, ranging from one month or less (6:42) to almost five years (1:42). What happens immediately after young people leave home often predicts the future. If young people can access services and alternative means of supporting themselves promptly, the disruption to their lives can often be minimal, and the detrimental effects on their future life chances reduced. The young people in this sample had little knowledge of accommodation, income and other services until they left home. This suggests that learning about the resources available to homeless young people takes place in the first weeks and months away from home. It is also believed that possibilities for reconciliation with parents are greatest in this period. The longer homelessness lasts, the more severe and long-lasting its effects are likely to be.

To illustrate the experiences of homeless young people we have grouped them by length of homelessness since they last left their parental home. Profiles have

been drawn (see Figures 2.2 to 2.4) for young people homeless (this time) for six months or less (21:42); those homeless for seven to 12 months (10:42); and the long-term homeless, defined as those who had been living away from home for more than one year (11:42). The characteristics include age, income, accommodation, school status and employment. There were no apparent gender differences in length of homelessness.

The comparison suggests that support services have important benefits for homeless young people.¹⁶ Overall, appropriate accommodation services of types suited to individual needs provide young people with a degree of stability enabling them to go to school, attend training courses or undertake employment. Supported accommodation services are especially important for those not receiving income support. The longer they had been away from home the more likely it was for them to be receiving income support. The breakdown by duration shows that there were diverse needs among them in terms of age, experience, preferred accommodation and what they wanted to be doing in terms of education and employment.

Family Reconciliation

One in six of the young people said they had no contact with their parents, but most did have family contact. The majority regarded themselves as having left home permanently (35:42, 18 females, 17 males); 13 said they could not return home because the situation had not changed, and 20 never would consider going home again. Just under a quarter said they would like to return home sometime in the future (7:42, two females, five males).

Specific questions regarding mediation towards family reconciliation were not asked. Table 2.4 lists characteristics of young people in order of age and wishes to return home. The majority of those who wished to return home were in the younger age groups, had been away from home for less than six months and had left home only once or twice. Those who could not return home gave reasons such as family conflict, violence or parents' substance abuse. Twenty people said they never wanted to return home. The majority said family conflict or violence was the main reason why they left home; thus the possibility of changing the family situation was beyond their control.

Overall, the picture suggests that those who wanted to go home had access to services and through them may also have had access to counselling, advice and

16 The bias of the sample towards young people who are in contact with accommodation services should nevertheless be borne in mind.

Figure 2.2: The Situation of Those Who Have Been Homeless (Last Episode) for Six Months or Less (n=21)

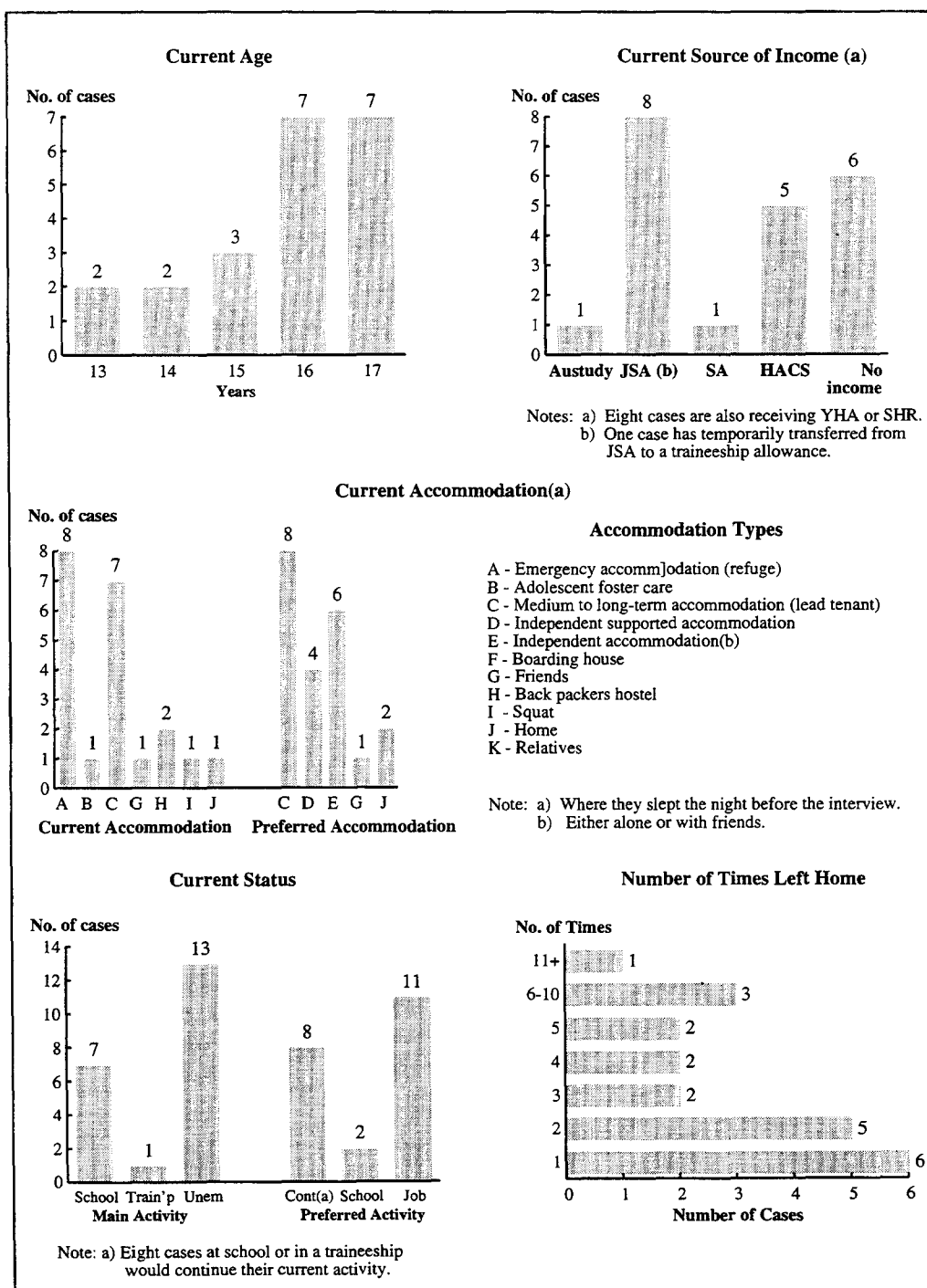


Figure 2.3: The Situation of Those Who Have Been Homeless (Last Episode) for Between Seven and Twelve Months (n=10)

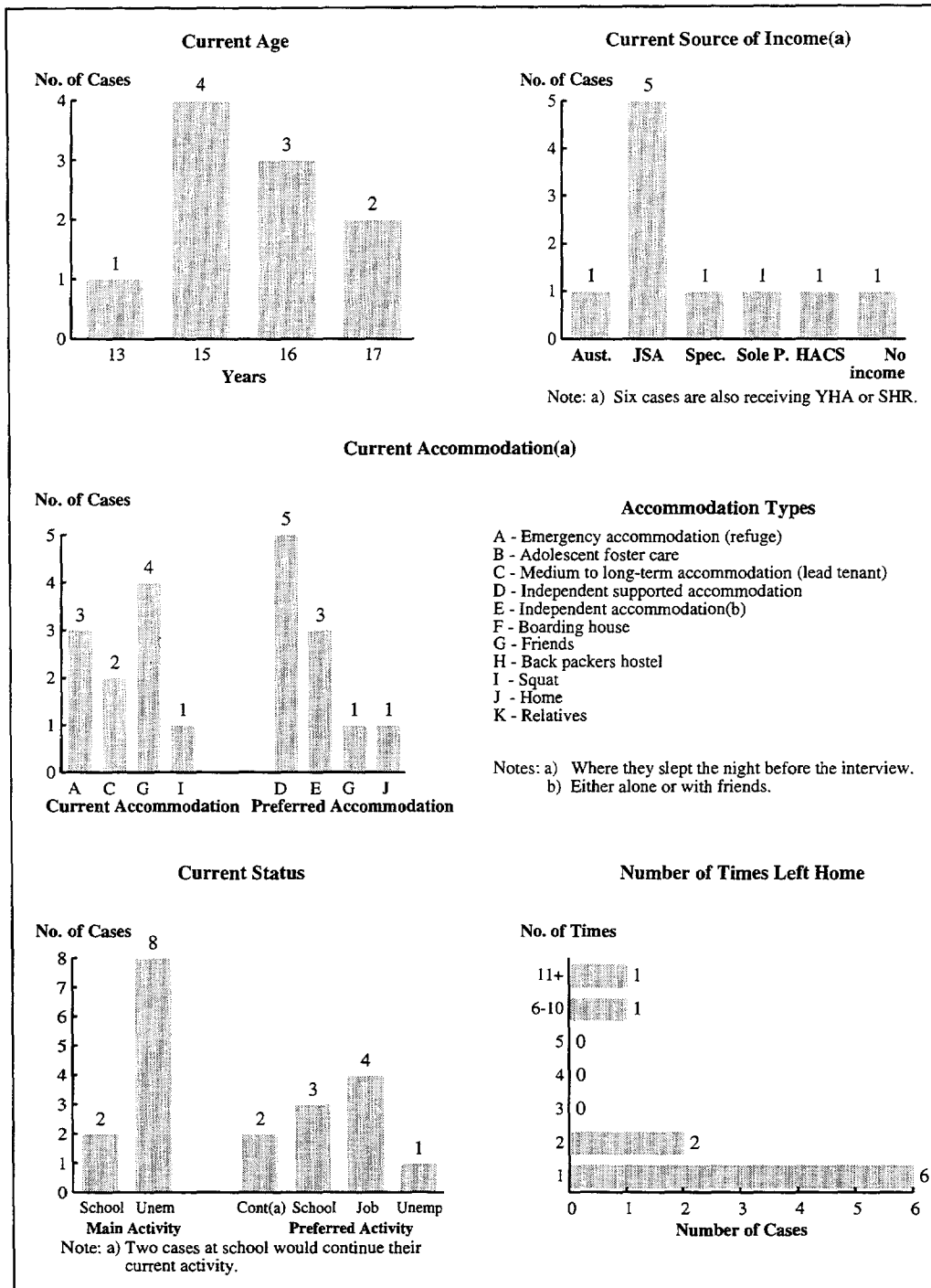


Figure 2.4: The Situation of Those Who Have Been Homeless (Last Episode) for More than One Year (n=11)

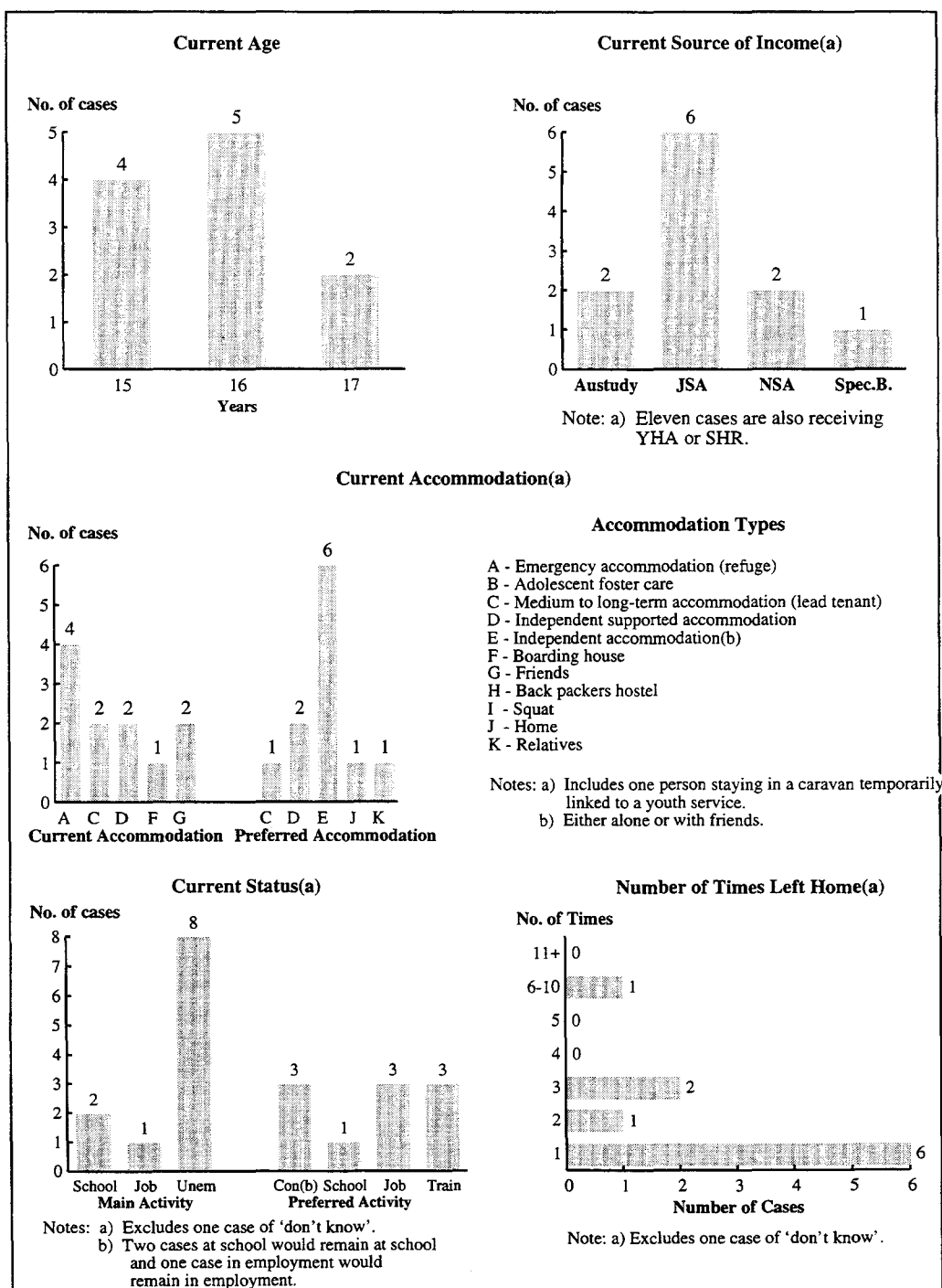


Table 2.4: Wishes to Return Home by Age and Duration of Homelessness^(a)

Age	Months Homeless ^(b)	Times Left Home	Current Accommodation
Those who want to return home in the future (n = 7)			
13 years	3	2	refuge
	3	2	lead tenant
15 years	2	1	lead tenant
16 years	1	20	back-packers
	5	1	friends
	8	1	lead tenant
	24	1	lead tenant
Those who want to return home but can't because of the situation (n = 13)			
15 years	1	9	refuge
	2	3	refuge
	9	2	independent
	9	1	refuge
	12	7	friends
16 years	24	1	refuge
	1	3	refuge
	1	4	refuge
	6	2	refuge
	10	2	independent
17 years	1	5	back-packers
	7	20	squat
	21	3	supported
Those who never want to return home (n = 20)			
13 years	7	1	refuge
14 years	4	5	lead tenant
15 years	12	1	refuge
	48	1	refuge
	48	2	friends
	48	1	refuge
	3	1	refuge
	6	1	foster family
	12	1	friends
	13	3	lead tenant
	24	1	refuge
	24	1	supported
16 years	54	7	friends
	3	1	lead tenant
	4	1	lead tenant
	5	7	lead tenant
	5	10	squat
	6	4	refuge
	12	1	lead tenant
	-	-	boarding house

- Notes: a) Excludes two young people who were unsure about their feelings about returning home.
 b) This refers to the last time they left home only.

information from youth workers. One can be less sanguine about those who could not or did not wish to return home. Of 13 who were aged 15 years or younger, only two were in stable and secure accommodation. Of the 15 people in emergency accommodation more than half had been homeless for more than six months. It may be important for work towards mediation to be undertaken early in the process of homelessness, before 'chronicity' sets in.

2.4 Case Studies

Case histories drawn from the qualitative data provide an overall picture of the experiences of the young people when they left home, how they supported themselves and what services and support they would have preferred. We grouped the sample population into four groups based on housing stability once they had left home to indicate how access to services and support can effect outcomes. Over half (26) of the people interviewed fell into the group who experienced long-term instability. This indicates that services and support are not being accessed in the optimum way to result in constructive outcomes. Eight people fitted the unsettled and recently settled group. This indicates positive outcomes from services and support. Eight of the 42 people in the sample fell into the long-term stable group showing that some people benefit from services and support. Only two people from this group experienced a setback and became unsettled. We have given a case study to illustrate each group.

Case Study 1: Unsettled and Remaining Unsettled

Zac, aged 15 years, had a H&CS worker assigned to him (without a protection order) until his sixteenth birthday nine months after our interview. In his words, 'after 16 they dump you'. He was interviewed at the refuge where he was staying short term. He was unemployed and being supported by H&CS until JSA was approved.

Leaving Home. Zac had left home a month before because his father physically abused him and his family. He first left home at 13 years and had returned about nine times. He said 'the CSV (H&CS¹⁷) tell you you have to go home; you go to them for help and they tell you to go home'.

17 H&CS was previously known as CSV and often referred to as CSV by the young people.

Education. Zac was asked to leave school in Year 10 because he 'was causing too much havoc and falling behind because of the problems at home'. He felt the teachers didn't care. He was placed in a 'farm school' for a month as crisis intervention, but he thought it was a bludge and wanted to go to a 'normal' school. He wanted to do an apprenticeship as an electrical technician. He described the CES as 'hopeless' because the jobs do not suit everyone, they ask for experience and young people don't have any, and they ask for school reports which he has not got. A school teacher recently told him about YAC.

Accommodation. When Zac first left home he stayed on the streets until his girlfriend told him about CSV. He had also stayed in refuges and a bed and breakfast. When he last left home he went on the streets for a week, then to The Gill, which was 'like a private hotel ... lots of horrible drunks there'. After a couple of weeks he went to H&CS, who placed him at the refuge where he was staying. H&CS were in the process of finding him another placement. 'I don't have a clue about it - if I don't like it too bad - if I leave they will put a missing persons on me'. Zac has experienced refuges being full many times: 'the CSV keep you at their office all day and put you in emergency accommodation for one night'. He liked his CSV worker but she was often not available and he had to see others. Once he spoke to four workers in 24 hours. 'Living like this is boring'.

Income. He had applied for JSA (via H&CS). He had had a number of problems with DSS, including proving his identity (they didn't believe him even after he had presented a bank book, birth certificate and school report), having his form lost (which extended the waiting period), and establishing an address. While Zac had no income his needs were being met by the refuge (meals, bed, shower, etc.). 'CSV used to give me transit tickets but they told me they have run out. I used to steal to survive but I don't any more - not worth the trouble'. If CSV could not help him Zac went without. He did not use charities.

Reconciliation. Zac said he couldn't go home because nothing had changed.

Preferred Options and Suggestions for Better Practice.

He wanted stable accommodation in a lead tenant home in a familiar area before organising school or TAFE. He was concerned he would end up on the streets again. He turned to friends and his CSV worker for advice. He felt refugees need to stay open during the day, 'if you are sick and need to stay in bed'. Refugees also need to be flexible about the length of stay. There is a need for more information - 'kids don't know about income support and refugees so they stay at home and get hit. I would have left earlier if I knew about it. Workers need to listen to what kids want rather than say here you are and too bad if you don't like it. I tell all my friends if they get kicked out of home not to go to the CSV'.

Case Study 2: Unsettled and Remaining Unsettled (Mother)

Sara was 15 years old. She had an 18 month old daughter and was pregnant with a second child. She and her daughter were staying in a refuge where they had been for two weeks. Sara supported her daughter by herself although she saw the father regularly.

Leaving home. Sara left home a year ago and had never returned. Until her father died a few months ago, both her parents lived at home and were on income support. Sara left home because of verbal abuse and to stop her parents taking control of her daughter. Sara talked to her mother on the phone once a week.

Education. She left school in Year 8 and did not think she would go back. Sara has had no work experience. She found the CES and YAC helpful for courses and writing her resume. She attended a child care course organised through YAC. Sara was too young to do courses through Job Placement Employment Training (JPET).

Accommodation. A youth housing program had got priority on a waiting list for public housing for Sara and her daughter. She found out about the program through an information brochure at her school, and the school counsellor put her name on a list when she became pregnant. Sara had been living at a refuge for two weeks. Sara did not like the curfews or the rules at the refuge but planned to stay for

another two weeks, by which time she hoped to be in public housing. Previously Sara stayed with friends for short periods of time. She rented a flat through a private real-estate agent, but this broke down after five months because of a falling-out with her flat-mate and being unable to afford the rent. Sara also stayed with her boyfriend's parents for three months, when they 'threw her out'.

Income. Sara had been receiving the Sole Parent Pension and Family Allowance since her baby was born. She had never had any problems with DSS and had found the staff helpful. Sara felt that she did not have enough money to look after her child and herself - 'things are too tight'. On one occasion she asked for an emergency payment from DSS and was refused - DSS offered her a food voucher but she was so annoyed she chose not to accept it. There was a period of four months, while staying with friends, when Sara went without food regularly. Her health had been 'alright' but her daughter had had tonsillitis and had been hospitalised. The refuge paid for a taxi to get the baby to hospital but it was difficult for Sara to get to the hospital to visit.

Reconciliation. Sara did not think that she would return home because it had not worked out in the past. She was happy with her life now and felt she had a lot of control. Her future involved looking after her children.

Preferred Options and Suggestions for Better Practice. Sara had attended pregnancy counselling organised by a non-government family service but she wanted on-going support and help with her baby. She said there needed to be more supported accommodation and felt the main thing preventing her from finding permanent housing was the lack of it. It is difficult, for example, for young people to rent through a private real estate agent. She thought there were not enough DSS staff to attend to everyone trying to see them and that they did not spend enough time with young people to sort out their problems. Sara said she found mobility a problem because it was expensive and difficult to travel.

Case Study 3: Unsettled and Recently Settled

Ethan was 17 years old and recently arrived in Australia from a non-English speaking country. He had a partial protection order between the ages of 15 and 16 years. He was discharged at sixteen because H&CS said he was old enough to look after himself. 'I think that was unfair'. Ethan was interviewed at a lead tenant home. He was then currently in a traineeship.

