

Australian homeless jobseekers aged 18-35: Benchmark report for YP⁴

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December 2005

Joining up services for young homeless jobseekers



YP⁴ outcome evaluation

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
About YP ⁴	6
Purpose of this report	7
Definitions of homelessness and unemployment	9
Point-in-time estimates: Unemployment, Centrelink payments and homelessness in Australia	13
Point-in-time estimates: Unemployment, Centrelink payments and homelessness in Victoria	17
Point-in-time estimates: Homeless jobseekers in the YP ⁴ trial sites ..	21
Annual estimates: Annual homeless jobseekers	22
Rolling estimates: Homeless jobseekers identified by the Job Seeker Classification Index	24
Estimating the number of young homeless jobseekers: A methodological comparison	29
Young homeless jobseekers: A socio-demographic profile	30
Young homeless jobseekers: Outcome benchmarks	34
Conclusion	36
Appendix 1.....	39
References.....	41

Executive Summary

YP⁴ is a trial of joined up services for homeless jobseekers. This is the first report of the YP⁴ outcome evaluation team. It presents a socio-demographic profile of homeless jobseekers aged 18 – 35 years, as a benchmark for the group recruited for the YP⁴ trial. In preparing this profile, we experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining data regarding the population from which the YP⁴ participants have been drawn. Planning for joined up services in the future will require much better access to a range of data in relation to target populations.

This report sheds light on the unexpected slow recruitment into the trial. In addition, it presents limited outcome benchmarks for interventions with the target group. Like the demographic data, this information is not readily available. We will continue to pursue additional outcome benchmarks for our next report.

Our work builds on 1996 and 2001 census point-in-time estimates for homeless persons in Australia and Victoria, and annual service usage data for homeless people who access Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services. We estimate the number of homeless jobseekers aged 18-35 in Australia, Victoria, and the four YP⁴ trial sites in three different ways. One method is a point-in-time method, the second is a cumulative annual method and the third is a rolling method.

Using a point-in-time method, we estimate that at any one time Australia would have approximately 15,000 homeless jobseekers aged 18-35, and Victoria would have approximately 3,350. Our annual estimates indicate that each year 42,048 – 63,709 Australians aged 18-35 years experience both homelessness and joblessness. This is lower than the earlier estimate of 80,000 (Campbell et al 2003), partly because of using more recent data, and partly because a slightly different procedure was used for calculating this estimate. We estimate that 15,323 – 23,217 Victorians aged 18-35 years experience both homelessness and unemployment annually. It seems that approximately four times as many Australians experience homelessness and unemployment over a year as at any one point in time.

For our estimates we have used an inclusive definition of 'jobseekers' rather than the more limited definition of unemployment that has been used to determine eligibility for the YP⁴ trial. The National Homelessness Strategy (CACH 2000) uses a figure of 40 per cent

unemployment for homeless Australians aged 18-35. This figure is well above the 28.4 per cent cited in the SAAP annual report (AIHW 2005). It seems that the 40 per cent is a more inclusive figure, encompassing people employed part-time, and those on Parenting and Disability Support Payments. Clearly these people could be seen as 'jobseekers', but are not 'unemployed' according to the definition used to determine eligibility for Newstart and Youth Allowance (other). It is this latter definition that is used for eligibility for the YP⁴ trial. Thus our estimates of homeless jobseekers in the trial sites are overestimates in terms of eligibility for the YP⁴ trial.

In relation to YP⁴ recruitment, our detailed estimates show that, allowing for overestimation and less than 100 per cent take-up, there would not have been enough homeless jobseekers aged 18-35 in the trial sites to quickly fill the 520 trial places. This has contributed to slower than expected recruitment into the YP⁴ trial. The Executive of the Interagency Coordinating Committee (IACC) has used information contained in this report to inform its decision to extend the trial recruitment period from 6 months to a total of 12 months, January to December 2005. This experience underlines the importance of having detailed estimates available in the planning stages of service development.

We present a demographic profile that is tentative because of the reservations of the data sources about the accuracy of the data. According to this profile, of Victoria's homeless jobseekers aged 18 – 35, approximately 60 per cent are male and 40 per cent are female. Approximately 4 per cent are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people and approximately 60 per cent have obtained a highest education level of Year 11 or below. Approximately one in five of Victoria's young homeless jobseekers is identified as being an ex-offender.

The partner agencies initiated the YP⁴ trial because they were dissatisfied with the outcomes they were achieving with young homeless jobseekers. We found quantified outcome benchmarks scarce, and the outcome evaluation will rely heavily on the YP⁴ trial design, with 'treatment' and 'control' groups. The control group outcomes will act as the main point of comparison with the intervention outcomes. However as the trial progresses, we will continue to pursue other outcome benchmarks, in order that YP⁴ outcomes can be placed in the context of other recorded housing and employment outcomes for Australian homeless jobseekers aged 18 - 35.

Introduction

Homelessness damages individuals, families and communities. In order to prevent homelessness and alleviate its impacts, governments, advocates and service providers require high quality information. Since the publication of *Our homeless children* (HREOC 1989), a great deal of dedicated and talented work has brought satisfying advances in definition, data collection and understanding of homelessness, its impacts and the need for services.

We now have census estimates for 1996 and 2001 of the number of homeless persons in Australia, where they were, their ages and their type of shelter or lack of it (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004, 2003). In addition to this point-in-time data, we have detailed annual usage data regarding people who access SAAP services. This information provides some basis for public policy, advocacy and service provision. However, when estimating numbers of homeless people in particular circumstances, educated guesswork and use of assumptions are still necessary.

Individuals aged 18 – 35 years, the target group for the YP⁴ trial, are considered to be in the first one-third of their working lives (Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness 2003). If people can establish their housing and employment in these years their prospects for later life are much improved. This report contributes to the demographic information available in Australia in relation to homeless jobseekers in this age range.

The evidence base for the YP⁴ trial (Campbell et al 2003) includes an estimate that each year 80,000 Australians aged 18-35 are in the position of being homeless jobseekers. This estimate drew on age and employment status data from the SAAP National Data Collection. Since that time, 2001 census estimates have become available (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004, 2003).

Clearly there are many homeless jobseekers in Australia over a year. In preparing this report, we have become aware of the difficulties involved in moving from point-in-time data to annual estimates. Census reports provide reasonable point-in-time estimates, and SAAP reports contain good annual service usage estimates. However, clearly not all people experiencing homelessness access SAAP services. Therefore overall annual homelessness rates can be very difficult to estimate. For example in 1998 the Consilium Group used a combination of SAAP data, 1996 Census figures and observations

provided by frontline staff in order to develop a model for estimating the number of homeless. They estimated that 283,000 Australians experienced homelessness during 1996 – 97, with only 34 per cent of these people accessing SAAP services.

Other expert opinion suggests that for every homeless person who uses a SAAP service in a year, there is at least one, and possibly as many as two others, who do not (Chamberlain 2005a). These estimates are the best available regarding SAAP usage as a percentage of the overall homeless population. We have therefore used them as necessary, to estimate the numbers of people who experience homelessness during a given year.

About YP⁴

YP⁴ (formerly known as the Young Homeless Jobseeker Trial) seeks to demonstrate that joining up a range of services and programs in a client-centred manner will result in more sustainable employment and housing outcomes for young homeless jobseekers. YP⁴ is an initiative of four community organisations: Hanover Welfare Services, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne Citymission and Loddon Mallee Housing Services. The 'YP' represents young people. The '4' refers to the four 'p's: purpose (a job), place (a home), personal support (offered by the trial) and proof (the evaluation). The number '4' also represents the number of partner agencies and the number of sites for the trial.

According to Australia's Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (2003: 37):

... We estimate that [people who are homeless who are in the labour market but lack a job] make up 20 per cent of the long-term unemployed. However, it is likely that many of these people could secure employment given appropriate assistance — the desire to work is certainly there. There is little evidence that these people are being effectively engaged by labour market programs.

