Positioning Paper

Categories of Indigenous 'homeless' people and good practice responses to their needs

authored by

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for the

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

Queensland Research Centre

July 2003

AHURI Positioning Paper No. 53

ISSN: 1834-9250

ISBN: 1 920758 58 5

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This material was produced with funding from the Commonwealth of Australia and the Australian States and Territories. AHURI Ltd gratefully acknowledges the financial and other support it has received from the Australian, State and Territory governments, without which this work would not have been possible.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AHA	Aboriginal Housing Authority
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CoS	City of Sydney (Local Authority)
CPU	Crime Prevention Unit (South Australia)
DATSIP	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (Queensland)
DCC	Darwin City Council
DHS	Department of Human Services (Victoria)
FaCS	Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services
HMAC	Housing Ministers' Advisory Committee
Koorie	Name used for Aboriginal people in Victoria and southern NSW
Murri	Name used for Aboriginal people in Queensland and parts of northern & western NSW
NYCH	National Youth Coalition for Housing
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This research is concerned with the phenomenon of small groups of Indigenous people living in public settings, despite in many cases the advent of formal Town Camps and a range of Indigenous housing options having been established in many regional centres throughout the late 20th century (especially post 1970). Although these people are often categorised as 'homeless', a reading of the literature clearly demonstrates the difficulties of conceptualising either mainstream 'homelessness' or Indigenous 'homelessness'. A number of Indigenous itinerant people see themselves as being both 'placed' and 'homed', and prefer instead to refer to themselves with such labels as 'parkies', 'goomies', 'long grassers', or 'river campers'. Indigenous homeless people can be further characterised as those who do not pay for accommodation, have a visible profile (socialising, sheltering, drinking, arguing and fighting in public), have low incomes of which a substantial part is often spent on alcohol, have generally few possessions (minimal clothes and bedding), and usually conform to a 'beat' of places where they camp and socialise in particular public or semi-public areas. They are public place dwellers. 'Public place dwelling' is a preferred nomenclature by the current authors as opposed to 'homeless' or 'itinerants', as these latter terms have specific, and sometimes narrowly construed, meanings that are not always helpful in analysis and strategic thinking.

Project Aims

This project has two aims. The first is to examine the definitions and constructs of 'Indigenous homelessness' found in the literature and to develop a set of categories of Indigenous public place dwellers based on their complex range of needs (accommodation, health, transport, counselling, etc). This is referred to as the 'Category Analysis'. The second aim is to carry out an evaluative analysis of a minimum of three response strategies, which are being used to address the needs of particular categories of homeless or public place dwelling Indigenous people, and which appear to qualify as 'good practice' examples from preliminary investigation (desktop and phone interview). This is referred to as the 'Good Practice Analysis'. By profiling 'Good Practice' responses relevant to the 'needs' categories of homeless people, it is hoped that Indigenous and government agencies will have some benchmarks from which to model or adapt designs for local policy and programs.

Aims of This Paper

The purpose of this Positioning Paper is to locate the project in relation to the available body of research and policy regarding Indigenous homelessness, and to identify any knowledge gaps that may exist. This includes a preliminary examination of categories of Indigenous homelessness ('Category Analysis'). The paper also outlines methods that are to be employed in the evaluation of good practice responses ('Good Practice Analysis').

Policy Context

The Positioning Paper contains a policy context overview that aims to: (i) position this paper in relation to current policies, (ii) identify categories of homelessness that are inherent in policy or that inform policy, and (iii) identify policy gaps. A review of the policy context relevant to Indigenous 'homelessness' reveals a number of weaknesses in conceptualisation of the problem, policy derivation and breadth of program response. Not only is there a degree to which policy objectives and strategies fail to embrace the complex nature of the issue at hand, but while some objectives are clearly and ambitiously stated they are not accompanied by tangible, practical strategies that have been designed to realise them.

While each policy document recognises the complex and multi-dimensional nature of 'homelessness', and the many structural factors that can cause, perpetuate and prevent it, many go on to adopt a limited or narrow definition of 'homelessness'. It was clearly demonstrated in a National Analysis of Indigenous homelessness response prepared by Memmott et al (2002) that 'homelessness' is not always simply created by a lack of 'housing', nor simply addressed by its provision. For example, the SAAP definition is tied categorically

to the constructs of housing and inadequate access to a safe and secure variety of housing, without considering those chronically homeless who have chosen to pursue a lifestyle of 'living rough' for a number of complicated reasons, and who consider public space their 'home'. These needs are likely to render them ineligible for SAAP funding benefits.

Many government policy areas are relevant to 'homelessness', from Native Title, cultural heritage, health, and employment, to criminal justice. Memmott et al have previously identified the necessity for undertaking holistic approaches to Indigenous 'homelessness' that are 'whole-of-government' (2002:58-59). But while the Housing Ministers Advisory Committee's policy statement for the ten years from 2001 concurs with this assessment, it does not provide information regarding strategies to achieve such an overarching approach. And the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness in its efforts to delineate a national 'homelessness' strategy does not list any strategies, which will specifically encourage the interaction between its initiatives and those being undertaken by other agencies that it views as important.

One of the most significant results of governments' adopting a definition or conceptualization of 'homelessness' that relates solely to housing provision, is that their response is limited to housing or accommodation options. A useful example of what such a string of assumptions can miss is provided by the itinerant Action Plan or Strategy defined for Darwin and Palmerston (Memmott & Fantin 2001:90-102). It not only incorporates an accommodation component, but also response elements related to patrolling, education, and alcohol as well as elements pertaining to the entire region from which the homeless and public place dwelling population derives.

Queensland's policy document (Qld, DATSIP 2003A) provides a useful example of how the needs of Indigenous homeless people can become confused with community and government ire over anti-social behaviour and the desire to address it. While it is important to address issues related to the negative behaviour of homeless people who occupy public spaces and those who socialise within them, it is vital that other components of a strategy are aimed at addressing their health and well-being needs. It is also not appropriate to view the entire issue of Indigenous 'homelessness' through the lens of anti-social behaviour. The two are not necessarily synonymous, and at most, are overlapping problems. Efforts must be made to educate community members about the pathways that people follow into these circumstances and the existence of alternate cross-cultural values concerning residential styles and behaviour; in addition to developing pro-active methods for reducing recidivist anti-social behaviours.

Finally, both policy and the categories of 'homelessness' addressed by policy generally do not appear to be informed by extensive empirical research (or if they are, they do not state or reveal the grounds for such). Consequently mainstream definitions of 'homelessness' pervade policy where Indigenous definitions of 'homelessness' are clearly required. It also appears that few solid goals for evaluating the success of various policies are stated. This criticism also applies to specific program operations. It is essential to clearly define the means by which this evaluation might occur, and what indicators are used to determine success or improvement in a given situation. The indicators of success in achieving the delineated goals would need to be varied to reflect the various categories of 'homelessness' and public place dwelling in each given cultural context. Further to these points, it is also necessary to recognise that the time period over which change or improvement can be realistically expected is often longer than the timeframes assigned to many policies and programs within the government funding cycles.

Constructs of Mainstream Homelessness

Section 3.0 of the Positioning Paper begins with an exploration of mainstream Australian constructs of homelessness. 'Homelessness' is a visible phenomenon in Australia in the early twenty-first century, of which Indigenous people are too significantly a part. In spite of intensive study, and various attempts to address the issue, homelessness remains part of Australia's social landscape. The term itself remains a contested one, wherein a multiplicity of meanings reflect a range of individual situations and experiences (Coleman 2000B:20).

The initial discussion of mainstream categories of homelessness considers the major definitions that have currency in Australia's policy and service delivery environment today, predominantly those used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the peak mechanism of service delivery to homeless people, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). A conflict is revealed between the kind of definition adopted by the ABS, which purports to objectively reflect the community's standards of adequate housing, and the kind adopted by SAAP, which incorporates people's subjective perceptions of their situation. Chamberlain1, is one of the main proponents of a 'cultural definition' such as the that adopted by the ABS, which delineates primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness (refer Section 3.2). He argues that it is unwise to include the subjective element of people's perception and uses a comparison of non-Indigenous and Indigenous people living in improvised dwellings to support this argument (1999:12). This example neatly segues into the complex issue of Indigenous homelessness and how to define it. The current authors argue that the objectivity sought by 'cultural definitions' is undermined by the existence of very different cultural contexts within Australian society, each of which may maintain their own values and meanings related to housing. 'Cultural definitions' are founded on the principle that homelessness must be delineated in terms of the distance certain people are from meeting a commonly held community standard. However, it is vital to recognise that the needs of many Indigenous Australians will not be met by a applying a community standard drawn from the broader community.

While these mainstream definitions generally agreed in these mainstream definitions that homelessness represents a continuum of experience including 'rooflessness', as well as unsafe and inadequate housing conditions, and unstable tenancy arrangements, what Coleman (2000B) argues they do not properly address is the meaning of 'home' for chronically homeless people. For those who have abandoned mainstream housing options and connected themselves and their daily activities to certain public spaces, the condition of being homelessness is about having no control over, or legitimacy in, the places they have chosen to call home. Approaches, which fail to recognise that these public place dwellers do not want to be readily reintegrated into the mainstream, can have little real success in improving their quality of life.

Constructs of Indigenous Homelessness

Recent definitions of homelessness in the Indigenous context have recognised that it is a multi-layered and multi-dimensional concept, differing both qualitatively and quantitatively from non-Indigenous homelessness in terms of its form, nature, context, causes and visibility. (Keys Young 1998, Berry et al 2001, ABS 2001 and Memmott & Fantin 2001.) While both groups may lack shelter, or be 'at risk' of losing the shelter they do have, many more Indigenous people occupy accommodation that is substandard, does not meet their basic needs and risks their health. This situation is exacerbated by high rates of mobility among Indigenous people, who are either fulfilling cultural obligations, escaping extraordinary rates of violence or simply accessing services not available in their own communities. Assessing when a residence has become overcrowded is difficult given that crowding is a culturally specific construct and there is a general paucity of Indigenous models of it. This in turn impacts on the definition and measurement of Indigenous homelessness, particularly as it is conceived within the categories of primary and secondary homelessness. It therefore comprises a significant knowledge gap that makes the implementation of related public policy seriously deficient.

While Census analysis has clearly demonstrated that Indigenous citizens are far more likely to experience homelessness than their non-Indigenous counterparts, the former remains the hardest category of people to enumerate as accuracy is heavily reliant on the local knowledge of the collectors and their awareness of Indigenous homeless individuals and groups. It has been argued that the Census does not fully enumerate the homeless population, particularly

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1 See also Chamberlain and Johnson 2000A & B, and Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992 for further discussion of a 'cultural definition' of homelessness.

the Indigenous members who represent a disproportionately high percentage of its number. A more informed empirical understanding of the daily lifestyle, problems and needs experienced by Indigenous public place dwellers would improve the Census workers' ability to seek out these people.

From our review of the available literature on Indigenous homelessness and pubic place dwelling, we have developed the following set of five working categories, which underpin this Positioning Paper and elaborate on an earlier, seminal classification produced by Keys and Young (1998).

1. Lack of access to any stable shelter, accommodation or housing - living in public places.

   This is the category of people who dwell in public space and consider these places to be their home. While there are a significant proportion of people who would not be persuaded to alter their lifestyle, there are also others who join these groups on a temporary basis. This life of public place dwelling, chronic or not, is often bound up with excessive alcohol consumption. In this category we can initially differentiate at least two sub-categories:

   (i) Those who have come to town to have a good time socialising and drinking and who are prepared to do this by camping out in public places, but who intend to eventually return home, and do not have a strong sense of attachment to the public places in which they camp;

   (ii) Those who live a permanent public place dwelling lifestyle, have cut off their ties with home communities long ago, and who accept that their lifestyle will remain consistent. They have a sense of belonging to a local place and the shifting community of public place dwellers with whom they socialise. The people in this sub-category are equivalent to the chronically homeless as defined in the mainstream. This group may see recognition of their rights to public space and access to storage and ablution facilities as higher priorities than conventional accommodation. Their failed attempts in the public housing sector will have been left many years behind them.

   Public place dwelling groups are thus likely to comprise a core of permanent public place dwellers and some visitors who are temporarily attached. Within the Positioning Paper, the variety of reasons why people come to live this way are explored.

2. Transient homelessness'.

   Another category of people who spend time with public place dwellers occasionally are those who can be described as the transient homeless. These people experience temporary, intermittent and often cyclical patterns of homelessness due to transient and mobile lifestyles, living in temporary arrangements without secure tenure (e.g. staying with friends or relatives, living in squats, improvised dwellings or boarding houses and at times moving into parks and public places). However, Indigenous societies and communities are characterised by high frequencies of residential mobility both between and within settlements, and it does not necessarily follow that such mobile individuals should be construed as homeless. A number of researchers have identified two general categories of mobility: firstly that which is an expression of individual autonomy and reflects enduring social and cultural practices and values, and secondly that which is problematic and expressive of instability and lack of support. It is essential to grasp the nature of these opposing concepts of residential mobility, particularly in terms of certain categories of homelessness.

3. Spiritual forms of homelessness.

   These may derive from: (a) separation from traditional land, (b) separation from family and kinship networks, or (c) a crisis of personal identity wherein one's understanding or knowledge of how one relates to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused. Keys and Young (1998) introduced this Indigenous-specific concept to the discussion of homelessness, and related it directly to post-contact dispossession. Berry et al (2001) elaborated on the concept further introducing ideas about separation from

traditional lands, and family and kinship networks, as well as an erosion of Aboriginal identity. The existence of forms of 'spiritual homelessness' was widely endorsed at the National Indigenous Homelessness Forum (March 2003). Unfortunately there are no empirical studies of this category of homelessness for particular Indigenous groups. In the next stage of this analysis the authors intend to see how concepts from a number of bodies of relevant literature (eg the anthropology and the geography of Aboriginal Australia, Deaths in Custody and the Stolen Generation Inquiry) can inform an understanding of this category.

4. Crowding, where it causes considerable stress to families and communities.

   It is generally held that Indigenous Australians live in more crowded conditions and in a poorer standard of housing in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians. However, any identification or analysis of homelessness that encompasses notions of community standards for housing, residential mobility, household stress or insecurity must be founded on a reliable model of Indigenous crowding. The derivation of such a crowding model is a complex issue involving different cultural constructs of household stress. It is one that has been hardly advanced by social science research. Crowding impacts on the definition and measurement of Indigenous homelessness, particularly as it is conceived of within the categories of primary and secondary homelessness. To know little about it comprises a significant knowledge gap and seriously affects the implementation of related public policy.

5. Individuals escaping an unsafe or unstable family circumstance.

   The individuals in this category are typically women and young people forced into crisis accommodation by family violence. Their precarious situation puts them in danger of being drawn into a public place dwelling lifestyle which they might otherwise have never considered. Further associated with such homelessness in regional centres and capital cities, are 'at-risk' lifestyles involving alcohol and drug abuse, and poor nutrition and health care.

In the second part of this project the current authors intend to revisit the available empirical studies on Indigenous homelessness collected as apart of the literature review, to more closely reveal how Indigenous homeless or public place dwelling persons were categorised and defined there. This information will be incorporated into the Final Report of the authors' overall analysis.

Good Practice Analysis

Section 5.0 of this Positioning Paper contains a classification of types of responses to Indigenous homelessness and public place dwelling, and the selection of several these responses for documentation as good practice examples. Fifteen categories of responses to Indigenous homelessness are summarised, based on an earlier National Survey by Memmott et al (2002), which in turn described in detail some 73 response programs, activities or actions. Collectively these responses address a wide range of needs that reflect the complex circumstances of Indigenous public place dwellers and homeless people. The 15 categories of responses are as follows:

- Legislative approaches.
- Patrols and Outreach services.
- Diversionary Strategies.
- Addressing Anti-Social Behaviours.
- Philosophies and methods of interaction.
- Alcohol strategies.
- Regional strategies.
- Accommodation options.