Leaving Home. Ethan first left home at 15 years because of conflict with his step-mother and physical abuse by his father. He had returned seven times, leaving for the last time five months before we met him.

Education. Ethan was asked to leave school in Year 9 because he 'was slack and didn't study properly'. The teachers knew about his problems and supported him for a couple of weeks, but then said he had to either change or leave. Ethan was enrolled in a retail clothing traineeship and enjoying it. He said it had changed his attitude towards studying and many things. He was not interested in returning to school. He thought the CES did not give enough information. 'They make you wait and they never contact you. I waited for thirteen months'. 'YAC are more helpful - they got me into the traineeship'.

Accommodation. Ethan had had a turbulent history since leaving home, staying in H&CS short-term and medium-term units. He thought they were okay but his father wanted him to return home and H&CS agreed. This happened three times, then on the fourth time Ethan said 'stuff the CSV' and went to stay with friends. He was upset that H&CS did not believe his story about his home life. Ethan felt that H&CS only took him seriously the last time. Since then he had stayed at four refuges and at the lead tenant home where he had been for five months. This was the longest he had stayed anywhere and was on-going for another ten months, when he was to move to independent supported accommodation. He liked where he was because of the respect and friendliness; the lead tenants were like brothers.

Income. H&CS supported him until he was 16. He received AUSTUDY, and then JSA at the YHA rate. He had

transferred to a traineeship allowance and was to go back to JSA when that was completed. The allowance was the same amount, plus amounts for transport and materials. The main problem Ethan had with DSS was the waiting periods, although the refuge supported him during that time. DSS misplaced his three IDs so he had to provide five. On another occasion he had gone off JSA when he got a job, but when that only lasted five days it had taken three weeks to get JSA again. During this waiting period, the lead tenant house had supported him; he had accrued debts of \$500 which he was paying back in instalments. He would prefer weekly payments to help budget. He had two transit offences, and a \$100 fine to pay. A summons for stealing was coming up soon. It was the only time he has stolen. He did not like using charities.

Reconciliation. Ethan would not return home because nothing had changed. He had up-and-down contact with his sister. Recently his father had contacted him and said he was prepared to talk to him soon. This made him happy.

Preferred Options and Suggestions for Better Practice. Ethan turned to his youth worker or YAC worker for help and advice. He was happy with the traineeship and where he was living, and with the option of moving into independent supported housing in ten months. He said 'CSV need to help and trust kids. No-one wants to leave their family. I wished it never happened but it did. They need to support kids in every way who can't live at home. It took seven times of being returned home before they believed me'. He said stable accommodation, money, food, counselling, traineeships and transport were the important things that young unsupported people need.

Case Study 4: Settled and Remaining Settled

Lynda was in her final year of school and received AUSTUDY. She was 17 years old and was living in a lead tenant house in an outer suburb.

Leaving Home. Lynda had left home a year before this interview because of abuse. When she left Lynda stayed

with a friend for a week and had some savings. She had not returned home since.

Accommodation. Lynda knew about refuges and supported accommodation from a youth worker at school. She contacted a community centre who put her in touch with the accommodation service, which placed her in a short term refuge for three weeks. The refuge was her first experience with other homeless people. Lynda did not like the refuge because many of the young people living there were rough. She felt she was not getting enough support, seeing her worker (from a non-government youth organisation) only twice in three weeks. Lynda also felt the worker was not concerned about her personally and emotionally. The same accommodation service organised Lynda's present accommodation in a lead tenant house, where she had been for ten months. Lynda thought she would stay until she finished school. Then she hoped to move into independent supported accommodation. A worker visited Lynda once a week and gave her support and advice about money and budgeting. Lynda thought her present accommodation was okay but she did not get on with some of the girls she lived with. She thought it would be better to live with other people who were studying.

Income. When she first left home Lynda lived from her savings until her AUSTUDY payment arrived. A worker from the accommodation service helped Lynda to apply for income support and she encountered no problems.

Reconciliation. Lynda spoke to her family once a week and saw them once a fortnight. She had thought about going home but decided the abuse would never stop.

Preferred Options and Suggestions for Better Practice. Lynda felt positive and happy with her life. She was in her final year at school and in the process of studying for her higher school certificate. She planned to go to university and work in youth affairs. Lynda said that the best form of support would be an adult who could reassure her everything will be okay. She would like to live with other people who were studying and who did not move on frequently. Lynda lived in an outer suburb and public transport was inaccessible.

Case Study 5: Settled and Recently Unsettled

Lillian was 15 years old, and though not under a protective order had been in a housing program through a foster care association until this broke down. When we met her she was staying with friends until she got into another housing program. She had no regular source of income. She had recently left school, planning to go back the next year after she had found accommodation. She was interviewed at a youth outreach service where she was participating in a short living skills course.

Leaving Home. Lillian first left home when she was ten. She stayed with friends and in squats, returning home because she was hungry and sick with asthma. She has left home twice. The last time she left was nine months briefly because she couldn't cope with her mother's alcoholism.

Education. Lillian left school one month before the interview because she found the middle class orientation of her school (selective) unsupportive of her homelessness. She was in Year 9 and planned to go back to a non-selective school the next year. She wanted to go on to university. The student representative council informed her of YAC, who have been helpful. She liked them because they focus on youth aspects and are all encompassing.

Accommodation. Lillian had stayed with about ten different friends, moving on because she felt she had overstayed her welcome. She got into medium-term housing in an independent flat through a youth accommodation service. However after eight months she had to leave because of problems with the landlord not liking young tenants. Everything was working well for her there and she was stable, going to school and making ends meet because the accommodation was subsidised. She was looking for a similar set-up again, but there were waiting lists. She said she had her name down at about ten housing programs in Melbourne and should get into one by Christmas. The housing program workers suggested she stay at refuges in the meantime. She was not interested in refuges because of theft, the drug scene and rules. She said they are like a women's prison. She had been at her current friend's place

for five days and would stay another two weeks maybe, depending on how it went. 'I feel like I am scabbing, I don't like that'. She felt that once she was in a housing program things would be fine; getting in was the difficult part.

Income. Lillian was in the process of transferring from SHR to YHA. She was having problems because her mother would not sign the school's exit forms. She had been without an income for one month. Her friends were supporting her. YAC had been helping her with information about JSA and YHA. She could not get DSS counter cheques because she was not registered. She either went without or asked friends to help her. She asked a charity for food once and they said no because she didn't have a health care card. She has been arrested for shoplifting clothes.

Reconciliation was not an option because of her mother's addiction and poor health.

Preferred Options and Suggestions for Better Practice. Independent supported accommodation (non-share), where a worker visits only. She preferred a familiar area near school. She was too young to rent privately and could not afford it whilst at school. She turned to YAC, a youth outreach service and a youth referral service for advice. She thought schools needed to be more supportive, for example to have breakfast and lunch clubs, and housing officers rather than just welfare co-ordinators. She thought they should also have pamphlets on services and support for homeless people, and more funds so they could provide transport tickets, food vouchers and school materials. Youth workers need training on a regular basis. There need to be more housing programs so there are no waiting periods.

2.5 Discussion

None of those participating in the research received any regular financial support from their parents or relatives. Most said they were in contact with someone in their family, but this was not necessarily constructive. Some, most of whom had been away from home for six months or less, hoped to return home in the future. By the time we met them most of those who had been away from home for a year or more viewed themselves as away from home permanently. A third group, whose time away from home was greatly varied, said that though they would like

to return home they regarded the situation at home as making this impossible. The majority of homeless young people had a history of returning to and leaving their parents' home, but for many this phase had probably ended and they were unlikely to return home again. These young people needed alternative long-term accommodation, a regular source of adult advice and support, and a living income. The remainder were coming and going between home, accommodation services and unsupported arrangements, and some were likely to return to their parents at least temporarily. Their needs varied a good deal, but included safe and appropriate accommodation, counselling, and economic support when away from home.

The availability of support did not appear to be a factor in the decision to leave home; few knew about it at the time they left their parental home. Whether the episode of homelessness was temporary or permanent, early intervention to assess needs would have a significant impact on their 'homelessness', assisting them to find stable alternative arrangements and to avoid the 'revolving door' outcomes that may lead to chronicity.

Our sample probably over-represents young people using accommodation services, and because these often provide channels to other sources of support and assistance it probably also over-represents those among homeless young people who are in touch with other key services, mainly income support. The value of these services to the young people concerned will be clear in the discussion to follow. At the same time, that discussion will show that important needs of homeless young people remained unmet.

The needs of homeless young people are addressed by the services of both Commonwealth and State Governments. While the majority of those in the sample were 16 or more at the time we spoke to them, four out of five had been 15 or younger when they first left home. Though it has now begun to be addressed by the Case Management Protocol, the division of responsibility between levels of government has been less clear for this group than for those 16 years and older, and the research has given particular attention to the needs of this group. The next section of this Report discusses the way the needs of homeless young people are addressed through Commonwealth income support services and allied programs concerned with employment, education and training. Section 4 examines the Victorian framework of services for adolescents and homeless young people. Section 5 deals with accommodation services and the joint Commonwealth-State Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).

3 Commonwealth Income Support And Employment, Education And Training Services

Whilst the role of State Governments in the support of homeless young people has contracted over the last decade, that of the Commonwealth has expanded. This section reviews the main income support programs of the Commonwealth for this group, and also discusses allied services facilitating employment, education and training for young people. Information concerning the provision by DSS of income support and other assistance to homeless young people has been brought together through the House of Representatives Inquiry into Aspects of Youth Homelessness. Three documents have been of particular relevance to the discussion in this section. These are the DSS *Submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Youth Homelessness* (1994a), and the Inquiry's *Discussion Paper* (House of Representatives, 1994), and its final report, the Morris Report (House of Representatives, 1995).

3.1 Income Support Policies and Programs

DSS Income Support and Social Work Services

YHA was introduced in 1986. This is a higher rate of allowance paid to homeless people under 18 qualifying for an unemployment or sickness payment or for special consideration. Thus the young person must qualify first for an income support provision of one of these kinds. In 1994 these were Job Search Allowance (JSA) or New Start Allowance (NSA), and Sickness Allowance (SA). Young persons who meet the tests for homelessness but who do not qualify for one of the above allowances may be granted a discretionary payment called Special Benefit (SB) (DSS, 1994a: 19).

At the time of the study, eligibility for YHA required the young person to have been away from the parental home for at least two weeks and be unable to live there because the parent(s) were not prepared to allow the young person to live at home, or because circumstances in the home made it unreasonable to expect the young person to live there. These circumstances included domestic violence, incestual harassment, and a range of 'other exceptional circumstances' such as the following: criminal activity within the home; drug abuse or alcoholism by parents or other persons living in the home; prostitution by parents or other persons living in the home; extended irrational parental behaviour involving mental cruelty; parental insistence on the child's leaving school; or parental

insistence on an unwanted marriage. In 1992 the guidelines were extended to include a long history of domestic disharmony affecting the relationship between parent(s) and child as another exceptional circumstance. The young person must not be receiving continuous support from a parent or guardian, and must not be receiving income support from a Commonwealth instrumentality (other than social security) or from a State department on a continuous basis. YHA is limited to single persons and to persons without children.

With the introduction of the Youth Training Allowance (YTA) and the Independent Homeless Rate (IHR) on 1 January 1995 the criteria for eligibility for support as a homeless person were changed to follow the apparently narrower formulation used by DEET in the administration of SHR. These criteria and their comparison with those used by DSS at the time of the study are discussed further below.

In December 1994 YHA was paid at the rate of \$218.40 per fortnight. Recipients were also potentially eligible for rent assistance to a maximum of \$69.20 per fortnight. The number of young people receiving YHA has risen steeply over the years since its introduction. These numbers are shown in Table 3.1. During 1992/93 these numbers represented about one quarter of all benefit/allowance recipients under 18 years of age (DSS, 1994a: 22).

The rate of increase in numbers of young people receiving YHA has slowed appreciably since 1993 and decreased in 1994 and 1995. The main reasons for the rapid increase in youth homelessness which is reflected in these figures have been considered to be the trend away from direct intervention by state welfare authorities, financial stress on families associated with high rates of adult unemployment, the extended economic dependence of young people on their families, and increases in the frequency of marital breakdown and the subsequent formation of blended families. A number of changes in the operation of the social security system itself also contributed to the increase in numbers claiming YHA, including changes in other social security provisions, improved outreach and administration, and the introduction of a long period of domestic disharmony as a qualifying circumstance (DSS, 1994a: 23-4). The slowing since 1993 is thought to reflect administrative changes in assessment procedures clarifying eligibility criteria and requiring maximum reasonable contact with the parents of claimants. The introduction of the Case Management Protocol has seen a significant reduction in the number of young people receiving SB.

Most recipients received YHA as a supplement to JSA, but the type of benefit is strongly age related. By far the largest number of YHA recipients are aged 16-17, but there are small numbers aged 15 or younger. In June 1994 just under four

Table 3.1: Number^(a) of Recipients Under 18 in Receipt of Payments at the Young Homeless Rate, Australia: June 1987 to 1995

Year	YTA	JSA	SA	SB	Total YHA/ IHR ^(b)	Percentage Increase/ decrease
1987		668	30	245	942	na
1988		1190	61	381	1632	73.2
1989		1487	60	449	1996	22.3
1990		1987	52	591	2630	31.8
1991		3787	34	1059	4880	85.6
1992		6132	31	1902	8065	65.3
1993		8836	52	1592	10480	29.9
1994		8239	59	1602	9900	-11.7
1995(b)	2961	4812	84	890	8743	-5.5

Note: a) June monthly average.
b) The Youth Training Allowance (YTA) was introduced from 1 January 1995 for unemployed under 18 years old, in place of JSA. The Independent Homeless Rate (IHR) replaced the YHA.

Source: DSS, 1994a: 23; and personal correspondence.

per cent (404 individuals) of YHA recipients were under 15 years of age, and another 14 per cent were aged 15 (Table 3.2). Most of those in these younger age groups receive YHA in association with SB.

Homeless young people may also receive a social security payment at the independent rate, which provides the same level of support as YHA. The independent rate is payable to a young person under 18 who has been away from home for a continuous period of 18 weeks and has, while living away from home, been employed on a full-time basis or has been unemployed and registered by the CES for a total of at least 13 weeks. As with YHA, the young person must not be receiving regular financial support from a parent or guardian. Young people who meet these requirements may be able to claim support without disclosing their homelessness or other personal information. For this reason the number of young persons receiving YHA understates the extent of homelessness.

The reasons for granting YHA are shown in Table 3.3. That parent(s) will not allow the young person to live at home is by far the most common reason, accounting for 55 per cent of all grants over the period from January 1993 to February 1994. That it is unreasonable to expect the young person to live at home is the second most common, representing 30 per cent of grants.

Table 3.2: YHA Recipients by Age and Benefit Type, Australia: 28 February 1994

	<14	14	15	16	17	18	Total
JSA	0	4	464	3317	5032	19	8836
SA	0	0	1	15	18	1	35
SB	27	350	533	64	64	0	1038
S. JSA ^(a)	0	23	488	9	4	0	524
NSA	0	0	0	0	0	22	22
Total	27	377	1486	3405	5118	42	10456

Note: a) S. JSA refers to Special JSA.

Source: DSS, 1994a: 88.

Table 3.3: Reasons for Grant of YHA^(a) by Gender, Australia: January 1993 to February 1994

	Male	Female	Total
History of domestic disharmony	710	1011	1721
No parental home	659	517	1176
Not allowed to live at home	6199	5309	11508
Unreasonable to live at home	2408	3773	6181
Other	119	88	207
Total	10095	10698	20793

Note: a) Figures in this table refer to all grants of YHA made during the period, whereas those in other tables refer to numbers of recipients at a particular date.

Source: DSS, 1994a: 90.

Young women are more vulnerable to homelessness than young men, and this is reflected in larger numbers of young women receiving YHA. As the table shows, the grounds on which YHA is granted are gender-related, with males more often not allowed to live at home and females more often having a history of domestic disharmony or circumstances in which it is unreasonable to expect them to live at home. These last categories reflect young women's greater vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse.

The assessment of claims for YHA entails verification of the reason the young person is unable to live at home, and DSS social work staff play a major role in these investigations. Departmental guidelines require that all claimants for YHA be interviewed by a social worker as soon as possible after the claim is made. In verifying information given about the reason the young person is unable to live at home social workers are obliged to contact parents except in the following circumstances:

- where there have been no dealings of a type which indicate parental concern for the claimant for at least two years;
- where sexual abuse and/or domestic violence has been verified by a third party;
- where there is a court order refusing parental access to the claimant;
- where a former student in receipt of SHR claims YHA; and
- where 'other exceptional circumstances' exist, such as parental drug abuse, criminal activity or irrational behaviour (DSS, 1994a: 32).

When dealing with a claim for YHA, social workers are expected to assess needs for help or assistance other than income support. They may address the family situation of the young person, encouraging reconciliation or referring the family to counselling or mediation services. Their role is, however, to link the young person with other services, and DSS guidelines do not approve ongoing casework services. An evaluation of DSS social work services conducted in 1993 indicated that social work assessments usually covered support networks and accommodation, and often also included the possibility of reconciliation and education, training and AUSTUDY (DSS, 1993: 31).

In recent years the Department has begun to take a much more active role in service delivery to young people, with respect not only to its own income support services but also to those of the welfare sector more generally. The Youth Pilot Projects, funded in 1991/92 as part of the Youth Social Justice Strategy, were a major initiative of this kind. These projects had four objectives:

- to improve access of homeless young people to DSS programs and services;
 - to work with young people in co-operation with other agencies to improve access for homeless young people to available support services in the community;
-

- to provide enhanced opportunities for homeless young people to participate more fully in society by encouraging and facilitating their involvement in education, training and employment; and
- to obtain information and data on youth homelessness for policy development, decision making and service delivery purposes (DSS, 1994b: 1-2).

Ten Pilot Projects provided services to young people over a period of a year. These were designed to test and compare a variety of service delivery models, variously combining elements of outreach and mobile services to established agencies, outposted services co-located with other agencies, the establishment of a specific Youth Counter Area in DSS Regional Offices, and service development with a focus on training. In addition, Pilot Projects addressed service delivery issues associated with the needs of specific groups, these being young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, young people in a rural environment, non-English speaking youth, and young offenders. An additional project with a research focus examined the needs of homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in remote areas of Northern Australia.

The Youth Pilot Projects identified a number of aspects of service delivery as important in facilitating the access of young people to government services. Among these were the provision of practical assistance to the client at the time of first contact, higher than usual levels of personal assistance, and making contact with young people in an environment they found to be supportive, relaxed and non-threatening (DSS, 1994a). The findings of the Pilot Projects supported the value of specific services for homeless young people in areas where there is a concentration of youth homelessness, of a case management approach, of outreach, co-operative service relationships with local youth agencies, and of integration in DSS regional offices and where possible physical proximity with YAC (DSS, 1994b).

Following the Youth Pilot Projects, ten Youth Service Units (YSUs) were established in rural and urban locations around Australia as permanent parts of the DSS service delivery system, and have now been in operation for a full year. The YSUs provide young people with the full range of services available from mainstream DSS regional offices, and in addition serve as a first point of contact for the local service system. YSUs adopt a case management approach for those young people requiring a more intensive level of assistance. The aim of this approach is to target young clients who initially need extra help to access income support as well as to assist them with educational, labour market, job search, housing and general welfare needs. While working co-operatively with other community and departmental agencies, YSUs are intended to complement rather

than duplicate other services in the local area. YSUs are located in Darlinghurst, Blacktown and Shellharbour in New South Wales; Frankston, Knox and Geelong in Victoria; Adelaide, South Australia; Victoria Park, Western Australia; Glenorchy, Tasmania; and Cairns, Queensland (DSS, 1994a: 42-4).

Fieldwork for this report included a visit to the YSU in Frankston, Victoria. The Unit was established in June 1994, and is co-located with a YAC. Its workers see the Unit as having a comprehensive role, going beyond the initial assessment of eligibility for income support to deal with the issues and problems that inhibit young people from looking for work or studying. They believe the Unit can fill a preventive role through activities such as assisting young people to get services and working towards family reconciliation. At the time of fieldwork for the present study the Unit had been operating for two months. Workers' early experience was that they were filling an important void in support to homeless young people, keeping in contact with some young people for sustained periods and undertaking case management with many clients.

DEET Income Support through AUSTUDY

Parallel income support for homeless young people engaged in full-time study is provided through the Student Homeless Rate (SHR) of AUSTUDY. Claimants must first qualify for support as a student, being above the minimum school leaving age, studying full time in an approved course, and not receiving long-term financial help from parents or other persons.

Homelessness is one of a range of grounds of eligibility for AUSTUDY at the independent rate. DEET guidelines defining the circumstances in which a young person is to be recognised as homeless are broadly similar to those applying to YHA. They provide for circumstances in which the student is homeless because:

- of serious risk to physical or mental health in the family home, due to domestic violence, sexual harassment, extreme family breakdown, or another similar and exceptional circumstance; or
- the student's parents cannot provide a home due to current physical or mental incapacity or imprisonment.

These grounds are narrower than those applying to YHA in two respects. The criterion that parent(s) do not allow the young person to live at home in reasonable circumstances was withdrawn from SHR in 1991 on evidence that it was being used by parents and students (mainly students over 18 years) to collude in evading the parental income test. The 1992 decision by DSS to add the criterion of a long history of domestic disharmony was not accepted by DEET.

DEET criteria are widely perceived as more restrictive than those applied by DSS, but this perception is open to debate. The onus placed on students to substantiate their homelessness (discussed further below), as opposed to the role played by social workers in the DSS system, may make the SHR harder to get. On the other hand, there is thought to be substantial overlap between the categories of 'family breakdown' and 'not allowed to live at home', making the criteria substantially similar in practice.

In December 1994 AUSTUDY at the SHR rate was \$218.40 per fortnight. AUSTUDY recipients, including those receiving SHR, were not eligible for rent assistance. From 1995, however, rent assistance became available to students receiving the SHR if they are in private rental accommodation. This provision includes young people who are orphans and refugees with no parents in Australia, and students in State substitute (foster) care who receive the AUSTUDY 'away from home' rate and live away from their foster carer's home to study.