YP⁴ represents a new approach to assisting individuals who are experiencing both homelessness and unemployment, in recognition that existing forms of housing and employment assistance are fragmented, linear, ineffective and inefficient for homeless jobseekers. YP⁴ offers homeless jobseekers a single point of contact to address

employment, housing, educational and personal support goals in an integrated manner over a two-year period.

The key components of YP⁴ are:

- Resourced case management
- Access to a flexible pool of resources
- Timely, individualised assistance
- Negotiated pathways to employment, which could include mentoring, work experience, vocational training and/or subsidised employment
- Commitment to secure housing and a living wage

The evidence base for YP⁴ is contained in the foundation paper, entitled *A new approach to assisting young homeless jobseekers* (Campbell et al 2003). Copies of this document and the trial proposal (Horn 2004) may be downloaded from www.hanover.org.au (see 'Current research').

An Ethics and Evaluation Advisory Group (EEAG) (Refer Appendix 1) provides expertise and advice to the Inter Agency Coordinating Committee (IACC) for YP⁴, regarding all evaluation and research processes and outcomes required by the trial. An evaluation framework was prepared and formally approved by the Ethics and Evaluation Advisory Group in 2004. It includes outcome, financial and process evaluations. The overall purpose of the evaluation is to ensure that what is learnt from YP⁴, including future implications for program design and practice, is well documented, analysed, shared and realised both within the scope of this project and beyond. There are three separate components that comprise the YP⁴ evaluation: an outcome evaluation, a process evaluation and a financial evaluation. Principal Investigator for the outcome evaluation, Dr Marty Grace, was appointed in February 2005. This report is a product of the outcome evaluation.

Purpose of this report

This report was prepared by the YP⁴ outcome evaluation team between June 2005 and November 2005, during the trial recruitment period. This is our first report, and it provides a demographic background to the trial. Later reports from the outcome evaluation team will include analysis of data generated within the trial. None of this material is available at this stage.

Robust evaluation has been part of the trial design since its inception. The role of the outcome evaluation team in these early stages has been to ensure the viability of the research design, and to protect the credibility of the findings that will be produced over time. The Principal Investigator has been involved, for example, in review of the procedures for random allocation to the two groups that are integral to the trial design.

Implementation of a complex trial such as YP⁴ inevitably reveals matters that were not anticipated, and this is one of the reasons for conducting pilots and trials. The slower-than-expected recruitment into the YP⁴ trial has been one such 'discovery'. The preparation of this early report has been used as an opportunity to reflect on this experience, and to carry out analysis of available data regarding Australian homeless jobseekers aged 18-35 years. We have examined in three different ways the expected numbers of homeless jobseekers aged 18-35 in each of the four trial sites. This material has been used by the Executive of the Interagency Coordinating Committee (IACC) in deciding to extend the recruitment period for the trial.

We have used three different ways of estimating numbers of homeless jobseekers: point-in-time, cumulative annual and rolling estimates. The **point-in-time** estimate uses 2001 census data (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004, 2003). We draw on Victorian population projections for 2005 and SAAP data regarding unemployment rates among homeless persons aged 18-35 in order to estimate numbers of homeless jobseekers. We have carried out this work right down to postcode level in order to make estimates for each of the trial sites. Our second method uses SAAP annual usage data for Australia and Victoria, with 2001 census population data at the postcode level to estimate the **cumulative annual** number of homeless jobseekers in each trial site area. Our third method uses data provided by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) based on their Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) data. This is neither point-in-time data nor an annual estimate, but is characterised as **'rolling'** data, since people who become homeless may be added to the data at any time. Equally, those who exit homelessness may be removed, but there is likely to be a lag in this removal. Thus this data will include more people than point in time, but fewer than full annual data. This data was provided by trial site, based on postcodes.

This report sets the scene for the YP⁴ trial and the outcome evaluation by describing, in quantitative terms, Australia's population of homeless jobseekers. We start by looking at Australia as a whole, and gradually

narrow down to details of Victoria's homeless jobseekers. Not all of the data sources cited within this report had available data for the 18 – 35 age group. In these instances estimates for the 18 – 35 age group were calculated, and we have provided details of our procedures for arriving at these estimates.

Definitions of homelessness and unemployment

Both homelessness and unemployment have a range of possible definitions. Definitions of homelessness have been developed and have converged over the past decade to the point where there is now considerable agreement. Homelessness organisations have long favoured the inclusion of people insecurely accommodated in caravan parks. They were not recognised in 1996 and 2001 ABS census estimates, but there now appears to be growing support for their inclusion (Chamberlain 2005b; Scarr 2005; Roberts 2005). Indeed a recent Centrelink publication stated that the exclusion of caravan park residents from homeless definitions is odd, 'as many supported accommodation services put homeless people into caravans' and most residents of caravan parks have no more security of tenure over their accommodation than boarding house residents (Roberts 2005: 3).

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994 defines **homelessness** as (No. 162, 1994 – SECT IV):

When a person is homeless

4.(1) For the purposes of this Act, a person is homeless if, and only if, he or she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing.

Inadequate access to safe and secure housing

(2) For the purposes of this Act, a person is taken to have inadequate access to safe and secure housing if the only housing to which the person has access:

- (a) damages, or is likely to damage, the person's health; or
- (b) threatens the person's safety; or
- (c) marginalises the person through failing to provide access to:
 - (i) adequate personal amenities; or
 - (ii) the economic and social supports that a home normally affords; or
- (d) places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing.

Person living in SAAP accommodation

- (3) For the purposes of this Act, a person is taken to have inadequate access to safe and secure housing if:
- (a) the person is living in accommodation provided under SAAP; and
 - (b) the assessment of the person's eligibility for that accommodation was based on the application of subsection (1) or (2) (ignoring the effect of this subsection).

Centrelink's recent response to homelessness states:

For Centrelink's purposes, homelessness and risk of homelessness are experienced when an individual or family has inadequate access to safe and secure housing which meets community standards. For example:

- *Is without conventional accommodation (e.g. sleeping rough, squatting, living in a car) or*
- *Lives in, or moves frequently between, temporary accommodation arrangements (for example with friends or extended family, emergency accommodation, youth refuges) or*
- *Lives medium to long term in a boarding house, caravan park or hotel, where accommodation is not covered by a lease or*
- *Lives in accommodation which falls below the general community standards which surround health and well-being, such as access to personal amenities, security against threat, privacy and autonomy or*
- *Is facing eviction or*
- *Lives in accommodation not of an appropriate standard which may be detrimental to their physical and mental well-being, and / or where they have no sense of belonging or connection (e.g. Indigenous Australians living in crowded conditions and / or disconnected from their land, family / kin, spiritual and cultural beliefs and practices)*

NOTE: *The individual's own perception about the suitability of their accommodation needs to be considered when applying this definition." (Scarr 2005:6).*

The following definition and explanation comes from Victoria's Council to Homeless Persons (CHP 2005:1):

The Council to Homeless Persons defines a homeless person as someone who "is without a conventional home and lacks the economic and social supports that a home normally affords. She/he is often cut off from the support of relatives and friends, she/he has few independent resources and often has no immediate means, and, in some cases, little prospect of social support."

A home is more than a physical structure. The attributes of home can be seen to be security of tenure, security against threats, physical characteristics which do not undermine health or create further disadvantage, affordability, living with people of one's choice, privacy and autonomy and control. (Neil C and Fopp, R, 1994: 3-4)

In order to count the numbers of people who are homeless, the homeless population is characterised by three segments. They are:

1. *Primary homelessness*: people without conventional accommodation – living on the streets, in deserted buildings, in cars, under bridges, in improvised dwellings etc.
2. *Secondary homelessness*: people moving between various forms of temporary shelter, including friends, relatives, emergency accommodation and boarding houses.
3. *Tertiary homelessness*: people living in single rooms in private boarding houses on a long-term basis – without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure and people living as 'marginal residents' in caravan parks where no person in the household is in full time employment and all persons are at their 'usual address'.

(Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2001)

This understanding of homelessness is also consistent with the definition adopted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, except that the ABS 2001 census did not include homeless caravan park residents. According to the CHP, including these people would add an estimated 22,868 to the total number of homeless Australians. As discussed in detail later in this report, our work draws on these contemporary understandings of homelessness.

In common usage, the idea of **unemployment** may include people who have no employment and are available for employment; those who have some employment but would like more; and those who receive income support such as Disability Support Pension or Parenting Payment, but would prefer employment. The term 'joblessness' is often used to cover this broadly defined group. Publicly available data regarding employment status defines unemployment more narrowly.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004: Chapter 6) recognises the international definition of unemployment as derived during the *Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statistics 1982*. According to this definition a person must simultaneously satisfy each of the following criteria in order to be considered unemployed. They must be:

- without work
- actively seeking work
- currently available for work.

Unemployed people are therefore defined by the ABS as people who, during a specified reference period, meet all of the above criteria. This definition is criticised for not acknowledging underemployment¹, discouraged jobseekers or those who are marginally attached to the labour force (although the ABS publishes other statistics that include these people).

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) links the concept of unemployment with labour market income support payments administered through Centrelink. For their purposes, unemployed people are those in receipt of either Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance (other) (DEWR 2005).

The key differences between DEWR's unemployment count and the ABS definition are that:

- Unemployment allowance recipients who may be employed part-time while continuing to receive the allowance, providing their income falls within an income test limit, are counted by DEWR but not by ABS:
- Those who do not apply for an allowance, or those who do not receive an allowance because their income and/or their partner's income exceeds the income test limit are counted by ABS but not by DEWR.
- There is also a significant difference in the definition of long term unemployment across official ABS definition and the DEWR count.

Estimating numbers of homeless jobseekers presents a challenge, as published census data for homeless people does not include employment status. The National Homelessness Strategy (CACH 2000) uses a figure of 40 per cent unemployment for homeless Australians aged 18-35. This estimate will be utilised throughout this report, consistent with the two previous trial documents (Campbell et al 2003; Horn 2004). However, this figure is well above the 28.4 per cent cited in the SAAP annual report (AIHW 2005). It seems that the 40 per cent is a more inclusive figure, encompassing people employed part-time,

¹ Consistent with the International definition, the ABS classifies a person who worked for one hour or more during the survey reference period as employed.

and those on Parenting and Disability Support Payments. Clearly these people could be seen as 'jobseekers', but are not 'unemployed' according to the definition used to determine eligibility for Newstart and Youth Allowance (other). It is this latter definition that is used for eligibility for the YP⁴ trial. Thus the trial site estimates are overestimates in YP⁴ eligibility terms.

Throughout this report, we draw on different understandings of unemployment and jobseekers. In each instance we make it clear which definition is relevant.

Point-in-time estimates: Unemployment, Centrelink payments and homelessness in Australia

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics population estimates for June 2005, Australia's population was 20,414,152 persons. Included in this figure were 5,192,872 individuals aged 18 – 35 years. This group represents 25.4 per cent of Australia's total population. For both the whole population and persons aged 18-35, numbers of males and females are approximately even.

Table 1: Australia's population of persons aged 18 – 35 years

	Persons	Males	Females
Australia's total population	20,414,152	10,131,610 (49.6%)	10,282,542 (50.4%)
Australia's population aged 18 - 35	5,192,872	2,605,418 (50.2%)	2,587,454 (49.8%)

Of the 5,192,872 Australians aged 18-35, 940,459 (18.2 per cent) receive some form of Centrelink benefits. Of these, 272,149 are unemployed, receiving either Newstart or Youth Allowance (Other). This represents 5.3 per cent of the total population of persons aged 18-35, and 28.9 per cent of Centrelink beneficiaries in this age group. Of the 272,149 unemployed, 176,347 (64.8 per cent) were males and 95,802 (35.2 per cent) were females.

Table 2: Australians aged 18 - 35 and their Centrelink benefits as at June – July 2005

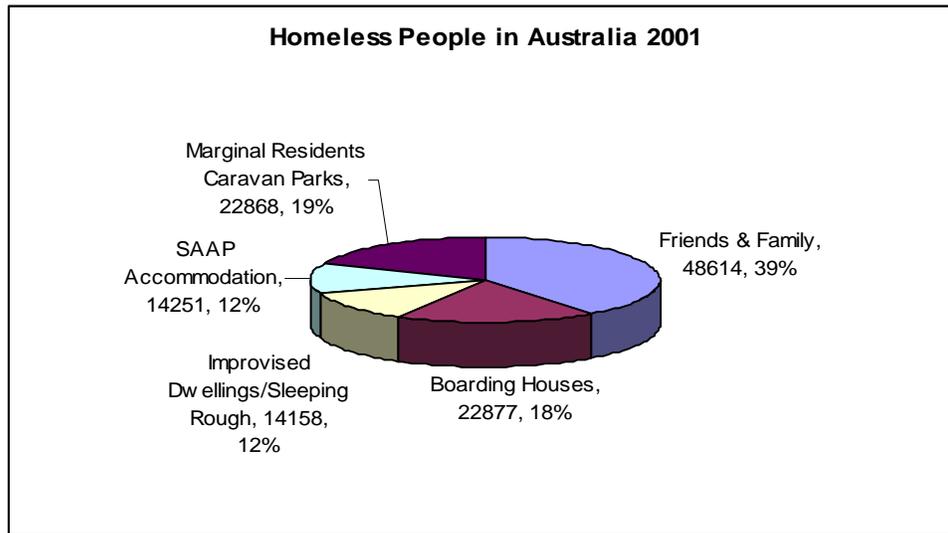
	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total persons	Percentage of Australia's population aged 18 - 35
Australia's population aged 18 - 35	2,605,418 (50.2%)	2,587,454 (49.8%)	5,192,872	100%
Newstart	145,101 (68.8%)	65,794 (31.2%)	210,895	4.1%
Youth Allowance (Other)	31,246 (51.0%)	30,008 (49.0%)	61,254	1.2%
Disability support pension	71,214 (59.4%)	48,633 (40.6%)	119,847	2.3%
Parenting Payment (Partnered)	5,577 (6.5%)	80,831 (93.5%)	86,408	1.7%
Parenting Payment (Single)	12,013 (5.2%)	220,063 (94.8%)	232,076	4.5%
Youth Allowance (Training)	74,089 (43.0%)	98,039 (57.0%)	172,128	3.3%
Other	30,274 (52.3%)	27,577 (47.7%)	57,851	1.1%
Total Centrelink benefits	369,514 (39.3%)	570,945 (60.7%)	940,459	18.2%

Note: In some cases Centrelink was unable to provide the exact number of individuals who received a particular payment type within a specific age range. In these instances, where Centrelink have indicated that the number of recipients was 'less than twenty', we have assumed a mid-way value of ten.

Some of Australia's most disadvantaged jobseekers are also homeless. On census night 2001, Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003) estimate that approximately 99,900 Australians were homeless. Almost half of these individuals (48.7 per cent) or 48,614 were staying temporarily with friends or family. Another 22,877 people (22.9 per cent) were staying in boarding houses on either a short-term or long-term basis and 14,158 (14.2 per cent) were in improvised dwellings, tents or 'sleeping rough'. The remaining 14,251 individuals (14.3 per cent) were staying in accommodation funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), such as hostels, refuges, night shelters and other types of emergency accommodation.

According to the Council to Homeless Persons, a further 22,868 Australians were marginal residents of caravan parks. This refers to people who were renting their caravan on census night, where there was no-one in the household with a full-time job and the household was at its usual address (Chamberlain 2005b). The census publications do not include these people, however they are included in the figure below.