- Dedicated service centres and gathering places.
- The physical design of public spaces.
- Education strategies.
- Phone-in services.
- Skills and training for field and outreach workers.
- Partnerships.
- Holistic approaches.

One of the problems of categorisation is that when applying certain definitions or constructs of 'homelessness', the social character and diversity of Indigenous groups dwelling in public spaces may be oversimplified and thus their needs may be at best, misunderstood and minimally serviced, or at worst, overlooked and not addressed. So, the categories used to define 'homeless' people directly influence the perception of the needs of this group. An aim of the Final Report of this project will be to clarify further the relation between categories of Indigenous homelessness and public place dwelling on the one hand, and categories of responses to the needs of such people on the other.

Which responses are relevant to a particular place or group will vary across the continent depending on the local environmental and socio-economic context and the history of culture contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It is from within this body of knowledge of responses that the current authors are selecting good practice case studies for profiling in the next stage of this project. The selection criteria for these case studies are outlined in Section 4 of the Positioning Paper, whilst the findings will be presented in the Final Report on this project.

1 INTRODUCTION

Ensuring and developing pathways out of homelessness is unfortunately not simple, as history has demonstrated it is actually much easier to create homelessness. Pathways out of homelessness inevitably require a continuum of responses and opportunities for individuals and families to access, in order to move onto that pathway. Some people may not be ready to take that pathway then either fall off it or decide to jump off it. However, many individuals and families will successfully move out of homelessness if access is available in a continuum of responses. These include adequate length of support, opportunity to try again and access to appropriate housing options. (Durkay et al 2001:14.)

In public settings, despite in many cases the advent of formal Town Camps and a range of Indigenous housing options having been established in many regional centres throughout the late 20th century (especially post 1970). Although these people are often categorised as 'homeless', a reading of the literature clearly demonstrates the difficulties of conceptualising either mainstream 'homelessness' or Indigenous 'homelessness' (Coleman 2000B). A number of Indigenous itinerant people see themselves as being both 'placed' and 'homed', and prefer instead to refer to themselves with such labels as 'parkies', 'goomies', 'long grassers', or 'river campers'. Indigenous homeless people can be further characterised as those who do not pay for accommodation, have a visible profile (socialising, sheltering, drinking, arguing and fighting in public), have low incomes of which a substantial part is often spent on alcohol, have generally few possessions (minimal clothes and bedding), and usually conform to a 'beat' of places where they camp and socialise in particular public or semi-public areas. They are public place dwellers. 'Public place dwelling' is a preferred nomenclature by the current authors as opposed to 'homeless' or 'itinerants', as these latter terms have specific, and sometimes narrowly construed, meanings that are not always helpful in analysis and strategic thinking. We shall return to this point in due course.

State and Local government, and Indigenous and charitable groups in most capital cities and regional centres of Australia are facing the problem of responding to Indigenous people residing in public and semi-public places. Such people often engage in anti-social behaviour and substance abuse, suffer from poor health, and have a short life expectancy. This is becoming an increasingly prevalent and more complex social problem across the continent. Yet there is very little published literature on the phenomenon. What literature there is, neither comprehensively profiles these people nor provides systematic strategies in response to their needs. Nevertheless many local groups have attempted to respond to their particular situations through a range of strategies, which are sometimes described in unpublished (and often confidential) documents.

1.1 Project Aims

This project has two aims. The first is to examine the definitions of 'Indigenous homelessness' and 'Indigenous itinerancy' found in the literature and to develop a set of categories of Indigenous public place dwellers based on their complex range of needs (accommodation, health, transport, counselling, etc). This is referred to as the 'Category Analysis'. The second aim is to carry out an evaluative analysis of a minimum of three strategies, which are being used to address the needs of particular categories of homeless or public place dwelling Indigenous people, and which appear to qualify as 'good practice' examples from preliminary investigation (desktop and phone interview). This is referred to as the 'Good Practice Analysis'. By profiling 'Good Practice' responses relevant to the 'needs' categories of homeless people, Indigenous and government agencies will have some benchmarks from which to design local policy and programs.

This research builds on an earlier stage of work funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) that compiled and then analysed the literature on strategic responses to Indigenous homelessness, as well as work by Memmott (Memmott & Fantin 2001) done in Darwin. These efforts are discussed shortly. Stakeholders who might benefit from this study include local authorities, State and Territory Housing Departments, charitable organizations, Indigenous organizations, ATSIC Councils, and Indigenous

'homeless' people themselves. In fact, all those concerned with the circumstances of Indigenous people living in public places should stand to benefit from the survey compiled herein. (Memmott et al 2002:2)

1.1.1 Aims of This Paper

The purpose of this positioning paper is to locate the project in relation to the available body of research and policy regarding Indigenous homelessness, and to identify any knowledge gaps that may exist. This includes a preliminary examination of categories of Indigenous homelessness ('Category Analysis'). The paper also outlines methods that are to be employed in the evaluation of good practice responses ('Good Practice Analysis').

1.2 Recent Studies by the Authors that Inform the Current Work

In 2001, Memmott completed a study of Indigenous homelessness in the Darwin area entitled "The Long Grassers: A Strategic Report on Indigenous 'Itinerants' in the Darwin and Palmerston Area" (Memmott & Fantin 2001). Part of this study involved carrying out a limited desktop analysis of the available literature on Indigenous itinerants, illegal campers and squatters. Literature was collected and compiled from some 16 town and urban locations including Darwin, Katherine, and Alice Springs, Cairns, Rockhampton, Townsville, Brisbane, Redfern, Ceduna, Halls Creek (WA), and Port Hedland. (Memmott et al 2002:2). The compiled literature was then analysed with reference to the types of strategies that were recommended or trialled in the various locations. This process is referred to as a 'Response Analysis'.

In early 2002, Memmott was awarded a small grant by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) in order to complete a national 'Response Analysis' of the previously compiled literature. Its aim was to supplement the earlier analysis with further documents from Perth, Adelaide, Port Augusta, Mt Isa, Melbourne, and Sydney. Where possible, materials gathered from the locations first listed were updated (Memmott et al 2002:2). The research monograph that resulted, "A National Analysis Of Strategies Used To Respond To Indigenous Itinerants And Public Place Dwellers," provides an overview of local strategies being used to address the needs and problems of homeless and itinerant Indigenous Australians, many of whom live in public places (Memmott et al 2002).

Previously, Memmott has referred to these people as 'itinerants' (Memmott & Fantin 2001), but the current authors prefer 'public place dwellers' as the former term carries connotations of people in transit and our research has shown this is not always the case. Within homeless groups there is often a significant proportion of people who can be categorised as chronically homeless, and who have annexed a territorial niche within public and semi-public spaces that they regard as their permanent home. These individuals often form the nucleus of a wider group of public space dwelling people; a group whose numbers can swell or decrease across the day or season, as other individuals attach themselves briefly or indefinitely, joining in a carefree lifestyle of outdoor socialising usually characterised by heavy alcohol consumption. Herein lies one of the problems of categorisation; when applying certain categories of 'homelessness' the composition of Indigenous groups dwelling in public spaces may be oversimplified and thus their needs may be at best, misunderstood and minimally serviced, or at worst, overlooked and not addressed. So, the categories used to define 'homeless' people directly influence the perception of the needs of this group. (Memmott et al 2002:2.) For example, the Queensland Government has recently responded to Indigenous public place dwelling in Townsville with a range of homelessness response strategies, while the Mayor believes the core issues to be addressed are alcohol consumption in public places and alcohol-related violence, not 'homelessness' ('National Indigenous Times' 5/2/03).

The 'National Analysis' report (Memmott et al 2002) canvassed a wide repertoire of some 70 or more techniques and approaches to Indigenous public place dwelling in order to raise awareness levels amongst service providers and to provoke debate about contrasting philosophies of how public policy makers should utilise, design or position their service bureaucracies in relation to these people.

The strategies and responses collected for this national analysis report were organized under 15 categories of response (see Table 2 and Section 5.2 of this Positioning Paper for a summary).

The principal criteria by which case studies were judged to be relevant to the National Analysis were as follows:

1. Whether the case studies illustrated responses that addressed the situation of Indigenous public place dwellers, or in a small number of cases, a mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous public place dwellers; in general this excluded a sizeable amount of literature on homelessness that was not culturally specific.
2. Whether published literature and/or unpublished documents were available from which to describe the case studies; where available, these have been collected by the authors.

The body of literature that informed the "Long Grassers Study", the "National Analysis" and the current study has been compiled over several years. Yet it is not a large corpus, and this reflects the paucity of available information on this subject (Memmott et al 2002:2-3)[2].

2 A number of speakers and participants at the National Indigenous Homelessness Forum in March 2003 asserted that Indigenous homelessness had been over researched. The current authors are of the view that such responses are misled. There is a general lack of published well-researched studies on the subject.

2 POLICY CONTEXT OVERVIEW

This project is highly relevant to the Commonwealth, State and Local Government policy domains that are pertinent to the circumstances of homeless, and/or public place dwelling, Indigenous people. The project will provide findings relevant to the design and implementation of policies and programs issuing from all levels of government. It is also relevant to the current AHURI research agenda. The purpose of the following policy context overview is to: (i) position this paper in relation to current policies, (ii) identify categories of Indigenous homelessness that are inherent in policy or that inform policy, and (iii) identify policy gaps.

2.1 Commonwealth Government Policy

There are numerous areas of Commonwealth Government policy that are relevant to Indigenous homelessness and public place dwelling. In fact, because of the complex and multi-dimensional nature of homelessness most domestic policy is relevant to it in some way. For example, the boom in the real estate market of most Australian cities in recent times has been in part stimulated by Commonwealth Government policy (including the first home-buyers incentive scheme). This property boom has directly impacted on Indigenous homelessness in that people have thereby lost access to cheap inner city accommodation. There are reports of some Indigenous homelessness services struggling to find accommodation for the service itself in the increasingly expensive inner city market. (p.c. Dulcie Bronsch, Musgrave Park ATSI Corporation, Brisbane, Nov. 2001.) Commonwealth policies concerned with Native Title, cultural heritage, health, employment, and the criminal justice system are also highly relevant to the issue of Indigenous homelessness. In the National Analysis, Memmott et al (2002:58-59) identified the need for holistic responses to Indigenous homelessness, and the necessity that they be whole-of-government approaches; thus many policy areas are relevant. A thorough examination of policy across government is beyond the scope of the current project; instead an overview of policies that make direct reference to Indigenous homelessness is made.

2.1.1 Housing Minister's Advisory Committee (HMAC)

In 2001 Australia's Housing Ministers "noted the alarming levels of Indigenous homelessness" and made a commitment to work together on responses "that link housing with essential community supports" (Aust, HMAC 2001:2). The Committee's policy statement, 'Building a Better Future,' defined outcomes to be achieved over the next ten years, including better housing and housing services, more housing, improved partnerships with Indigenous people, and coordination of services. It was acknowledged that this required a 'whole of government' approach that ensured greater coordination of housing and housing-related services linked to improved health and well being outcomes (Aust, HMAC 2001:5). The importance of the last two points was noted by Memmott et al (2002:58) in the National Analysis. Yet the Housing Ministers did not provide information regarding strategies that would achieve a 'whole of government' approach (Aust, HMAC 2001). They did however provide a number of strategies to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify and address unmet housing needs of Indigenous people.
2. Improve the capacity of Indigenous community housing organisations and involve Indigenous people in planning and service delivery.
3. Achieve safe, healthy and sustainable housing.
4. Coordinate program administration. (Aust, HMAC 2001:6.)

These objectives and their associated implementation strategies are concerned with improving access to appropriate housing. No strategies were defined which explicitly addressed the "alarming levels of Indigenous homelessness" (Aust, HMAC 2001:2). This policy document implies that to be homeless is to be without housing and that homelessness can alone be addressed by increasing or improving access to housing.

At the time of completing this Positioning Paper in March 2003, the Housing Minister's Advisory Committee, the Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing was holding a National Indigenous Homelessness Forum. In an effort to identify appropriate responses that would minimise Indigenous homelessness, the Forum was to involve Indigenous and mainstream government and non-government stakeholders in discussions of homelessness related issues. (Aust, HMAC 2002.)3

The Victorian Aboriginal Housing Board has been leading a working group on Indigenous homelessness research comprised of Victorian, NSW, NT and Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Service representatives.

2.1.2 The National Homelessness Strategy & the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (CACH)

In 'Working Towards a National Homelessness Strategy', the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (CACH) asserted that the only way to reduce homelessness was to address structural factors that could prevent homelessness. Such factors include: secure employment, income security, housing, family assistance, access to community support, improved health, intellectual and physical disability support, and drug and alcohol programs. (Aust, CACH 2001:8, 14-43.)

CACH lists a number of its goals in relation to Indigenous homelessness, the first of which is to "develop a better understanding of indigenous homelessness and a range of localised responses to it..." (CACH 2001:46). The current project will contribute to the achievement of this goal. Five of the nine goals are housing-related responses to homelessness. This seems to reflect the dominant categorisation of homelessness in terms of housing circumstances. However, there are two goals which reflect a slightly broader understanding of Indigenous homelessness. The first seeks to improve the health and longevity of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, and the second seeks: "To increase and improve awareness and understanding of how the legacy of history continues to affect the emotional and social well-being of indigenous people." (CACH 2001:46.)

CACH lists the following 'priority actions' in response to Indigenous homelessness: (i) it will convene a national forum on the topic to further elaborate its list of priorities for action, and get advice from an Indigenous Community Capacity Building Round Table regarding appropriate employment strategies for marginalised people; (ii) it intends to introduce effective pre- and post-release support programs whose operation will break the cycle of incarcerated people being released into homeless situations; (iii) it will work with the Real Estate Institute of Australia and others to educate them about the discrimination provisions contained in tenancy legislation and will enforce penalties for discrimination; and (iv) it intends to increase the number of Indigenous people employed in housing policy and service provision (Aust, CACH 2001:46-47).

Whilst the action list drawn up by CACH is likely to have some impact on Indigenous homelessness it appears unlikely to fulfil all of the Committee's goals; nor will it address all of the structural factors that were identified earlier in the same document (see above). It seems that greater effort needs to be made in considering responses to Indigenous homelessness. The current authors would suggest that a more detailed understanding of categories of Indigenous public place dwelling and homelessness would assist in this endeavour.

In 2002 the Minister for the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) determined the following priorities for the National Homelessness Strategy:

1. Supporting families in housing stress;
2. Developing information and education tools for young people;
3. Improving access for homeless people to the Job Network and Centrelink;
4. The development of a strategic direction to prevent Indigenous homelessness;

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3 Memmott, Long and Spring presented some findings from the current research at the Forum.

5. Developing strategies that prevent young people who have been in care from becoming homeless; and
6. Developing strategies to prevent people exiting institutional care from becoming homeless. (Aust, FaCS 2003B.)

The FaCS consultation paper on Australian homelessness (Aust, CACH 2001) details a number of related initiatives undertaken by other government agencies including: the Commonwealth-State Working Group on Indigenous Homelessness; Home and Community Care Programs; SAAP IV; the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement; State and Territory Indigenous homelessness strategies and programs; and the National Homelessness Strategy funded demonstration projects (documenting good practice of Safe Houses in remote communities, transition support for people moving between remote communities and metropolitan areas, combined homelessness and parenting support). (Aust, CACH 2001:47.) However, the CACH strategy document does not provide any goals or strategies to encourage interaction between these initiatives.

2.1.3 Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, SAAP, is the Commonwealth Government's support program for people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming so. Currently in its fourth incarnation, SAAP (IV) offers a range of support and supported accommodation services to the community. SAAP (I), was established jointly between Commonwealth, State and Territory governments following a 1983 review of services to homeless people, which recommended that various programs be integrated into a single initiative. The latest evolution of SAAP (IV) contains four strategic themes: (i) client-focused service delivery; (ii) integration and collaboration between agencies; (iii) improved performance, knowledge and skills; and (iv) forging partnerships with the community. (Aust, FaCS 2003A.)