The SHR was introduced in 1986. It is difficult to compare the numbers receiving YHA and SHR because of differences in age limits for eligibility (SHR is available until the age of 23) and in the basis of data reporting (SHR figures apply to a full year rather than a particular date). In 1992 there were 8,801 young people under 18 receiving AUSTUDY and ABSTUDY together, and 8,804 in 1993 (see Table 3.4).

As with YHA, the number of SHR claimants increased steadily in the years following its introduction. Economic and labour market conditions are thought to be factors in these increases, affecting employment opportunities and perceptions of the value of education. The increase in SHR claimants has been less rapid than that of YHA recipients, and recent limitations to the criteria defining homelessness arrested the rate of increase in 1993. It has been argued that more restrictive administration of SHR, in combination with the unavailability of rent assistance to AUSTUDY recipients, have created incentives for homeless young people to discontinue education (House of Representatives, 1994: 12, 17).

Social workers play a smaller part in assessing claims for the SHR rate than for YHA. Eligibility as a homeless student is determined on the basis of a written statement made as part of the AUSTUDY application, with the onus on the student to provide the necessary documentation. The assessor refers applications whose determination is unclear to a social worker, who may then interview the student and who may seek verification of the student's circumstances (with the student's permission) from school authorities, parents or other sources. From 1995, social workers will also be responsible for referring young people and their parents to family mediation services where appropriate.

Table 3.4: Number of Recipients of AUSTUDY at Student Homeless Rate, Academic Year:1987 to 1994

Year	Total SHR	Percentage Increase/decrease
1987(a)	2,170	na
1988	5,671	61.3
1989	8,403	48.2
1990	10,949	30.3
1991	13,693	25.1
1992	16,286	18.9
1993	16,450	1.0
1994	16,039	-0.1

Note: a) Figure applies to six month period ending June 30, 1987.

Source: DEET, 1987-1994, *Report on the Operations of the Student Assistance Act*.

Whereas DSS employs a standing social work staff, DEET social workers are employed part-time on contract and lack full status as DEET employees. While DSS employs approximately 500 social workers, DEET employs approximately 30 to 40 on a part-time contract basis (House of Representatives, 1994: 16). DEET arrangements reflect increasing recognition of the role of social work in that Department, and address some of the difficulties reported in previous research (Shaver and Paxman, 1992: 76, 101).

The contract basis of social work employment in DEET raises a number of issues. Among these are limitations on their accessibility to claimants and other welfare workers, on their ability to represent themselves as acting on behalf of DEET, and on the feedback of their experience into the policy process. Submissions to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Aspects of Youth Homelessness (1994: 16-17) were critical of DEET performance in supporting young people through the application process.

Working Nation and the Youth Training Initiative

In May 1994 *Working Nation*, The Prime Minister's White Paper on Employment and Growth (Australia, Prime Minister, 1994), announced the introduction of the Youth Training Initiative (YTI). The aim of the YTI is to ensure that all young persons under 18 who are not employed are engaged in education or training. It provides intensive case management to unemployed people under the age of 18,

beginning 13 weeks after their registration as unemployed. The YTI provides a labour market or vocational training place and job assistance to those who are still unemployed six months after registration. An early review of the YTI proposals was presented in the *Discussion Paper* issued by the House of Representatives Inquiry into Aspects of Youth Homelessness (House of Representatives, 1994).

Beginning 1 January 1995, new arrangements brought the support of young people who are unemployed into closer alignment with the treatment of those who are studying or training. In the process, the way in which the two Departments exercise their responsibilities in income support has been brought into closer alignment. The two main changes in income support made as part of the YTI are the replacement of JSA with a Youth Training Allowance (YTA) and the extension of rent assistance to AUSTUDY recipients who are homeless.

YTA will be paid to young people qualifying as homeless at the rate of \$222.10 per fortnight. Claimants may also be eligible for rent assistance to a maximum of \$70.20 per fortnight if single and without children.¹⁸

The YTA is intended to encourage young people to undertake education and training, and carries activity test requirements associated with this objective. DEET will be responsible for activity testing and case management. Existing JSA waiting periods apply to YTA (with young people in financial hardship eligible for early assistance). The AUSTUDY personal assets test and the parental income and assets test apply to YTA, but the personal income test is based on the JSA provisions (Australia, Prime Minister: 95-8). DSS will continue to be responsible for assessing eligibility, and for payment and administration.

YTA is paid at the same three rates as apply to AUSTUDY and ABSTUDY, the at home rate, the away from home rate and the independent/homeless rate. The White Paper (Australia, Prime Minister: 1994: 97) suggested that the criteria for eligibility for the homeless rate would be brought closer to those applying to the equivalent rate of AUSTUDY. Objections to this apparent narrowing of access have been aired in the House of Representatives Inquiry (House of Representatives, 1994: 13-14). Bodies such as the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and the Australian Youth Policy Action Coalition (AYPAC) argue that the more restrictive guidelines used by DEET are likely to deny support unfairly to young people who need it. In evidence to the Inquiry, DSS maintained that there were not significant differences between the two Departments in the severity of the criteria applied and their administration (House of Representatives, 1995: 101). The Inquiry recommended a Post

18 These rates will be constant regardless of status, i.e., student or unemployed.

Implementation Review of the operation and effectiveness of the common eligibility criteria for the homeless rate of payment after 12 months of implementation (House of Representatives, 1995: 101).

The YTI also introduced changes to the rules governing access to YTA at the independent rate, equivalent in amount to the homeless rate. The young person must have lived away from the parental home for 18 weeks. The requirement to have been registered with the CES for 13 weeks or to have had reasonable employment since leaving home was stiffened, so that the young person must have worked at least 20 hours per week for at least 13 of the 18 weeks away from home and not received regular financial support from parents during this time. This represented a significant tightening of eligibility requirements, and the House of Representatives Inquiry (1995: 102) was also critical of these proposals.

The House of Representatives Inquiry also noted the greater access of homeless young people claiming allowances through DSS to professional social work assistance than claiming AUSTUDY through DEET. Citing submissions from community bodies, it concluded that DSS social work services had benefits in prompt support to homeless young people and the development of local service networks (House of Representatives, 1994: 16). The Committee recommended that DEET and DSS establish the same quality service standards in the assessment of applications for the homeless rate of payment. It viewed minimum standards as including the young person being interviewed by a social worker on the day of claim; consistent practices in contact with parent or guardian, taking account of privacy requirements; and arrangements to support common practice standards while avoiding duplication of resources (House of Representatives, 1995: 105-6).

As indicated above, the YTI included proposals to make students qualifying for the homeless rate eligible for rent assistance. The ineligibility of this group for rent assistance had created a disincentive to study (JSA recipients are eligible for rent assistance), and the YTI changes seek to eliminate this disincentive. An anomaly remains, however, because young people receiving AUSTUDY at the independent rate remain ineligible for rent assistance. The Committee's *Discussion Paper* noted that this raised new issues of equity within the AUSTUDY payment system, as students who are not homeless will remain ineligible for rent assistance (House of Representatives, 1994: 17).

Finally, the House of Representatives Committee observed continuing differences between DEET and DSS payments in the treatment of parental support, noting discrepancies concerning both the amount and the type of support permitted without affecting eligibility. It also noted differences between DEET and DSS with respect to appeal procedures and the management of debts and

overpayments (House of Representatives, 1994: 17-21). In its final report (House of Representatives, 1995: 125-9) the Committee considered arguments that the treatment of parental support in eligibility for income support provisions was unduly rigid and called for further review of the issue.

3.2 Young and Homeless in Victoria: Experiences of Commonwealth Income Support

None of the 42 homeless young people interviewed for the study received any regular financial support from their parents. Income support was thus a primary concern. Youth workers felt that ambiguities in the division of responsibility between Commonwealth and State were causing some of the youngest to fall through the income safety net. The school leaving age in Victoria is 14 and one half years, leaving a gap of 18 months during which their eligibility for income support is unclear. The 'hidden homeless' in this age group do not show up in figures for YHA or SHR.¹⁹

The importance of Commonwealth income support was demonstrated in that the majority of those interviewed received a pension or allowance (29:42, 11 females, 18 males). Most were also in receipt of the YHA or the SHR (25:29). Six people received financial assistance from H&CS (three state-wards; one ex-ward). The majority of 15 year olds interviewed received Commonwealth income support, about half at the homeless rate of payment (see Table 3.5). Seven young people, about one in six of those interviewed, had no income at all. All had either lodged applications for Commonwealth income support or planned to do so when they had gathered enough identification to meet the requirements. Four had left home within two months of this interview and were currently in the waiting period for income support. This group without income were mostly aged 15 and 16 years.

Table 3.6 shows the total amount of money the young people received the week of the interview, including both income from benefits and other sources. Almost one in four had a weekly income of about the standard rate of payment for a Commonwealth benefit for under 18s, that is between \$104 and \$110. Incomes were above the standard rate because of rent assistance, earnings, loans from friends, begging or stealing. Some received money from youth workers in non-government organisations (8:42). For example, a youth worker had given two young people not receiving income support on the day of the interview \$20 each

19 This period is addressed in substantial part in the Case Management Protocol, which took effect shortly after fieldwork for the present study.

to pay for beds at a back-packers hostel. Reasons given for receiving less than usual were that they had lost their job or they had been docked pocket money on account of hostel rule infringements. Just over one fifth of those interviewed were receiving less than \$90 per week because they were repaying Commonwealth overpayments.

Six people in care of H&CS received pocket money of up to \$25 per week, the standard amount. In addition, H&CS pay the accommodation service to provide the young people with meals, bed, shower, transport and advice.

From the 42 interviews with young people several issues concerning the application and receipt of benefits came to the fore. Almost half of those interviewed had a problem meeting the identification requirements often because their birth certificate and other belongings were at their parents' home. The majority of these were DSS allowees, reflecting the fact that more of those in the sample received DSS than DEET payments. They said that youth workers helped them overcome these barriers by providing statutory declarations or accompanying them when applying, and thought that having a youth worker present made the process run more smoothly. Youth workers also reported that meeting identity requirements could be a problem.

The sample group commonly reported they found the application process complicated. Just under a quarter of the young people had difficulties completing the application forms. Some could not understand the questions. Two young people had literacy problems and could not complete the forms alone. Youth workers reported that homeless young people have difficulty keeping appointments, so that to get through the process might take weeks. It was also said that the requirement that parents be contacted to verify homelessness 'turns young people off' applying for income support.

Young people also had problems with waiting periods when transferring from one benefit to another or having a benefit reinstated after its cancellation. For example, a young woman 16 years old waited for two months when she first applied for JSA. Another young woman who recently left school encountered problems with AUSTUDY because she had moved from New South Wales to Victoria. This interrupted her payments and she had no alternative source of income. Over half experienced difficulties making ends meet during the waiting periods for income support. During these periods they relied on friends, relatives and refuges for support and services. In some instances they went for considerable periods without food and/or lived on the streets. Twelve per cent reported that they stole. Youth workers believe that failure in the income support system is one cause of young people having criminal records.

Table 3.5: Number of Interviewees Receiving Various Types of Government Income Support by Age

Type	13-14	15	Years 16	17	Total
AUSTUDY	-	1	1	2	4
Job Search Allowance ^(a)	-	3	8	8	19
New Start Allowance	-	1	1	-	2
Sickness Allowance	-	-	1	-	1
Special Benefit	-	2	-	-	2
Sole Parents Pension	-	1	-	-	1
H&CS	4	1	1	-	6
No income	1	2	3	1	7
Total	5	11	15	11	42
Young Homeless Allowance ^(b)	-	6	10	9	25

Notes: a) Includes one person receiving a training allowance for a traineeship (transfer). Amount did not change.
b) Receipt of a government cash benefit at the homeless rate (YHA or SHR).

Table 3.6: Type of Income Support Payment by Weekly Income from All Sources Received by Interviewees

Type	Amount per week					
	< \$90		\$104-110		> \$116	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Commonwealth						
Job Search Allowance ^(a)	2	5	13 ^(a)	31	4	10
New Start Allowance	-	-	-	-	2	5
Sickness Allowance	1	2	-	-	-	-
Special Benefit	1	2	-	-	1	2
Sole Parent Pension	-	-	-	-	1	2
AUSTUDY	1	2	3	7	-	-
State						
H&CS	6	14	-	-	-	-
No income	7	18	-	-	-	-
Total	18	43	16	38	8	19

Note: a) Includes one young man who is in a traineeship.

The participants' perceptions of DSS and DEET staff varied, and it is not always possible to distinguish their opinions of the representatives of the two departments in the data. A number of the young people interviewed found the DSS staff helpful, referring in particular to the social workers at the regional offices. Youth workers also thought that some DSS youth workers, e.g. those at the youth pilot projects, especially Frontyard, were excellent. However, there were also negative views expressed. Some young people perceived the DSS staff they dealt with as uninterested, unhelpful or rude, and in a few cases unsympathetic to their plight. Their comments included:

I applied for JSA and it took about four weeks to get JSA and I had to fill out five or six forms. I got cut off so my doctor gave me a medical certificate so I could get Sickness Benefit.

DSS don't pay much attention unless you're with a (youth accommodation) worker.

Difficult filling out the forms.

I had problems with ID, I had no birth certificate and I had problems opening a bank account.

DSS sent forms all over the place because I had moved a lot.

Youth workers thought DSS social workers needed more training and support. Refuge workers felt that having a good relationship with the local DSS office and YACs helped in getting their residents onto benefits. At the same time, they also thought that in helping young people establish identity and complete forms they were doing the work of DSS staff.

The young people had much less to say about DEET than DSS staff, in part because there were fewer AUSTUDY than social security claimants among those interviewed and in part because much of the application process occurs by correspondence and over the telephone. The help they received often came from school counsellors or other adults. AUSTUDY claimants had encountered similar problems in establishing their identity and supporting themselves during assessment and waiting periods, while overpayment problems seemed more common and more severe. Youth workers believed that young people had more problems with SHR than with YHA, regarding the guidelines as tougher and the process to take longer.

Young people wanted to receive their income support payments on a weekly basis to help them budget. A fifth of the young people received weekly payments, while the same proportion again said they would prefer this. Some had

requested weekly payments and been discouraged by staff, who said it was a hassle to organise or warned that it often caused 'stuff ups' with payments.

About one in five of those interviewed had had their benefit cancelled at some time. The reasons for cancellations included late lodgment of forms, forms sent to the wrong address, confusion about how to complete forms and a failure to comply with activity tests. A quarter of the homeless young people reported that their mobility, because of homelessness, caused correspondence to go to old addresses. As noted earlier, homeless young people rarely receive any financial support from their parents and cancellations result in periods without any income. Those without access to youth accommodation services are particularly vulnerable.

Although most of the young people had access to some form of income support a lack of money was one of their most frequent complaints. Just over a third said they had enough money to make ends meet on a daily basis. This group consisted of slightly more males than females. About two thirds of the young people had difficulties making ends meet: 16 said they only sometimes, and 11 always, ran short. Reasons given for accruing debts were the cost of accommodation, poor budgeting, problems with income support payments including having to pay back overpayments, and fines from public transport fare evasion.

Without employment or subsidised housing, living on income support was very difficult for most. Access to accommodation services considerably affected perceptions of income adequacy. Table 3.7 shows that all the young people who could make ends meet were linked into youth accommodation services. Similarly, over half of those who never had enough money for daily living expenses were living in private arrangements. This pattern clearly shows the financial advantage attached to accessing supported youth accommodation.

Over half had tried to get 'crisis' money from the government or a non-government agency since leaving home, for necessities such as rent, money, food, clothing and medication. About a third of the young people received an emergency payment or voucher, from DSS (four) or non-government organisations (nine). A few had never heard about emergency cash payments from DSS, H&CS, non-government organisations or charities. Others presumed they would be refused and did not apply.

The majority of the young people received in-kind support (36), mostly from youth accommodation services (29). Clothing (19) and food (14) were the most common items mentioned when asked what they needed more money for. It should be noted that clothing was amongst the items that the young people stole. Assistance from non-government organisations was usually given in kind, in

Table 3.7 Adequacy of Income of Interviewees by Living Arrangements

Living Arrangements	Yes	Income Adequacy Sometimes	No
Youth accommodation services			
Lead tenant	8	2	1
Independent supported	1	1	-
Refuge	6	6	4
Foster family	-	1	-
Private arrangements			
Friends	-	5	2
Boarding house	-	1	-
Back-packers	-	-	2
Squat	-	-	2
Total	15	16	11

Note: The question asked was, '*for daily living expenses (rent, food, bills, transport, etc.) can you make ends meet money-wise?*'

Most of the young people said they would go without meals if they were running short of money for day to day living (24). Just over a third would borrow money from family and friends, although many expressed reservations about this (14). Just under a quarter said they would resort to crime, while others admitted having done so in the past. (Most said they would not do so again.)

3.3 Young and Homeless in Victoria: Experiences of Education, Training and Employment Services

No-one had a full-time permanent job. The majority of the 42 young people interviewed were unemployed (29, 12 females; 17 males). Eleven were at school (seven females, four males). One young man was in a full-time traineeship in clothes retailing. One young woman was working part time as a childcare assistant. The last year of school completed by the young people is shown in Table 3.8. About three quarters had not completed Year 10; 16 were aged 16 and 17 years.

Eighteen had left school involuntarily. Reasons given were behavioural problems, that they did not fit into the mainstream education system, that they did not fit into the mainstream education system, that they had fallen behind in their class work and had study problems, or that their attendance had been poor

Table 3.8: Last Year of School Completed by Gender

Year	Males		Females		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
6	1	5	3	15	4	10
8	4	18	4	20	8	19
9	10	45	9	45	19	45
10	6	27	3	15	9	21
11	1	5	1	5	2	5
Total	22	100	20	100	42	100

because of problems at home or their homelessness. Although they understood that their behaviour led to their expulsion, they also often felt the school had been unsympathetic to their predicament. Others left school voluntarily because of the difficulty of going to school when they had problems at home or because they had left home and had only insecure housing. Schools appeared not to have the resources to work with homeless young people and the problems associated with premature independence.

It is not possible to tell from this data for whom homelessness caused problems at school and who experienced problems at school prior to homelessness. For the young people in this sample school counsellors did not appear to play a significant role in providing information, referral, advice or support for homeless young people. In several cases, however, homeless students told us school counsellors did play an important role in applying for SHR. Schools could provide a beneficial link between young people and youth support services.

The following are four examples of young peoples' experiences.

I was asked to leave school because I was causing too much havoc ... I was falling behind because of the problems at home and the teachers didn't care much. (male, 15 years)

I got kicked out of home and was on the streets so I didn't want to go to school ... School and telling the teachers I was having problems was the last thing on my mind. (male, 17 years)

I'm not ready to go to school at the moment ... I just left because I want to settle down and find a place to live ... work things out with my mother and stuff. (female, 16 years)

Can't cope with the work load at school while I'm living in a refuge. (female, 16 years)

Many people who had negative experiences at school said they would nevertheless be interested in continuing their education. Other young people spoke about wanting to go back to school but having to wait until the next year because the schools would not accept them half way through the school term. Another person raised the issue of not being able to continue with their education because of the difficulty of getting short-term placements in schools in the same local area as the short-term accommodation services. Some wanted to continue their education but not in the school environment and structure. They wanted more flexible learning opportunities, more freedom, and a different relationship with the teachers. Alternative schools may be better suited to independent students. As one person said,

I was expelled five times because of bad behaviour ... I'm now going to an alternative school for people who have problems in school. You call teachers by their first name, more understanding, small classes, more time for you, they talk you through problems until you understand. I like it a lot. (male, 15 years)

Youth workers underlined the importance of support for the education needs of homeless young people. The problems they reported included the housing of school students in refuges, stress, and stigma attached to homelessness. The young people wanted to pursue a range of careers, and many needed to return to school as a prerequisite for jobs or courses in the future. Independent students need both financial and emotional support. Most of the young people said that they needed secure housing before they could go back to school. One young woman wanted 'time-out' to organise her life and not to have to look for jobs until she resumes school the following year.

Table 3.9 shows what the young people would prefer to be doing. The table shows that more than two in five wanted full-time employment. About a quarter of the people said they would prefer to be at school now or next year (six), or in a traineeship or apprenticeship (three). Almost half of those not currently studying said they would like to return to school in the future. Eight of the 42 people said they were not interested in returning to school at all. About one third of the total sample said they were happy with what they are doing now, including school (ten), traineeship (one), job (one) and motherhood (one).

The young people interviewed expressed some enthusiasm for jobs, education or training. They were interested in a range of occupations, including child care, gardening, computer programming, graphic art, spray painting, mechanic, police,

Table 3.9: Preferred Activity of Interviewees by Gender

Type ^(a)	Males		Females		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
School	8	36	8	40	16	38
Training	4	18	-	-	4	10
Working	9	41	9	45	18	43
Motherhood	-	-	1	5	1	2
Time-out	-	-	2	10	2	5
Don't know	1	5	-	-	1	2
Total	22	100	20	100	42	100

Note: a) 31 per cent (5 males, 8 females) said they were happy with what they were doing, including school (10), traineeship (1), working (1) and motherhood (1).

design, cabinet making, retail, hairdressing, community care, marine biology, cooking, engineering, counselling and youth work. Barriers such as age, lack of education, accommodation problems and lack of employment experience prevented most from getting a job in their present circumstances. For example one young woman had left her job as a waitress because she could not find stable housing and found washing her uniform too difficult.

Overall, the young people did not have much success finding jobs, whether through the CES, YAC or the newspaper. Even so there was an overwhelmingly positive response to YAC. Table 3.10 lists the typical responses given about YAC and is a useful guide to a youth service model that young people like.

YAC compared favourably with the CES. A few young people made positive comments about the CES, including that they were helpful when looking for jobs and preparing for job interviews. One young person said it was good to have all the jobs listed in one place. However, most said the CES was just a place that listed jobs or a place you had to go to satisfy the DSS activity test. Some young people commented that the jobs advertised at the CES were irrelevant to them because of their age, lack of education or lack of work experience. Some were frustrated at the way the CES was organised, especially when old job cards were left on the display. Others felt that the staff were not helpful or interested, and did not give them adequate job descriptions. Because of their mobility, some of the young people encountered problems with follow-up by the CES workers. It was common for young people to say that they got tired of going to the CES and YAC all the time when no job or training eventuated.