Figure 1: Australia's homeless population census night 2001



Source: Chamberlain & MacKenzie (2003:2), modified to include caravan parks

Factoring up Chamberlain and MacKenzie's (2003) estimate to include caravan parks, we estimate that 122,768 Australians were homeless on census night 2001. We have estimated the number of homeless Australians aged 18-35 by applying the average homelessness rate for those aged 19-34 (0.0060) to the additional two one-year cohorts. Because these cohorts are one at each end of the distribution, we believe this to be a reasonable estimate. Using this method, we estimate that there were approximately 36,953 homeless 18 – 35 year olds (30.1 per cent of the total homeless persons) in June 2001. Given that persons aged 18 – 35 years were 25.4 per cent of Australia's total population in 2001, this age group is clearly over-represented among homeless people.

Table 3: Age breakdown of homeless population Australia 2001

Years	Number	Per cent	Number including caravan park residents
Under 12	9,941	10	12,277
12 – 18	26,060	26	31,920
19 – 24	10,113	10	12,277
25 – 34	16,567	17	20,870
35 – 44	12,992	13	15,960
45 – 54	10,349	10	12,277
55 – 64	7,883	8	9,821
65 or older	5,995	6	7,366
Total	99,900	100	122,768

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students (Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2003), modified to include caravan parks.

Chamberlain and MacKenzie's estimate that 99,900 Australians were homeless in 2001 is 5,404 fewer than the 105,304 estimated in the previous census in 1996. Part of this reduction can be attributed to a change in the definition of an 'improvised shelter' (Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2003). As a result, the number of improvised dwellings in Indigenous communities declined from 8,727 to 823 in 2001. Thus, if the same definition had been used in 1996, the number of homeless persons would have been more like 97,400, a homelessness rate of 0.0053. The comparable rate for June 2001 is 0.0051. This reduction in the rate does not establish a trend. However, in order to make a conservative estimate for 2005, we have assumed a downward trend in homelessness and used a rate of 0.0049 then factored this up to include caravan parks, giving a rate of 0.0061.

Using population projections from the Australian Bureau of Statistics as at June 2005 and multiplying them with the anticipated homelessness rate of 0.0061 gives an estimate of approximately 124,526 homeless Australians. Of these individuals, we estimate that approximately 37,482 or 30.1 per cent are 18 – 35 years of age. We have used Chamberlain and MacKenzie's (2003) male to female ratio. Unlike the broader population, the homeless population includes 16 per cent more males than females.

Table 4: Estimated homeless persons in Australia as at June 2005

	Persons	Males (%)	Females (%)
Homeless Australians	124,526	72,225 (58.0%)	52,301 (42.0%)
Homeless Australians aged 18-35	37,482	21,740 (58.0%)	15,742 (42.0%)

Assuming that 40 per cent of homeless people aged 18 – 35 are jobseekers according to an inclusive definition of unemployment, Table 5 shows that that 14,993 Australians aged 18-35 are estimated to be both homeless and unemployed.

Table 5: Estimated homeless jobseekers aged 18-35 years in Australia as at June 2005

	Persons	Males (%)	Females (%)
Homeless Australians aged 18-35	37,482	21,740 (58.0%)	15,742 (42.0%)
Homeless unemployed Australians aged 18-35	14,993	8,696 (58.0%)	6,297 (42.0%)

Point-in-time estimates: Unemployment, Centrelink payments and homelessness in Victoria

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates Victoria's population to be 5,016,614 as at June 2005. Of these individuals, 1,295,055 are between 18 and 35 years of age, representing 25.8 per cent of Victoria's total population.

Table 6: Victoria's population of persons aged 18 – 35 years

	Persons	Males (%)	Females (%)
Victoria's total population	5,016,614	2,473,244 (49.3%)	2,543,370 (50.7%)
Victoria's population aged 18 - 35	1,295,055	646,514 (49.9%)	648,541 (50.1%)

Of the 1,295,055 Victorians aged 18-35, 230,094 (17.8 per cent) receive some form of Centrelink benefits. Of these, 65,763 are unemployed, receiving either Newstart or Youth Allowance (Other). This represents 5.1 per cent of the total Victorian population of persons aged 18-35, and 28.6 per cent of Centrelink beneficiaries in this age group. Of the 65,763 unemployed, 41,202 (62.7 per cent) were males and 24,561 (37.3 per cent) were females.

Table 7: Victorians aged 18 - 35 and their Centrelink benefits as at June – July 2005

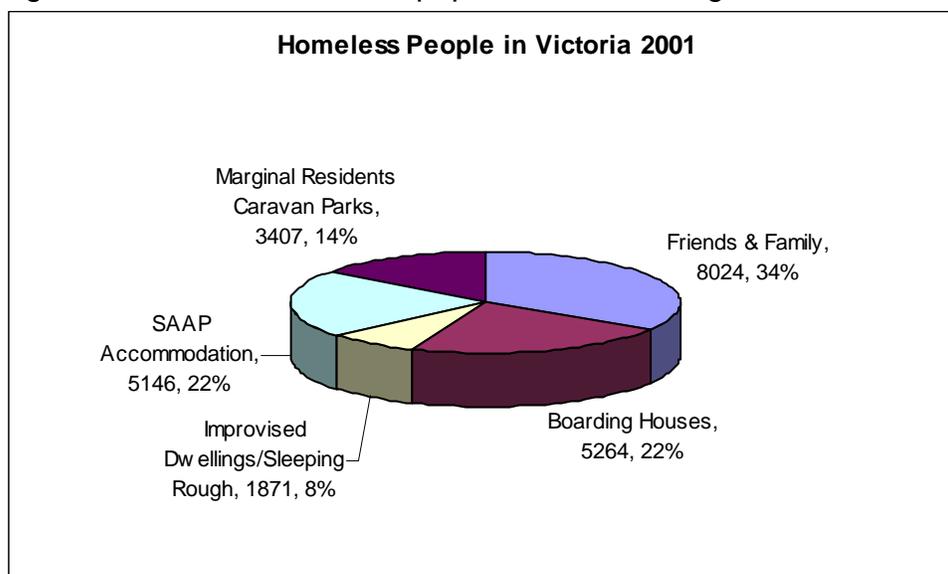
	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total persons	Percentage of Victoria's population aged 18 - 35
Victoria's population aged 18 - 35	646,514 (49.9%)	648,541 (50.1%)	1,295,055	100%

Newstart	34,936 (66.0%)	18,024 (34.0%)	52,960	4.1%
Youth Allowance (Other)	6,266 (48.9%)	6,537 (51.1%)	12,803	1.0%
Disability support pension	17,460 (58.1%)	12,614 (41.9%)	30,074	2.3%
Parenting Payment (Partnered)	1,134 (5.9%)	18,165 (94.1)	19,299	1.5%
Parenting Payment (Single)	2,035 (4.2%)	46,120 (95.8%)	48,155	3.7%
Youth Allowance (Training)	22,589 (43.8%)	28,985 (56.2)	51,574	4.0%
Other	7,815 (51.3%)	7,414 (48.7)	15,229	1.2%
Total Centrelink benefits	92,235 (40.1%)	137,859 (59.9%)	230,094	17.8%

Note: In some cases Centrelink was unable to provide the exact number of individuals who received a particular payment type within a specific age range. In these instances, where Centrelink have indicated that the number of recipients was 'less than twenty', we have assumed a mid-way value of ten.

As is the case at the national level, many of Victoria's most disadvantaged jobseekers are also homeless. On census night 2001, Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003) calculate that approximately 20,305 Victorians were homeless. Many of these individuals (39.5 per cent) or 8,024 were staying temporarily with friends or family. A further 5,264 people (25.9 per cent) were residing in either short-term or long-term boarding house accommodation, and 1,871 (9.2 per cent) were staying in improvised dwellings, tents or 'sleeping rough'. The remaining 5,146 individuals (25.3 per cent) were located in accommodation funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), such as hostels, refuges, night shelters and other types of emergency accommodation. According to the Council to Homeless Persons, a further 3,407 Victorians were marginal residents of caravan parks. Once again the census publications do not include these people, however they are included in the figure below.