The outcomes that SAAP (IV) is supposed to achieve are:

1. A contribution to the reduction of homelessness,
2. Promotion of self reliance, choice and independence,
3. Effective crisis responses to changing patterns of need, and
4. An increase of partnerships with other service systems to meet needs. (Aust, FaCS 2003A.)

The definition of 'homeless' utilised by SAAP (IV) and contained within the *SAAP Act 1994* (s4.1) is outlined more fully later in this paper. Of significance is that it is tied categorically to the construct of housing; people are homeless if, and only if, they have inadequate access to safe and secure housing. Once again, this ignores the real circumstances and needs of many public place dwelling Indigenous people (eg see Memmott and Fantin 2001).

2.2 State and Territory Government Policies[4]

As with Commonwealth policy, numerous areas of State and Territory policy are relevant to Indigenous homelessness and public place dwelling, including policy areas that can actually contribute to these phenomena.

2.2.1 Victorian Homelessness Strategy

In 1999, Tony Cahir, the Director of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, which operated from within the Department of Human Services, reported that Indigenous homelessness was being addressed in Victoria through: (i) reforms within the public housing sector; (ii) agencies working in partnership with the Koorie community; and (iii) the reversal of social and economic disadvantage. He maintained that the last point described the fundamental causes

4 A number of the following discussions, specifically those pertaining to Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia, have been largely extracted from Memmott et al (2002:27, 56-57) with some adjustments and additions having been made.

of homelessness (Cahir 1999:9-10). Cahir asserted that the provision of additional funding for Indigenous housing, combined with reforms such as the integration of segmented waiting lists for public housing and a transitional housing management program, would improve the homelessness rates in Victoria. The first reform would accelerate access for those with a high level of need, and the second would assist those in crisis to find stable accommodation (Cahir 1999:9). He also argued that in addressing Koorie housing needs the government must draw on the expertise of Koories and their organisations (Cahir 1999:9). The potential for such partnerships was increased further with the advent of the Victorian Homelessness Strategy.

A working partnership involving government agencies and experts from community organisations and services was employed in the development of the Victorian Homelessness Strategy. There were four elements to this partnership, the first of these being an 'Inter-Departmental Committee' consisting of representatives from the Departments of Human Services, Justice, Education, Premier & Cabinet, Treasury & Finance, and the Offices of Local Government and Youth Affairs. This committee coordinated the Government's input into the strategy. The second element was a 'Ministerial Advisory Committee' consisting of representatives from community agencies with experience in homelessness issues, including one from the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria[5] and a former manager of the Bairnsdale Koori Women's Shelter. These committees were supported by a Project Team from Victoria's Department of Human Services (DHS). The fourth component of this partnership model consisted of regional representatives from the nine DHS regions who coordinated regional inputs into the strategy. (Vic, DHS 2001.)

Despite the implementation of this partnership in Victoria, Berry and his co-authors, in their report to the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria, found that: "Dealing with housing, employment and health in separate policy channels makes it difficult and cumbersome for homeless Indigenous young people to access services and to commit to them" (Berry et al 2001:56). They also asserted that "the issues and responses relevant to the non-Indigenous homeless" are not necessarily "the most critical for relieving Indigenous homelessness" (Berry et al 2001:20).

A range of consultation approaches was employed by the strategy, including consultation with people who were currently homeless, or who had been homeless, with regional service agencies and interest groups, and a public submissions and focus group program. The focus groups discussed issues and responses related to specific target groups such as 'homelessness and pre- and post-release services for prisoners', 'single men and homelessness', and 'homelessness in rural and remote communities'. (Vic, DHS 2001.)

2.2.2 New South Wales Partnership Against Homelessness Strategy[6]

In recognition of the fact that homeless people often require assistance from a range of government agencies, the 'Partnership Against Homelessness' initiative was formed by the NSW Government in 1999 to "co-ordinate and improve a wide range of housing and support services for homeless people in NSW" (NSW, Dept of Housing 2002A:1). The Partnership involved ten state government agencies, including the various State Departments of Housing, Health, Community Services, Corrective Services, Women's Juvenile Justice, Fair Trading, Cabinet, and Aging, as well as the Aboriginal Housing Office. The Department of Housing (including the Office of Community Housing) was the lead agency.

In 2002 the aims of this Partnership were to:

1. help homeless people access services - to help direct people to services;
2. co-ordinate support services - to get agencies working together;
3. improve access to temporary or crisis accommodation; and

5 One of the authors (Memmott) has met with the CEO of this Board (16/5/02) who has indicated a strong interest in this positioning paper and its potential to inform national policy and strategic response design.

6 This section extracted from NSW Department of Housing, NSW Department of Community Services & Sydney City Council [extracted from Memmott et al 2002:55].

4. assist the move from crisis or temporary accommodation to long-term accommodation (NSW, Dept of Housing 2002A:1).

Some of its planned initiatives included the following:

1. The Homelessness Action Team (Dept of Housing) was formed to assist long-term residents of crisis accommodation in metropolitan Sydney to find more suitable accommodation.
2. The co-ordination of extra support services for homeless people or 'recently housed' people, in Sydney (three areas) and regional NSW, to assist them in their new homes.
3. The broadening of the range of available accommodation models (the Dept of Housing was trialing two different supported housing arrangements in Inner West Sydney and Newcastle).
4. The Office of Community Housing was working with the Aboriginal community and the Aboriginal Housing Office (metropolitan Sydney and regional NSW) to develop more easily accessed crisis and transitional accommodation.
5. The Crisis Accommodation Program (administered by the Office of Community Housing) aimed to improve the move from crisis to transitional housing by providing additional transitional accommodation to free up crisis services and accommodation.
6. In 2001 the Dept of Housing established an after-hours late-night call centre service for people who required temporary accommodation in the Sydney Metropolitan area and the Central Coast; this service has become known as the 'Homeless Out-of-Hours Service'.
7. The NSW Government was working with local government to assist people living in public places to find "support and housing that is right for their needs and [to create] a cleaner, safer neighbourhood" (NSW, Dept of Housing 2002A:1-2 & 2002B:1-2).

Note that initiative (iv) is the only one that explicitly focuses on Indigenous issues. The outcomes of this initiative had not been publicly released at the time of writing this paper.

2.2.3 Queensland Government's Homelessness Strategies for Cairns, Mt Isa and Townsville

In April 2002 the Queensland Government, through its peak Aboriginal Affairs section the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (DATSIP), commenced the development and preparation of a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness Policy for use by its various Departments7.

The Queensland Government has developed strategies to respond to homelessness and public place dwelling among a number of Indigenous groups living in three regional centres: Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa (Qld, DATSIP 2003A:1). These strategies have been described in the Government's regional 'blueprint' reports and in a consolidated report entitled "Safer Places with New Opportunities", which was released in early 2003. (Qld, DATSIP 2003A:5.)

DATSIP identified the following as major causes of homelessness in each of the three centres:

- People have come to the region for medical or legal reasons and have not returned. In some cases they have chosen not to return when transport has been provided and now cannot afford to do so or else they were not eligible for free transport.
- They have been banned from their community or have suffered some family or personal disruption that has led them to leave their community or home. (Some victims of domestic violence may have a home in their community, but not be able to access it.)
- They follow a transient lifestyle.

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7 The staff working on this policy have invited Memmott to provide input into it during 2002, and it is anticipated that the current research may make an ongoing contribution.

- They have a home (though it is often temporary) in the region but may spend periods in the parks.
- There are people that have been evicted or forfeited tenancies.
- They have substance abuse problems that prevent them maintaining a conventional lifestyle. (Qld, DATSIP 2003A:9-10.)

Despite identifying the complex factors influencing the public place dwelling experience of Indigenous people, DATSIP has explicitly adopted the relatively narrow definition of 'homelessness' contained in the SAAP Act 1994. That is, DATSIP only considers a person to be homeless if they have inadequate access to safe and secure housing. Thus the groups targeted by this strategy are supposed to be those 'living rough' or in improvised shelters and those in temporary accommodation. DATSIP found that there was a core group of visible Indigenous homeless people living in each regional centre and that there were many Commonwealth, State and local agency funded services providing for them. It was also found that people who had a long history of 'living rough' had little chance of succeeding in tenancy arrangements, because of the increased cost involved and their inappropriate or inadequate life skills. (Qld, DATSIP 2003A:7.)

DATSIP identified five strategic areas to guide future efforts in each of the three regions:

1. Coordination of support services for greater effectiveness. This includes the development of a model that responds to the multiple and complex needs of 'homeless' people;
2. Securing Safer Communities, as a response to anti-social behaviour;
3. Supporting Healthier Individuals, as a response to substance abuse;
4. Balancing Rights and Responsibilities, as a response to anti-social behaviour; and
5. Improving accommodation options and arrangements. (Qld, DATSIP 2003A:16-21.)

The consolidated report stated that the main concern for the broader community was the set of circumstances involving Indigenous people who do not have access to accommodation, are addicted to alcohol or other substances, and use public places to gather and sleep. The report recognised that each of these issues needed to be dealt with concurrently and that responses had to be tailored to the unique circumstances of each centre's homeless population. (Qld, DATSIP 2003A:10.)

Given DATSIP's acknowledgment of the necessity for multiple and integrated strategies the evaluative measures that they have established for the success of their immediate actions appear to be too limited. The evaluative indicator and measure are as follows:-

- Performance Indicator:

A decrease in the number of Indigenous homeless people, and public place users, being arrested for public drunkenness and unlawful behaviour; and

- Performance Measure:

The percentage of Indigenous homeless people, and public place users, being arrested for public drunkenness and unlawful behaviour. (Qld DATSIP 2003A: 25.)

These indicators and measures suggest that the strategy's focus is not to address 'homelessness' as the document defines it, but to address 'public disorder' or anti-social behaviour in the form of public drunkenness and unlawful behaviour. They further suggest that the strategies documented are reacting to public concern rather than responding to the wider needs of Indigenous public place dwelling people.

DATSIP found that few agencies had access to or collected information and data on the 'homeless', the level of assistance they received and what would be effective in ending their homelessness. It was found that the approaches taken "tended to be more intuitive and general than strategic and outcome driven" (Qld, DATSIP 2003A:12). The current authors would concur with this and have highlighted the difficulty in obtaining reliable information on current initiatives, as well as the lack of research from which to build evidence-based policy.

2.2.4 *Northern Territory Homelessness Action Plan*

In 2000, the Darwin office of ATSIC and the Northern Territory Government commenced a jointly funded Policy Research Project to consider the issues surrounding Indigenous itinerants living in the Darwin and Palmerston area. The Project Committee developed an Action Plan or Strategy for trial implementation (Memmott and Fantin 2001), which was endorsed by the NT Government's Cabinet in March 2002.

Memmott and Fantin initially developed a set of strategies that addressed itinerants' issues using both their literature analysis and direct discussions with organisations and government departments running relevant programs in Darwin. These strategies were reviewed by the Project Management Committee and considered closely during a specially convened Project Workshop held in mid-2001 and attended by representatives from 30 stakeholder agencies. The findings from this workshop were then refined and integrated into the overall strategy. (Memmott & Fantin 2001:89-90.) The end product devised for implementation in Darwin, the Indigenous Itinerants Strategy, was divided into the following four components, each of which contained a range of sub-elements:

1. Patrolling Strategy
2. Education and Regional Strategy
3. Alcohol Strategy
4. Accommodation Strategy (Memmott & Fantin 2001:90.)

It is to be noted here that accommodation involves a range of solutions from basic camping facilities, through a range of managed and supported accommodation options to conventional housing. But accommodation is only one element of the strategy which in it totality reflects the multiple and complex needs of public place dwelling Indigenous people.

"The Project Management Committee has decided to implement the foregoing four parts of the Itinerants Strategy using four Working Parties. It is hoped that the use of such Working Parties will achieve stronger co-ordination, networking and collaboration between agencies." (Memmott & Fantin 2001:11.) The final report also recommended the establishment of a lead agency to oversee the Working Parties. The current study has the capacity to further inform this Strategy, which is likely to be extended to Alice Springs, Katherine and Borroloola in the near future.

2.2.5 *Western Australian Homelessness Strategy*

In July 2001, the West Australian Government established a special Taskforce whose aim was to develop a homelessness strategy for the State in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. It produced a report in January 2002, which contains a review of current thinking and practice with regards to homelessness, and the findings of the project's consultation process. It makes a series of recommendations, which are supported by an Action Plan. (W.A., State Homelessness Taskforce 2002:Foreward.) One of the key recommendations put forward was that an Implementation Committee be established, whose membership included representatives from the State Departments of Indigenous Affairs, Housing and Works, Community Development, Health, and Justice, as well as the Aboriginal community agencies involved in homelessness and social welfare. The Committee's role would be to provide advice on policy, prioritise the initiatives that arise from the Taskforce's recommendations and monitor their implementation. (W.A. Homelessness Taskforce 2002:3.)

The Taskforce report's Action Plan emphasised the importance of forming and maintaining partnerships between stakeholders in one of its final sub-sections entitled '3.4 Working Together'. To enhance the implementation of the homelessness strategy, it is recommended that a number of efforts be made. The first two of these involved the State Government improving its methods of collecting data about people who are homeless, and the means by which it makes funding available. The Plan encouraged more flexible funding arrangements that will enable government to work more closely with community agencies and suggested developing a central, cross-portfolio source for these funds. (W.A. Homelessness Taskforce 2002:9.)

The Taskforce heard representations from Aboriginal people and organisations, which stressed the importance of involving Aboriginal people fully in the implementation of the strategy. (W.A. Homelessness Taskforce 2002:41.) They strongly recommended that a strategy be developed to identify Aboriginal people who were homeless, such as those in temporary accommodation or staying with relatives. This would involve mapping kinship practices and related lifestyles, which could inform "a culturally-appropriate service system based on collaborative ways of working between communities and organisations" (W.A. Homelessness Taskforce 2002:43).

The strategy is still in its early stage of development with respect to Indigenous homelessness and public place dwelling persons.

2.2.6 South Australia's Alcohol Strategy and Social Inclusion Initiative

In 2000 an Alcohol Strategy was developed by the Crime Prevention Unit within the South Australian Government. The key elements of this strategy were:

- Mobile Assistance Patrols - These patrols removed intoxicated people from public places to safe locations where they were to be encouraged to engage in rehabilitation programs.
- Sobering Up Service - This would provide a 'medically safe' accommodation facility where intoxicated people could recover.
- Licensing Restrictions - These would reduce the harm caused by alcohol consumption by restricting takeaway sales until 11am.
- Day Centre - The day centre would provide access to food, showers, washing facilities and access to other services and agencies.

Transient Camps and Gathering Places - In order to reduce the harm created by alcohol misuse the strategy proposed the development of three spaces. The first of these was a designated gathering place where people could consume alcohol. Two transient camps were proposed, one for transient people who drank and a dry camp for transient people who did not.

- Rehabilitation - The strategy aimed to improve access to rehabilitation.
- Early Intervention - This element recognised the value of early detection of alcohol problems and intervention with appropriate strategies to address those problems. (SA Govt, CPU 2000:4-7.)

This Alcohol Strategy would impact greatly on the Indigenous homeless population, particularly on those who habitually dwelt in public and semi-public spaces. Often a significant component of their lifestyle is the excessive consumption of alcohol; and the kind of behaviour that this results in is regularly the source of conflict with other users of public space.