Table 3.10: Common Positive Comments about YACs made by Interviewees

-
- more interactive
 - one-to-one attention
 - help you fill in forms
 - organise interviews
 - help you with your resume
 - try harder for you than the CES
 - they match your interest with jobs and training, career development
 - all encompassing and cover many areas for youth
 - more successful at finding jobs and courses for your age group and experience
 - youth workers are available
 - counselling
 - provide information you need about independent living
 - more helpful, staff are nicer
-

Only a few people had heard of JPET (five people). One person was enrolled in a six week part-time course on finding jobs. JPET was much less widely known or used than either the CES or YAC among this group of homeless young people.²⁰

Many of the young people had heard about traineeships but did not really know what they involved (a large proportion of the sample were 15 years and younger). YAC appeared to be informing young people about traineeships, but eligibility requirements such as age and educational level prevented many from applying.²¹ The few who had successfully applied for traineeships were pleased to have them, though they thought the waiting period before it began was too long. Traineeships were attractive because they covered transport costs and would lead to employment.

3.4 The Commonwealth and State Case Management Protocol for Young People Under 18 Years

The division of responsibility between Commonwealth and State Governments in adolescent welfare has changed markedly in the last ten to 15 years, a period

20 JPET was administered by HRD. With the Federal Budget 1995/6 JPET was transferred to DEET to be integrated with Working Nation. AYPAC fear that this transfer will result in JPET, a successful pilot program, being abolished (AYPAC, 1995: 4-5).

21 Those aged 15 and younger thought that traineeships were only for people aged 16 and older. In part their perception was right. Labour market programs were for people aged 16 and over, with special discretionary arrangements for those younger. However, with the introduction of the YTA and case management on 1 January 1995 people under 16 will have immediate entry into preparatory courses prior to a traineeship or equivalent at 16 years.

when homelessness among young people has also increased and been more widely recognised. State Governments have redefined their roles and responsibilities, most visibly in reducing their use of the powers of wardship (Shaver and Paxman, 1992). While the process has been particularly turbulent in Victoria, the trend to reduce intervention and target child welfare resources is general among States. In the same period the Commonwealth has entered the field, most visibly through programs for income support and accommodation-related services. The division of responsibility that has emerged in the result has been widely criticised, as allowing gaps and duplication in services, as creating referral roundabouts, and as the basis of cost-shifting between governments.

The Commonwealth and State Case Management Protocol for Young People Under 18 Years has been developed to improve the integration of Commonwealth and State services with respect to the income support and protective needs of young people under 16 years of age. Its goals are to clarify responsibilities, improve liaison and co-ordination so that young people do not slip between agencies, increase consistency of treatment, and establish mechanisms for monitoring policy and practice in the provision of support and assistance to this group. The Protocol rests on three principles:

- that young people 15 years and over who are homeless or unsupported are entitled to Commonwealth income support;
- that young people under 15 years who are homeless or unsupported can receive Commonwealth income support in exceptional circumstances, and should be referred to state services for assessment of their need for protective care; and
- that any young person who is at risk of significant harm through abuse should be referred to protective services, and where consent is not given, the referral will be made, without consent, in the public interest.

Thus the Protocol affirms that the Commonwealth will take responsibility for providing income support to homeless young people from the age of 15, and to some below this age in exceptional circumstances. For their part, State Governments are to take responsibility for assessing the needs of homeless claimants under 15 for protective services, and those over 15 where indicated, and for ensuring that these needs are met. States are also responsible for the financial support of wards of state under 16, and for providing protective services to all claimants who are assessed as needing them. The affirmation of responsibilities includes the requirement to refer all young people aged under 15 and claiming DSS payments as homeless to State welfare agencies for protective assessment, and the obligation of those agencies to conduct this assessment.

The arrangements surrounding the Protocol have entailed changes to the regulations governing the privacy of social security claimants to allow DSS disclosure of information to State welfare authorities, including disclosures without the permission of the claimant. These have also included mutual clarification of procedures used by DSS and State welfare authorities in contacting the parents of homeless young people.

Specific guidelines for the implementation of the Protocol have been developed in each State. Victorian guidelines interpret the requirements of the Protocol in the light of the *Children and Young Persons Act (1989)* and associated policies. They spell out the responsibilities of H&CS under the Protocol for young people under 15 as the following:

- Any young person under the age of 15 who is homeless is considered by H&CS to be at risk of significant harm and a protective investigation will be made by H&CS to ensure that necessary action is taken for the health and well-being of the young person.
 - Where significant harm is substantiated and before referring the matter to the Children's Court on a Protection Application, H&CS is required to investigate options for returning the young person to their family or locating an approved placement. Where possible, young people are appropriately placed and caregiver payments are made to support the placement.
 - H&CS will initiate action through the Children's Court where the safety of the young person cannot be ensured by any other means. This may result in the Children's Court making a Protection Order.
 - Where a young person is the subject of a Protection Order, which places custody or guardianship with the Secretary of Health and Community Services, H&CS is responsible for all aspects of their well-being, including financial support, regardless of placement.
 - DSS will not provide income support to homeless young people under 15 years during the period of the protective investigation, or where an approved placement by H&CS or a Children's Court Protection Order has been made.
 - In exceptional circumstances after the investigation period, where a voluntary placement approved by H&CS or a Protection Order has not been made, DSS will provide income support, subject to the usual eligibility requirements being met, to enable a protective worker from H&CS to support the young person while an approved placement is
-

arranged or a decision made in relation to court action. (Victoria, H&CS, undated b, paras 4-9)

Responsibilities with respect to unsupported young people aged 15-16 lie with the Commonwealth through its framework of income support provisions. These exclude wards of the State under 16 years. H&CS is responsible for ensuring the health and well-being of young people in this age group who are at risk of significant harm (Victoria, H&CS, undated b, paras 27-8).

The Protocol took effect in Victoria on 1 October 1994, and it is too soon to know its outcomes in that and other States. It is clearly an important initiative toward improving the quality and support provided to the most vulnerable groups of homeless young people. The *Discussion Paper* issued by the House of Representatives Inquiry (1994: 31-3) reported considerable support for the Protocol from organisations working with young homeless people with respect to both its potential to improve clarity and standards of support and the mechanisms for evaluation and monitoring established with it. However the Inquiry noted a number of areas of disquiet about the Protocol and the mode of its development expressed by community groups. By the time of its final report (House of Representative, 1995: 231-37) the Protocol had been implemented in all States and Territories but had yet to be evaluated. The report noted a number of concerns about the Protocol, among which were:

- the inability of State Governments to adequately respond to the demands of the Protocol; it noted that increased workloads generated by the Protocol were placing an unmanageable burden on a service already unable to meet its statutory responsibilities;
 - concern that the mandatory notification procedures to State welfare authorities, to be made without the young person's consent, may deter some young people from applying for income support;
 - the implications of the changes to the privacy provisions that confidential information given to the two Commonwealth departments can be passed on to State welfare departments without the young person's consent;
 - the appropriateness of mandatory reporting of sexual abuse of adolescents;
-

- the inadequacy of State welfare department's financial support to young people during the 'risk assessment' period and beyond; and
- the failure of the Protocol to include access to education. (House of Representatives, 1995: 233-34)

The Inquiry concluded that the Protocol was an 'inadequate response to a massive problem' (House of Representatives, 1995: 237).

3.5 Discussion

The role of the Commonwealth in the support of homeless young people took its present shape in the mid-1980s. This role has grown significantly in the last decade, with the Commonwealth becoming the major provider of support to homeless young people aged 16 and over and increasingly also the major provider to those aged 15. This is the case with respect to income support and, in combination with State Governments, also with respect to emergency housing and allied services discussed in Section 5. The expanding Commonwealth provision has both responded to and facilitated the narrowing of State roles in adolescent welfare.

The interview data show that Commonwealth income support is getting through to homeless young people and giving stability to their lives while away from the parental home. It seems that although young people know little about such support at the time they leave home, the channels of the service system work to make its availability known and assist them to apply. Three quarters of those interviewed were receiving income support from the Commonwealth, and a number of others were in the process of getting it.

The group receiving Commonwealth income support included a number of young people aged 15: indeed, among those we interviewed there was no difference in access to Commonwealth income support between those aged 15 and those aged 16. Our interviews were conducted before the Case Management Protocol had taken effect. This shows the extent to which the cost of support for homeless young people below the usual age of eligibility for benefits such as AUSTUDY and JSA (now YTA) has moved from the State to the Commonwealth level of government.

Many of the young people had difficulty managing on the income support they received. Some of their problems stemmed from immaturity and poor budgeting skills, some from the additional costs of transience associated with homelessness, and some from loss of funds to repay overpayments or transport fines. More

generally, however, the subsidised living arrangements provided by youth accommodation services were crucial to their ability to make ends meet on income support. Almost all those living independently were unable to make ends meet, and a number recounted failed experiences in private rental accommodation.

Though most of the young people had been able to secure income support, many reported difficulties and frustration in the process. Some of their dissatisfaction was likely to reflect erroneous expectations. People often do not understand that the income support system works not simply to assess and respond to individual need as it may be felt by the individual but rather to establish eligibility for statutory entitlements. Thus they mistake as impersonal indifference the process of administering legitimate social rights.²² Nor are homeless young people an easy clientele to deal with. Nevertheless, the young people did identify specific parts of the process which they found problematic and which in their view resulted in the delay of their income support. These included the establishment of identity and the use of complex forms. Some had also had problems with waiting periods, including those after cancellation of benefits. They had similar problems with DSS and DEET. While they were more vocal in their criticisms of DSS than of DEET, this is largely a product of the greater weight of DSS clients in the sample we interviewed. The House of Representatives Inquiry into Aspects of Youth Homelessness (1995: 105) has recommended that DSS and DEET establish the same quality service standards in the assessment of applications for the homeless rate of payment, and that these include the young person being interviewed by a social worker on the day of claim. It has also called for a Post Implementation Review on the operation and effectiveness of the common eligibility criteria for the homeless rate of payment 12 months after it is implemented (House of Representatives, 1995: 101).

The young people mentioned a range of careers they wanted to pursue, and many needed to return to school as a prerequisite for jobs or courses they wanted to do in the future. About half were or wanted to be at school or in training. Independent students need both financial and emotional support. The other half wanted employment in jobs suitable to their level of experience and education.

Homeless young people are not a homogeneous group and have diverse needs. A range of services and locations are preferred by homeless young people to maintain a positive lifestyle in the community. There was nevertheless widespread agreement among the young people interviewed in their preference for holistic youth services. This was clear in their strong endorsement of the YACs and, by implication, also of YSUs.

22 This point was made by Alan Jordan in commenting on a previous draft of this report.

4 Victorian Services to Homeless Young People

The experiences of homelessness described in the present report took place in Victoria, mainly in Melbourne. This section examines the framework of policies and support services which have shaped those experiences. The discussion traces the series of momentous changes that have taken place in Victorian child welfare in the last decade and which are continuing into the present. It then goes on to describe the range and structure of placement and support services provided by H&CS and the non-government agencies funded through it. It should be recognised that these policies and structures have been instituted only very recently, and that processes of reform are still underway in some program areas.

The material in this section covers the main areas of generic provision to homeless young people with one main exception. It does not cover programs aimed at assisting homeless young people to continue in education. This is the subject of a research project into The Prevention of Youth Homelessness currently being conducted by the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Because of limits of time and resources, it also does not cover issues particular to groups such as Aboriginal people, young people from non-English speaking backgrounds, young people with mental illness or intellectual disabilities, or gay and lesbian youth.

4.1 A Decade of Change

Our investigation has come at the end of a turbulent decade in child welfare policy in Victoria. This decade began with the completion of the Child Welfare Practice and Legislation Review, known as the Carney Report (Victoria, Child Welfare Practice and Legislative Review, 1984) and proposals for a new child welfare act. Following extensive community consultations, the Carney Report presented a broad ranging and hard hitting critique of child welfare in Victoria. By the end of the decade a new Act had been implemented and the surrounding system of child protection, juvenile justice and adolescent support profoundly altered. In the same period much else has changed, in ways often not foreseen when the Carney Report was published and not compatible with its key underlying assumptions. Resource scarcities, the politicisation of homelessness and abuse, and repeated rounds of administrative reform have made for conflict throughout, but especially in the conflictual period of the last three years.

The Carney Report

Central to the recommendations of the Carney Report was a new philosophy on which to base the future development of a coherent and accountable child welfare system. This philosophy entailed commitments to social justice, equity, respect for cultural differences, and support for human development needs including the rights and freedoms of families and individuals including children. Two further principles underlay its proposals. These were commitments to community development and to voluntary participation in the use of community services. To put this philosophy into practice, the Report advocated both broadening and narrowing of the role of the child welfare system in Victoria.

The Carney Report argued that the system needed to rest on broad foundations. One aspect of these was a wide range of services, including those of both Commonwealth and State Governments, available to support and assist children, families and young people. Another was a broad definition of protection, recognising the variety of environments and circumstances in which children are vulnerable and functioning to support and assist before such vulnerability might mature into actual or potential threat to the well-being and future development of the child.

At the same time the recommendations of the Carney Report were also based on the belief that the coercive child welfare powers of the state should be used with greater discretion than in the past and in a manner that was more open and accountable. There was to be clear separation of child protection from the processes of criminal law, the basis of which was to be a new Children's Court with a separate division responsible for each function. The Court would have a new range of flexible placement options for children in each stream, similarly emphasising keeping young people within their communities and maintaining their links with family, neighbourhood and culture. A regional service base, increased opportunities for advocacy, a charter of children's rights, and a family and community development council were to safeguard the openness and accountability of child welfare policy and practice.

Of particular relevance to the present research were recommendations that use of the interventive legal powers of child protection be narrower and more closely governed. The Report effectively advocated the abolition of 'status offences', i.e. behaviour on the part of a young person which was not criminal when committed by an adult. This form of child welfare law had been carried forward from the nineteenth century. The conjunction of criminal and welfare functions was incompatible with the legal philosophy being adopted, and moreover was shown to have discriminatory effects on young women. It recommended that non-criminal behaviour should not constitute the basis of a court jurisdiction over a

young person. Primary responsibility for such behaviour was regarded as the responsibility of parents and family, and of the community with the police having a limited role to act as an extension of the community. A corollary of the exclusion of status offences was that wards and non-wards should be treated in the same way in all areas of non-criminal behaviour, and in particular that wards absconding from care be regarded as needing more appropriate placement rather than more secure confinement.

The use of powers to intervene in the lives of children and families was to be guided by the 'harms' rather than the 'needs' approach to abuse and neglect. The Committee regarded the 'needs' of the child as too vague a ground for the use of potentially coercive powers, giving too wide a latitude to individual decision-makers. Support and early intervention, on a voluntary basis, was the proper function of the broad base of community services. Formal legal intervention should, in the Committee's view, be based on tangible evidence demonstrating present, or probable future, harm to the child, and should constitute the minimum action ensuring that the child is protected from that harm (Victoria, Child Welfare Practice and Legislation Review, 1984: 260).

The Report recommended that the exercise of child protective powers be an exclusive State responsibility. The role then deputed to officers of the non-government Children's Protection Society should be reassigned to officers of the State welfare department. At the same time the Report recommended that the police continue to take active part in child protection. It regarded the police as an extension of the community, and as lending valuable credibility to child protection work. This was especially important in the absence of mandatory reporting of suspected child neglect or abuse, which the Committee opposed. The police were able to provide a 24-hour service and to respond to emergency situations. Victoria should thus retain its 'dual track' child welfare system with protective powers exercised by both welfare officers and police, but with both tracks under the auspices of the State.

Homelessness among young people was already a concern in Victoria as elsewhere. The Report was critical of 'an exceedingly low level of provision of youth support services' (Recommendation 42), and of the focus and content of many services as inappropriate to adolescents. It did not make specific recommendations concerning homelessness except to advocate a comprehensive accommodation scheme for young people. At the same time it cautioned against services to young people becoming too 'child-centered', reinforcing an adversarial relation between young people and their families. It favoured services with the perspective of the 'young person in a family', accompanied by supports facilitating 'time out' in periods of stress and conflict.

The Children and Young Persons Act (1989)

The *Children and Young Persons Act (1989)* largely adopted the approach and substance of the Carney Report. The *Act* established a Children's Court with separate Family and Criminal Divisions. The separation of protective and criminal functions was rigorously followed through in the specification of grounds for protection, guardianship and placement in care, with these grounds defined in the terms of protection of the child from actual or prospective harm. The abolition of status offences had begun with the previous *Community Welfare Services Act (1970)*, amended in 1978, which had dropped grounds for intervention concerned with 'pre-delinquent behaviours, uncontrollability, vagrancy, truancy and such like (Carney, 1986). That *Act* had introduced provision for the Court to find that there was an irreconcilable difference between a child and the parent or guardian, and this provision was carried forward into the new *Act*.

A child was defined as in need of protection in circumstances of parental abandonment; parental death or incapacitation; lack of protection against physical injury, sexual abuse, or emotional or psychological harm; or harm to physical development or health where parents fail to provide necessary health care. The *Children and Young Persons Act (1989)* provided for a range of protective orders, including an order requiring a person to give an undertaking, a supervision order, an order assigning custody to a third party, a supervised custody order, and orders for custody and guardianship to the Director-General. There was also provision for an interim accommodation order placing the child in secure care for a maximum period of 21 days. The *Act* charged the Court with the responsibility to ensure that intervention in the life of the family should be to the minimum extent necessary to protect the child.

The End of the 'Dual Track' System

Further reviews of child welfare were conducted in 1989 and 1990 (Fogarty and Sargeant, 1989 and Family and Children's Services Council, 1990, summarised in Fogarty, 1993). There had been significant changes in child protection in the period since the Carney Report. In 1985 the Children's Protection Society withdrew from its deputed role in child protection. This work was assumed by the newly formed Department of Community Services Victoria (CSV), by then working in parallel with the police in the 'dual track' child protection system. The 1989 review recommended the termination of this dual track system and the

consolidation of protective powers in the Department within three years.²³ The dual track system was phased out over three years to March 1992, consolidating powers to investigate and act in child protection in the Department. The police were to be involved only where criminal charges were to be laid. In June 1993, Victoria introduced mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse for a range of professional groups. This followed the public and media criticism arising out of the death of Daniel Valerio, in September 1990, aged two years. Daniel died from severe physical abuse inflicted by his family. The *Children and Young Person's Act (1989)* was proclaimed in September 1991.²⁴

The *Act* had taken a long time in coming, and was on the whole widely welcomed. There were nevertheless misgivings, even within the specialist field of child and youth welfare. At the time the *Act* was introduced Simpson and Simpson (1989) voiced suspicion that the intended elimination of status offences might simply result in the application of different labels to difficult young people. They also noted a long-term reduction of resources in child welfare and declining use of guardianship orders. Three years later, O'Grady (1992) was pointing to two unintended effects of the new *Act*. While the number of young people taken to court on welfare grounds had fallen, the number being charged with criminal offences was increasing, perhaps because police were using that channel to secure welfare intervention. He also suggested there might be a degree of 'benign neglect' taking place with respect to reduced levels of welfare intervention. Liddell and Goddard (1992: 133) expressed concern that the abolition of status offences might result in the withdrawal of resources from some groups of young people, particularly young women.

The Changing Context

The *Children and Young Person's Act (1989)* and associated legal developments came in the context of wider changes taking place in Victoria, most of which have occurred in other States also. These are a rollback in legal intervention, deinstitutionalisation in protective care, a shift to contractual funding of non-government organisations, and administrative restructuring and reform.

There has been a sustained and long-term reduction in the use of protective orders for guardianship and control in all states including Victoria (Taylor, 1990; Shaver and Paxman, 1992). In general this reduction has been the combined outcome of

23 It also recommended the establishment of a central register of child abuse notifications, the establishment of a 24-hour service, and the requirement that the Department accept all notifications made to it.

24 This research has been unable to establish what changes in the allocation of child welfare and police resources accompanied the abolition of the dual track system.

a number of factors. Among these are changes in values and legal philosophy calling for more restricted and accountable use of legal authority, and a reassertion of the importance of the family as the preferred basis of support for young people. There has been increasing recognition of the rights and freedoms of young people themselves, and at the same time concern that legal intervention can disrupt relationships between parent and child. There has thus been a move towards shorter and more discrete orders, more reluctantly imposed.

In an era of declining resources in child welfare, these changes in value and ideology have provided rationales for targeting scarce resources on a more narrow band of children and young people in whose circumstances intervention is least avoidable. Universal services providing general support to adolescents have also been subject to funding squeezes, so that their providers too have had to consider whose needs are greatest. From one side, it has appeared that wardship might provide a passport to resources not available to other young people. From another it has seemed that because the State has taken responsibility for them other providers could legitimately deny them services.

In the 15 years from 1972 to 1987 the number of children in Victoria under orders for guardianship or custody dropped from 7236 to 2703. The number has continued to decline in the years since, reaching a low of 1927 in 1993. These figures refer to children of all ages; it is likely that the fall among adolescents was still greater. Sharp declines were recorded in 1991 and 1992.²⁵ In 1994 the number of children and young people on these orders rose slightly, to 2,147. These figures are shown in Table 4.1.

Similarly, all States have seen some degree of deinstitutionalisation in the care of young people unable or unwilling to live with their parents. This trend has operated across virtually all sectors of social policy provision, most notably mental health and the care of the frail aged and people with disabilities. In adolescent services it has extended to both welfare and criminal justice functions, and has entailed shifts towards both smaller and more flexible forms of institutional care and especially family-based (i.e. foster) care. In all these fields questions have been raised about inadequate resources and increased reliance on untrained carers in new, deinstitutionalised service arrangements (Neil and Fopp, 1992: 74). In its Inquiry into the needs of homeless youth the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs charged that deinstitutionalisation of youth support services has gone too far:

25 Some part of this fall was a byproduct of the termination of the dual track system and larger than usual numbers of police orders in its last phases. Many such orders expired during 1991 and 1992.

Table 4.1: Numbers of Children on Orders for Guardianship and Custody, Victoria: 30 June 1987 to 1994

Year	Number on Orders	Percentage Change from Previous Year
1987	2703	na
1988	2589	-4.2
1989	2634	1.7
1990	2522	-4.3
1991	2267	-10.1
1992	2033	-10.3
1993	1927	-5.2
1994	2147	11.4

Sources: Shaver and Paxman, 1992: 19; Victoria, DH&CS *Annual Report 1993/1994*: 164.