Figure 2: Victoria's homeless population census night 2001



Source: Chamberlain & MacKenzie (2004:6), modified to include caravan parks

Of the 23,712 Victorians who were homeless on the night of the 2001 census (including marginal residents of caravan parks), we estimate that approximately 8,062 or 34 per cent were 18 – 35 years of age. With persons aged 18 - 35 years representing 25.8 per cent of Victoria's total population, this age group is clearly over-represented among people experiencing homelessness.

Table 8: Age breakdown of homeless population Australia 2001

Years	Number	Per cent	Number including caravan park residents
Under 12	2618	13	3,082
12 – 18	4663	23	5,454
19 – 24	2401	12	2,845
25 – 34	3665	18	4,268
35 – 44	2775	14	3,320
45 – 54	1885	9	2,134
55 – 64	1184	6	1,423
65 or older	1114	5	1,186
Total	20,305	100	23,712

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students (Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2004), modified to include caravan parks.

According to ABS population projections, Victoria's population in 2005 would be 5,016,614. At the time of the 2001 Census, Victoria had a lower rate of homelessness (0.0043) than that which was experienced at a national level. For our estimates we have assumed a Victorian rate of 0.0049, allowing for a reduced homelessness rate of 0.0041 and factoring it up to include marginal residents of caravan parks as discussed above. We have used Chamberlain and MacKenzie's (2004) male to female proportions.

Table 9: Estimated rates of homelessness in Victoria as at June 2005

	Persons	Males (%)	Females (%)
Homeless Victorians	24,581	13,520 (55%)	11,061 (45%)
Homeless Victorians aged 18-35	8,358	4,597 (55%)	3,761 (45%)

Using the Chamberlain and MacKenzie figures, combined with the June 2005 population projections from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, we estimate that there would now be approximately 24,581 homeless people living in Victoria. Of these individuals, we estimate that approximately 8,358 or 34.0 per cent are 18 – 35 years of age.

Assuming that 40 per cent of homeless people aged 18 – 35 are jobseekers according to an inclusive definition of unemployment, Table

10 shows that an estimated 3,343 Victorians aged 18-35 are both homeless and unemployed.

Table 10: Estimated homelessness jobseekers in Victoria, persons aged 18-35 as at June 2005

	Persons	Males (%)	Females (%)
Homeless Victorians aged 18-35	8,358	4,597 (55%)	3,761 (45%)
Homeless unemployed Victorians aged 18-35	3,343	1,839 (55%)	1,504 (45%)

Point-in-time estimates: Homeless jobseekers in the YP⁴ trial sites

Combining Chamberlain and MacKenzie's (2004) homelessness rates for different geographical areas of Australia with postcode level population data for YP⁴'s four sites we have made the following estimates of the number of homeless jobseekers at any one time.

Table 11: Estimated homeless jobseekers in the YP⁴ trial sites

Site	Total population	Homeless rate	Factored up estimate	Estimated homeless population aged 18-35	Estimated homeless jobseekers aged 18-35
Bendigo	81,381	0.0055	0.0060	166	66
Cheltenham	366,258	0.0036	0.0038	473	189
Frankston	217,073	0.0044	0.0046	340	136
Central Melbourne	392,812	0.0149	-	1,990	796
Total	1,057,524	0.0081	0.0082	2,969	1,187

According to Chamberlain (2005b) the number of marginal caravan park dwellers is slightly higher in regional areas such as Bendigo, and lower in Central Melbourne. Of the 3,407 Victorians who were marginally housed in caravan parks on the night of the 2001 census, he found that 60 per cent were in regional centres or country towns. A

further 17 per cent, or 600 marginal caravan park residents, were located in the Frankston-Dandenong corridor (including the Mornington Peninsula). We have therefore factored up the above estimates for Bendigo, Cheltenham and Frankston to include marginal caravan park dwellers. To the best of our knowledge there are no caravan parks within the Central Melbourne catchment area for YP⁴.

Keeping in mind that the above estimates use an inclusive definition of jobseekers (40 per cent) rather than the Centrelink definition of unemployment (probably closer to 28 per cent) that is used to determine YP⁴ eligibility, and given that not all eligible people could be expected to accept the invitation to join the trial, it seems that only central Melbourne could have had any reasonable expectation of rapid recruitment, and this would have been limited by the trial site agency restriction to persons aged 18-25 only. This finding underlines the importance of having this type of information available in the planning stages of service development. Service providers' impressions of demand for services may be based more on an inclusive definition of jobseekers, and annual numbers rather than point-in-time numbers.

Annual estimates: Annual homeless jobseekers

While point-in-time data is clearly important, assessment of demand for services requires annual data. People become homeless and exit homelessness. The duration of homelessness varies from person to person, and this duration of homelessness will clearly have an impact on demand for services. Annual homelessness, the number of people who experience homelessness over a 12 months period, gives agencies important information about how many people may require their services during a funding period.

While a count such as the census can aspire to full coverage, there is no Australian agency that has contact with all persons who become homeless during the year. This means that we currently have no reliable annual estimates. The agency with arguably the greatest coverage and the most sophisticated data collection is the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The National Data Collection Agency that has the responsibility for SAAP data is particularly thorough and diligent in its data collection. However, not all of Australia's homeless people access SAAP services, and when it comes to moving from SAAP annual usage totals to estimates for the broader population, considerable guesswork is involved. Chamberlain (2005a) suggests that for every homeless person who accesses SAAP

services during a given year, there are between one and two who do not. This means that cumulative annual estimates fall within a range rather than being reasonably quantified as a number. For example, if 15,000 persons accessed a SAAP service over a year, the annual estimate of people in similar circumstances in the broader population could be expressed as 'between 30,000 and 45,000'.

For this report, estimates of annual homelessness are calculated by factoring up SAAP data. This method is fraught not only because the factor is two or three, but because Victoria has 0.2 or one fifth of Australia's homeless population (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004), but more like one-third of Australia's SAAP usage. Further, Victoria has a Transitional Housing Management Program that is coordinated with SAAP, but its work is not included in the SAAP data collection. Thus Victoria has even more than the official one-third of Australia's SAAP usage. We understand that Victoria's high proportion of Australia's SAAP usage is because Victorian service development has been more active than in other states, particularly in relation to services for women and children. This discrepancy between proportion of homeless persons and proportion of SAAP usage means that Victorian estimates of annual homelessness using SAAP data should be used conservatively, with more credibility at the lower end of the range.

In 2003-4, we estimate that 52,560 persons aged 18-35 used SAAP services in Australia (based on Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2005: Table 4.1). If there are one or two homeless people who do not use SAAP services for every one who does, then annual homeless persons aged 18-35 would be between 105,120 and 159,273. Assuming that 40 per cent of these people are jobseekers, Australia would have between 42,048 and 63,709 persons aged 18-35 who are homeless jobseekers annually².

In 2003-4, we estimate that 19,154 persons aged 18-35 used SAAP services in Victoria (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2005a: Table 9.4). Using the assumption above, Victoria's annual homelessness for persons aged 18-35 is between 38,308 and 58,042. Assuming that 40 per cent of these people are jobseekers, Victoria would have between 15,323 and 23,217 persons aged 18-35 who are homeless jobseekers annually.

² This is somewhat lower than the earlier estimate of 80,000 (Campbell et al 2003). This is partly because of using more recent data, and partly because a slightly different procedure was used for calculating this estimate.