In March 2002, South Australia's Premier, the Hon. Mike Rann MP, established the Social Inclusion Initiative and appointed the Social Inclusion Board to oversee its progress. The Government's aim was to focus attention and energy on three social issues, one of which was homelessness. The stated objective was to reduce the population of people 'sleeping rough' by 50% during the current Government's term in office. The Board was to advise on collaborative initiatives between State Government and other sectors. Its membership included community leaders who have proven experience in the area and established links across non-government organisations, the business sector and the broader community. These were to enable the Board to build partnerships. Notably, the Board participates in the Dry Zone Steering Committee whose task is to review restrictions on the consumption of alcohol in public places within the City of Adelaide. (SA, Dept of the Premier and Cabinet 2002.)

The Social Inclusion Unit was to undertake consultations across government and the community that focused on "identifying the causes of homelessness in greater detail and developing strategies to address these causes" (SA, Dept of the Premier and Cabinet, Social Inclusion Unit 2002A:1). This work was to contribute to the development of an Action Plan

and its presentation to Cabinet for approval. A cross-sector Reference Group, whose membership included senior public sector decision-makers and representatives from peak non-government organisations, has been established to assist the Unit with its efforts. The Government decided to set up a separate Aboriginal Reference Group that would deal with issues specific to South Australia's Indigenous homeless population. (SA, Dept of the Premier and Cabinet, Social Inclusion Unit 2002A:1-2.) The Unit has adopted the cultural, 'community standard' definition of homelessness, which differentiates between primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness. (SA, Dept of the Premier and Cabinet, Social Inclusion Unit 2002A:3.) This is considered in Section 4.0 of this paper.

State wide consultations were held in late 2002 from which emerged a number of themes: pathways into homelessness, service responses, and government and community responses. The first theme referred to the individual, economic and social factors that lead or force people into homelessness. The second, service responses, included early intervention, prevention strategies and improved service delivery and integration. And the last, government and community responses, involved improved government coordination and more innovative approaches. (SA, Dept of the Premier and Cabinet, Social Inclusion Unit 2002B:iii-iv.) It was also recognised that there were important links between homelessness issues and the other focus areas of the Social Inclusion Unit, the education system and keeping young people in it, and drug and alcohol misuse.

There are as yet no Indigenous-specific outcomes of the work being undertaken by the SA Social Inclusion Unit, but there is evidence that its value is recognised.

2.3 Local Government Policies

Indigenous public place dwellers, and those experiencing 'homelessness', are affected by local government policies on a daily basis, including those directed specifically at homelessness and those that may impact indirectly. There are examples across Australia of reactive and pro-active response strategies to Indigenous homelessness that emanate from local government policy. The numbers of local governments across Australia, and the numbers of policies involved make analysis beyond the scope of the current project. (A number of local government strategies are reviewed in the National Analysis prepared by Memmott et al in 2002).

2.4 Knowledge Gaps in Policy

A review of the policy context relevant to Indigenous 'homelessness' reveals a number of important knowledge gaps. There is a degree to which policy objectives and strategies fail to embrace the complex nature of the issue at hand. In addition to this, while some objectives are clearly and ambitiously stated, they are not accompanied by tangible, practical strategies that have been designed to realise them.

While each policy document recognises the complex and multi-dimensional nature of 'homelessness', and the many structural factors that can cause, perpetuate and prevent it, many go on to adopt a limited or narrow definition of 'homelessness'. It was clearly demonstrated in the National Analysis prepared by Memmott et al (2002) that 'homelessness' is not always simply created by a lack of 'housing', nor simply addressed by its provision. These issues will be considered further in the following Section (4.0) of this paper. They are particularly true with regard to the chronically homeless or those who consider public place their 'home'. For example, the SAAP definition is tied categorically to the constructs of housing and inadequate access to a safe and secure variety of housing, without considering those who have chosen to pursue a lifestyle of 'living rough' for a number of complicated reasons. Their needs are likely to render them ineligible for SAAP funding benefits.

Many government policy areas are relevant to 'homelessness', from Native Title, cultural heritage, health, and employment, to criminal justice. Memmott et al have previously identified the necessity for undertaking holistic approaches to Indigenous 'homelessness' that are 'whole-of-government' (2002:58-59). But while HMAC's policy statement for the ten years from 2001 concurs with this assessment, it does not provide information regarding strategies to achieve such an overarching approach. And CACH in its efforts to delineate a national

'homelessness' strategy does not list any strategies, which will specifically encourage the interaction between its initiatives and those being undertaken by other agencies that it views as important.

One of the most significant results of governments adopting a categorisation of 'homelessness' that relates solely to housing provision is that their response is limited to housing or accommodation options. A useful example of what such a string of assumptions can miss is provided by the Action Plan or Strategy defined for Darwin and Palmerston, and developed by Memmott and Fantin (2001:90-102). It not only incorporates an accommodation component, but also elements related to patrolling, education, alcohol and the region from which the homeless and public place dwelling population derives. This strategy was the outcome of a survey of Indigenous public place dwellers as well as a careful analysis of programs already in place, not only in the area but nationwide, that were targeted specifically at Indigenous people. It reveals the value of making an empirical analysis of both needs and responses at the local, regional and national levels.

Queensland's policy document discussed above (Qld, DATSIP 2003A) provides a useful example of how the needs of Indigenous homeless people can become confused with community and government ire over anti-social behaviour and the desire to address it. While it is important to address issues related to the negative behaviour of homeless people who occupy public spaces and those who socialise within them, it is vital that other components of a strategy are aimed at addressing their health and well-being needs. It is also not appropriate to view the entire issue of Indigenous 'homelessness' through the lens of anti-social behaviour. Efforts must be made to educate community members about the pathways that people follow into these circumstances and the existence of cross-cultural values concerning residential styles and behaviour; in addition to developing pro-active methods for reducing recidivist anti-social behaviour.

Finally, both policy and the categories of 'homelessness' addressed by policy generally do not appear to be informed by extensive empirical research (or if they are, they do not state or reveal the detailed grounds for such). Consequently mainstream definitions of 'homelessness' pervade policy where Indigenous definitions of 'homelessness' are clearly required. It also appears that few solid goals for evaluating the success of various policies are stated. This criticism also applies to specific program operations. It is essential to clearly define the means by which evaluation might occur, and what indicators are used to determine success or improvement in a given situation. The indicators of success in achieving the delineated goals would need to be varied to reflect the various categories of 'homelessness' and public place dwelling in each given context. This approach would be most useful if a well-researched understanding of a particular situation had been gained. Further to these points, it is also necessary to recognise that the timeframes over which change or improvement can be realistically expected is often longer those assigned to many policies and programs within government funding cycles.

3 ANALYSIS OF CATEGORIES OF INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS

The 'Category Analysis' will derive a set of working categories of Indigenous public place dwelling persons from their cultural, social and economic profiles (literature that has been largely collected through previous research efforts by the principal author - eg Memmott & Fantin 2001 and Memmott et al 2002). These people do not fit into a single group or social category, nor do they necessarily fit the mainstream definition of 'homeless' (see Coleman 2000B). And they are not formal 'Town Campers' as defined in the Aboriginal literature (eg see Memmott 1996). Categories will be considered in terms of gender, generational groupings, social and kinship groupings, and a range of service needs.

3.1 A Brief History of Homelessness in Australia

In the mainstream of social science and public policy literature, the phenomenon of Indigenous people dwelling in public places generally falls under the analytic category of 'homelessness'. However, a preliminary reading of this literature clearly demonstrates the difficulties involved in trying to conceptualise either mainstream or Indigenous 'homelessness'. Anne Coleman's PhD thesis (2000B) entitled "Five Star Motels: Spaces, Places and Homelessness in Fortitude Valley Brisbane" provides a most comprehensive literature review of the history of homelessness in Australia, and an overview of the various definitions and constructs of 'homelessness' as they apply to Australian urban situations. Her work has been heavily drawn upon in the following summary8.

Homelessness has been part of Australian society since the arrival of the British First Fleet in 1788. Many Indigenous peoples were dispersed from, and dispossessed of their lands and effectively rendered homeless. Despite being cut off from all that was familiar and identifiable as 'home' in the British sense, the new colonists brought with them the ideologies and values of 18th century Britain. In the early and mid-19th centuries, poverty quickly became localised in the inner city areas of Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. Responses to poverty and homelessness were also imported from Britain, and were enacted mainly by charitable and benevolent societies or agencies. As early as the 1820s, homeless boys were removed from the streets of inner city Sydney and accommodated on ships anchored in Sydney Harbour. By the close of the century, Australia's major cities had a network of night refuges and shelters providing generally overcrowded accommodation on a temporary basis. (Coleman 2000B:5.)

Goldie asserts that the English common law system, transplanted to Australia after 1788, included vagrancy components dating back to the 1300s that were punitive in their approach to regulating the use of public place (2002A:6). People occupying public places were penalised if they were not able to give an adequate account of themselves and their source of income (2002A:6).

Depression at the end of the 1800s, and again through the 1930s, produced large numbers of Australian homeless and itinerant people as the result of economic downturn. Families who were unable to pay rent were forcibly evicted into the streets. In capital cities, homeless people camped out in public spaces such as The Domain in Sydney, and Victoria Park in Brisbane (Coleman 2000B:6). People sleeping out were tolerated at some times, and moved on at others. Homelessness became a familiar, if not accepted, part of the Australian landscape. Many of the responses to homelessness drew on the principles of the old Poor Law system in England, where distinction was made between the deserving and undeserving poor, and where responses to homelessness focused on moving homeless people on, in order to avoid accepting responsibility for them. (Coleman 2000B:6.)

8 Parts of this summary have previously been used by Memmott and Fantin in the Darwin Indigenous itinerants study (2001:30-31).

World War II and the immediate post-war period witnessed a boom in employment and prosperity. Home-ownership was actively promoted by governments as a way of creating a stable population, and as an integral part of their work-based welfare strategy. However, a sharp economic recession occurred in 1952, overloading the welfare agencies with homeless men. The post WWII homeless population was essentially reduced to a core group, the most visible and researched of which were older, single men. During the late 1960s and early 1970s poverty and homelessness in Australia were rediscovered, youth homelessness and homelessness affecting women were identified, and government-funded services rapidly expanded in response to these social issues. In 1973, the *Homeless Persons' Assistance Act 1973* (Cwlth) was passed, and the following year it was operationalised as the Homeless Persons' Assistance Program. This represented an official recognition of homelessness in Australia and the beginning of a coordinated government response to this long-standing social issue. (Coleman 2000B:6,7.) In the 1970s the Australian Commission of Inquiry into Poverty recommended that vagrancy and public drinking laws be abolished and replaced by social welfare strategies (Goldie 2002A:7).

While there has been little argument since the 1970s about the existence of homelessness in Australia, there has been much debate and dispute about the size of the homeless population, and the most appropriate ways to respond to homelessness. For example in 1996 estimates of homeless people varied from 68,000 to 105,000. These debates continue to shape the definition and scope of homelessness in Australia today. (Coleman 2000B:7,8.)

The government's primary response to homelessness is currently delivered through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The 1994 Supported Accommodation Assistance Act (S5ss2) states, in part, that the program's overall aim "... is to provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services" to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The SAAP ACT 1994 (s4.1) states that a person is homeless if, and only if, he or she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing. 'Homeless' people include: (a) people who are in crisis and at imminent risk of becoming 'homeless', and (b) people who are experiencing domestic violence and are at imminent risk of becoming 'homeless' (SAAP Act 1994, s4.1). The reader is referred to Coleman (2000B:12-14, 28-29) for an analysis of the contents and changes in successive SAAP services since this policy was first introduced in 1983 (See Table 1), and of gaps in the current service due to it targeting only restricted categories of 'homeless' people.

'Homelessness' is a visible phenomenon in Australia in the early twenty-first century, of which Indigenous people are too significantly a part (Coleman 2000B:20 & Adv Com on Homelessness 2001:46). In spite of intensive study, and various attempts to address the issue, homelessness remains part of Australia's social landscape. The term itself remains a contested one, wherein a multiplicity of meanings reflect a range of individual situations and experiences (Coleman 2000B:20).

3.2 Mainstream Constructs of Homelessness.

This section aims to provide an overview of the more dominant constructs of mainstream homelessness in common use in Australia, particularly by government policy makers and program administrators, with an emphasis on those concepts, which are relevant to the analysis in the following section (3.3) on Indigenous homelessness constructs. The mainstream effort to define homelessness in contemporary Australian society has at times produced a number of conflicting results. Most researchers (eg Chamberlain 1999, ABS 2001:20) agree that it has to be conceived of as a continuum of experience that incorporates the literal state of being 'roofless', as well as those states in which people are 'at risk' of becoming homeless. Central to where a person, group or family may exist along this continuum is the somewhat elusive concept of 'home'. The following discussion will first consider the Australian Bureau of Statistic's current working definition and the research of the scholars who were most influential in shaping it. These definitional concepts will then be briefly compared with the definition developed by the Commonwealth Government's support program for homeless people, SAAP. Finally, we shall consider the overarching definitional analysis completed by Coleman (2000B) in her doctoral thesis and the questions it raises about the interaction between chronically homeless people and public spaces. The current

authors have reviewed various definitions by other researchers in the field, however they are not mentioned in this Positioning Paper because it was felt that the selections set out below are representative of the essential themes. The mainstream constructs, which are presented here are examined further in the following review of constructs of Indigenous homelessness. It will be shown that whereas there are clearly some commonalities reported in the literature within the respective models of mainstream and Indigenous homelessness, the latter portray a range of culturally specific properties that do not appear relevant to the former.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the country's official statistical organisation, adopted a three-part definition of 'homelessness' for use in both its 1996 and 2001 Census. In an effort to accurately assess how many homeless people were living in Australia, and to determine the nature of their situation, the following three categories were established:

Primary homelessness - People without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.

Secondary homelessness - People who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. It covers people using emergency accommodation (such as hostels for the homeless or night shelters), teenagers staying in youth refuges, women and children escaping domestic violence (staying in women's refuges), people residing temporarily with other families (because they have no accommodation of their own) and those using boarding houses on an occasional or intermittent basis.

Tertiary Homelessness - People who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis. (Memmott et al 2002:2, paraphrased from Chamberlain 1999:1.)

Prior to the 1996 Census, "no questions were included on the [census] form to specifically try to identify respondents who were homeless" (Norwood 1997:2). The definition of tertiary homelessness that was utilised prior to the 2001 Census differed somewhat from the one above. It reads:

> People whose living arrangements do not provide them with security of tenure as provided by a lease, or who are living in accommodation which is unsafe or harmful to their health. Such accommodation might include some boarding houses, caravan parks, rooming houses or special accommodation houses. (cited in Strategic Partners 2001:13.)

The ABS definition was adopted by the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness in its consultation paper 'Working Towards a National Homelessness Strategy', which was published in 2001. It was drawn from the definition first outlined in a paper written by Chamberlain and MacKenzie in 1992 for the 'Australian Journal of Social Issues' (Chamberlain 1999:1). Chamberlain asserts that, toward the end of the 1990s, there was an "emerging agreement about how homelessness should be defined in an Australian context" and that it centred on the kind of 'cultural definition' exemplified in the primary/secondary/tertiary classification above (1999:8).

Chamberlain has argued for the adoption of such a 'cultural definition' of homelessness on a number of occasions. In one instance, he and his co-author Johnson contend "that 'homelessness' and 'inadequate housing' are socially constructed, cultural concepts that only make sense in a particular community at a given historical period" (2000A:7). So, they contend that to develop such a definition it would be necessary to first "identify shared community standards" of minimum housing requirements that allow full participation in that community, and then to delineate who falls below the level established (2000A:7). Chamberlain and Johnson state that community standards can be elicited from the dominant housing practices of a particular society (2000A:7). In Australia this would translate into independent accommodation that supplied a person, or persons, with a room to sleep in, a room to live in, and kitchen and bathroom facilities (1992, 2000A:8).