It is the Committee's strong view that State and Territory government policies of deinstitutionalisation and intervention have created an environment with a shortage of housing services for adolescents. (House of Representatives, 1995: 137-8)

In the past Victoria has placed larger numbers of children in institutional settings than has been the practice in most other states. In June 1990, 23 per cent of Victorian children under guardianship or other orders were in residential care establishments. This may be compared with a national figure of 15 per cent. While the Victorian proportion of 75 per cent in home-based²⁶ placements differed little from that of 72 per cent in New South Wales, both were below the proportion of 80 per cent in Australia as a whole (calculated from Shaver and Paxman, 1992: 33).²⁷ A shift from larger to smaller and more flexible residential institutions has been underway for three decades. In 1993, Victoria's comparatively low use of home-based care began to be addressed more forcefully than in the past, viewed by policy makers as both desirable in itself and

26 Foster care, supervised home placements, etc.

27 If corrective as well as protective care institutions are included, the placement profiles of Victoria and New South Wales were very similar, Victoria placing 25 per cent and New South Wales 28 per cent of children under orders in a residential establishment of some kind. They differ sharply, however, in the proportions of children and young people in corrective establishments, with New South Wales placing 13 per cent of young people in corrective institutions in 1990 (calculated from Shaver and Paxman, 1992: 33).

a means of reducing expenditure. A number of smaller institutions were to be closed (Victoria, DH&CS *Annual Report* 1993/94: 109-11).

Victoria has also had a larger and more active non-government sector than most other States, and recent years have seen important changes taking place in the funding of non-government services. The assumption of sole responsibility by the State for investigation of child abuse, previously deputed to the Children's Protection Society, was an exception to a wider pattern in which government views itself as working in partnership with non-government organisations in the provision of child welfare services.²⁸ In recent years about 60 per cent of all placement and support services have been provided by non-government organisations and 40 per cent by DH&CS (*Annual Report* 1992/93: 105). In 1991/92 the Department, responding to a campaign by the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria threatening to withdraw from service provision, began to fund non-government organisations for 100 per cent of agreed costs of approved non-government placement and support services. A corollary of increased financial support was government concern with cost efficiency and the direction of resources to areas it considered as having greatest priority. From July 1992 funding has begun to be put on a contractual basis through service agreements (CSV *Annual Report* 1991/92: 10, 56). In July 1993 it was announced that budget savings in child protection of ten per cent or \$7.4m would be achieved through the replacement of high cost residential services by family-based services.

Finally, the child welfare department in Victoria has undergone two phases of administrative restructuring in the last decade. In the mid-1980s a number of functions previously managed by the Health Department of Victoria were incorporated in what became the larger Department of Community Services Victoria (CSV). Further restructuring followed the election of the current government in October 1992, when that Department was amalgamated with the Health Department Victoria to create the present Department.²⁹

While these phases took place under different and opposing parties in government, some common themes have run through the changes of both periods. Regionalisation aimed at increasing equity and accessibility of service on the ground across the State. A second theme was a shift away from traditional

28 This view was not necessarily shared by non-government and peak organisations. There is a long history of disputation over levels and conditions of funding of the work of the non-government sector.

29 Also incorporated in the new department were the Office of Preschool and Child Care, the Older Person's Planning Office, and (with special arrangements applying) the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

bureaucratic and toward new-style corporate management. This style identifies accountability as achieved through the identification of program goals and their specification in terms of outputs, and of efficiency as secured through the use of techniques such as program budgeting and unit costing of services (Bryson, 1986; Beilharz, Considine and Watts, 1992: 119-22). The move to corporate management was accelerated under the direction of Dr John Paterson, Secretary of the Department since 1989. Paterson identifies its key elements as transparent financing arrangements; budget funding of clearly defined outputs; contractually based, competition exposed, service delivery functions; separation of policy and regulatory functions from operational service provision; emphasis on the interests of those who use services above those of service providers; and explicit and enforceable accountabilities (Victoria, DH&CS *Annual Report* 1992/93). A third continuity was severe resource constraint, so that change and performance improvements had to be achieved with at best the same resources and in some periods with significantly reduced resources. The funding process has brought non-government organisations providing child welfare services into the ambit of managerial reform. As the operational arm of service provision, complementing more limited and specialised State services, their role in the larger system is increasingly being specified through contractual service agreements. Many non-government organisations were unhappy with this arrangement, viewing it as encroaching on their independence and right to set their own standards and directions.

While child welfare has been the subject of repeated administrative reorganisation over a much longer period (Jaggs, 1986), this decade of restructuring has been particularly turbulent. Management structures have been reshaped, regions defined and redefined, institutions reformed or closed, and serious abuse and malfeasance within the child welfare system exposed and prosecuted. All these developments have attracted media controversy. There have at times been high levels of industrial conflict, and significant staff reductions.

4.2 The Fogarty Report (1993), *Our 'Voluntary' Homeless*, and HOOK

Tumult in child welfare came to a head with the report of Mr Justice Fogarty in July 1993 (the Fogarty Report). The report was commissioned in the aftermath of the death of Daniel Valerio in 1990 and public belief, heightened by media campaigns, that the child protection system had failed to protect him from extreme and continued abuse. The introduction of mandatory reporting occurred in the same context. Fogarty was given terms of reference to 'examine and report on the progress of the implementation and operation of the welfare based child

protection system in Victoria' and to consider issues associated with the introduction of mandatory reporting (Fogarty, 1993: 170).

Writing his third report in less than five years, Fogarty charted substantial progress in the improvement of child protection in the period. However, he found that new and serious problems had arisen in the system. Among these were, in his words, 'the virtual abandonment of adolescents by the State'. The Report charged the Department with poor performance in dealing with protective notifications in the socially and economically disadvantaged western suburbs, and more generally argued that the term 'significant harm' had been interpreted too restrictively in the conduct of protective functions. He maintained that proposed funding cuts to community services risked devastating the availability of protective services. He pointed, too, to adverse effects on staff morale and efficiency as a result of the many changes and uncertainties in child welfare policy and practice over the past few years (Fogarty, 1993: 22).

Fogarty commended the move away from the use of status grounds for protective intervention, but he argued that in practice the retraction of State intervention had gone too far.

However, these changes in legislation have been interpreted so as to exclude from protective intervention young persons in conflict with their parents and other authorities and who have run away and are chronically homeless. The view was formed that if they were not at risk from their parents and home environment they did not fall within the new protection grounds and thus were not within the child protection service, and that this was so even though it was obvious that they had no active guardian and were in danger on the streets.

While the de-institutionalization of these children and a policy which, where possible, avoids them being put through the protective system had much to commend it, that is entirely different from the view that the State no longer has any protective responsibility for them or that they were not at risk. (Fogarty, 1993: 33-4)

He claimed that there had been a drop of 50 per cent in the use of protective applications for young persons aged 13 and over since 1991, and that reduced intervention had left large numbers of young people homeless and at risk.

Fogarty suggested that it was being inferred from the *Act* that 'homelessness in itself' was not a ground for protective intervention.³⁰ He argued that this was a 'cop out' by the service enabling it to avoid involvement with the most difficult section of its work. When accompanied by the absence of an active guardian and a condition of risk on the streets, homelessness was a proper ground for protection within the terms of the *Act*. Under the *Act* the intervener was required to investigate such a matter 'in a way which will best ensure the safety and well-being' of the young person. He felt the view that the *Act* precluded intervention in circumstances of homelessness was also found in the Children's Court. Such a reluctance to intervene was frustrating to the police, who were themselves no longer empowered to act protectively. One consequence was a more frequent use of criminal proceedings to deal with homeless young people, especially in the case of young women (Fogarty, 1993: 33-8).

Fogarty called for a change of policy within the Department acknowledging Department responsibility for homeless young people.

Where young persons of 13 and 14 have no active guardian and are living on the streets, the State has a positive responsibility to assume the role of active guardian and take what steps it can to protect them. These young persons have a right to protection and to have an active, responsible guardian. (Fogarty, 1993: 37-8)

Perhaps his strongest criticism was directed to then foreshadowed budget cuts in support to non-government organisations operating in the child protection field. This was to happen at a time when needs were heightened by economic recession, when the needs of homeless young people were not being met, and in the face of an increase in notifications associated with the introduction of mandatory reporting. He doubted that the replacement of residential care services with lower cost home-based care would achieve the savings necessary to avoid cutbacks in support to the non-government sector, or that these savings would become available in the short term. Although the rapid deinstitutionalisation proposals had apparently been withdrawn by the time of his Report, he remained concerned that a significant cut in resources over the next two years was still to take place. Criticising the 'budget-driven' nature of policy implementation, he called for an incremental, negotiated mode of cost reduction (Fogarty, 1993: 26-31).

30 The *Children and Young Person's Act (1989)* states that: 'The fact that the child does not have adequate accommodation is not by itself a sufficient reason for the order for the placement of a child in a secure welfare service' (S.75(2)). Fogarty charged that this clause was being used to evade responsibility for welfare intervention.

In the same year the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria published *Our 'Voluntary' Homeless* (Green, 1993). This book reported the findings of research among non-government residential care services, adolescent community placement services and youth refuges concerning the young people using their services and the impact of the *Children and Young Persons Act (1989)*. The research was concerned with the group of young people aged 13-16 who in the terms of the new *Act* were no longer to be regarded as 'young people in need of care and protection' but as 'young people in crisis'. Representing approximately half of the young people with whom protective staff had worked under the previous *Act*, these young people were now to gain access to services and support on a voluntary basis.

The report of the research strongly supported the new principle of voluntary access by this group, but it argued that because of poor implementation their situation had actually become worse. Case material presented in the report included instances of Department workers maintaining that homelessness in itself was not a ground for protection and that a young person who had left an abusive situation was by dint of leaving, no longer at risk of harm. A larger share of young people than before had to seek support on a voluntary basis, and the services they received were poorly funded and often inappropriate. This report too referred to a steep drop in teenagers placed under orders, and recommended that the money the Department had saved should be redirected to the non-government sector, reflecting the effective transfer of responsibility.

Contrasting with these charges of inaction on behalf of homeless young people were vocal groups of parents alleging that welfare authorities were intervening excessively, undermining relations between parents and their children. The most active of these groups was HOOK, an acronym for Hands Off Our Kids!

We are ordinary mums and dads whose teenagers (approximately 97 per cent girls!) started to rebel to the point where they were putting themselves at risk by their behaviour. Our attempts to prevent them from harming themselves and to bring them back on track were met with more rebellion which escalated until the state's agencies became involved. Then our problems really started and were further complicated by the fact that parents no longer have the unqualified support of the state's agencies while they raise their children. Parents who used private family welfare agencies fared a lot better under their family centred models, rather than the child centred model used by the Department of Health and Community Services. (Berridge, 1994: 21-2)

This group felt that the common sense intervention of the police was more effective than protective workers in sorting out situations without court action. It charged that Department practice was dominated by a single model for handling problem teenagers, that of 'abuse'. As a lobby group it campaigned for family centered approaches to parent-child conflict. These parents were also critical of the Young Homeless Allowance as facilitating children leaving home.

4.3 The Policy Response

The issues raised by the Fogarty Report and *Our 'Voluntary' Homeless* were reviewed in consultation with a Service Redevelopment Reference Group on which were represented sections of the Department providing services to adolescents, police and non-government organisations (Victoria, DH&CS, 1994c). As might be expected, discussions among the Reference Group raised further concerns. Notable among these were community perceptions that young people were being dealt with in isolation from their families and agency opinion that the protective concerns relating to voluntary clients could not be met within existing resources. Agencies expressed concern about a lack of accessible accommodation and support, particularly for young offenders and young people exhibiting difficult behaviour, and about income and placement support arrangements for young people, especially those under 15, in non-government agencies. Issues were also raised about the performance of H&CS in a variety of program areas.

According to H&CS, the Department has addressed the issues raised by clarifying and sharpening the focus of its response to the protective needs of adolescents. Its revised approach was to be predicated upon the understanding of young people as having needs both for material support including accommodation and also for a stable adult figure able to provide advice and care. The 'target population' of H&CS responsibility was defined as

young people aged 12 to 17 who are without a secure home environment or any effective caregiver who is willing to protect them and therefore, are at risk of physical, emotional or sexual harm. (Victoria, DH&CS, 1994c: 4)

Included in this group are young people who though still at home are in severe conflict with their families, young people who have left home only recently, and young people who have been away from the parental home for considerable periods.

Responding to Fogarty's charges, H&CS intended that improvements in responses to the needs of adolescents would be centered on the need of the

adolescent for an effective adult caregiver and the service and practice arrangements supporting the maintenance or establishment of this relationship. Policy was to recognise the family as the primary source of support for adolescents, and H&CS claimed that services to assist families in crisis and adolescents in crisis with their families were to be given an important role in the service system. Where the immediate family is unable to care for the young person a caregiver was to be found among extended family and other kin if possible.

It was recognised, however, that it may not be possible or desirable for the young person to remain with the family, necessitating the provision of alternative support. The policy response defined case management as a key factor in ensuring an adequate response to the needs of young people, based on a case plan. An initial case plan was to have the aims of:

- investigating the existence of an effective adult relationship and endeavouring to activate this, within the constraints of potential risk to the young person and the importance of maintaining effective contact with the young person;
- providing assistance to the young person in gaining access to essential supports such as accommodation and financial help, education, training or employment and the like; and
- helping the young person to obtain specialist assistance such as psychiatric, drug and alcohol or sexual assault services.

Policy envisioned that the case manager might be a worker from H&CS or a non-government agency, depending on the needs of the young person. This was not necessarily to be determined by the door through which the young person entered the service system. A community-based case manager could be contracted to implement the case plan by H&CS, or could develop and implement a case plan without H&CS involvement.

The revised policy required that the need for protective services be considered from the moment of entry to the service system. This could happen through the process of notification, which is mandatory for certain categories of professionals. Where the young person made contact with a community agency, policy made that agency responsible for an initial assessment of risk and developing an initial case plan. Where the agency believed that the services available to the young person were not adequate to protect the young person from significant harm it was incumbent on them to notify Protective Services.

According to H&CS, service redevelopment was aimed at ensuring that the needs of young people notified to them for assessment, support and care were met in the terms of the *Act*, including its clear intention that the level of legal intervention be minimised. Thus an order for protection was not to be taken out unless all reasonable steps had been taken to provide the necessary services and ensure the safety and well-being of the young person without an order. The Department considered itself to have the same responsibilities for young people whether or not an order was in force. Addressing the charges that Department workers used the *Act* to justify inaction, policy was revised to state unambiguously that:

Referral of a homeless young person to an accommodation service without negotiated arrangements for risk assessment and ongoing case management will not be seen as a sufficient response on the part of the protective worker. (Victoria, DH&CS, 1994c: 8)

Practice guidelines associated with these policy changes required protective assessment within 28 days of notification. Where assessment indicated the likelihood of harm to the young person, a protective application might be sought immediately or a short-term case plan of up to three months duration might be put in place. Even where court action proceeded, case management could be contracted out to a community-based agency. A caseworker from a non-government agency was to be assigned a H&CS case manager to work co-operatively in meeting the needs of the young person. Short term case plans were to be reviewed after three months, and if no further short term steps were likely to alleviate the harmful circumstances of the young person a protective application was to be lodged. Department responsibility was to be discharged only on the basis that case-management objectives had been met, and that effective adult support for the young person has been ensured. H&CS responsibility could also be concluded when the young person was viewed as having made a safe transition to more independent living and was of an age and level of maturity sufficient to sustain a safe and secure lifestyle (Victoria, DH&CS, 1994c: 8).

As of June 1994, H&CS expected the redevelopment of protective services to Victorian adolescents who are homeless or without family supports to take place over a twelve month period. This process was in its early stages at the time of fieldwork for this study and remained uncompleted at the time of writing. The key components of the service system as it was then planned are, put briefly:

- Individual caseworkers who can work intensively with young people for as long as required;
 - Family support and counselling to assist families experiencing problems;
-

- A range of accommodation services flexible enough to meet the different needs of young people;
- The development of central points of assessment which are equipped to examine the overall needs of the young person, including services and accommodation;
- Access to a range of individual services including general health, psychiatric, drug and alcohol, and abuse counselling services;
- School, college and educational policies and programs that assist young people to remain in the mainstream educational system, and substitute educational and training programs for young people who are unable to return to school; and
- Employment services to assist young people to find appropriate employment and career advice when they leave school (Victoria, DH&CS, 1994c: 10).

H&Cs considered State and non-government services as comprising elements in a single service system. As indicated above, non-government agencies provided the larger share of actual services. Service redesign and redevelopment over the next few years was aimed at changing the way in which non-government agencies were funded, emphasising full-cost payment for the services they provide rather than reimbursing them for the costs of staffing and other operations as in the past. These payments were expected to be set at benchmark or efficient best practice standards of quality, efficiency and cost (Victoria, DH&CS *Annual Report* 1993/94: 103-4).

H&CS regarded non-government agencies as having joint responsibility with H&CS for child welfare, and the funding of non-government services as covering both infrastructure and the capacity to provide case management. It was thus expected that many of the adult caregivers required to overcome the abandonment charged by Fogarty would be found in or through these agencies.

The research did not examine the adequacy of resources given to the redevelopment of services undertaken in response to the criticisms of Fogarty and Green. The adequacy of funding to non-government agencies was similarly beyond the scope of this investigation. H&CS cited the increase in the use of guardianship orders as evidence that homeless young people without a stable source of support were no longer treated as not at risk. At the same time, H&CS did not resile from its commitment to the voluntarism in child and adolescent welfare intervention that underpins the *Act*. The role of non-government agencies in child and adolescent welfare remained controversial; it was clear that

these agencies did not share the H&CS view that they are partners with H&CS in a single system and did not accept that they have the same case management responsibilities as do the child protection officers of the State welfare authority.

4.4 Programs and Services in Victoria

Child, adolescent and family welfare services in Victoria are arranged in three tiers. At the base of the system are primary care services. The emphasis of services in this tier is preventive and their distribution universal and local. Few of these are specialist services for adolescents and their families, but some are relevant to their needs. Among these are family support, community health, and women's health services. Primary care services were not covered in this research,³¹ but it may be noted that the Department acknowledged gaps and short supply in health and welfare services specifically targeted to adolescents (Victoria, DH&CS *Annual Report* 1993/94: 100).

The second tier of services comprises those provided by agencies in the non-government sector, and the third tier Department services in Juvenile Justice and Child Protection. As the discussion above indicates, government and non-government services were regarded by H&CS as elements of a single system of support and intervention, and because they are closely linked are discussed together here.

Juvenile Justice

The *Children and Young Persons Act* (1989) established a clear separation between Protective Services and Juvenile Justice. The latter has not been included in the present investigation, and only some general and brief comments can be provided. In Victoria there was a strong emphasis on diversion of young offenders from the judicial system and the management of young offenders in the community. Victoria had a very low rate of detention of young people compared to other States, and in 1992/93 had the lowest rate for young people aged 14 to 16 years (Victoria, DH&CS *Annual Report*, 1992/93). Since the implementation of the *Act* few of those under the supervision of the Department have been wards. A H&CS officer estimated that about ten per cent of offenders under supervision were homeless.³² Specific services for young offenders having been dismantled,

31 With the exception of health service initiatives funded through the Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth Program, discussed below.

32 DSS research associated with the Youth Pilot Projects suggested a substantially higher incidence of homelessness among young offenders, in Victoria.

these young people were served through generic programs, and were placed mainly in home-based care.

Department experience has been that it is often difficult for generic services to deal with these young people, who may need intensive and individually tailored responses. It is difficult for homeless young people to enter employment programs until their accommodation needs have been resolved. Young offenders find it difficult to compete in the employment market and the particular problems associated with having a record of offences is not recognised in the same way as other forms of disadvantage. The most critical issues are accommodation and case management.

Protective Care

The need for changes in policies governing protection and support of adolescents had begun to be acknowledged before the Fogarty Report (1993). Guidelines for child protection practice began to be revised in November 1992 (Victoria, DH&CS, 1992, and Victoria, DH&CS, undated a). Some changes in practice, in combination with the introduction of mandatory reporting, were reflected in an increase of 11 per cent in protective orders in 1993/94 (Table 4.1). The policy being implemented at the time of the research has been outlined above.

Several further aspects of that policy should be noted. The intention of the *Children and Young Persons Act (1989)* is unambiguously that legal powers should be used as sparingly as possible and that support and assistance should be provided on the basis of need rather than legal status. It was intended, then, that legal orders should not function as a passport to services otherwise unavailable to a young person. The second feature is the role of age in the judgements of protective workers concerning the use of court processes and legal orders. Few young people over the age of 14 were taken through court processes. H&CS explained this on the basis that, other things being equal, workers often consider the stress of court action and the potential stigma of orders more costly than the benefits of what would be a brief period of formal protection. The irreconcilable differences provision of the *Act* was said to be little used.

The number of reported cases of child abuse or neglect in Victoria has risen dramatically in recent years. In 1993/94, 34.7 per cent of such cases were substantiated. This rate of substantiation was slightly lower than that of 38.6 per cent for Australia as a whole (Angus and Woodward, 1995). One consequence of the increase in the number of notifications has been to focus H&CS services on the investigatory 'front end' of child protection, reducing resources available for other child and youth welfare functions. In the result, work with those young

people who do not need statutory intervention was undertaken largely by non-government agencies with the support of H&CS funding.

Placement and Support

The Placement and Support program provided accommodation and support services for children and young people unable to live at home or at risk of not being able to do so. These services were under redevelopment in 1993/94, one goal of which was to reduce the higher use in Victoria than in other states of residential care. According to H&CS, the objectives of redevelopment included obtaining a better and more flexible mix of services, achieving a fairer spread of services across the State, improving cost effectiveness, moving to unit pricing for client care, improving the quality of services, and enabling client outcomes to be monitored and services evaluated. The primary emphasis of redevelopment was on strengthening and expanding home-based services (Victoria, DH&CS, 1994a).