Table 12: Victoria and Australia estimated annual homeless jobseekers, based on SAAP usage data 2003-04

	Annual SAAP usage, persons aged 18-35	Estimated annual homelessness, persons aged 18-35	Estimated annual homeless jobseekers aged 18-35
Australia	52,560	105,120 - 159,273	42,048 - 63,709
Victoria	19,154	38,308 – 58,042	15,323 – 23,217

This Victorian annual homelessness estimate of 15,323-23,217 for persons aged 18-35 compares with a point-in-time figure of 3,343. Using both the minimum and maximum ratios, we have estimated the range of annual homeless jobseekers for each postcode within the four YP⁴ trial sites.

Table 13: Estimated homeless jobseekers in YP⁴ trial sites, including marginal residents of caravan parks

Site	Estimated point-in-time homeless jobseekers	Estimated range of annual homeless jobseekers
Bendigo	66	303 – 458
Cheltenham	189	866 – 1,313
Frankston	136	623 – 945
Central Melbourne	796	3,649 – 5,528
Total	1,187	5,441 – 8,244

Rolling estimates: Homeless jobseekers identified by the Job Seeker Classification Index

Rolling data includes more homeless people than a point-in-time estimate, but is different from an annual estimate. In this section we present data based on information taken from the Job Seeker Classification Index (JSCI). Broadly speaking the JSCI is a questionnaire that is used to determine levels of disadvantage among job-seekers. It includes three questions regarding homelessness. These assessments may be updated at any time, as people move in and out of homelessness. This means that the data set reflects

assessments carried out over a period of time that is difficult to determine.

In theory, this data could be point-in-time, but because of lags in updating, it will be more than point-in-time. Also in theory, this should be a good source of data regarding homeless jobseekers. However Parkinson and Horn (2002) found JSCI data to be highly inaccurate. It is included here for the sake of being thorough.

In addition to being a potential data source, the JSCI is important because of its use in determining eligibility for the trial. As stated, YP⁴ aims to assist individuals who are experiencing both homelessness and unemployment. The criteria for eligibility for YP⁴ are:

- Aged 18-35 years;
- Currently homeless or with a history of homelessness;
- Unemployed and in receipt of either Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance; and
- Disadvantaged, defined as eligible for Intensive Support Customised Assistance (ISCA), Personal Support Program (PSP), or Job Placement Employment and Training (JPET)

While Centrelink practices are changing, the following overview provides background information in relation to the JSCI and other acronyms that are often used in connection with the YP⁴ trial.

When a person applies to Centrelink for income support, if they are seeking employment and are deemed eligible for Newstart or Youth Allowance, their level of relative disadvantage is assessed. This assessment is initially undertaken by a Centrelink Customer Service Officer, and requires clients to complete the Looking for Work Questionnaire. Answers to this questionnaire subsequently inform the JSCI score. The JSCI quantifies the level of disadvantage and the extent of the barriers that a person will face in seeking employment. They may be referred to the Job Network, funded by DEWR, with responsibility to assist people to obtain employment. Depending on the issues that are disclosed, the Looking for Work Questionnaire can trigger a Special Needs flag, a Disability or Personal Factors flag. Clients that trigger a Special Needs flag (SNA) are then typically referred to a Centrelink social worker or psychologist for the Job Seeker Supplementary Assessment (JSA).

Whilst undergoing the JSA, a client may be deemed 'not job ready'. Program options such as Personal Support Program (PSP) are then

considered. Clients can be referred to PSP for up to two years for case management that is designed to overcome their barriers to employment. The primary aim of PSP is *“to assist people with multiple non-vocational barriers to achieve economic and/or social outcomes that are relevant and appropriate to them. These outcomes are expected to be matched to the abilities, capacities and circumstances of the participants”* (Brotherhood of St Laurence, Hanover Welfare Services & Melbourne Citymission 2005: 14). PSP utilises a case management model that emphasises strong connections and referrals to appropriate local services. It is currently administered by DEWR. While engaged in PSP, participants are exempt from the activity testing requirements that are applicable to other job seekers (Brotherhood of St Laurence et al 2005: 15).

After undertaking the JSA, some clients may be deemed ‘job ready’, and yet still face severe barriers to employment. Such individuals are classified as requiring Intensive Support – Customised Assistance (ISCA) and are eligible for high levels of support when referred to the Job Network.

One of the problems with the JSA is that it relies on clients’ disclosure during the initial JSCI interview in order to trigger the Special Needs flag. According to a 2005 interim report by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Hanover Welfare Services and Melbourne Citymission, this can be somewhat problematic. Indeed Centrelink staff report that clients are often reluctant to disclose issues *“as they just want to get payments started”* (Brotherhood of St Laurence et al 2005: 38).

JPET (Job Placement and Employment Training) accepts referrals more broadly. It is a service for young homeless and unemployed people aged 15-21. These people can access a JPET service as well as a service through the Job Network. JPET is delivered by community based organisations and would often include outreach, case management and group work from a youth-friendly platform. JPET participants include some students, as well as the YP⁴ target group of unemployed young people.

Prior to November 2004, the JSCI was administered only to those individuals who were registered as unemployed and actively seeking work. Currently the JSCI is also administered to individuals in receipt of the Supporting Parenting Payment and Disability Support Pension, however this is done on a voluntary basis. There are three questions included in the JSCI which elicit information about the jobseeker’s housing status and stability. These questions are as follows:

Are you currently living in emergency or temporary accommodation?
For example, a refuge, emergency, transitional or support accommodation, a hostel, boarding house, hotel, short stays in caravan parks, temporarily staying with friends, living in a squat, sleeping out, in a car or tent or have nowhere to stay?

Yes

No

If NO

How long have you lived at your current address?

More than 12 months

Less than 12 months

If less than 12 months

How often have you moved in the past year?

0 – 3 moves

4 or more moves

Those individuals who answer 'yes' to the first of these questions, or '4 or more moves' to the last question can reasonably be understood to be homeless or (in the latter instance) at serious risk of homelessness.

According to DEWR there were 900,208 Australians who had an active JSCI score as at August 2005. More than half (482,518) of these people were aged 18 – 35. The following table serves to illustrate the number of individuals who DEWR have identified as being homeless, or at serious risk of homelessness, based on their responses to the questions about accommodation contained in the JSCI. Unlike both our point-in-time and annual estimates, which used an inclusive factor of 40 per cent jobseekers, these estimates are based on a narrower definition of unemployment. That is, those with an active JSCI score are generally eligible for Newstart or Youth Allowance (Other).

Table 14: Estimated number of Australians who are both homeless and unemployed, based on active JSCI scores as at August 2005.

Total Australians with an active JSCI score	Total Australians with an active JSCI score (Homeless)	Australians aged 18 – 35 with an active JSCI score	Australians aged 18 – 35 with an active JSCI score (Homeless)
900,208	85,538	482,518	53,703

Source: DEWR. Figures as at 17/08/2005

Similar figures are also available for Victoria, with 203,047 Victorians identified as having an active JSCI score as at August 2005. Of these 107,429 were aged 18 – 35 and 11,610 of the 18 – 35 age group were homeless.

Table 15: Estimated number of Victorians who are both homeless and unemployed based on active JSCI scores as at August 2005.