In terms of the debate concerning definitions, Chamberlain points out "... that there may be operational definitions of homelessness which are needed in particular contexts. For example, government departments may need more specific definitions when it comes to

deciding who is eligible for particular welfare benefits. Similarly, welfare agencies may use broader definitions because they are often concerned with assisting people who are 'at risk', as well as people who are attempting to return to secure accommodation." (Chamberlain 1999:50.) He further asserts that "[t]he purpose of theorising a cultural definition is to provide a benchmark for thinking about the validity of operational definitions used in particular contexts" (Chamberlain 1999:50). Such a benchmark cannot be used in a "purely mechanistic way" however. When it is applied it must be "sensitive to cultural meaning systems." (Chamberlain 1999:9.) This would mean, for example, that people living in certain institutional settings, such as nursing homes and prisons would not be considered a part of the homeless population, even though their accommodation would not adhere to the minimum standard.

In the 1999 ABS Occasional Paper 'Counting the Homeless', Chamberlain adds a fourth category to the previously delineated three of primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness. It is that of the 'marginally housed', or people who are in accommodation situations that rise above the community norm only slightly (Chamberlain 1999:11). He suggests a number of examples of people who would fall into this category: "a couple living in a single room with their own kitchen and bathroom, but without a separate room for sleeping; or a family staying with relatives on a long-term basis (doubling up); or a couple renting a caravan without security of tenure" (Chamberlain 1999:11). Such a category may relate to the following discussion of constructs of Indigenous homelessness, as would the new wording for 'tertiary homelessness' developed prior to the 2001 Census (see earlier).

With regards to the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) definition of homelessness, according to Chamberlain, it revolves around its role in service delivery. It relies on the *SAAP Act 1994* definition of 'homeless' (4) as follows:

> *When a person is homeless*
>
> 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*
>
> 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:
>
> – damages, or is likely to damage, the person's health; or
>
> – threatens the person's safety; or
>
> – marginalises the person through failing to provide access to:
>
> – adequate personal amenities; or
>
> – the economic and social supports that a home normally affords; or
>
> – places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing. (Aust, C'weath Parl. 1994:3-4.)

The Act goes on to state that people living in accommodation supplied by SAAP are to be regarded as having inadequate access to safe and secure housing (Aust, FaCS 1999:20).

Coleman (2000A) argues that because the focus of the SAAP policy is to return people in crisis to the mainstream via intervention and transitional accommodation within a 12-month period, it precludes providing services to the chronically homeless who do not want to be integrated into the mainstream. By defining homelessness as crisis-related and temporary in duration, there is a marked reduction in the numbers of people who are recognised as 'homeless' and eligible for assistance. Furthermore, making it necessary that people be integrated into the mainstream can create unrealistic expectations about their motivations, capacity to achieve independence and level of competitiveness in seeking employment. (2000A: 5-7.) (There are parallels here to the expectations of Aboriginal assimilation policies of the 1950s and 1960s (Memmott 1991B:100-101, 135-136).)

The final report produced from the 'Technical Forum on the Estimation of Homelessness in Australia' held in April 2001, records how the participants agreed to use the SAAP definition's wording in its preamble to a definition of homelessness (Strategic Partners 2001:11-12). They went on to agree to use the Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) and ABS Census definition, with some minor refinements. This is despite the fact that Chamberlain argues against incorporating people's perceptions into a method for determining who is and is not homeless, as SAAP's definition does. Central to the SAAP definition are terms like 'threaten', 'damage' and 'adequate', which, being value-laden but nowhere clearly defined, would make the inclusion of how people perceive their situation inevitable to determining their status. He and Johnson contend that a cultural definition, like the ABS's three-part one, and in contrast to one such as SAAP's that introduces subjective views, would not exaggerate the numbers of homeless (2000A:11). The latter does not properly distinguish between those who are homeless and those who are 'at risk' because it is tied to service delivery and the need to help both categories of people. Further elaborations of Chamberlain's concern are outlined in the text following Table 1 and Section 3.4.

The current authors found Coleman's doctoral thesis to be useful for the summary it provided of the post-World War 2 homelessness literature. Coleman (2000B) categorises this literature into four 'waves' according to the different kinds of definitions it was based on (see Table 1). The definitions offered in the 'First Wave' are narrow, defining the homeless population as being solely composed of highly visible, older, white males living in boarding house rooms in inner city areas. The Second Wave of literature expanded the definition of homelessness to be more inclusive, recognising the diversity and complexity of homelessness, including its hidden forms. It described the experiences of various groups who were identified as homeless, such as young people and women in precarious or dangerous relationships. (Coleman 2000B:22,26.)

In response to the advocacy-based approach taken by the Second Wave, the Third Wave literature attempted to use definitions to delimit the extent of homelessness in Australia, and to restrict the number of people eligible for assistance under various legislated responses and programs. Access to adequate accommodation became the medium through which homelessness was defined. In Coleman's estimation, it is the literally shelterless and the people who have adapted to homelessness over long periods of time, in other words people who would seem to be unarguably homeless, who are obscured from view in the Third Wave definitions. (Coleman 2000B:27,28.)

The Fourth Wave literature has (most recently) reconsidered and re-evaluated earlier definitions and representations of homelessness. It aimed to understand how representations of homelessness by researchers and policy makers have skewed understandings of homelessness as opposed to the way it is experienced by homeless people themselves. This literature, produced in both Australia and the USA, highlights the fact that while responses to homelessness are struggling to meet the needs of already identified groups of homeless people, new groups experiencing and vulnerable to homelessness continue to appear. The group most frequently identified in Australia among the 'new' homeless of the 1990s was 'families'. (Coleman 2000B:29,30.)

Table 1 Overview of Coleman's Definitional Waves (2000B:23-24).

	KEY THEMES	TYPICAL RESEARCH
First Wave Literature: Description and disaffiliation	• Detachment of the homeless from society • Social and geographic isolation • Focus on older, single white males • Limited acknowledgment of structural factors	• US: Skid Row studies (eg. Bahr & Caplow 1974; Caplow, Bahr & Sternberg 1968) • Britain; National Census of People Sleeping Rough 1966 • Australia: Enumeration and description of men in inner city are as, generally using homeless services (eg. Jordan 1965; Darcy & Jones 1975)
Second Wave Literature: Self-definition and advocacy	• Calls for self-definition • Emphasis on the subjective nature of homelessness • Identification of hidden groups experiencing homelessness	• Studies designed to identify new groups who are experiencing homelessness • Australian examples include the report by the National Youth Coalition for Housing 1985 report, and the HREOC report on homelessness (also known as the Burdekin Report) 1989
Third Wave Literature: Delimiting and restricting	• Narrowing of definitions, most notably in policy literature • Tighter restrictions on service eligibility • Actual exclusion of the long-term homeless from service	• Research designed to count homeless people, specifically to counter the high numbers being used by advocacy groups • Increasing separation of research and policy • US: Dept. of Housing and Urban Research count 1984 • Australia: Increasingly limited definitions applied by SAAP
Fourth Wave Literature: Reflection and renewed debate	• Reflective re-evaluation of the impact of earlier research and advocacy • Attempts to redefine homelessness • Critique of existing responses	• Review of previous literature • Meta-analyses of existing literature • US: Blasi 1994; Snow & Bradford 1994 • Britain: The Social Exclusion Unit's 1998 report on people 'sleeping rough' • Australia: Chamberlain & Mackenzie 1992; Neil & Fopp 1994

Coleman concludes (2000B:30) that the limitations of the key literature are strongly connected to a continual failure to clarify the meaning of 'home', an apparent reluctance to place both 'home' and 'homelessness' in context, and a lack of comment about the operation of privilege in the definition of homelessness. However in terms of policy, Chamberlain warns against using people's subjective views of their situation as the criterion for judging whether they are homeless (1999:12). A pertinent example he uses to illustrate his point follows. He asks the reader to compare the situations of a poor white family living in an improvised dwelling and an Indigenous family from Northern Australia living in a similarly improvised dwelling and pursuing a 'traditional lifestyle' that involves a high level of mobility. Chamberlain then asks whether the 'white' people should be considered homeless but the Indigenous people adequately housed. While he accedes that the policy implications might be different in each case, he believes that "it would be publicly unacceptable for any government to conclude that homelessness depends on people's perceptions" (1999:12). The current authors would disagree with this conclusion and argue that judgements about

homelessness always rely on people's perceptions9. The issue is how accurately they can be measured and whether (in the context of the current paper) they can be tied to an agreed-upon social model of Indigenous homelessness.

The 'chronic' category of mainstream homelessness is considered in detail by Coleman (2000B) and is of great relevance to the later discussion of Indigenous public place dwellers. It is defined not just by the application of a fixed time criterion but also by evidence that acceptance of, or adaptation to homelessness has occurred. Long-term or chronic homelessness becomes established when homelessness ceases to be a crisis event, and becomes an accepted way of life. (Coleman 2000B.) (One of the current authors (PM) has encountered numerous Aboriginal persons who fall into this category - see later discussion.)

In a similar vein, Chamberlain and Johnson consider the notion of the 'homeless career' (2000B). Such a term "draws attention to the fact that people go through various stages before they develop a self-identity as a homeless person, and it 'calls attention to the factors that influence movement from one stage (of the process) to another'" (Snow and Anderson 1993:273 cited in Chamberlain and Johnson 2000B:1-2). The authors identify three main stages which adults pass through: when they lose their accommodation, when they are homeless and when they transit into chronic homelessness (Chamberlain and Johnson 2000B:3). The paper further states that it is often "difficult to help people who have made the transition to chronic homelessness, because they no longer express a strong disposition to change their lifestyle (Hirst 1989, HREOC 1989, O'Connor 1989)" (Chamberlain and Johnson 2000B:3).

One of Coleman's contributions to the understanding of homelessness in general, is the idea that it may not necessarily be defined as a lack of accommodation. Most significantly for the current authors and the categorisation of Indigenous homelessness, she concludes that a person may have a concept of 'home,' which applies to a place or a set of places, but which does not necessarily involve any conventional accommodation. Such a concept may involve a sense of belonging, or recognition and acceptance in an area. Her research found that public spaces have become places of significance to some people experiencing homelessness, and may come to be equated with 'home'. Homelessness could then be defined as having no legitimacy or control over the spaces in which one lives (Coleman 2000B:40).

This definition of 'home' by Coleman fits precisely the context of classical or pre-contact Aboriginal Australia where 'home' was country, cultural landscape and the repertoire of places in it. Residency could be at any one of a range of campsites and if shelter was required it could be constructed with minimal effort. Home was a place or set of places, not a building. In terms of contemporary Indigenous public place dwellers, the forging of strong connections to particular locations may be particularly marked and bound up with concepts of 'spiritual homelessness' and dispossession. This will be considered further in later section (4.3).

A good deal of the literature reviewed by Coleman analyses conflict between members of mainstream and homeless communities. These conflicts over place, she asserts, have arisen out of its increasing 'commodification', particularly in urban precincts. This conceptual framework rests on the idea that conflict at this level is essentially a contest over the meaning, definition and control of these spaces, as well as over the definition and meaning of homelessness. (Coleman 2000B:37,43,44.) Goldie expands on the nature of conflicts between homeless users of public space and other members of the community. She contends that people who regularly, and in a settled way, occupy public space are often attempting to carry out activities that, when conducted there, are regulated or considered unlawful by authorities (Goldie 2002A:4-5). The most obvious types of activities that tend to concern other public space users and the authorities include sleeping, being partially or

9 Furthermore if the Indigenous family in Chamberlains' example were asked if they needed a conventional house, the current authors view is that they would say 'yes'. And if one asked the family to make comparisons of architectural elements and services in the improvised dwelling with those in a conventional Euro-Australian dwelling, we think that they would probably conclude that their improvised home falls below the 'community standard'. (These hypotheses are based on Memmott's experience of over 30 years of interviewing Aboriginal people about their housing needs.)

wholly naked, having sex, becoming intoxicated and noisy, taking drugs and defecating or urinating.

Coleman contends that "[i] increasingly, it is the market citizen (or consumer) who is recognised as the legitimate user of public space, while other users (including people experiencing long-term homelessness) are not recognised, do not have their uses of public spaces legitimated and are frequently moved-on" (2000B:14). She goes on to raise issues about the changing definition of and contest over public space that has been the result of a decade or more of urban renewal, redevelopment and gentrification throughout Australian cities. These questions are significant, particularly to the lives of the chronically homeless who identify certain public spaces as 'home' where they can conduct all aspects of their daily lives. Further research comparing the legal and civic definitions of public space, and the behaviours perceived by different stakeholders to be appropriate in public spaces, would also inform the debate about homelessness.

Two disadvantages traditionally ascribed to homeless people have been variously identified as the inability to access the housing market and dislocation from the labour market. Coleman argues that the resources the homeless most obviously lack (legitimacy, space, and control over space) are rarely referred to in the debate on homelessness, despite their central importance in the daily life and social exclusion of these people. Coleman goes on to warn that responses to homelessness which rely solely on the relocation of people to housing and the creation of employment opportunities may very well fail due to their lack of relevance to long-term or chronically homeless people and their place attachments. (Coleman 2000B:46.)

3.3 Indigenous Constructs of Homelessness.

This section of the Positioning Paper provides a preliminary exploration of Indigenous constructs of homelessness based on the available literature, and culminating in a working set of categories of Indigenous homelessness. It draws on a number of the constructs outlined in the previous section. (The second stage of the project will expand this analysis for inclusion in the final report.)

At the outset it should be recognized that Indigenous citizens are far more likely to experience homelessness than their non-Indigenous counterparts in addition to poor health, violence, unemployment, contact with the care and protection system, incarceration and poverty (Aust, Cwlth Adv Com on Homelessness 2001:46). Chamberlain, using the results of the 1996 Census, determined that there were 19,579 individuals in Australia who listed themselves as either having no usual address or occupying an improvised dwelling; and half of these people also identified as being Indigenous (Chamberlain 1999:22). As that author asserts, this is the hardest category of people to enumerate in the Census as accuracy is heavily reliant on the local knowledge of the collectors and their awareness of homelessness. To take but one example, Memmott and Fantin found that the 1996 Census had grossly underestimated the number Indigenous itinerants living in the Darwin and Palmerston area (2001:21). Their interviews with Indigenous homeless people in February and April 2001 indicated that there were as many as 227 people living an itinerant lifestyle in the area (Memmott & Fantin 2001:62). However, for wider Darwin, the Census only recorded 50 individuals in the category it uses to identify homelessness, which comprises people who occupy improvised dwellings or tents, and sleep out (Memmott & Fantin 2001:21).

Because of the difficulties involved in defining Indigenous homelessness, researchers studying so-called Aboriginal 'homeless' people also have difficulty in deciding on a term of collective address. For example Dillon and Savage (1994:3) rejected the use of the terms 'homeless' and 'displaced' in Cairns as being not strictly accurate because a number of Indigenous people saw themselves as being both 'placed' and 'homed'. They preferred to use the colloquial term 'parkies', as assigned by the people themselves. Aboriginal people themselves employ such labels as 'goomies', 'long grassers', 'ditchies', 'beachies' and 'river campers'.

Amidst the sparse literature on Indigenous homelessness, Olive (1992:2,3), writing about problems in Rockhampton, was one of the first to adopt a broadly inclusive definition of homelessness from the mainstream literature. She cites the work of the National Youth

Coalition for Housing (NYCH) completed between 1987 and 1988. The NYCH definition of homelessness considered an individual to be homeless if they, firstly experienced the absence of secure, adequate, and satisfactory shelter as perceived by that individual, and secondly, experienced at least one of the following circumstances:

1. an absence of shelter,
2. the threat of loss of shelter;
3. very high mobility between places of abode;
4. existing accommodation considered inadequate by the resident for such reasons as overcrowding, the physical state of the resident, lack of security of occupancy, or lack of emotional support and stability in the place of residence; or
5. unreasonable restrictions in terms of access to alternative forms of accommodation.