Placement and support services operated on a variety of models. Residential (facility-based) services included family group homes, residential rostered-staff units, and secure welfare services. Sixty-seven per cent of family group homes and 75 per cent of rostered-staff units were provided through the funded non-government sector. A number of large institutions had been closed in the preceeding years. The redevelopment plan envisaged closing many of the smaller institutions established in the 1980s, with the objective of freeing resources to develop home-based service options and preventive and support services.

Home-based models relevant to adolescents included the Adolescent Community Placement (ACP) program, foster and shared family care, and 'kith and kin' placements.³³ The ACP program, modelled on the South Australian Intensive Neighbourhood Care program (Shaver and Paxman, 1992: 94), was a specialised family placement program for adolescents and served both wards and non-wards. Seventy-eight per cent of ACP services and 94 per cent of foster care services were provided by funded non-government agencies. While residential beds for adolescents had been reduced, the addition of 120 ACP beds had increased the total number of beds provided by 40.

Service redevelopment has been particularly concerned with establishing and strengthening preventive and support services. The Placement Support Worker program provided outreach support to young people and families in their own homes. The Families First program was similar, but provided brief, intensive,

33 Non-parent assistance, private board payments, relative placements and informal placements. Increased support for relative placements was said to increase the options available to young people.

crisis counselling and life skills education with the aim of preventing the removal of children from home. The Department reports that as of 30 June 1994, 23 per cent of its clients were adolescents. 'Lead tenant' accommodation provided home-based support service enabling a young person to move safely into the community. Support was provided by the lead tenant, a live-in volunteer who lived rent-free in the house or flat in exchange for support given to other residents. These three types of support services were provided wholly through the funded non-government sector. Because of its high relative cost, institutional accommodation using rostered staff was little used for long-term care.

Additional accommodation and support services were provided under the SAAP Program jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments. This accommodation, provided largely through non-government agencies, is discussed in Section 5 below.

Services Funded Through the Office of Youth Affairs

Additional accommodation and support services to homeless young people in Victoria were provided through 'Street Kids' initiatives under the auspices of the Office of Youth Affairs (OYA). OYA was part of the role of the Minister for Business and Employment, and funds for these initiatives came from gaming revenues channelled through the Community Support Fund. The program was being developed on a regional basis in association with the non-government and private business sectors (Heffernan, 1993).

The Street Kids program evolved out of the Youth Homelessness Task Force established in 1989 as part of the Victorian Government's response to the Burdekin Report (HREOC, 1989). Operating as pilot initiatives, the Task Force program addressed issues of prevention, service co-ordination and innovative service development in three suburban localities. One of its concerns was to develop service organisation preventing the drift of homeless young people to the inner city. A December 1992 evaluation (Econsult [Australia] Pty Ltd, 1992) of the Task Force program to that date found that youth-specific services had proved more accessible to young people than those 'mainstreamed' in generic services. The evaluation recommended continuation of the program.

OYA also funded small business employment and training projects, municipal youth services, and youth services addressing the special needs of particular groups, including ethnic and religious groups and young women with children. Funding of local government areas favoured agencies providing services over those concerned with service co-ordination. There was an emphasis on tackling the family issues in the background of youth homelessness, and guidelines required funded agencies to address issues of family reconciliation.

Since 1991, Street Kids initiatives have included additional funds for supported accommodation through the SAAP program, family mediation and reconciliation services,³⁴ intensive youth support units to house and support young people living in night shelters, residentially based counselling and support programs for physically and sexually abused young women, and capital funding for groups working with homeless young people.

Census of Placement and Support Clients

In 1994 the Placement and Support Program conducted a Census of clients using services funded by the Program, with the expectation that this data would continue to be conducted annually. All service providing agencies funded by the Program were asked to complete a census return for each client in a placement or using Program services on 30 June 1994. Census data thus refer to the service system as a whole, including both H&CS services and those of the non-government agencies it funds.

Preliminary 'first counts' information from the Census has been made available for inclusion in this Report (Victoria, DH&CS, 1994b).³⁵ It should be noted that these figures were supplied at an early stage in data processing and were subject to revision due to the incorporation of late returns, the correction of processing errors and the resolution of queries and inconsistencies in the data. The Census was known to have undercounted service provision, particularly to Aboriginal clients and in the areas of discretionary payments and non-placement services. The information from the Census was nevertheless the best available picture of service delivery to adolescents in Victoria at the time of the research.

As shown in Table 4.1, between 1989 and 1994 the number of children on statutory orders declined from 2634 to 2147. This represented a fall of 18.5 per cent in the five years since the introduction of the *Children and Young Persons Act* (1989). In the same period there was an increase in access to Department services without protective orders. In 1994, 44 per cent of Placement and Support clients were not subject to any statutory order, compared to 18 per cent in 1989. Census information showed that adolescents aged twelve to 17 made up 40 per cent of Placement and Support clients. Of these, 66 per cent were subject to some form of protective order. One third of adolescents receiving support were doing so without orders. Half of the young people in ACP were not on any order, as were half of those using the Adolescent Support Worker Program.

34 There has been an expansion of Family Group Conferencing in Victoria in the belief that it may help to widen the options for young people.

35 The researchers also thank H&CS for providing special tabulations of Census data for their consideration.

Comparison with earlier years is limited by the lack of sufficiently detailed data, but H&CS maintained that

Where qualified comparisons can be made all the evidence indicates that the number of adolescents being provided with a service appears to have increased in absolute terms and has certainly increased on a per capita basis. (Joyce, personal correspondence).

The Census provides information about the channels through which young people aged twelve to 17 were reaching placement and support services. By far the largest share of referrals came from within the Department, from Protective Services (60 per cent) and Juvenile Justice (two per cent). The level of referrals from Protective Services corresponded to the proportion of young persons on orders. The next largest source of referrals were self or community initiated (13 per cent). Nine per cent had been referred by another government agency, and six per cent by a non-government agency. A larger proportion (30 per cent) of those in the Adolescent Support Worker Program (i.e. supported but not in placement) were referred by self or community.

The age-related pattern of response to referrals is shown in Table 4.2, which presents Census information about the types of placements and services provided to young people aged 12 to 18. The largest numbers receiving support of most kinds were aged 14 and 15, with many fewer of those aged 16 or older in placement or receiving support. Those programs most immediately relevant to homeless young people, e.g. ACP, Adolescent Support and Other Residential (which includes lead tenant accommodation) tended to serve slightly older age groups than other programs, but these also had relatively few clients aged 16 and over. While the number of young people aged 16 and over in rostered staff residential units was relatively high, this could be expected to change as the scale of accommodation of this kind was reduced.

The Census also provides information about the occupations and incomes of Placement and Support Clients. Most of those aged 15 and over were studying (61 per cent), or in job training (four per cent). Eleven per cent were looking for work, and four per cent were employed. Eight per cent were 'working on other issues', i.e. in crisis or in transition and fully occupied in resolving life problems.³⁶

36 Data on occupations were unknown or missing for 17 per cent of clients aged 15 and over.

Table 4.2: Numbers of Adolescents in Main Types of Placement or Service by Age

	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Foster care	100	72	79	58	38	17	1
ACP	4	30	42	49	38	21	9
Other home based	33	32	63	43	29	6	2
Cottage parent	42	59	64	52	36	19	6
Rostered staff residential	16	35	63	74	45	18	5
Other residential	1	2	5	10	21	13	2
Families first	4	3	4	0	2	0	0
Adolescent support	6	10	18	25	20	10	7

Source: Victoria, DH&CS, 1994b.

Fourteen per cent of clients (of any age) had an income. Of these, AUSTUDY or ABSTUDY accounted for more than half. Census data did not identify numbers receiving these benefits at SHR or independent rates. Twenty-two per cent received JSA, including ten per cent receiving YHA.

Health Services for Homeless Young People

Since 1990/91 health initiatives directed to the needs of homeless young people have been funded under the Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth Program, jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments as a response to the Burdekin Report (HREOC, 1989). The program had just begun its second four-year term at the time of the research.

In Victoria the program aimed at improving access by homeless and at risk young people to mainstream health services, mainly community health centres and hospitals but also some specialist services. In many cases the program funded the placement of youth access workers in generalist services, but some youth specific projects were also funded. With this focus, most projects entailed dual objectives of increasing the relevance of health programs to homeless young people and developing strategies to attract young people to them. A 1993 evaluation of this program (Econsult [Australia] Pty Ltd, 1993) concluded that the program had resulted in a substantial increase in the number of homeless young people using youth specific and mainstream health services, making the health needs of homeless people better recognised and understood, and had had other long-term benefits. It noted difficulties, however, with respect to resistance to change within the community health sector, need for greater emphasis on provision of direct health care and material aid for young people, preferably in a setting in

which they feel comfortable, and the need to recognise the scope for greater involvement of youth accommodation and support agencies in getting services through to homeless young people. Department advice was that gaps remained with respect to drug and alcohol services.

4.5 Young and Homeless in Victoria: Experiences of State Services

The homeless young people interviewed for the study had experience of a variety of welfare and other support services. We contacted them through accommodation services, and hence almost all the young people had something to say about these services and the workers who staff them. That aspect of their experience of homelessness is discussed in Section 5 below. The following section discusses their contact with the welfare system more generally, including protective services, advice and support, health care, transport and police.

Guardianship Orders

Almost one third of the sample had been subject to a formal child protection order at some stage during their life. Seven young people were subject to an order at the time of the interview, three being under full orders and four subject to partial or voluntary orders (see Table 4.3).³⁷ These young people were aged 15 years or younger and were homeless. Length of homelessness among this group ranged from three months to four years, yet only one person was in medium- to long-term lead tenant housing, the others being in temporary arrangements. Four of the seven were aged 15 years and were receiving Commonwealth income support payments. Three people aged 13 years were receiving financial assistance from H&CS. Five young people had been subject to full or partial guardianship orders at an earlier time in their lives. They were aged 16 and 17 years and were currently living in a range of accommodation types (see Table 4.3). Two were ex-wards and the other three had H&CS involvement without formal orders.

Youth workers continued to see Victorian child and adolescent welfare in the terms set out in *Our 'Voluntary' Homeless* (Green, 1993). They believed the use

37 A partial protection order entails a degree of intervention in the care and control of a child, but less than the full transfer of the responsibilities of guardianship, from parents to the state. An example of a partial order is an Interim Accommodation Order.

Table 4.3: Interviewees Subject to Past or Current H&CS Guardianship Orders

Protective order	Age	Accommodation/Income	Age Admitted	Age Discharged
Past				
state ward	17	squat/ JSA	8	15
state ward	16	friends/ JSA	1	15
partial	17	boarding house/ JSA	-(c)	-(c)
partial	17	lead tenant house/ JSA	15	16
partial	16	foster care/ H&CS	16	16
Current				
state ward	15	caravan ^(a) / NSA	9	16
state ward	15	friends/ JSA	14	unsure
state ward	15	refuge/ SB	11	unsure
voluntary order ^(b)	15	friends/ JSA	15	16
partial	13	lead tenant house/ H&CS	13	review in 3mth
partial	13	refuge/ H&CS	13	review in 1mth
partial	13	refuge/ H&CS	-(c)	-(c)

Notes: a) Caravan is linked to a youth service and temporary accommodation.

b) Had been a state ward between 10 and 12 years.

c) Missing data.

of protective orders had continued to decline, and in particular that H&CS resisted placing a young person aged 14 or over on a protective order.³⁸ They also believed that wards were being discharged at younger ages of 15 and 16 years. A number of wards were reported to be coming through non-government services, and in addition more to be coming to refuges directly, without prior H&CS contact.

Non-government youth workers did not see themselves as playing parts in a single system of government and non-government services. On the contrary, they reported that service providers were always asking 'whose kid is it?'. Some refuges would not take H&CS clients, and felt that if they did they would be left to do the case work. They felt the shift from residential to home-based care, provided almost entirely by non-government sector agencies, had not been

38 The number of children and young people on protective orders increased slightly in 1994. H&CS did acknowledge an age-related pattern in which orders were little used in the case of young people aged 14 and over. Note, however, that there were young people interviewed for this study who were placed on orders when aged 14 or older (Table 4.3).

accompanied by adequate resources to meet the wide-ranging needs of homeless young people or funds to provide training or support for caregivers. The devolution of services to the non-government sector was said to be attaching more regulations to services, and that these rules often worked against the interests of the young people concerned. An example given was that some services were only taking clients who agreed to participate in a family reconciliation program, which was often unsuitable in circumstances of sexual or physical abuse. Non-government workers were fearful that protest about inadequate funding and the neglect of child welfare in Victoria might put their future funding at risk.

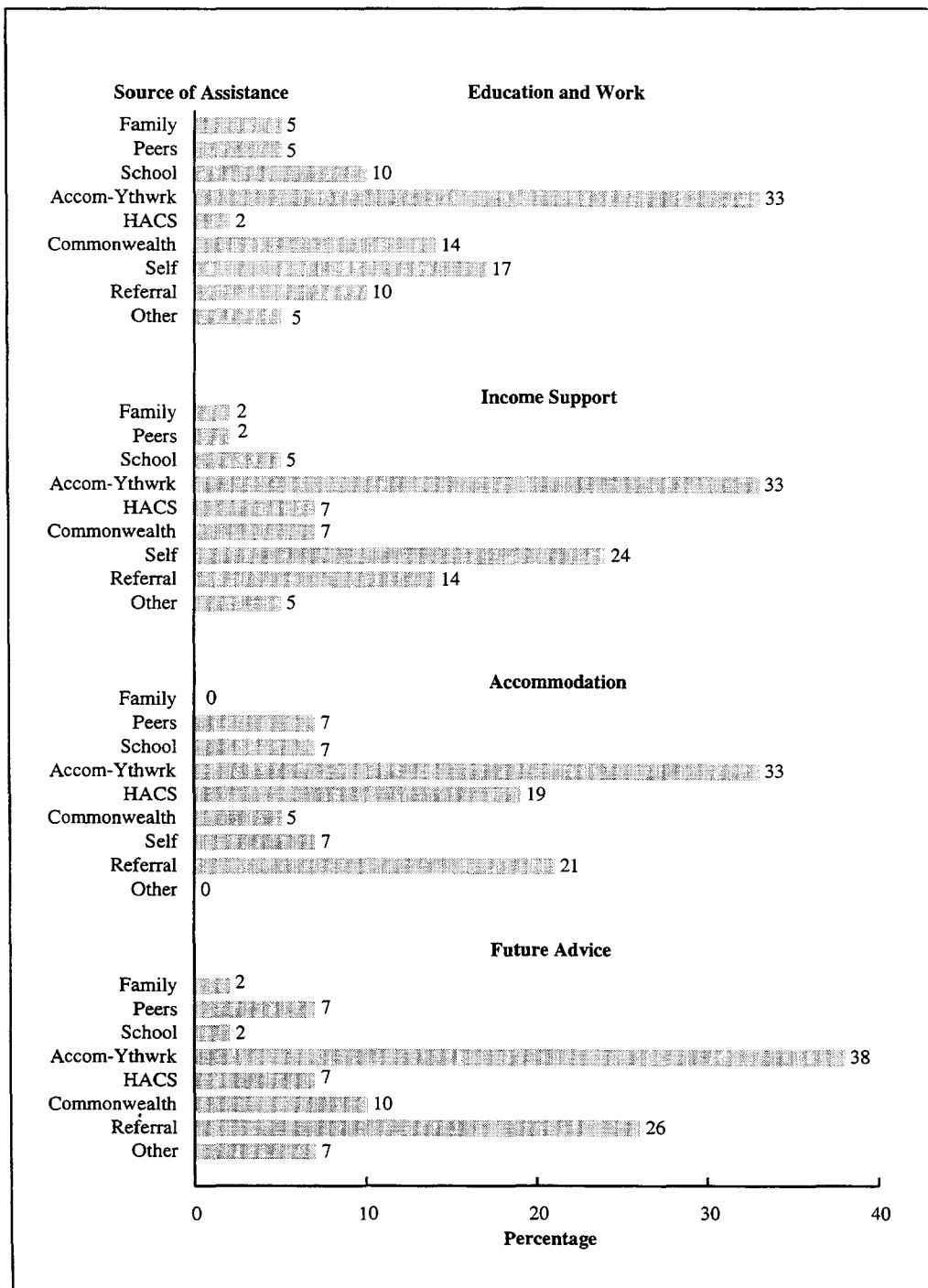
Advice and Support

Workers from DSS, DEET, H&CS, school counsellors and non-government organisations are a vital link between the support system and the young homeless; in particular they are critical to the continuing accessibility and stability of service provision. The workers providing these services can have an administrative function (e.g. processing applications) or a case management role ensuring that the young person has accommodation, income support, counselling, advice and referral to other services as required.

As a measure of the availability of advice and support the young people were asked if they had found a worker they liked and felt they could ask for support in the future. Almost three quarters of the young people indicated that they would contact a worker they had met in the past if they needed help. Most of these workers came from non-government organisations (22), but some also came from H&CS (five), Commonwealth departments (two) and one from a local government organisation. The relatively high number who had a youth worker they liked reflected at least in part the sample bias towards those accessing accommodation services. Just under a quarter of the young people had no worker that they trusted and would contact if in need of help. The majority of this group were male, in the older age groups (16 and 17 years), and in private or emergency accommodation arrangements.

The workers are an important source of information and advice for homeless young people. Figure 4.1 shows that workers from accommodation, outreach and referral services (community centres, drop-in-centres and information services) were key sources. Not surprisingly, who young people would turn to depended to some extent on the problem at hand. Youth workers from accommodation services (14) and from outreach and referral services (nine) were the main sources of advice and help about accommodation. H&CS workers gave advice and help about accommodation to eight interviewed and Commonwealth workers

Figure 4.1: Who Interviewees Turn to for Advice About Education, Income and Accommodation (n = 42)



to two people. When it came to advice and information about education and work, just under one fifth of the young people received help from Commonwealth workers, and a similar number tried to sort out things themselves. However, over a third also relied on workers at accommodation services, and a further four on workers from outreach or referral services, for advice in this area also, while very few sought help from H&CS workers. Most of this group were unemployed but neither the CES nor YAC were their main source of advice about employment. The young people also depended on workers in non-government organisations for help about income. If problems arose in the future, the majority of the young people said they would contact workers from various services rather than family, friends or schools.

A number of the homeless young people reported that they had found workers from H&CS, and particularly youth workers with non-government organisations, to be trustworthy, helpful and sympathetic to their problems. They appreciated the workers talking to them, helping them to access money, and working out solutions to their problems. Some had less fortunate experiences with H&CS workers. They felt some of the workers were unhelpful, did not listen and did not respect their confidentiality. A few young people felt the H&CS workers did not believe their version of events or think they were justified in leaving home, returning them there inappropriately. Although many of the young people made favourable comments about workers from accommodation services, some felt this contact was only short-term, and that there were too few workers. Young people reported that it would be counter-productive to be 'case managed' by a youth worker they did not like.

When asked what they felt made youth workers helpful, understanding and listening were the attributes most frequently identified. Other characteristics considered important in a youth worker included empathy, open-mindedness, experience, reliability, keeping appointments, having enough time and the ability to get the job done without any problems. It was also important for the young people to be enabled to make their own decisions, to be offered choices, advice and pointers in the right direction. The participants disliked being patronised and treated like 'kids'. They complained about workers who were stressed, tired, did not listen, made mistakes, did not act on their problems or kept them waiting. Some of the young people found it frustrating when they were unable to contact their workers. Many of the young people experienced frequent changes of workers, which they found confusing and disruptive.

Workers were also concerned about a lack of continuity. They felt services have become too specialised in, for example, income support or education or housing or counselling, resulting in poor linkage between services. They feel more integration was required in the provision of information. Morwell workers spoke

of closer and stronger networking among services in the La Trobe Valley, perhaps because they were in shorter supply.

School welfare co-ordinators were said to be stretched to the limit and to do little follow-up work with homeless students. While alternative schools catering for homeless young people had had good outcomes, most of these have since been closed.

Health

The experiences of the young people interviewed for the study suggested that Australia's universal health care system was effective in reaching homeless young people. Most of the young people did not encounter problems gaining access to medical care, and the cost of doctors was not reported to be an obstacle to health services. All said they had their own Medicare Card or access to the family's card. However, even with a DSS Health Care Card some found it difficult to afford medication. The cost of transport to the doctor and chemist were also reported as problems.

Overall, the lifestyle of homeless people appears to be the main issue that deserves attention. Their lives included getting cold and wet, going for days without food, chest infections, flu, asthma, not being able to rest in bed when sick, stress, too many cigarettes, too much alcohol, and so on. Further problems mentioned by youth workers included conditions such as mental illnesses, asthma, uncontrolled epilepsy, Pelvic Inflammatory Virus (PIV), poor hygiene and anorexia and eating disorders. Because they had low self-esteem and few of the skills necessary to protect themselves they often fell 'victim' time and time again.

Transport Needs

An important policy area that became apparent during our research was public transport. Those living in supported accommodation were often provided with public transport tickets, but not all those interviewed had this assistance. Many could not afford the transport they needed to attend school, seek employment, access support, and participate in social activities. For example, when he left home a young man aged 16 could not afford a train ticket to travel to a refuge. In desperation he walked to the train station and searched for tickets on the ground. Eventually he found a discarded ticket which he used to travel to the refuge. Transport problems were particularly acute for those living in the suburbs or country areas. A 15 year old young woman accommodated at a H&CS medium-term hostel in an outer suburb, had to walk for 45 minutes to the station to get to her part-time job. Transport needs are compounded when refuges were closed for

at least part of the day. Many people, particularly those living in the outer suburbs, found these hours difficult to fill without travelling to visit drop-in centres and the referral agencies located in the city centre.

A further indication of the inability of those interviewed to afford public transport was the frequency of transit fines. Almost a fifth of the young people interviewed had incurred transit fines for travelling on public transport without a ticket. Almost all of the young people said they could not afford to pay these fines and would have to go to court.

Police

Almost two thirds of the young people interviewed had had contact with the police, and we thought it appropriate to record their experiences. They told us a range of experiences, both positive and negative. A number felt they had been treated unfairly by the police. The most common complaint was that they had been questioned and pressured to move on while frequenting public spaces. The following example describes one such experience:

I hang around (suburb) because my friends are there and the police come up and they search us. They say we can sit there for one hour and then we have to move on. They ask us what we're doing - they don't trust us. They tell us to move on and we say we haven't done anything and they just say we have to move on. (male, 15 years)

Others had been caught committing offences. One young man offered a particularly dramatic account:

I've been in trouble for stealing money from cars to survive - this was during the waiting period for JSA. My summons is coming up soon. It's the only time I have stolen and three of us broke into eleven cars. At the last one, a chopper was above us and six cop cars pulled up. I was not treated badly by the cops but I was in the cop shop for nine hours because Dad didn't come to the station- he was called at 3am and arrived at 9am to get me. (male, 17 years)

Although the police presence at his arrest was considerable, he believed he was not treated improperly.