Total Victorians with an active JSCI score	Total Victorians with an active JSCI score (Homeless)	Victorians aged 18 – 35 with an active JSCI score	Victorians aged 18 – 35 with an active JSCI score (Homeless)
203,047	18,106	107,429	11,610

Figures as at 17/08/2005

For the purposes of systematically identifying individuals who would be potentially eligible for YP⁴ and inviting them (by SMS) to participate in the trial, YP⁴ secured information from DEWR about the total number of individuals in each of the YP⁴ catchment areas:

- Whose response to JSCI questions 14 and 15 demonstrate homelessness AND
- Who are eligible for Intensive Support- Customised Assistance from the Job Network (i.e. disadvantaged) AND
- Are aged 18 to 35 years, except for those in the vicinity of Melbourne Citymission's Frontyard (central Melbourne) who must be aged between 18 and 25 years AND
- Have a mobile phone

Table 16: YP⁴ eligible homeless jobseekers in the catchment areas according to JSCI data from DEWR June 2005

Site	Number with mobile phones	Total number within catchment area
Frankston (postcodes: 3196 3197 3198 3199 3200 3201 3910 3911 3912 3913 3915 3930 3977)	293	418
Central Melbourne (postcodes: 3143, 3144, 3161, 3000, 3001, 3002, 3002, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3008, 3031, 3032, 3039, 3044, 3050, 3051, 3052, 3053, 3054, 3056, 3057, 3058, 3060, 3065, 3066, 3067, 3068, 3121, 3141, 3142, 3181, 3182, 3183, 3184, 3185, 3186, 3205, 3206, 3207, 8003, 8004, 8005, 8006, 8007, 8008, 8009, 8010, 8500, 8507, 8557, 8659, 8865, 8873)	963 (424 aged 18-25)	1467 (677 aged 18 – 25)
Cheltenham (postcodes: 3142, 3144, 3148, 3161, 3162, 3163, 3165, 3166, 3167, 3168, 3169, 3172, 3183, 3185, 3188, 3189, 3190, 3191, 3192, 3193, 3194, 3195, 3196, 3197, 3202, 3204)	223	329
Bendigo (postcodes: 3550, 3551, 3555, 3556, or 3557)	295	444
TOTAL	1,774	2658

Estimating the number of young homeless jobseekers: A methodological comparison

Within the preceding sections, we have utilised three different approaches to estimating the number of young homeless jobseekers across Australia, Victoria and within each of the four YP⁴ trial sites. The following table is presented as a way of comparing our findings using the point-in-time, annual and rolling data.

Table 17: Estimated number of homeless jobseekers aged 18 – 35 by data type for Australia, Victoria and YP⁴ trial sites

	Point-in-time estimate of homeless jobseekers aged 18 - 35	Estimated range of annual homeless jobseekers aged 18 - 35	Rolling estimate of homeless unemployed ³ aged 18 – 35
Australia	14,993	42,048 – 63,709	53,703
Victoria	3,343	15,323 – 23,217	11,610
YP ⁴ trial sites	1,187	5,441 – 8,244	2,658

Clearly, all methods of estimating numbers of homeless persons and numbers of homeless jobseekers have limitations. As researchers think further about estimates and reflect on these limitations, we must expect that estimates will change, as has been the case with classification of indigenous homes, inclusion of caravan park dwellers, and the revision of the earlier estimate of 80,000 homeless jobseekers annually in Australia. While our estimates have been carefully prepared, they are subject to future revision as we benefit from further work in this developing area of estimation of homeless populations.

Young homeless jobseekers: A socio-demographic profile

While it is useful to be able to estimate the number of young homeless jobseekers, it is also important to have some understanding as to the demographic profile of these individuals. What characteristics do young homeless jobseekers share, and how do these characteristics compare with the wider Australian community?

We encountered many barriers to estimating the number of young homeless jobseekers. Arguably however, we experienced even more difficulties in trying to develop a useful demographic profile. Although

³ Refers to individuals in receipt of either Newstart or Youth Allowance (other) as per the narrower DEWR definition of unemployment.

limited demographic information is available through a number of sources, we found that there was no single data set that accurately portrayed the demographic characteristics of young homeless jobseekers. Therefore in order to develop a demographic profile of young homeless jobseekers aged 18 – 35, we have collated data from three different sources. These are as follows:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census
- National Data Collection Agency SAAP Statistical Supplement
- Department of Workplace Relations (DEWR)

We used parameters identified by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003, 2004) to request ABS demographic information for all unemployed people aged 18 – 35 who were:

- Living in improvised homes, tents and sleeping out (excluding overseas visitors and Australian residents who were on camping holidays)
- People who indicated that they had “no usual address”
- People who were in boarding houses (excluding owners, staff and people who reported a usual address either elsewhere in Australia and overseas)

Not included in this profile are people who were living in SAAP supported accommodation or were marginally housed in caravan parks as at census night 2001. Complete Census information is not routinely collected for all people living in improvised homes, tents or sleeping out. Often these individuals are required to complete only the Special Short Form, which contains very limited demographic information. Overall the ABS was able to provide demographic information for approximately 54,910 (55 per cent) of the 99,900 individuals who Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003) identified as being homeless on the night of the 2001 Census.

The National Data Collection Agency (NDCA) SAAP Statistical Supplement contains information regarding a wide range of demographic variables for all unemployed SAAP users aged 18 – 35. However, not all homeless people access SAAP services. In fact this figure could be as low as 33 per cent, with only one homeless person accessing SAAP services, for every two who do not. Conversely, information for some SAAP clients may have been included more than once. The NDCA have provided information based on the number of closed support periods during 2003-2004. It is indeed possible that

some individuals may have required more than one period of SAAP support during this time.

Similar doubts also exist as to the representativeness of the DEWR data. As outlined previously, Parkinson and Horn (2002:29) found that only 22 per cent of JSCI scores accurately recorded instability of residence. Given these limitations, the following demographic profile should be utilised with caution.

Gender

While numbers of women and men in the general population are approximately equal, there are more men than women among homeless people in general, and among homeless jobseekers. According to information obtained from the NDCA and DEWR, males account for approximately 59 per cent of all homeless jobseekers aged 18 – 35. However figures obtained from the ABS indicate that this figure could be as high as 69.4 per cent. Given that males currently represent 50.2 per cent of Australia's total population aged 18 – 35, it is clear that men are over-represented among Australia's young homeless jobseekers.

At the Victorian level these figures are slightly lower, with males accounting for between 56.5 and 66.3 per cent of all homeless jobseekers aged 18 – 35. However given that males currently represent 49.9 per cent of Victoria's total population aged 18-35, they are still over-represented among Victoria's young homeless jobseekers.

Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander

According to DEWR, of the 53,703 homeless Australians aged 18 – 35 who have an active JSCI score, 6,870 (12.8 per cent) identify as being either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Similar figures are also available from the NDCA, who report that in 2003 – 2004 approximately 17 per cent of all SAAP clients were indigenous.

In Victoria these figures were much lower, with DEWR and the NDCA estimating 4.1 and 4.4 per cent of Indigenous clients respectively.

According to the 2001 Census, 2.7 per cent of Australians and 0.6 per cent of Victorians aged 18 – 35 are indigenous. It is therefore apparent that Indigenous people are grossly over-represented among young homeless jobseekers at both an Australian and Victorian level.

Labour force status

According to the ABS, there were 22,863 individuals aged 18 – 35 who indicated that they had no usual address, or were living in boarding houses, improvised homes, tents and sleeping out on census night 2001. Of these individuals, the ABS estimates that 3,854 or 17 per cent were unemployed and actively seeking work.

This figure however, does not include homeless individuals who were residing in SAAP accommodation on census night 2001. The NDCA estimate that 28.4 per cent of SAAP clients are unemployed and actively seeking work immediately prior to undertaking a period of SAAP support.

Highest education level obtained

According to both DEWR and the ABS, approximately 60 per cent of Australia's young homeless jobseekers have obtained a highest education level of Year 11 or below. Most homeless jobseekers aged 18 – 35 have left school earlier and have received less education than other young people within the wider Australian population.

In Victoria it is estimated that 57.6 – 59.6 per cent of young homeless jobseekers will have obtained a highest education level of Year 11 or below.

Ex-offender status

According to DEWR, of the 53,703 homeless Australian aged 18 – 35 who have an active JSCI score, 11,694 (21.8 per cent) have been identified as ex-offenders.

Similar figures are also available at a state level. Of the 11,610 Victorians aged 18 – 35 who have an active JSCI score, 2,261 (19.5 per cent) have been identified as ex-offenders.