Note that we see here a definition that incorporates the perceptions of the so-called homeless person of their situation, as well as other more tangible criteria.

Olive goes on to explain how many Aboriginal people fall into category (d) above, due to overcrowded circumstances. Olive suggested that "[h]omelessness within the Aboriginal community differs slightly from 'mainstream' homelessness in that the extended family often provides alternative, temporary accommodation. On the one hand this is a positive aspect for it provides additional support for families, however it also serves to delay the problems in the long-term and creates a whole range of new ones, such as overcrowding." (Olive 1992:6.) This system of support, concludes Olive, serves to mask the actual extent of Indigenous homelessness. This issue of overcrowding will be discussed further as an indicator of homelessness in a following section.

More recent definitions of homelessness in the Indigenous context have modelled it as a multi-layered and multi-dimensional concept, which differs from non-Indigenous homelessness in terms of context and causes. Of particular interest to this study, and its efforts to categorise Indigenous homelessness, is the work of Keys Young (1998), Berry et al (2001) and Memmott & Fantin (2001). Each of these studies will be discussed in turn, as will certain aspects of the ABS document 'The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People' (2001).

Keys Young was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services in 1997 to undertake a study of homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context and identify the implications for the delivery of SAAP. The consultants defined five distinct categories of Indigenous homelessness. These were:

1. Lack of access to any stable shelter, accommodation or housing - literally having 'nowhere to go' - which is regarded as the worst form of homelessness.
2. Spiritual forms of homelessness, which relate to separation from traditional land or from family.
3. Crowding, where it causes considerable stress to families and communities.
4. Relocation and transient homelessness, which results in temporary, intermittent and often cyclical patterns of homelessness due to transient and mobile lifestyles, but also to the necessity of a larger proportion of the Indigenous population (relative to the non-Indigenous population) having to travel to obtain services.
5. Individuals escaping an unsafe or unstable home for their own safety or survival is another form of homelessness affecting large numbers of Indigenous people, especially women and young people. (Keys Young 1998:iv.)

Keys Young reiterated what was already widely known at the time, that Indigenous Australians live in more crowded conditions and in a poorer standard of housing in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians. Also, they faced considerable difficulty in being able to access housing in the private rental market due to poverty and high levels of

unemployment, discrimination, and in some areas, a lack of private rental housing stock. (Keys Young 1998:v.)

Given transitional lifestyles, cultural obligations and the necessity for a substantial proportion of the Indigenous population to travel to urban centres in order to access services, Keys Young asserted that there was a considerable need for affordable, temporary accommodation. Notwithstanding the existence of some 135 Aboriginal hostels across the country at the time of their study, a shortage of culturally appropriate short-term accommodation was found to be contributing to considerable levels of homelessness. (Keys Young 1998:v.) Often associated with such homelessness in regional centres and capital cities, were 'at-risk' lifestyles involving alcohol and drug abuse, family violence and poor nutrition and health care.

Keys Young identified a glaring gap in the literature regarding Indigenous homelessness, because only occasionally was there recognition "that certain aspects of homelessness may be quantitatively different for ATSI people compared to other Australians who are homeless" (1998:xii). The current authors would add to this, 'qualitatively different forms of 'homelessness' as well, which are inherent in the Keys Young Indigenous homelessness categories. The report resulting from the 'Technical Forum on the Estimation of Homelessness in Australia' held in April 2001 has since recognised that what it called a 'cultural audit' would need to be done to understand homelessness in an Indigenous context (Strategic Partners 2001:12).

The Keys Young study also exemplified how the definition of homelessness varied dramatically between the service providers being interviewed. Some conceived of homelessness in terms of the 'big picture' of post-contact society while others thought of it in terms of a precipitating event. Also, many interviewees believed that multiple types of homelessness could be experienced by an individual simultaneously (1998:xxiii). The above five categories are therefore not mutually exclusive. The Keys Young report summarised the major differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous homelessness as: incidence, scope, nature, experience, and visibility of problem (1998:xxvi).

A number of forms of Indigenous homelessness were also identified in a report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, entitled 'The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' (1999A), which defined five general homeless situations, said to exist on a continuum. These were: "living on the street; living in crisis accommodation; living in temporary arrangements without security of tenure (e.g. staying with friends or relatives, living in squats, improvised dwellings or boarding houses); living in unsafe family circumstances; and living on very low incomes and facing extraordinary expenses or personal crises" (AIHW 1999A:297-298 cited in ABS 2001:20).

Berry et al (2001), in preparing a study of Indigenous homelessness in Victoria for that State's Aboriginal Housing Board, raised the issue again of 'spiritual homelessness' and the broad historical perspective of which it is apart. "The first meaning of homelessness in this broader spiritual sense is not belonging to traditional lands. A second meaning is separation from family and kinship networks.... The third meaning ... is not really knowing about your Indigenous identity or what your place is in the community" (Berry et al 2001:34).

Berry and his co-authors discuss a number of themes or dimensions in relation to Indigenous homelessness (2001:35-43). Firstly there is the issue that the historical dispossession of Indigenous peoples has not been adequately acknowledged. This is symptomatic of a general lack of regard for the specificities of Indigenous culture and history, which has been further expressed in the imposition of inappropriate response strategies, and the exclusion of Aboriginal people from decision-making processes and roles in helping other Indigenous people. Further to this are the little understood characteristics of the Indigenous extended family.

Social and economic disadvantage plays an additional role in Indigenous homelessness and is a complex problem. The low income of Indigenous people, combined with social responsibilities such as assisting other family members, can create financial crisis, which in turn make it difficult for people to obtain and maintain accommodation. Berry et al also note

that people who choose to live close to traditional lands may experience high rates of unemployment due to a relative absence of economic opportunities (Berry et al 2001:37).

Berry et al's work also revealed that there was insufficient affordable housing in Victoria for Aboriginal people. House designs were often unsuitable; and houses were often unavailable in those areas where people wanted to live. "Many policies in combination effectively disengage Indigenous people from active participation in housing provision and use" (Berry et al 2001:40). Also complicating the access that Indigenous people have to housing in the private rental market are racism and discrimination.

Berry et al report that there is a "confusing array of programs and agencies, with the level and quality of service provision varying accordingly" (Berry et al 2001:44). The diversity and complexity of services and the lack of coordination between services creates problems for Indigenous homeless people.

An empirical study of Indigenous homelessness was completed in 2001 by Memmott and Fantin and dealt with the Darwin and Palmerston area of the Northern Territory and its 'long grasser' population. 'Long grassers' or 'itinerant campers' in this study are distinguished from 'Town Campers' who are defined (as is common in the NT and other states) as those Aboriginal people who reside on Town Camps. These are in turn defined as conveying some sort of permanent or temporary land tenure to the campers. It was determined that itinerants would move into and reside with a host Town Camp for certain periods of time. At this point they were, at least temporarily, no longer itinerants but Town Camp visitors.

A division of the Darwin 'long grassers' into two categories was suggested as follows in 2000 by a Project Management Committee member:

1. Those who have come to town from the more remote parts of the region to have a good time socializing and drinking and who are prepared to do this in 'long grass style' (camping out), but who intend to eventually return to their home community; and
2. Those who live a permanent long-grass lifestyle; have cut off their ties with home communities long ago, and who accept that their lifestyle will remain consistent. (Barbara Cummings, ATSIC, Darwin, p.c., 2/5/00.)

The first category refers to Aboriginal people who visit Darwin and reside for an indeterminate period of time but who intend to return to their home community. Such visitors may reside in or attach themselves to Town Camps, rental house residents, hostels and itinerant groups as well as move between all of these. Most 'long grassers' surveyed by Memmott and Fantin were merely visitors at some time, but for a significant proportion their intentions of returning to their home community eventually changed and they became permanent dwellers in Darwin's public places. The second category above fits with Coleman's (2000B) definition of long-term or chronic homelessness, where it has ceased to be a crisis event and has become an accepted way of life. Long grasser groups in Darwin are thus often comprised of a core of permanent public place dwellers and a number of visitors who are temporarily attached. These visitors may reside in relative's houses in town or they may sleep out in public places with the core members of the group. The core group may be only two, three or four people and the attached visitors may swell to ten, fifteen or twenty on occasions.

It should be noted that the use of the term 'itinerant' in connection with the project in Darwin was imposed at the outset by the client in their terms of reference for the research contract. After reflecting on their findings, Memmott and Fantin do not now regard this term as being very useful. In Darwin the category includes chronically homeless individuals who have been residing regularly in particular public places for many years, and in a range of urban campsites for up to 15 years. Given the literal meaning of 'itinerant' as implying mobility and a lack of permanent connection to place, it would seem desirable to use a more appropriate term covering both of the above categories; hence our preference for the term, 'public place dweller'.

A profile of itinerants or 'long grassers' residing in Darwin and Palmerston is contained in the Memmott & Fantin report (2001, also summarised in Memmott 2003). Some of their obvious characteristics can be sketched out as follows:

- People who do not pay for accommodation;
- People who have a visible public profile: they socialise, shelter, drink, and argue/fight in public;
- Perceived by some to exhibit anti-social behaviour at times;
- Perceived by some to be at risk and needy;
- Have low incomes, a substantial part of which is spent on alcohol;
- Generally have few possessions, minimal clothes and bedding;
- Generally conform to a 'beat' of camping, socialising and resource places; and
- Most do not have any immediate intentions of returning to home communities.

The study of Indigenous 'long grassers' from the Darwin area presented findings from interviews with 52 subjects. They in turn profiled other members in their groups giving a total of 227 persons in the 'long grass'. They gave a range of reasons for coming to the city from their home communities. Some were looking for work, for a change and to see Darwin. Others were 'chasing grog' or 'action'. Still more were escaping a range of problems in their home communities, from fighting to violence and racial discrimination. (Memmott & Fantin 2001:70,72.) When the interviewees were asked if they wanted to stay in Darwin, a majority said they would. Staying would allow them to support sick or disable relatives, or access alcohol, which was banned in the communities from which they came. Some felt there were too many problems in their home communities or they simply did not have the resources to return. (Memmott & Fantin 2001: 72.)

Further categorisation of public place dwellers can be obtained from the social structures of groups that occupy public places. In Darwin it was found that the structure of itinerant groups was variable. Some individuals preferred being alone and having limited social interaction, while others lived as couples or in small family groups. There were also larger groups containing a range of the previous two groupings. (Memmott & Fantin 2001:70.)

The community from which public place dwellers originate is one of their significant characteristics and could potentially impact on the definition of their needs and service providers' responses to them. For example, in Darwin public place dwellers came from remote, Top End communities and interstate. Particularly large transforming groups with core leaders were from Maningrida and Wadeye. Those interviewed asserted that in implementing any accommodation strategies, separate accommodation would have to be provided for different tribal or cultural groups to prevent potential conflict. (Memmott & Fantin 2001:70.) Homeless people, in particular public place dwellers, can also be categorised by age and gender. In Darwin most participants in the interviews ranged between the ages of 30 and 50, and the ratio of males to females was 2:1 (Memmott & Fantin 2001: 70).

3.3.1 Residential Mobility as an Attribute of Indigenous Homelessness

It was noted that the ABS's 'cultural definition' of homelessness included a category of 'Secondary Homelessness' comprised of those "who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another". Olive (1992, drawing on the NYCH definition) also identified "very high mobility between places of abode" as a circumstance contributing to Indigenous homelessness. Aboriginal societies and communities are characterised by high frequencies of residential mobility both between and within settlements (Memmott and Moran 2001). However, despite this technique of categorisation, the current authors would argue that it does not necessarily follow that such mobile individuals should be construed as being homeless.

A useful discussion of the concept of mobility was conducted by Joanne Victoria in her Masters thesis on Indigenous youth housing need in Queensland (2002:49-51). She identified high rates of residential mobility amongst that state's Indigenous youth, however they are not always considered homeless by their communities. Mobility is defined in its simplest terms as "movement from one house to another" (Henry & Daly 2001:9 cited in Victoria 2002:49). Victoria cites a number of authors who attest to the vital part this movement

through extended family networks plays in Indigenous social and economic arrangements (Young & Doohan 1989, Henry & Daly 2001, Musharbash 2001). People's patterns of movement represent the fulfilment of their kinship obligations as well as their connection to country or particular places. Young people were found to value "the opportunities offered by mobility between kin" (Victoria 2002:121). Victoria distinguishes between 'inter-community and intra-community mobility' and provides examples of each. She reveals that young people, single men and, to a lesser extent, women, are often the most mobile groups. However, "mobility in the modern urban context has also been associated with contemporary urban phenomena ... such as poverty, violence and housing shortages" (Memmott et al 2001 and Henry & Daly 2001 cited in Victoria 2002:51).

Victoria utilises an important aspect of the work of Henry and Daly 2001, which is relevant to understanding the relationship between homelessness and mobility (2002:51). While their focus is young Indigenous people, the analysis they derive could be applied to all age groups. The researchers have identified two general categories of mobility: firstly that which is an "expression of individual autonomy" and reflects enduring social and cultural practices and values, and secondly that which is problematic and expressive of instability and lack of support. It is essential to grasp the nature of these opposing concepts of mobility, particularly in terms of certain categories of homelessness. While it is true that social obligations accommodating high rates of mobility can serve to mask the numbers of people in the Indigenous population who are without accommodation, such a phenomenon is not necessarily injurious to the health or safety of all such persons. High residential mobility rates in themselves are not merely expressions of negative circumstances.

Victoria goes on to identify the second category of problematic mobile young people and warns of the dangers of only providing housing to such highly mobile Indigenous youth without additional complementary support:

Differentiating 'normal' youth mobility from those 'doing the rounds' reveals hidden homelessness and vulnerability in young people. These young people are considered to be in need a [sic] much support. For many the provision of housing to this group may even exacerbate the dire situation the young person is experiencing, because without significant housing and non-housing support the tenancy will inevitably fail. (Victoria 2002: 121.)

Victoria goes on to emphasize the role of senior carers in Aboriginal households who provide the necessary support for younger kin. The role mobility plays in issues of crowding is further examined in the following Section 3.3.3.

3.3.2 'Crowding' as an Attribute of Indigenous Homelessness

Given that the mainstream definitions of homelessness incorporate and gather together notions of residential mobility, inadequate personal amenities in housing, insecurity of housing (due to violation of tenancy agreements), and given the cross-cultural complexity of defining Indigenous homelessness, it is important to examine the relevance of Indigenous 'crowding'. As early as 1987-88, the National Youth Coalition for Housing identified the potential of crowding to contribute to a sense of homelessness and Olive, in her study at Rockhampton identified how this was particularly relevant to Indigenous people (1992:2,3). By the late 1990s, Keys Young had identified crowding as a distinct type of Indigenous homelessness (1998:iv). Memmott and Fantin's 2001 study of Darwin's Indigenous itinerant population revealed that those mobile persons who temporarily left the long-grass lifestyle and stayed in houses with members of their family could have a significant impact on the viability of such tenancies. The factors negatively influencing tenancy stability upon the arrival of such itinerant persons in the household included: the increased load placed on a residence's water and waste facilities and the potential for health hazards, the perceptions of landlords and management agencies (not necessarily accurate) about crowding, and the increased risk of alcohol-related violence and its impact on neighbourhood quality of life and on a property's condition (2001:11, 67). Crowding is therefore a recurring theme in these studies.

In 1991 Memmott published a cross-cultural model of crowding which pertained to North American, European and east Asian groups and which was drawn from an analysis of the

environmental psychology literature (Memmott 1991B:255-258). This model holds that states of crowding involve high-density settings displaying various stimuli, some of which induce stress amongst the setting participants according to their values regarding acceptable environmental stimuli. The presence of unacceptable stimuli may be perceived as a loss of control. Alternatively a coping mechanism may be used if one is available. It was found that the values employed to evaluate the state of any particular setting, to determine which stimuli are present, and to select an appropriate coping mechanism, vary across cultures.