Morwell youth workers were critical of the police for not working more co-operatively with them.

4.6 Discussion

During the last decade the youth welfare service system in Victoria has undergone profound, and often conflictual, change. Long outdated aspects of the system such as the delegation of statutory child protection functions to a non-government body and the use of status offences to control the behaviour of young people have been eliminated, and the responsibilities of police and welfare professionals rationalised on the basis of relative expertise. Other changes have paralleled those taking place in the child welfare systems of other states. The new *Act* provides for the powers of wardship to be used more lightly and more sparingly. Mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse is now required in Victoria, as in most other Australian states, though it remained the case that many Victorian professionals did not believe it is desirable. With the exception of mandatory reporting, these changes seem to be unambiguous improvements and to be widely supported in the field.

The Burdekin Inquiry (HREOC, 1989: 109; see also Taylor, 1990; Hirst, 1989; Green, 1993; Cashmore and Paxman, 1994) noted that a disproportionate number of homeless young people have had a previous history of child welfare intervention. This has been the case in all states of Australia. One third of the young people interviewed for the present study had been subject to a protection order of some kind at some time in their lives. These orders assign to state welfare authorities the legal responsibility to provide better care to young people than their parents were judged to provide. Several of those we spoke to believed that H&CS or its predecessor agencies had withdrawn casework support too early, and/or that they had not been given appropriate after care and follow-up support. There were others who felt they had been returned home inappropriately, sometimes on more than one occasion. Case Study 4 gives an example of positive outcomes for a young person forced to leave home at an early age.

In recent years there have also been widespread reports of child welfare authorities retracting child welfare intervention to the extent of abrogating their responsibilities to young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This charge has been made with respect to all states (HREOC, 1989: 109; House of Representatives, 1995: 206). It has been made with particular force in Victoria (Fogarty, 1993; Green, 1993). H&CS acknowledged such criticism with respect to the early implementation of the *Children and Young Person's Act (1989)* and has instigated policy changes intended to ensure that young people away from the parental home are assisted to secure not only accommodation and income support but also a source of adult advice and support. Policy intention was to continue to restrict the use of guardianship orders while maintaining the same standard of assistance of those who are and are not subject to orders. Policy maintained that

funded non-government services share responsibility with government services in a single system of support and care.

The redevelopment of child and adolescent welfare policy in Victoria was not yet complete at the time our research was conducted. One early sign of its implementation was a rise in the number of protection orders taken out in 1994. Another was evidence recorded in the Census of Placement and Support Clients which showed increasing service provision to adolescents and the provision of service to young people both with and without guardianship orders. Zac (Case Study 1, Section 2), for example, had received worker support though he was not subject to orders. At the same time, it should be noted that in a random selection of 42 homeless young people contacted for the study no fewer than seven were subject to a current full or partial protection order. All of these were aged 15 or younger, and only one was living in stable supported accommodation. Four were living in refuges and two were staying with friends. In addition, workers in non-government agencies were widely and strongly of the view that *de facto* responsibility for the 'case management' of others not on orders was being left with them.

During the last decade the range and variety of services provided to homeless young people has been greatly increased, in Victoria as elsewhere. There is experimentation with new service models, especially in early intervention and supported and independent accommodation. The same innovation is, however, strongly driven by the demand to stretch support resources further, with deinstitutionalisation the key mode. Non-government service providers are subject to the same imperatives. The adequacy of policy responses to the needs of homeless young people depends not only on the appropriateness and effectiveness of service models but also on the adequacy of the resources applied to them. Our research did not examine the resourcing of child and youth welfare in Victoria, or its relative adequacy in Victoria as compared with other States. The last decade has seen a large-scale increase in resources directed to the needs of homeless young people, but this has come largely through the increase in Commonwealth policies and programs. It is hard to escape the conclusion that such increases as have occurred in State funding have been achieved through the narrowing of traditional child welfare functions, reducing the role of state welfare departments in the kinds of support and early intervention activities that might help to prevent homelessness.

5 Accommodation and the Commonwealth-State Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

SAAP is a joint program of the Commonwealth and the States to assist in the provision of temporary accommodation and allied services. It has the objective of providing transitional supported accommodation services and related support services to people who are homeless and in crisis to help them move towards independent living. The Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) provides capital funding for SAAP services. Over the period 1984/85 to 1992/93 about one third of funded accommodation projects were for homeless young people (House of Representatives, 1995: 78).

1994 marked the end of a five-year funding period for SAAP, during which young people represented one of five identified target groups for the program. In its submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Aspects of Youth Homelessness the Department of Housing and Regional Development described SAAP services for young people as providing:

- day centres providing meals, training and recreational activities;
- outreach services assisting young people living in a range of mainly unstable and unsuitable living arrangements;
- intensive support services;
- refuges providing emergency accommodation and support;
- medium and long term accommodation and support; and
- information and referral services (House of Representatives, 1995: 77-78).

Several important issues have been identified concerning SAAP services to homeless young people. The first of these concerns the lower age limit applying to accommodation services. SAAP guidelines specifically prohibit services provided exclusively for unaccompanied young people below a certain age from funding under the program.³⁹ Of necessity, however, young people of this age

³⁹ While previous SAAP guidelines set this limit at age 16, SAAP III guidelines define this age as the official school leaving age in the state concerned.

do use services aimed at older age groups. According to the National Client One Night Census, conducted on 3 November 1994, young people under 16 constituted five per cent of all SAAP clients. Of the SAAP services specifically for young people, 15 per cent were under 16 (SAAP, 1995: 3,9). This figure has been stable at this level since 1991. It is not known what proportion of those aged under 16 are 15 and what proportion still younger. Data from Victoria showed a small but steady increase in the use of SAAP services by under 16 year olds, from 6.6 per cent in 1990 to 7.3 per cent in 1991/92 (Smith, 1994: 6, quoted in House of Representatives, 1995: 139)

The *Discussion Paper* of the House of Representatives Inquiry into Aspects of Youth Homelessness (1994: 34-6) identified the rationale for the exclusion of very young people as their special and greater need for support, citing also the argument that the welfare of this group is the proper responsibility of State Governments. In its final report (House of Representatives, 1995: 136-43) the Inquiry blamed State Government policies of deinstitutionalisation and (reduced) intervention for a shortage of housing services for adolescents, so that welfare authorities had to use the last resort of refuge accommodation on a frequent basis. It noted differences of view among State Governments regarding the placement of under 16 year olds in SAAP services, and that there were substantial numbers of such placements including young people for whom welfare departments had statutory responsibilities. The Inquiry also charged the States with cost shifting in the use of SAAP services to place and accommodate young people unable to live with their families (House of Representatives, 1995: 153). The Inquiry recommended that HRD review the appropriateness of placements of state wards and young people under 16 years of age in SAAP services with State Governments and community service providers. Responding to the immediate realities of placement in the last resort, it further recommended the development of a new SAAP category to provide specific supported and supervised accommodation services for young people under 17 years of age (House of Representatives, 1995: 143).

The focus of SAAP services is on crisis and transitional support. The second issue concerns the lack of accessible and affordable long-term accommodation to which young people can move from SAAP services. The evaluation of the 1989-1994 SAAP framework (SAAP Evaluation Steering Committee, 1993: 107-22) reported that the lack of suitable 'exit points' had significant detrimental consequences for the Program and the homeless young people it serves. The shortage of appropriate housing for SAAP clients forces some people to remain in SAAP services when they no longer need the additional support services the program provides, reducing access to new clients. It also results in clients moving to inappropriate accommodation and increases the prospect of their again becoming homeless. The Evaluation Steering Committee called for urgent action

to improve the availability of, and access to, appropriate and affordable housing, including public housing. It recommended that the Program's efforts should be directed to improving links with public housing and community housing and to developing a more effective advocacy role with respect to the access of homeless people to mainstream housing. It argued for greater flexibility to be allowed in the relationship between support and accommodation in the role of SAAP services, enabling SAAP programs to provide continuing support to homeless people moving into mainstream housing.

A third issue has been canvassed in the *Discussion Paper* issued by the House of Representatives Inquiry into Aspects of Youth Homelessness (1994) and its final report (House of Representatives, 1995: 157-61). This concerns the introduction of case management into SAAP services and the professional skills and of SAAP workers. While being generally supportive of the case management approach to providing accommodation services for young people, it raised a number of issues for discussion. These were:

- the need to co-ordinate SAAP case management with other case managers dealing with different aspects of their lives, and possible duplication, overlap and confusion caused by introducing more case managers into the field, including those of Commonwealth and State departments;
- the skills and training required of staff undertaking case management;
- the possibility that this approach will divert funds from the provision of accommodation services to more intensive and expensive personal services; and
- whether SAAP services are an appropriate auspice for this 'interventionist' approach.

With respect to the last point, the *Discussion Paper* noted submissions arguing that the introduction of case management could turn SAAP services into surrogate players of the wardship role being vacated by State welfare authorities. It raised a number of concerns about the level of skills and limited training of workers in the youth field, including issues associated with its lack of an industrial award structure and career path, high turnover of workers and failure to work with young people in the context of family and community. The final report of the Inquiry (House of Representatives, 1995: 157-61) called further attention to the proliferation of case management strategies and a lack of coordination and planning on the part of the Commonwealth Government.

A further range of accommodation and support services are provided through the SAAP funded jointly by Victoria and the Commonwealth. These services too

were under review and redevelopment in 1993/94, following the national evaluation of this program (SAAP Evaluation Steering Committee, 1993). SAAP III⁴⁰ was signed by the Minister for Housing and Regional Development, Brian Howe, on 3 March 1995. Major strategic directions in Victoria were planned to include a stronger focus on client assessment, case management for all clients, greater emphasis on early intervention, a more flexible approach to the provision of accommodation, strengthening of cross-program relationships, greater emphasis on staff training and skills transfer, and development and implementation of outcome standards and a move to outcome-based funding arrangements (Victoria, DH&CS *Annual Report*, 1993/94: 111-3).

The youth workers interviewed for the study generally regarded SAAP as a good but under-funded program. However, they also believed that it has become remote and bureaucratic, with success measured in terms of 'bums in beds' rather than the long-term happiness, stability and safety of young people. Workers suggested that it would be beneficial if professionals, such as school tutors, could be employed through SAAP funding.

5.1 Youth Accommodation Services in Victoria

SAAP services in Victoria consisted very largely of accommodation services, primarily medium-term. ACP places were also funded through the SAAP program. Following the national evaluation, a degree of consolidation of services had been begun. In addition, the positions of regional co-ordinators were to be redeployed, a decision evoking opposition from the field.

Refuges were a small part of the Victorian system. Most of the young people under 16 in refuges were said to be aged 15, and their needs were considered to be similar to those of 16 year olds. H&CS reported that young people often arrive at refuges on their own initiative, as 'self-referrals'. Commenting on instances of protective workers referring young people to refuges reported in *Our 'Voluntary' Homeless* (Green, 1993), H&CS maintained that those protective clients currently accommodated in refuges dated from the period before the change in protective policy in the early 1990s.

Information on the users of SAAP Services in 1992 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 1994: 22, 30) showed higher proportions of SAAP clients receiving JSA and AUSTUDY at homeless rates in Victoria than in other States, and a longer duration of stay by all groups in that State.

40 SAAP Act 1994 Subsection 6(1).

Youth workers believed there was need for a range of accommodation types, including refuges, medium- to long-term housing, outreach services and appropriate accommodation on exit from the system. The Ministry of Housing was said to have a two year waiting list for public housing. The workers interviewed felt the age criteria applying to accommodation services were problematic. The services set up for 16 year olds often had to accept younger ones, considering it crucial to assist them before they met up with other 'street kids'. There were also gaps in support for those 18 and over, who are not always ready for the transition to adult services. More staff were needed, and they needed to be supported and given ongoing training.

The youth workers also referred to the concerns of special needs groups, including young people under 16, those from non-English speaking backgrounds, young mothers, young couples and gay and lesbian young people. They felt matching client groups would provide better services to young people. This was a concern with respect both to students and to very young people who have just left home.

Youth workers in Morwell reported a particularly serious shortfall in accommodation and support services in their area. One service had turned away ten young people under 18 years in the previous week, three of whom had been referred by H&CS. They said this pattern was not unusual. When desperate they had no option but to accommodate young people in caravans and private hotels. While the stereotype is of young people drifting from Morwell to the city, workers' experience was that the cheaper cost of living attracted young people away from the city. The area also had needs for family reconciliation counsellors and psychological services.

5.2 Young and Homeless in Victoria: Experiences of Accommodation Services

On the night before we spoke to them, the majority of the young people interviewed for the study had stayed in an accommodation service (see Table 2.1). These included refuges and a caravan linked to a youth service, medium- to long-term accommodation, and adolescent foster care. Slightly more young men than young women had accessed accommodation services. About a third of the young people were staying in private arrangements, including with friends, independently, squatting, and in hostels or boarding houses. Slightly more young women than young men were in private arrangements.

The high numbers accessing services undoubtedly reflected the sample selection procedure, hence were not necessarily representative of homeless young people

in general. However, the insecure housing arrangements of this group, the range of age groups accessing services and duration of homelessness are the interesting findings in regards to policy. Whilst young people fail to access secure accommodation at a time of transitions, from for example, home to a premature independence and from school to work, training or unemployment, they are also likely to miss out on constructive adult support.

Table 5.1 shows the characteristics of the young people in various types of accommodation, including their age, the length of their time there and what they spent most of their time doing. As the table shows, more than a third of the young people were in emergency refuge accommodation, but there were almost as many in medium- to long-term accommodation. Together these categories accounted for most of those aged 15 years or younger. More than one quarter were in private accommodation arrangements.

Table 5.1 also illustrates how long they have been in their current arrangements. The overwhelming majority had not been in their present place for very long, and most expected to move soon. About one third of the sample had been in their current accommodation for one week or less, and half for three weeks or less. All but one had been at the current place for less than six months. When asked how long they expected to stay at their current place of residence, just over half said four weeks or less. These people ranged in age from 13 to 17 years, the majority being aged 15 and 16. Only one in eight of those we interviewed were happy where they were living and did not have to move until they were ready. One in ten (all males) said they intended to return home. Those staying in private arrangements tended to have more turbulent histories of leaving home and returning than those accessing services.

Just over half of those staying in refuge accommodation were 15 years and younger. Nine of the 16 staying in refuges had been away from home (this time) for six months or more. Most expected to remain at the refuge for three months or less. While emergency refuge accommodation is generally funded to provide shelter for young people for up to six weeks, these data suggest that many young people are staying for much longer periods, causing a bottle-neck in the system.

The young people in medium- to long-term housing were aged 13 to 17 years, four of them being aged 15 years or under. They had been homeless (last episode) for long periods: of the 14 young people, only two had been homeless for two months or less and seven had been homeless for six months or more. They planned to stay in their present accommodation for substantial periods, most commonly a year or longer.

Table 5.1: Utilisation of Accommodation Services at the Time of the Interview by Age and Duration of Homelessness

Age	Months homeless ^(a)	Weeks at accommodation	Weeks plan to stay	Preferred accommodation	Status and income
Emergency refuge accommodation (n=16)					
13 yrs	3	8	4	long-term refuge	school/ H&CS
	7	6	12	another family	school/ H&CS
15 yrs	1	3	3	lead tenant	unempl/ H&CS
	2	8	1	lead tenant	unempl/ JSA
	9	3	4	independent supported	unempl/ SB
	12	3	2	independent non-share	mother/ SPP
	24	12	4	independent supported	school/ AUSTUDY
	48	1	1	independent non-share	unempl/ NSA
	48	4	24	long-term refuge	pt job/ SB
16 yrs	1	1	12	home	unempl/ SA
	1	1	4	independent supported	school/ nil
	1	3	3	independent shared	unempl/ JSA
	3	3	6	independent share	unempl/ JSA
	6	2	2	independent non-share	unempl/ JSA
	24	2	1	independent share	unempl/ JSA
17 yrs	6	4	8	independent supported	unempl/ JSA
Medium to long-term accommodation^(b) (n=14)					
13 yrs	3	8	12	home	school/ H&CS
14 yrs	2	4	2	independent shared	unempl/ nil
	4	12	156	lead tenant ^(d)	school/ H&CS
15 yrs	2	1	104	lead tenant ^(d)	school/ nil
16 yrs	6	24	104	independent supported	school/ H&CS
	8	8	40	home	unempl/ JSA
	13	12	52	independent share	unempl/ JSA
	24	20	52	independent supported ^(d)	school/ AUSTUDY
	24	1	24	home	unempl/ JSA
17 yrs	3	8	52	lead tenant ^(d)	unempl/ JSA
	4	16	78	lead tenant ^(d)	school/ AUSTUDY
	5	20	40	lead tenant ^(d)	traineeship/ JSA
	12	40	20	independent supported	school/ AUSTUDY
	21	5	104	independent non-share	unempl/ JSA
Private arrangements^(c) (n=12)					
15 yrs	9	1	2	independent supported	unempl/ nil
	12	1	0	independent non-share	unempl/ JSA
	48	1	0	independent non-share	unempl/ JSA
16 yrs	1	1	1	independent share	unempl/ nil
	54	2	4	relatives	unempl/ NSA
	10	20	0	independent share	unempl/ JSA
	12	1	2	independent supported	unempl/ JSA
17 yrs	1	1	1	independent share	unempl/ nil
	5	1	0	independent non-share	unempl/ JSA
	7	1	1	independent supported	unempl/ JSA
	-	6	2	independent share	unempl/ JSA
	5	20	-	a family	unempl/ JSA

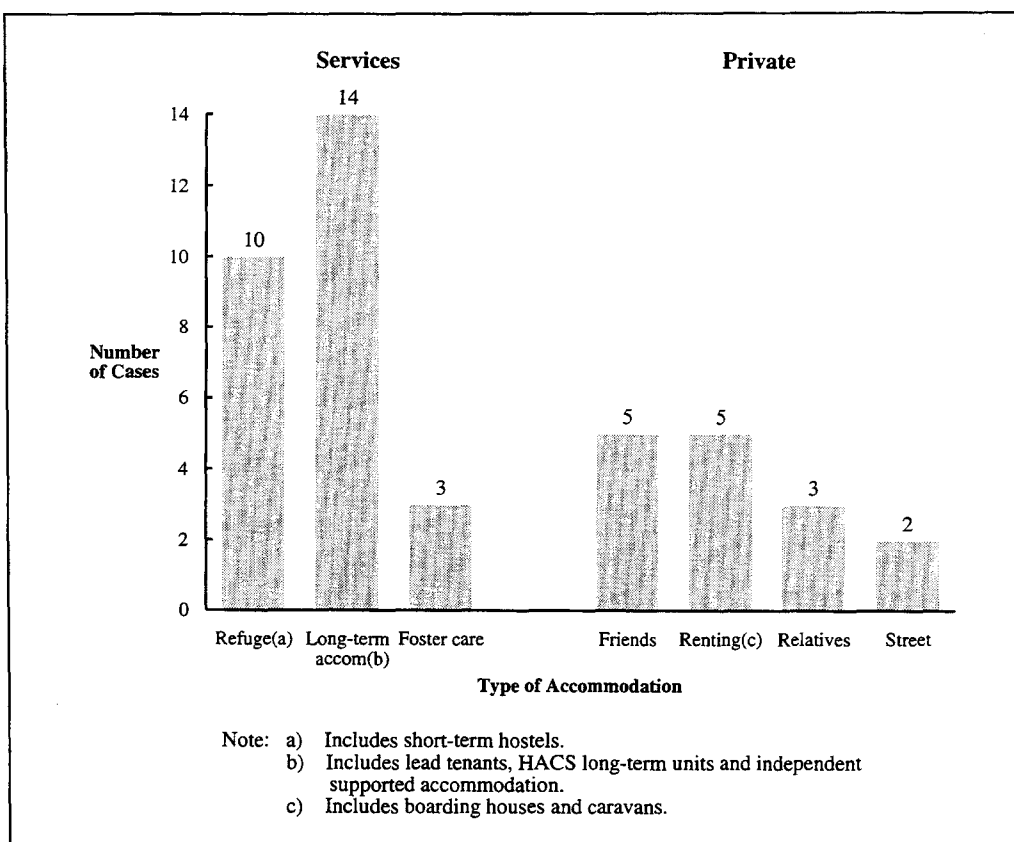
- Notes:
- a) This refers to the last time they left home only
 - b) Includes independent supported accommodation, lead tenant accommodation, foster family
 - c) Includes back-packers hostel, squat, boarding house, friends, independent
 - d) Currently in their preferred accommodation

For 12 of the 42 young people interviewed private housing arrangements were all that was keeping them off the streets. These included staying with friends, a squat, a back-packers hostel, and a boarding house. While three of those living in private arrangements were aged 15, the majority were older. The length of time they had been homeless (the last episode) was quite variable, ranging from one month to four years or more. None of this group were in their preferred accommodation and all viewed their current arrangements as temporary.

For just under half the young people the longest they had stayed in one place since leaving home was four months or less. Since leaving home about three quarters had not stayed anywhere longer than six months, and only a very few had stayed any one place for longer than a year. There were few gender differences in these patterns. The most common responses to why they had left their place of longest residence after leaving home included that they were asked to leave, that it was emergency accommodation only, that they did not get along with the other residents, or that they had overstayed their welcome. Ten per cent had left their most stable placement to return home, only to have the reconciliation fail. One in eight left their longest placement to move into other services or independent living. Other responses were that the accommodation was too close to home, that it was over-crowded, that there were age restrictions, that the unit was closed, or that they had been unhappy and had run away. Approximately one in five were currently living in their longest placement since leaving home: these included adolescent foster care, a friend's family, a refuge and, in six cases, lead tenant housing.