Unfortunately similar data is not available through the NDCA or the ABS. We are also not able to make any comparison to the wider Australian population, as information regarding ex-offender status is not currently collected by the ABS.

Young homeless jobseekers: Outcome benchmarks

The partner agencies initiated the YP⁴ trial of joining up services because they were dissatisfied with the outcomes they were achieving with homeless jobseekers (Campbell et al 2003; Horn 2004). Campbell et al (2003:3) argue that “existing forms of housing and employment assistance available to [young homeless jobseekers] are ineffective and wasteful...due to the manner in which assistance is constructed and delivered, as well as the state of the contemporary housing and employment markets”. In particular, the foundation document and the trial proposal indicate that housing services have poor outcomes in relation to employment, and employment services have poor housing outcomes.

YP⁴ was designed and funded as a trial, with ‘treatment’ and ‘control’ groups rather than as an intervention with evaluation of outcomes in comparison with those of existing interventions. We understand that one of the reasons for this design was the paucity of established outcome benchmarks for existing interventions. The trial design compensates for this by including the ‘control’ group that will have outcomes tracked in the same way as the ‘treatment’ group. These control outcomes will be the main point of comparison with the intervention outcomes. Nevertheless, it will be relevant to situate the outcomes for YP⁴ participants as much as possible in relation to other recorded outcomes for homeless jobseekers aged 18-35. As the trial progresses and other outcome evaluations of housing and employment assistance become available, YP⁴ outcomes will be placed in the context of other recorded outcomes for this target group.

In the following paragraphs we summarise the outcome benchmarks available at this time, including those from SAAP and those discussed more fully in the foundation and trial proposal documents (Campbell et al 2003; Horn 2004). These documents identified that in general while SAAP services collect data about employment, employment services do not collect systematic data about housing.

Table 18: Labour force status of SAAP clients immediately before and after a period of support July 2003 – June 2004 (per cent)

	Closed support periods in which clients needed assistance in employment and training		All closed support periods	
	Before	After	Before	After
Employed full-time	1.8	6.1	2.7	3.5
Employed part-time/casual	7.1	13.3	6.2	7.2
Unemployed (looking for work)	48.3	40.5	28.4	26.2
Not in the labour force	42.8	40.2	62.7	63.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: SAAP National Data Collection Agency Annual Report 2003 – 2004 (p.69)

Table excludes high volume records and have been weighted to adjust for non-participation/client non-consent

As shown in Table 18, SAAP support appears to have a small positive impact on employment status, with a 0.8 and 1.0 per cent increase in full-time and part-time employment respectively. Overall there was a 2.2 per cent decrease in unemployment. Improvements in employment status were more marked in cases where clients presented to SAAP as requiring assistance with employment and/or training.

Quantifiable outcomes are less available in relation to housing, although it would appear that approximately 33 per cent of all PSP clients require accommodation assistance (Brotherhood of St Laurence et al 2005:34). According to Campbell et al (2003:10) however, “the housing outcomes currently being achieved by the young unemployed as a result of homelessness assistance, more often than not, are not matched to their needs and are prone to breakdown”. They state that in 2000 – 2001 the Transitional Housing Management (THM) service was able to secure public housing tenancies for only 31 per cent of its clients. A further 21 per cent were moved into some form of private rental, including boarding house and rooming house accommodation. Of the 48 per cent remaining, 7 per cent appeared to ‘cycle’ within the SAAP/THM system and 8 per cent moved into temporary accommodation with family or friends. Overall it would appear that

security of tenure was achieved in less than 50 per cent of all cases (Campbell et al 2003:7).

Ideally, we would have liked to present more outcome benchmarks for interventions with the target group. However, like the demographic data, this information is not readily available. Although we will continue to pursue outcome benchmarks for our next report, it is anticipated that the best comparison will result from comparing the different groups of young homeless jobseekers within the YP⁴ trial.

Conclusion

This report has presented a socio-demographic profile of homeless jobseekers aged 18-35 years in Australia, Victoria and the YP⁴ trial sites. Throughout, we have drawn attention to the educated guesswork involved in preparing this profile, and have made it clear that these are estimates only, open to future revision as more information becomes available.

In preparing this report we have been impressed by and have drawn heavily upon previous work by the ABS, Chamberlain and MacKenzie (Chamberlain 1999; Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004, 2003), Horn (2004) and Campbell, Horn and Nicholson (2003). We have benefited from advice from these colleagues, and those listed in our acknowledgements section.

Following the work of colleagues, we have presented point-in-time estimates and annual estimates for homeless jobseekers aged 18-35 in Australia, Victoria and the YP⁴ trial sites. We have discussed the difficulty of estimating annual homelessness in Australia on the basis of SAAP service usage data, because of the lack of clarity about the relationship between the number of SAAP users and total homelessness. In the absence of an accepted formula, we have taken Chris Chamberlain's advice that for every homeless person who uses SAAP services there are one to two homeless people who do not. Thus we have presented annual estimates as ranges rather than numbers. Working with these estimates is further complicated by evidence that while Victoria has about one-fifth of Australia's homeless people, it has at least one-third of Australia's SAAP usage.

Estimating unemployment among homeless people has also proved difficult, with the ABS publications not including this information. SAAP annual reports include employment status, but these reports do not

cover all homeless people. We purchased data from the ABS, and have presented it, although the ABS has warned that this data is not as complete and reliable as most of their data. The National Homelessness Strategy uses a figure of 40 per cent unemployment for homeless people aged 18-35, but it seems to us that this must include all people who are seeking more paid employment, that is jobseekers, rather than the more narrowly defined 'unemployed' who are eligible for participation in the YP⁴ trial.

Following the population and gender estimates, we have presented further socio-demographic details in relation to homeless jobseekers aged 18-35, based on customised data purchased for this purpose from the ABS. Alongside this we have presented partial socio-demographic data from other sources. These details are based on the best available data but we would consider them far from accurate.

Finally the report discusses outcome benchmarks, mainly to note the lack of extensive comparative data, and the wisdom of designing YP⁴ as a trial with the ability to compare outcomes for the group receiving joined up services with the outcomes for the group receiving standard services.

This report has shed light on the trial's experience of much slower than anticipated recruitment. Clearly demand for services reflects annual homelessness rather than point-in-time homelessness. The estimates in this report make it clear that it is likely to take around 12 months to recruit 520 homeless jobseekers aged 18-35 into the trial across the four sites.

The experience of preparing this report has brought home to us that people wishing to provide joined up services face many barriers and delays when attempting to access the data required for service planning. We would strongly advise colleagues to allow much more time and resources that would initially appear reasonable for the preparation of material of this type.

Another implication of this research is that if governments are serious about pursuing joined up services as policy, the establishment of a responsive and streamlined data clearinghouse for Australia would be extremely useful.

Appendix 1

Membership of YP⁴ Ethics and Evaluation Advisory Group as at 30 June 2005

Professor Paul Smyth (Chairperson)
Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne,
and General Manager, Social Action and Research, Brotherhood of St Laurence

Professor Jeff Borland
Head, Department of Economics, University of Melbourne

Veronica Sheen
Manager Research and Development, Hanover Welfare Services

Ken Marchingo
Chief Executive Officer, Loddon Mallee Housing Services

Michael Horn
Manager Research and Social Policy Unit, Melbourne Citymission

Claire Nyblom
Manager Youth Homelessness Services, Melbourne Citymission

David Roberts
Evaluation and Benchmarking Unit, Centrelink – Canberra

Paul Mattsson
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John Assemani
Housing and Homelessness Section, Victoria State Office, Department of Family and
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Allegra Walsh
Senior Project Officer, Youth Homelessness Action Plan, Housing Services,
Department of Human Services

Louise Yaxley
Policy, Planning and Review Officer, Employment Programs, Department of Victorian
Communities

Janet Chimonyo
Policy Officer, Jobs Australia

Annette Gill
Policy Advisor, National Employment Services Association

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