This model was accompanied by a review of the limited research published on 'crowding' among Indigenous Australians. There were only three short studies available at that time from Arnhem Land (Reser 1976:24-26, 1979:85-87), Mornington Island (Memmott 1979:366-370), and Halls Creek (WA) (Ross 1987:112-113). New, supplementary material from Wilcannia was added (Memmott 1991B:258). This limited study concluded that many questions remained unanswered. Memmott found that the degree to which cultural change in communities with differing contact histories, had influenced norms of crowding and privacy was not known. He asserted that "[i]n the meantime it certainly cannot be assumed that high household densities regarded as 'crowded' by non-Aboriginal standards are necessarily perceived as being stressful by Aboriginal groups" (Memmott 1991B:262).

Subsequently, very little research has occurred on Indigenous crowding since the above was written. However, further research was conducted in the 1990s on the spatial behaviour of Indigenous households, particularly relating to household composition. Examples of these studies are: Ross 1991, Kubota 1992 (Galiwin'ku), Keys 1999 (Yuendumu, Nyirrpi), Hafner 1999:221-234 (Coen, Port Stewart) and Hammill 2001 (Cherbourg). In addition there are the various criticisms and reflexive considerations of the 1991 and 1996 Census Analyses on crowding produced by Dr Roger Jones and his colleagues at the Australian National University that need to be carefully considered.

Among Indigenous Australian groups, the occupants of houses do not necessarily belong to one family unit. Contrasting with the national trend toward an increased proportion of households being made up of single persons and childless couples, Indigenous households still tend to be larger and more complex, often made up of a number of family sub-groups. The 1996 Census revealed the extent to which Indigenous households were not only larger on average but also filled with more people in each bedroom. "Of all households in Australia with more than two people per bedroom, about one in eight (12.1%) were Indigenous, even though Indigenous households comprised only 1.6% of all Australian households" (ABS 2001:22).

These larger households are explained partly by the fact that Indigenous people today maintain practices from their traditional cultures, where households were often comprised of a number of sub-units based on kinship norms. Such a sub-unit would translate into a 'family unit' in the mainstream Australian society. In some cases multiple Indigenous families are residing together because of a shortage of housing and are experiencing crowding. However in other cases they may choose to reside in large household groupings, in keeping with their traditions.

In traditional camps, households were usually divided into nuclear families, single men's and single women's groups. In many contemporary Indigenous settlements these types of household groupings continue. More complex ones have emerged due to shifts and changes in domestic finances and social authority structures. In many cases several customary family units are found to occupy a single house, and often each resides in a bedroom or other room in the house.

In a survey of a limited sample of Aboriginal houses located across remote communities in the Northern Territory (Memmott et al 2000), it was found that the average number of permanent residents per house was 8.9, and per bedroom 3.2 across the sample. These averages are even higher at a number of times during the year because of the presence of visitors. Household sizes of 6 to 12 people were common, and much larger households were regularly encountered in the survey (up to 20 members). In these large households, it was normal to find each bedroom occupied by a family unit, including either a couple with infants, a single parent with child, a group of single men or single women, or a grandparent with

several infants or teenagers, as well as conventional nuclear families. It should not be assumed that this is a state of crowding as these may be normal family sub-units in extended families.

Therefore, a single Indigenous house may be doing the job of three or more houses as we might conceive their use in mainstream society. Unfortunately this circumstance is often overlooked by funding agencies and architectural designers in the Indigenous housing sector, who continue to provide houses to Indigenous people, which are designed for relatively small nuclear families (Memmott & Moran 2001). This situation exacerbates the instability of tenancy arrangements, thereby increasing the occupants' risk of becoming 'roofless'. In fact, according to the most commonly used definitions they are already homeless. The 'cultural definitions' which Chamberlain (1999) and the ABS espouse, are founded on the principle that homelessness must be delineated in relation to distance from meeting a commonly held community standard. It should be recognised however that the needs of many Indigenous Australians should not be met by the community standard applicable to the broader community.

Any identification or analysis of homelessness that encompasses notions of community standards for housing, residential mobility, household stress or insecurity, needs to be founded on a reliable model of Indigenous crowding. As can be seen from above, the derivation of such a model is a complex issue and one that has been hardly advanced by social science research. This in turn impacts on the definition and measurement of Indigenous homelessness, particularly as it is conceived within the ABS category of secondary homelessness. It therefore comprises a significant knowledge gap and a serious deficiency in implementing related public policy.

3.4 Developing working categories of Indigenous homelessness.

The initial discussion of mainstream categories of homelessness considered the major definitions that have currency in Australia's policy and service delivery environment today. In addition to the definitions used by the Commonwealth Government's chief statistical organisation, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and its peak organ of service delivery to homeless people, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), the comprehensive work done by Coleman in her 2000 PhD thesis was closely examined.

A conflict is revealed between the kind of definition adopted by the ABS, which purports to objectively reflect the community's standards of adequate housing, and the kind adopted by SAAP, which incorporates people's subjective perceptions of their situation. Chamberlain10, is one of the main proponents of a 'cultural definition' such as the that adopted by the ABS, which delineates primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness (refer Section 3.2). He argues that it is unwise to include the subjective element of people’s perception and uses a comparison of non-Indigenous and Indigenous people living in improvised dwellings to support this argument (1999:12). This example neatly segues into the complex issue of Indigenous homelessness and how to define it. The current authors argue that the objectivity sought by 'cultural definitions' is undermined by the existence of very different cultural contexts within Australian society, each of which may maintain their own values and meanings related to housing. ‘Cultural definitions’ are founded on the principle that homelessness must be delineated in terms of the distance certain people are from meeting a commonly held community standard. However, it is vital to recognise that the needs of many Indigenous Australians will not be met by applying a ‘community standard’ drawn from the broader non-Indigenous community.

While it is generally agreed that homelessness represents a continuum of experience that includes 'rooflessness', as well as unsafe and inadequate housing conditions, and unstable tenancy arrangements, what Coleman argues is not properly addressed in most definitions and related literature is the meaning of ‘home’ for chronically homeless people. For those who have abandoned mainstream housing options and connected themselves and their daily

10 See also Chamberlain and Johnson 2000A & B, and Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992 for further discussion of a ‘cultural definition’ of homelessness.

activities to certain public spaces, the condition of being homelessness is about having no control over, or legitimacy in, the places they have chosen to call home. Approaches, which fail to recognise that these public place dwellers do not want to be readily reintegrated into the mainstream, or even into their original home communities, can have little real success in improving their quality of life.

Recent definitions of homelessness in the Indigenous context have recognised that it is a multi-layered and multi-dimensional concept, differing both qualitatively and quantitatively from non-Indigenous homelessness in terms of its form, nature, context, causes and visibility. (Keys Young 1998, Berry et al 2001, ABS 2001 and Memmott & Fantin 2001.) The preceding discussion has shown that Australia's Indigenous homeless population shares characteristics with the mainstream group. While both groups may lack shelter, or be 'at risk' of losing the shelter which they do have, many more Indigenous people occupying accommodation that is substandard, does not meet their basic needs and risks their health. This situation is exacerbated by high rates of mobility among Indigenous people, who are either fulfilling cultural obligations, escaping extraordinary rates of violence or simply accessing services not available in their own communities. Assessing when a residence has become overcrowded is difficult given that crowding is a culturally specific construct and there is a general paucity of Indigenous models of it. This in turn impacts on the definition and measurement of Indigenous homelessness, particularly as it is conceived within the categories of primary and secondary homelessness. It therefore comprises a significant knowledge gap that makes the implementation of related public policy seriously deficient.

While analysis of the 1996 Census has clearly demonstrated that Indigenous citizens are far more likely to experience homelessness than their non-Indigenous counterparts, it remains the hardest category of people to enumerate as accuracy is heavily reliant on the local knowledge of the collectors and their awareness of homelessness. It has been argued that the Census does not fully enumerate the homeless population, particularly the Indigenous members who represent a disproportionately high percentage of its number. A more informed understanding of the daily lifestyle, problems and needs experienced by Indigenous public place dwellers would improve the Census workers' ability to seek out these people. More empirical studies of Indigenous homelessness could also assist in this process.

From the discussion of categories of Indigenous homelessness and public space dwelling, a preliminary set of five categories can be extracted. These are as follows:

1. Lack of access to any stable shelter, accommodation or housing - living in public places.

   This is the category of people who dwell in public space and consider these places to be their home. While there is a significant proportion of people who would not be persuaded to alter their lifestyle, there are also others who join these groups on a temporary basis. This life of public place dwelling, chronic or not, is often bound up with excessive alcohol consumption. In this category we can differentiate at least two sub-categories:

   (i) Those who have come to town to have a good time socialising and drinking and who are prepared to do this by camping out in public places, but who intend to eventually return home, and do not have a strong sense of attachment to the public places in which they camp;

   (ii) Those who live a permanent public place dwelling lifestyle, have cut off their ties with home communities long ago, and who accept that their lifestyle will remain consistent. They have a sense of belonging to a local place and the shifting community of public place dwellers with whom they socialise. The people in this sub-category are equivalent to the chronically homeless as defined in the mainstream. This group may see recognition of their rights to public space and access to storage and ablution facilities as higher priorities than conventional accommodation. Their failed attempts in the public housing sector will have been left many years behind them.

   Public place dwelling groups are thus likely to comprise a core of permanent public place dwellers and some visitors who are temporarily attached.

There are a variety of reasons why people come to live this way. Some people migrate to a regional or capital city from their home communities looking for work. Others desire some kind of change and to see the city's 'bright lights'. Still more come from dry communities to 'chase grog' or 'action', or to escape a range of problems in their home communities, from fighting to violence and racial discrimination. Some come to support sick or disabled relatives. Certain people wish to return to their communities of origin but do not have the resources to so. (Memmott & Fantin 2001: 72.)

Also, many Indigenous people face considerable difficulty accessing housing in the private rental market due to poverty and high levels of unemployment, discrimination, and in some areas, a lack of private rental housing stock. Low incomes, combined with social responsibilities which require that financial assistance be automatically given to other family members, can create financial crisis, which in turn makes it difficult for people to obtain and maintain accommodation. The combined operation of certain policies may make it impossible for Indigenous people to participate in the provision and use of housing. Many public space dwellers can elicit a history of failed tenancies due to these and other factors. (FOCUS 2000:14-22, Memmott & Fantin 2001.)

2. 'Transient homelessness'.

   Another category of people who spend time with public place dwellers occasionally are those who can be described as the transient homeless. These people experience temporary, intermittent and often cyclical patterns of homelessness due to transient and mobile lifestyles, living in temporary arrangements without secure tenure (e.g. staying with friends or relatives, living in squats, improvised dwellings or boarding houses and at times moving into parks and public places).

   It was noted that the ABS's definition of homelessness included the category of 'Secondary Homelessness', which comprises of those "who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another". However, Indigenous societies and communities are characterised by high frequencies of residential mobility both between and within settlements, and it does not necessarily follow that such mobile individuals should be construed as homeless. A number of researchers have identified two general categories of mobility: firstly that which is an expression of individual autonomy and reflects enduring social and cultural practices and values, and secondly that which is problematic and expressive of instability and lack of support. It is essential to grasp the nature of these opposing concepts of residential mobility, particularly in terms of certain categories of homelessness.

3. Spiritual forms of homelessness.

   These may derive from: (a) separation from traditional land, (b) separation from family and kinship networks, or (c) a crisis of personal identity wherein one's understanding or knowledge of how one relates to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused.

   Keys and Young (1998) introduced this Indigenous-specific concept to the discussion of homelessness, and related it directly to post-contact dispossession. Berry et al (2001) elaborated on the concept further introducing ideas about separation from traditional lands, and family and kinship networks, as well as an erosion of Aboriginal identity. The existence of forms of 'spiritual homelessness' was widely endorsed at the National Indigenous Homelessness Forum (March 2003). Unfortunately there are no empirical studies of this category of homelessness for particular Indigenous groups. In the next stage of this analysis the authors intend to see how concepts from a number of bodies of relevant literature (eg the anthropology and the geography of Aboriginal Australia, Deaths in Custody and the Stolen Generation Inquiry) can inform an understanding of this category.

4. Crowding, where it causes considerable stress to families and communities.

   It is generally held that Indigenous Australians live in more crowded conditions and in a poorer standard of housing in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians. However, any

identification or analysis of homelessness that encompasses notions of community standards for housing, residential mobility, household stress or insecurity needs to be founded on a reliable model of Indigenous crowding. The derivation of such a crowding model for Indigenous people is a complex issue involving different cultural constructs of household stress. It is one that has been hardly advanced by social science research. Crowding impacts on the definition and measurement of Indigenous homelessness, particularly as it is conceived within the categories of primary and secondary homelessness Knowing so little about it, comprises a significant knowledge gap and seriously affects the implementation of related public policy.

5. Individuals escaping an unsafe or unstable family circumstance.

   This category includes women and young people in crisis accommodation. Often associated with such homelessness in regional centres and capital cities, are 'at-risk' lifestyles involving alcohol and drug abuse, family and sexual violence and poor nutrition and health care.

The above provides a working set of categories of Indigenous homelessness based on a more insightful understanding of cultural factors in defining ‘homelessness’. They are not mutually exclusive categories. The circumstances of a homeless individual may be such that they fit into several of these categories simultaneously. In the second part of this project the authors intend to refine these categories further. This will be partly done by revisiting the small number of available empirical studies to reveal more closely how they have defined and/or categorised Indigenous homeless or public place dwelling persons.

3.4.1 Empirical Studies of Indigenous Homeless and Public Place Dwelling Persons

The Darwin case study (Memmott & Fantin 2001) is but one empirical research study. How many others are there that can inform the definition and categorisation of Indigenous homelessness?

It appears from the previous literature analysis that two government agencies have carried out or compiled surveys that have attempted to count the nationwide Indigenous homeless population. These are:

- National SAAP Data Collection
- ABS Census (1996 & 2001) and related analyses

It is argued herein that the ABS Census does not fully enumerate the homeless population, particularly the Indigenous members who represent a disproportionately high percentage of its number. A more informed understanding of the daily lifestyle, problems and needs experienced by Indigenous public place dwellers would improve the Census workers' ability to seek out these people. More empirical studies of Indigenous homelessness could assist in this process.

Locating studies that report empirical findings on the Indigenous homeless population, in particular public place dwellers, is difficult. Two common elements of the studies which are listed below is that fieldwork was conducted to quantify the numbers of Indigenous homeless people living in the relevant locality; and all concentrate their efforts on a particular location or region. In a number of cases they present a range of other data collected from interviews with, and observations of Indigenous public place dwellers. (The list excludes studies of formal town camp occupants.)

Darwin 'Long Grasser' Study (Memmott & Fantin 2001)

Alice Springs (Memmott 1990, 1991A, 1993A & B)

Halls Creek, WA (Memmott 1992)

Redfern, Sydney (Memmott 1994)

Cairns, Townsville and Mt Isa (Qld, DATSIP 2003A-D)

Cairns (Dillon & Savage 1994 & McDonald 1996)

Mt Isa (Durnan 2001)

Brisbane (Coleman 2001)

Townsville (Hale 1996)

Rockhampton (Olive 1992)

In the second part of this project the authors intend to revisit these empirical studies to more closely reveal how they defined and/or categorised Indigenous homeless or public place dwelling persons. This information will be incorporated into the Final Report of our overall analysis.

4 ANALYSIS OF GOOD PRACTICE RESPONSES

The preliminary literature findings from Section 3.0 indicate that each category of Indigenous homelessness generates a particular set of needs, such as accommodation, health, transport, security of identity, alcohol and counselling etc, which can inform the design of service responses to Indigenous homelessness and public place dwelling. The next part of the project incorporates an evaluative analysis of a selected number of service responses which are being used to address the needs of particular categories of homeless Indigenous people as identified in the preceding analysis, and which are being assessed as 'good practice' examples from preliminary investigation.