Almost two thirds of the young people had their longest stay in youth accommodation services, as compared to one third in private arrangements (see Figure 5.1). This indicates that medium- to long-term accommodation services have generally been more successful in providing stability than living with friends, relatives or renting. This depends of course on what is appropriate for the individual.

Affordable non-subsidised housing was not available. Just over one third of the young people had rented private accommodation in the past and had the arrangement break down. The most common barriers to private rental for the young people were age and money. Many said that real estate agents rejected their applications because of their age. Other problems encountered by the young people were the length of time it took to get bond assistance, and not having the furniture and kitchenware needed to set up a home. Some of the young people interviewed thought they did not have the skills to live independently.

Figure 5.1: Type of Accommodation Which has Been the Most Stable (n=42)

The following are some of responses the young people gave about their housing experiences. They illustrate the range of opinions young people have, which in turn reflects the diversity of services and support needed for them to achieve safe, stable and affordable housing.

Responses about vacancies

Each day involves looking for a place to live, like a rooming house or housing program. I have been looking for about one year and not getting very far. (male, 17 years)

I phoned all the supported accommodation places on the list and filled out application forms ... the waiting lists are from six weeks to a couple of months at all of them. (male, 15 years)

Difficult for CSV to find me a place because they have other kids on their lists - it would be good if there were more places like this [lead tenant house]. (male, 13 years)

Only stayed at one emergency accommodation place, there was no waiting list but I couldn't get in anywhere in my local area. (female, 16 years)

It is bad that you have to leave short-term refuges when you've found a place you like and workers that you like. (male, 15 years)

Responses about conditions

Don't like them shutting during the day. (male, 15 years)

Workers often say they are too busy, we haven't talked about future accommodation yet. (male, 15 years)

I can't choose my flat mate [two bedroom independent supported accommodation] and I just had someone to share who was depressed which makes things difficult. It would be good if you could choose, or they tried to match you better. (female, 16 years)

I don't like druggies so I go to refuges in the outer suburbs - but it is expensive getting to the city everyday where I meet my friends. (male, 17 years)

Hostel had rough/bad kids ... no support ... workers not supportive or helpful. (female, 17 years)

Positive responses about services

Staff are great. (male, 17 years)

Semi-permanent, it's like a second family [lead tenant], more flexible rules. (male, 13 years)

Community centres, refuges and Info Deli are really helpful because they help you look for places to stay. (male, 17 years)

Give you clothes and a bed and time. (male, 15 years)

Refuges are a good set-up, you get your own room, meals on a regular basis and heat. (male, 16 years)

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show the types of accommodation the young people preferred, and Table 5.3 their reasons for not being able to achieve them. The majority of those in medium- to long-term accommodation were not under any pressure to move on and expressed an ongoing interest in supported accommodation. The remainder said they would prefer independent living but were too young and/or did not have enough money. The majority living in temporary accommodation services wished to be in more secure supported accommodation but there were no vacancies; most were on a waiting list. The remainder wanted to live independently but again age and/or money prevented them. All but one of the young people in private arrangements had to move on as soon as possible.

The housing preferences of homeless young people obviously depended on their level of maturity, personality, age and availability. Most said they would prefer some type of independent supported accommodation with a youth worker living in, while some preferred to have a youth worker visiting regularly. Table 5.2 shows that more young women than young men preferred independent supported accommodation with a worker visiting. It was surprising that despite the young people's desire for more permanent arrangements three quarters had not applied for priority public housing accommodation. The reasons they gave for not placing their names on the Housing Commission list were that they were unaware of this option, that the waiting lists were too long and that they thought that at the age of 15 and 16 years they were ineligible to apply.

Youth workers believed that SAAP services in Victoria needed more staff, more administrative support, and to provide a broader range of services. One worker explained that while six years ago young people could be referred on to appropriate housing within two weeks, it now took six to eight weeks.

The following are examples they gave of community resources being stretched to the limit.

- The previous evening an emergency accommodation service could not find one male vacancy in 12 refuges and there had been only three for females in the whole of metropolitan Melbourne. Another service reported that on average it could accommodate only one of every nine referrals.
 - Youth workers were forced to place young people in cheap private hotels accommodating older men, substance abusers or people with mental illnesses. This exposed homeless young people, especially women, to further risks.
-

Table 5.2: Type of Accommodation Preferred by Interviewees, by Gender

Type of accommodation ^(a)	Males		Females		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Independent ^(b)	8	36	7	35	15	36
Independent supported	2	9	9	45	11	26
Lead tenant	7	32	2	10	9	21
Another family	1	5	1	5	2	5
Relatives	-	-	1	5	1	2
Return home	4	18	-	-	4	10
Total	22	100	20	100	42	100

Notes: a) All preferred accommodation was medium- to long-term
 b) Includes both independent shared and independent alone

Table 5.3: Barriers to Living in Preferred Housing Type Identified by Interviewees**Common responses**

- waiting lists (24 per cent)
- money (19 per cent)
- too young (14 per cent)

Other responses

- eligibility rules
- social worker not looking
- parents can't afford for me to come home yet
- hassles at the moment
- something always happens
- no friends who need share accommodation

- It was stressful and exhausting for workers to be the only staff member on duty with a maximum of seven to eight residents. Everyone was needy, and at the same time workers were doing telephone referrals, administration and other tasks.
- Many refuges were closed between 10am and 4pm, creating 'dead time' for the young person.
- Young people were often staying in emergency accommodation too long because they had nowhere else to go; the example was given of a SAAP

funded emergency refuge which though supposed to accommodate people for a maximum of six weeks often had young people staying for three months.

- There were also waiting lists for non-accommodation services: for example, at the time of the study the waiting period for an appointment at the Centre Against Sexual Assault was six to eight weeks.

5.3 Discussion

Even taking account of the over-representation of service users in our data, the evidence indicates that a large proportion of homeless young people accessed accommodation and associated services. Of those we interviewed, it is also clear that those with access to supported youth accommodation were better off than those in private arrangements. The benefits of youth accommodation services were lower rates for rent/board, extra in-kind support, access to information and advice, and a more stable environment in which to continue school or training. The majority of those who were engaged in school, training or work were in medium- to long-term accommodation.

The experience of these 42 young people also shows that homeless young people were often not being accommodated appropriately. There were shortfalls both of supported accommodation in general and of types suitable for particular groups. People under 16 were being placed in accommodation intended for older age groups because of a lack of appropriate services for younger people. When the shortage was most acute, young people are being placed in private hotels and caravans and in settings where the needs and problems of other residents were very different. Those placed in emergency accommodation were then being locked into it for longer periods than necessary because there was inadequate medium to long-term accommodation to which they can move. The level of transience among this group can be illustrated by the fact that four out of five of those we interviewed expected to move within a year.

The role of SAAP services for young people under 16 has been raised by the House of Representatives Inquiry into Aspects of Youth Homelessness. It observed that most state welfare departments were adamant that this client group was not regularly referred to refuges (House of Representatives, 1995: 220), but also reported that field workers often do call on refuge accommodation as a last resort. Noting the contribution of deinstitutionalisation policies to the shortage of housing services for adolescents, the Committee recommended both a review of the placement of young people under 16 in refuges and the development of a new SAAP category providing specific supported and supervised accommodation services for young people under 17 years (House of Representatives, 1995: 136-

43). The Committee also recommended an urgent review of current care options for young adolescents (House of Representatives, 1995: 226).

The Committee expressed concern at the fact that the Case Management Protocol 'almost legitimises' the responsibilities of State welfare authorities to those 14 years and under (House of Representatives, 1995: 222). Under the Protocol the support of homeless young people aged 15 has been assigned to the Commonwealth. The pragmatic realities which result in the placement of young people under 16 in SAAP services, often by state welfare workers, indicate the need for the development of services appropriate to the needs of this age group. The needs of these young people for educational support and opportunities for family mediation services are further arguments for the development of specialist services. At the same time, such developments will give further legitimacy and impetus to the withdrawal of State Governments and the extension of Commonwealth responsibility for the support of homeless young people.

The experience of the young people interviewed for the study indicates that as well as providing accommodation, SAAP services were also often providing the advice and support of the youth workers they depend on. The different perceptions of H&CS and the workers in the non-government agencies it funds concerning the case management roles of such workers is thus very serious. There are two important issues here. The first is the relative roles of government and non-government services in Victoria and the issue of 'whose kid is it?' Though this is a subject for local resolution, the same problems are likely to arise in some form elsewhere. The second concerns the proliferation of case management across the social policy field and the unrealistic expectations lately attached to it. As noted above (p. 110), the House of Representatives Inquiry has set a vital agenda for discussion of these issues with respect to youth homelessness.

The young people's accommodation experiences also provide ample evidence of the shortfall of medium- and long-term accommodation for young people. The extension of rent assistance to homeless students represents an important contribution to this need on the part of the Commonwealth. Access to public housing depends most directly on the policies of State Government departments.

6 Homeless Young People's Recommendations for Policy

The young people had policy ideas of their own about how services and support for homeless people like themselves could be improved. We have given them the last word in this report.

Income Support

Applying for benefits gets repetitive. If you go off it it is difficult to get back on. They [DSS] have all the information but you have to prove who you are again. (male, 17 years)

The young people suggested the following as ways of improving income support to homeless young people:

- make information about income support more accessible and widely available;
- simplify the application process;
- raise the level of support to provide an adequate living income for young people not supported by their families;
- eliminate waiting periods and gaps when going on and off benefits or transferring between benefits;
- government to carry the cost of overpayments when they are not the fault of the young person; and
- improve staffing levels and training.

The young people thought the application process for income support was confusing and unnecessarily difficult. They thought it should be possible, for example, to complete the process in one appointment rather than several. Arrangements for correspondence with homeless people need to be improved so that they do not miss out on information they need to fulfil benefit requirements. Many had incurred debts as a result of overpayments, and they thought the government should bear the financial consequences of these errors.⁴¹

41 Both DSS and DEET allowees experienced overpayments.

The young people thought many problems could be eased if they received income immediately. Waiting periods and periods without income support placed the young people in vulnerable positions. These cause them to put burdens on their friends, to accrue debts and be at risk if they are without accommodation. Weekly payments help budgeting and were appreciated, but are often difficult to arrange.

They thought that higher staffing levels could speed up the procedure and result in fewer mistakes, and that staff training could address issues of attitudes and consistency in information given to clients.

Education, Training and Work

I changed schools a couple of times this year because of moving around. This stuffed up my education and I fell behind and lost enthusiasm. You need permanent accommodation to do school properly. (female, 15 years)

Young people made a number of suggestions about improving services supporting their education, training or entrance into employment. Their ideas about what would help them remain in or return to school included:

- that schools should be flexible about mid-year and end-of-year enrolments;
- that there should be school student welfare coordinators and support with the cost of schooling, including educational materials, meals, transport, tutoring, and extracurricular activities; and
- that teachers, school welfare co-ordinators and associated staff would benefit from training in responding to the needs of homeless young people.

They also had suggestions to make about training, traineeships and employment services. Some of these were:

- that there should be more information about the employment and training services available;
 - that YAC is a good youth service model;
 - that they needed more help getting employment; and
 - that they would value more access to job training and traineeships, and for this access to be available without waiting periods.
-

Most of the young people recognised the need for Year 10 and Year 12 certificates for the jobs and training they wanted. They favoured changes to procedures to make it easier to return to school, to be able to enrol at any time of the school year, and to transfer between schools as changes in their circumstances require. The young people thought it was important for school rules to be flexible and for students to be able to work at their own pace. They thought training would help teachers to understand the problems facing homeless students, rather than responding to their problems punitively by expelling them.

The young people suggested that the schools could also support them with practical needs such as breakfast and lunch clubs, transport, books and other materials, tutoring, student health services, and access to extra curricular activities. They thought school student welfare co-ordinators should provide them with information and access to community services and support.

Many of the young people felt they needed more advice about how to tackle job search and employment interviews. They thought free courses or subsidised correspondence courses would be useful. They liked YAC, for the reasons shown in Table 3.10 above. While YAC received more positive feedback than the CES, both services were criticised for the lack of job training or employment available for young people.

A number of the young people interviewed wanted more opportunities in terms of access to and the variety of traineeships. The young people requested that there be no waiting lists for these. While in traineeships they felt they needed on-going support and for workplace supervisors to be educated about homeless people and their problems.

Advice, Support and Family Reconciliation

[What I need is] someone who could help me through everything, to help enrol in school, or if you need a job, money and a place to live some one you could tell your problems to, someone close like a parent. (female, 16 years)

CSV needs to trust kids - no one wants to leave their family. CSV should support kids in every way and don't send them home repeatedly. I was sent home seven times by CSV until I ran away. Kids need long-term housing, like a small family [group home], not foster care. (male, 17 years)

The young people had clear ideas about how workers could help them. They wanted:

- more information about the range of services available;
- continuity of youth workers;
- choices and participation in the decision-making process;
- assured confidentiality from service providers;
- support in family mediation, where the young person wants it; and
- training for staff in the needs and problems of homeless young people.

The young people favoured the development of link-up networks and the dissemination of information about services and support. Compatibility between a young person and their youth worker was important to their motivation to work towards stability. They said they wanted workers they could trust and who had time for them. They had a strong preference for having a particular worker familiar with their history who could provide ongoing support, believing this continuity helps to preserve confidentiality in sensitive areas. They would like to be given more information and explanations from their youth workers about what was being planned for them. They emphasised the importance of being able to make choices themselves rather than being told what to do.

The young people wanted access to reconciliation services where these were appropriate, including negotiation, conciliation, counselling, provision of information and assistance with access to the support services the family requires. They emphasised that this was not suitable for everyone, and in particular that it was counterproductive for young people to be compelled to return home against their wishes.

Health

Their suggestions about health included access to regular good meals, being able to rest, keep warm and safe when sick, and the need for money to pay for medications. Above all they stressed the importance of stable accommodation and accommodation services that provide access 24 hours a day so that if they are sick they can rest, and so that they do not have to spend the day 'hanging around' in the streets.

Transport

The young people thought they should have free public transport. They said homeless people need to be mobile so they can access services and support.

Access to free public transport would alleviate their accumulating debts from transit fines for fare evasion.

Police

Homeless young people have little choice but to meet friends in public spaces. They resented being questioned by the police when they were not doing anything illegal.

Accommodation

[It helps to be] living with people who have been in the same situation. You need supported accommodation when you are out of home, confused and need support. (male, 17 years)

Housing for young people [is essential] because it is important to have places where we can be happy and safe so we can leave home. (male, 16 years)

[It would be better to] live in a house where all the young people are going to school, it is difficult [to study] where I am living because people come and go - new people are always coming in. (female, 17 years)

I need a flat mate who I get on with, have similar interest, so I can rent a two bedroom flat. (male, 17 years)

Appropriate accommodation was the young people's most immediate and pressing need, and most of those interviewed thought that aspects of accommodation services could be improved. They recommended the following:

- more information about accommodation services;
 - adequate resources, no waiting for vacancies;
 - choice of accommodation types and locations;
 - safer refuges, residents matched with each other;
 - accommodation services to link people to other services (income support, family mediation, education, courses, health, employment, etc. as individually required); and
 - staff training in the needs and problems of homeless young people.
-

People need to know what is available. They suggested that information and referral centres for accommodation services would be useful.

Access to medium- to long-term subsidised accommodation affects other important aspects of life such as participation in education, training and employment; being safe and having good health, and feeling good about themselves and their futures. Many said that without stable accommodation continuing at school or working was too difficult. While they thought well of most of the existing accommodation services, there were not enough of them. They suggested there should be no waiting lists for appropriate accommodation. Accommodation services themselves also need to be more adequately resourced. For example, they need appropriate staffing, refuges should stay open all day, and there should be room for them to be flexible about how long someone can stay. Emergency youth refuges need to be linked with appropriate medium- to long-term supported accommodation in a range of types and locations. They also suggested refuges be made safer places, for themselves and their belongings.

The young people sought a variety of different types of accommodation, and they emphasised the value of having a choice. The preferred types of accommodation included affordable independent housing; independent supported medium- to long-term housing, with a youth worker visiting regularly or with a full-time, live-in youth worker; and refuges. Independent student housing was also suggested. In their view the Government needs to spend more money on youth housing and subsidise or provide rent assistance for independent private rental accommodation. Bond assistance needs to be processed faster.

They want to participate in the decisions made about where they will live, with whom and where. Many suggested that matching residents by interests and needs would make them feel comfortable with their co-residents. Peer group networks were suggested and someone recommended In-Search Camps. Peer networks could open up opportunities to find flat-mates and develop support networks when living independently.

They stressed the value of accommodation services linking young people to a range of other services, including medical, counselling, income support, education, jobs, and family mediation. They also mentioned courses to help them develop independent living skills, particularly budgeting, and the need for assistance with the requirements for setting up a house, for example, linen, furniture and crockery.

There is also a need for on-going training for youth workers and associated staff.

What Services Should be Like

The young people also had a number of overarching comments to make about the best approaches to meeting the needs of homeless young people:

- advertising of youth services and support;
- comprehensive, as opposed to compartmentalised, specialised youth services and support;
- being given a voice and having their rights respected; and
- dispel the myths about homeless young people in the community.

Many of the young people interviewed thought that there was insufficient information about the different types of services and support available to them. They suggested the creation of a 24-hour telephone information and help line; mainstream advertising about the different services and support for homeless young people; pamphlets at school; or a magazine for young people.

They said they want accessible, specialised youth services, including outreach services, community and drop-in centres, counselling, family mediation, referral agencies, information centres, health services (sex education, de-tox, free medication) and independent living skills courses. The young people also stressed the importance of freedom of choice.

At the same time, young people raised issues of equity and rights for homeless people. They thought youth workers and others have to be accountable; one person felt no one was really accountable for their well-being. Some of the young people interviewed felt discriminated against. They felt there was a need for public education to challenge the myth that they wanted to be homeless and have left functional family homes.

Attitudes ... people need to understand that kids these days are not a germ, to understand and listen to street kids. Don't treat us like children. Get rid of the stigma and myths about street kids. (female, 15 years)

Appendix One: Persons Consulted

Department of Health and Community Services, Victoria

Robin Clark
Director, Child and Adolescent Family Services

Claudia Hirst
Manager, Adolescent Services Redevelopment

Penny Armytage
Manager, Protective Services

Janice Robertson
Protective Services

John Burch
Manager, Juvenile Justice

David Griffiths
Juvenile Justice

Bill Joyce
Manager, Accommodation and Support Services

Mike Debinski
Manager, Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

Frank Carlus
Manager, Adolescent Services

Deborah Foy
Manager, Income Maintenance Unit

Shirley Pinnell
Primary Care Division

Office of Youth Affairs, Victoria

Bernie Marshall
Program Manager

Department of Social Security

Susan Devereaux
Youth and Homeless Section
Labour Market and Retirement Programs Division

Alan Jordan
Strategic Development Division
Melbourne

Steve MacKenzie
Jodie Lake
Social Workers
Youth Service Unit, Frankston

Michael Bradford
Social Worker
DSS Regional Office, Morwell

Department of Employment, Education and Training

Jan Foster
Social Worker on Contract
Northcote Student Access Centre

Peter Jubb
National Office, Canberra

Non-government Organisations

Gill Tasker
Prevention of Youth Homelessness Project
Brotherhood of St Laurence

Mark Longmuir
Youth Affairs Council, Victoria

Youth Services⁴²

Jenny Cummings
Berry Street Incorporated, East Melbourne

Burnie Geary, Rob Ware and Paul Newland
Brosnan Youth Service, Brunswick

Maureen Bourke and Joe Sangster
Catchment Refuge, Reservoir

Danny Sandor
Chief Justice Chambers, Melbourne

Youth Worker
Community Adolescent Support Services, Preston

Jenny Plant and Paul McDonald
Crossroads Youth Services, Moonee Ponds

Michael Bradford
Department of Social Security, Morwell

Kerri Jackson
Doncaster and Templestowe Youth Housing, Doncaster

Sue Carlile
Family Access Network, Box Hill

Rob Mason
Fitzroy Hostel, North Fitzroy

Sue Webley
Frontyard, Melbourne

Trieu Nguyen
Gia Dinh Moi (New Family Home), Richmond

42 These agencies provided assistance with the development of the sample of young homeless people. From this list of youth services 12 workers were interviewed.

Helen Riseborough
Hanover Young Adults Service, St Kilda

Roger Gough
Harrison Youth Services, Wantirna

Rob Testro
Hope Street Refuge, West Brunswick

Rina Minkou
Info Deli, Melbourne

Jan Stanford
Iramoo Refuge, Footscray

Youth Worker
Kairos Housing Program, Camberwell

Kim Torrens
Lakes District Youth Housing, Lakes Entrance

Kemal Sedick and Wendy Neagle
Lyndon Lodge, Murrumbena

Kerry Dunn
Mia Mia Refuge, Morwell

Youth Worker
Marg Tucker Hostel for Aboriginal Women, Fairfield

Raywin Thornley
Morwell Youth Accommodation Services, Morwell

Isabel Leech
Mullum Place, Ringwood

Julia Fredman and Jenny Lincoln
Napier House for Young Women, Fitzroy

Neil Morison
Open Family, Box Hill

Will Crinall
Peninsula Family Services, Frankston

Shirl Balis
Peninsula Crisis Accommodation, Frankston

Jon Smith
Salvation Army Youth Homelessness Project, Coberg

Jim McAlinden
Salvation Army West Care, Sunshine

Debbie Cliff
South Oakleigh Technical College, South Oakleigh

Bryan Ford
Springboard Youth Accommodation, Canterbury

Malcolm Ford
Stay Refuge, Rosanna

Maggie Hughes
Stopover Refuge, Carlton South

Michael Beresford-Smith
Street-Work Project, Albert Park

Sue Green and Heather Thomson
Sutherland Homes, Diamond Creek

Dennise Turner
Traralgon-Rosedale Youth Accommodation Services, Traralgon

Rowan Fairbairn and Paul McFadden
Theo's Youth Outreach, St Kilda

Maureen Buck
Waverly Emergency Adolescent Care, Glen Waverly

Youth Workers
Wesley Community Contact Centre, Ringwood

Carol Tomnay
Westernport Youth Refuge, Dandenong

Linda Brown
Young Womens Service, Oakleigh

Sarah McLean
Youth Accommodation Coalition, Melbourne

Mark Watt
Youth for Christ, Forest Hill

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