The full range of response categories documented by the authors from throughout Australia is listed below and derives from the efforts of many service providers to address the needs of Indigenous public place dwellers over the last 15 years. It is drawn from the list of 73 responses contained in the report "A National Analysis of Strategies Used to Respond to Indigenous Itinerants and Public Place Dwellers" (Memmott, Long & Chambers 2002, and see Table 2).

- Legislative approaches.
- Patrols and Outreach services.
- Diversionary Strategies.
- Addressing Anti-Social Behaviours.
- Philosophies and methods of interaction.
- Alcohol strategies.
- Regional strategies.
- Accommodation options.
- Dedicated service centres and gathering places.
- The physical design of public spaces.
- Education strategies.
- Phone-in services.
- Skills and training for field and outreach workers.
- Partnerships.
- Holistic approaches.

The 'Good Practice Analysis' has commenced by sorting the types of responses being used in different centres around Australia into preferred and non-preferred approaches; preferred approaches being those, which impact (or have impacted) positively on the needs of Indigenous homeless people. Six potential good practice examples have been identified and are being further verified through consultation with relevant members of a Project Network Group, and through phone inquiries amongst stakeholders involved in the projects. The list is being reduced to a minimum of three or four case studies for field survey in the next stage of the project. Some of the selected case studies include a number of strategies and agencies.

Initially the selection of case studies from the documented 73 responses, was to be considered in terms of the following categories of program responses to Indigenous public place dwelling, as derived from the FaCS funded national analysis (Memmott et al 2001):-

1. best reactive response strategy encompassing patrolling/policing and crisis diversion facility;
2. best proactive response strategy including daytime and night-time residential facilities, and educational techniques;
3. best holistic approach using a balance of multiple strategies.

However, these criteria were not as easily applied to the various strategies as one might have expected, and so were converted into a more detailed set of selection criteria. The following criteria will now be taken into consideration when selecting the short list of potential good practice case studies :

1. The strategy is currently implemented and has operated for a considerable amount of time.
2. The strategy appears to have a positive impact on the needs of Indigenous homeless people.
3. The strategy addresses specific/identified needs of homeless people.
4. The strategy considers socio-cultural issues.
5. Strategy is implemented or staffed by Indigenous people
6. Strategy is operated by a number of organizations in collaboration or the strategy operates successfully in association with other strategies.
7. Knowledge of this strategy is likely to benefit other organizations and knowledge of this strategy would have a significant and positive impact on policy development.
8. The agency/organization operating the strategy is likely to participate in this survey.
9. The strategy identifies and/or responds to different categories of homelessness.
10. The range of practices examined will provide a set of options for different government departments and NGOs to consider in responding to Indigenous Homelessness.

In the next stage of this project, fieldwork will be carried out to collect data to assist in the evaluation of the good practice approaches in more detail than was provided by the literature materials in Memmott et al (2000), which were not necessarily detailed, objective or up-to-date. A pilot field study was being conducted in Western Australia at the time of writing. Findings from this trip will be used to adjust the methods used for future field studies.

By profiling 'Good Practice' responses relevant to various 'needs' categories of homeless people, it is hoped that Indigenous and government agencies will have some useful models which might be adapted or used as benchmarks in the design of other local policies and programs.

4.1 Introduction to the Literature Analysis of Indigenous Response Case Studies

The case study literature on responses to Indigenous public place dwellers (homeless, itinerants, illegal campers, squatters etc) on which the current analysis is based is contained in Memmott et al 2002. This literature was organized and analyzed by geographic location.

This literature analysis did not attempt to deal with the broader literature on fringe camps and town camps. Indigenous Town Camps have been in existence since the colonists created towns and as most of the towns were sited on good water sources they were invariably on traditional camps in any case. The reader is referred to Memmott (1996) on this topic for a more in-depth historical analysis. Through the mid and later 20th century there was an historical trend for these camps to be moved on to special reserves and/or have excisions made for special reserves to accommodate them. If we examine the origins of such fringe camps they may well have once been classified as 'itinerants' or 'homeless'. (For example Clendinnen (2000) makes a sketchy comparison between the 'parkies' who were in Townsville's Hanran Park in the 1990s with the "Natives of NSW as seen in the streets of Sydney, 1830", as portrayed in a painting by Augustus Earle.)

The focus of the current literature analysis is on the phenomenon of small groups of Indigenous people living in public settings, despite in many cases the advent of formal Town Camps and a range of Indigenous housing options being established in many regional centres throughout the latter 20th century (esp. post 1970).

The list of locations which were examined in the literature analysis is as follows (refer Figure 1 below):

- Alice Springs
- Rockhampton
- Musgrave Park
- Fortitude Valley and New Farm
- Cairns
- St Kilda, Melbourne
- Port Hedland
- Halls Creek
- Ceduna
- Tennant Creek
- Port Pirie
- Katherine
- Darwin
- Townsville
- Redfern

Figure 1 Map showing locations where Indigenous homelessness has been reported and response strategies have been implemented according to the findings of the survey by Memmott et al (2002).

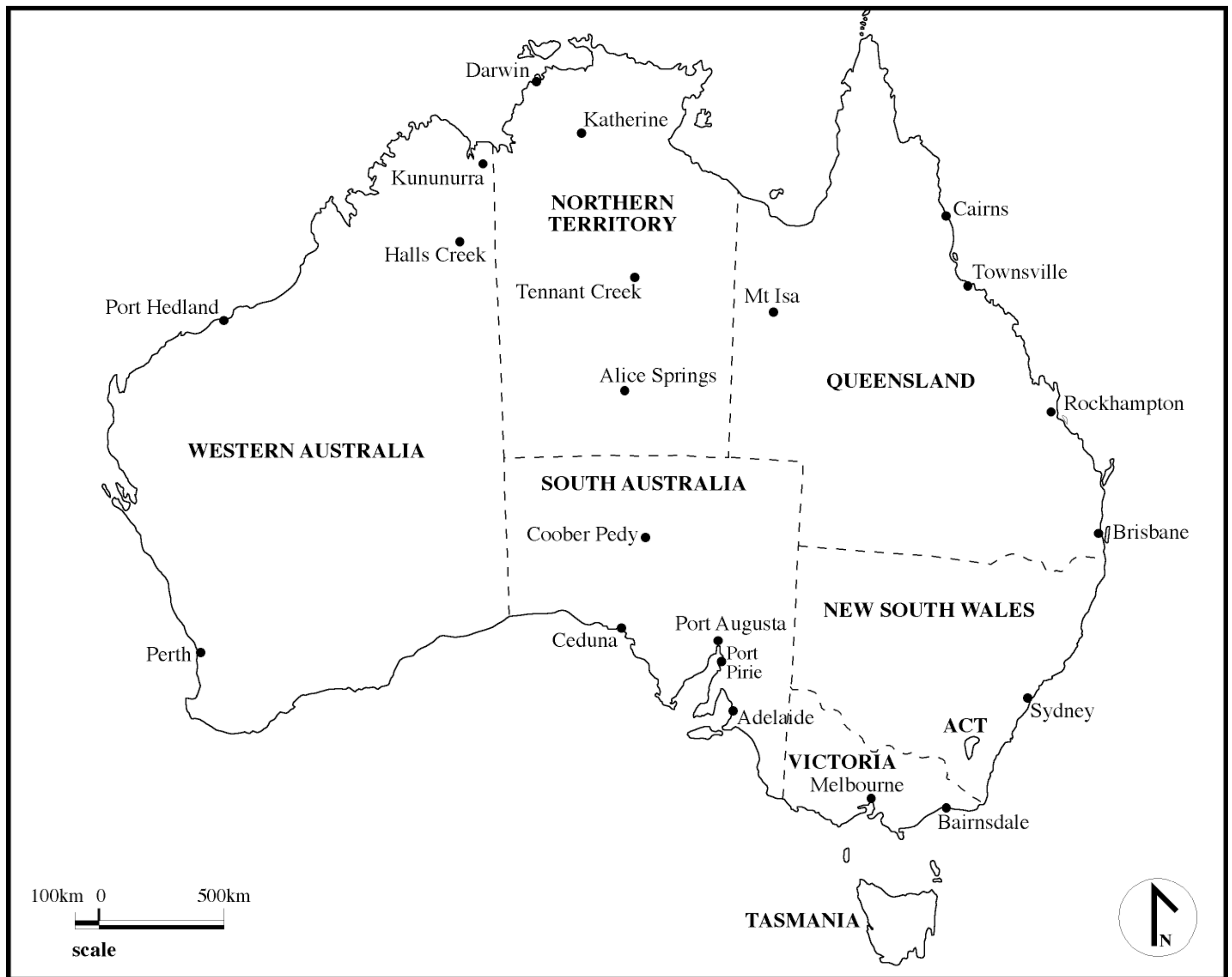

Table 2: Strategies used to respond to Indigenous Homeless and Public Place Dwelling People, categorized by strategy type, case study and location (Summarized from Memmott et al 2002)

1. Legislative and Police Approaches	
1.1 Law & Order Approach	• Hanran Park, Townsville • Darwin Agencies, Darwin • Toilet demolition, Cleve Gardens, St Kilda, Melbourne • Fortitude Valley, Brisbane
1.2 Targeted Legislation	• Hanran Park, Townsville • Alcohol-Free Zone, Redfern, Sydney • Drinking in public places, DCC, Darwin
1.3 Removal of Public Space Dwellers	• 12-point plan, Townsville • Strategies for Homeless ATSI People, Cairns • Evictions from Wallaby and Red Gum camps, Katherine
1.4 Dry Zone	• Adelaide City Dry Zone (trial), Adelaide

	• Dry Zone, Coober Pedy
2. Patrols & Outreach Services	
2.1 Night Patrols	• The Julalikari Council Night Patrol, Tennant Creek • Darwin Night Patrol, Darwin
2.2 Aboriginal Wardens	• Todd River Campers & the Wardens Program, Alice Springs • Kununurra Outreach Service, Kununurra • Ngwala Willumbong, St Kilda, Melbourne • Bedford St Outreach Services, Melbourne • Street Outreach Service, Sydney • Community Access and Support Services, Brisbane • City Homeless Assessment Support Team, Adelaide
3. Diversionary Strategies	
3.1 Detox Centres	• Detox Centre, Sobering-Up Shelter, Darwin
3.2 Sobering Up Shelters	• Arthur Peterson Special Care Centre, Mt Isa
4. Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour	• Tangentyere Council's Four Corners Council, Alice Springs • Long Grassers & the Larrakia Nation, Darwin • Redfern, Sydney
5. Philosophies of Client Interaction	
5.1 General	• Grannies Group, Adelaide • Case Study Approach by Centrecare, Perth
5.2 Community Development Approach	• New Farm Park, Brisbane • Indigenous Women in Inner City Brisbane, Brisbane
5.3 Healing Framework	• A Healing Framework for Service Provision, Brisbane
6. Alcohol Strategies	• Alcohol Strategies in Redfern, Sydney • Alcohol Strategies in Cairns • Alcohol Strategies in Coober Pedy • Alcohol Strategies in Darwin • Alcohol Strategies in Mt Isa • Response to Alcohol Violence in Port Hedland
7. Regional Strategies	• Tangentyere Social Behaviour Project, Central Aust. • Proposed Regional Strategy for Darwin • North-West Queensland Regional Strategy, NW Qld
8. Accommodation Options	
8.1 Socio-spatial Planning & Socio-territoriality	• Separate living areas for different tribal groups, Alice Springs • Separate living areas for different tribal groups, Halls Creek • Separate living areas for different tribal groups,

	Katherine • 'Parkies' in Cairns
8.2 Alternative Accom. for Squatters	• Housing Units for Redfern Squatters, Sydney
8.3 Visitors Camp	• Halls Creek Visitors' Camp Proposals, Halls Creek
8.4 Hostels and Units	• Accommodation for Musgrave Park Drinkers, Brisbane
8.5 Safe House, Town Camp	• Safe House and Town Camp for transients, Ceduna
8.6 Town Camp	• Proposed Town Camp Trial, Mt Isa
8.7 Diverse Accommodation Options	• Accommodation Options, Cairns
8.8 Diverse Accommodation Options	• Accommodation Options, Darwin
8.9 Crisis, Medium Term & Women's	• Accommodation at Port/South Hedland, Port Hedland
8.10 Women's Shelter & Hostel	• Accommodation for Women in Victoria, Bairnsdale, Melbourne
8.11 Youth Accommodation	• Meerindoo Youth Hostel, Bairnsdale • Young People in Rockhampton, Rockhampton
8.12 Accommodation for Families	• Transitional Housing for Homeless Families in Port Augusta, Port Augusta
8.13 Transient Camps	• Possible Negative Affects of Transient Camps, Darwin
9. Service Centres & Gathering Places	
9.1 Food Provision	• Ecumenical Coffee Brigade, Brisbane • St Vincent de Paul's Bakhita Centre, Darwin • Hedland Homeless Support Centre, Port Hedland
9.2 Day Centre	• Toonooba Day Activity Centre, Rockhampton • Hope Street, South Brisbane, Brisbane • Proposed Day Activity Centre in Redfern, Sydney
9.3 Dedicated Space	• New Farm Park Designated Space Trial, Brisbane • Proposal for a transient Camp, Darwin
10. The Physical Design of Public Spaces	
10.1 Storage Shelves	• Kurilpa Point Storage Shelves, Brisbane
10.2 Park Shelter	• Park Bench Shelter, Melbourne
11. Education Strategies	
11.1 Public Education & Indigenous Itinerants	• Longrassers Darwin • Adelaide City Council Information Brochure
12. Phone in Services	• NSW Homeless Persons Information Centre, Sydney
13. Skills & Training for Outreach Workers	
13.1 Effective Use of Non-Indigenous Field Staff	• Effective Use of Non-Indigenous Field Staff, Perth
13.2 Staff Training & Development	• Ngwala Willumbong, Melbourne

13.3 Information Sharing and Exchange	• The Homeless Handbook, a Medical Guide, Melbourne • Women's Transition Workers & Release Kits, Brisbane
14. Partnerships	• The NSW Partnership Against Homelessness • The Victorian Homelessness Strategy • West Australian Homelessness Strategy
15. Holistic Approaches	• Proposed Holistic Approach in Mt Isa, Mt Isa • Holistic Approach at Port and South Hedland • Long Grassers Strategy, Darwin

4.2 Summary of Response Types

The term 'response types' refers to a broad range of initiatives including philosophies, policies, programs, services, strategies, methodologies, legislations and activities that are aimed at addressing the needs of people who are homeless and/or residing in public places. This summary of the findings on the various responses to Indigenous public place dwelling and homelessness (Section 4.2) has been taken directly from Memmott et al (2002:63-68). In general, the responses selected as case studies for inclusion in this analysis were targeted specifically at Indigenous people. These response types and case studies are all listed in the attached Table 2. No attempt was made in the 2002 study to survey all mainstream service responses for homeless people. Nevertheless a number of programmes, although having been established for all homeless people, served predominantly Indigenous clients in their day-to-day operations. Also, a small number of mainstream services for homeless people were included in the analysis that, while only impacting on a small (or perhaps negligible) number of Indigenous homeless people, were brought to the authors' attention because of their interesting potential for possible application to Indigenous groups. Programmes of this sort included the Independent Community Living Association's (ICLA) Street Outreach Service in inner Sydney, and NSW Homeless Persons Information Centre. The converse of the previous category of examples is a number of programmes which although run by Indigenous organizations to target Indigenous homeless people, have also been made accessible to non-Indigenous people eg Bairnsdale Koorie Women's Shelter.

The various responses identified from the 2002 analysis can be described under the following 15 categories11.

4.2.1 Legislative Approaches

The law-and-order approach using reactive policing and supported by various forms of legislation, may be only partly successful and even totally unsuccessful, in eliminating Indigenous public place dwelling. It is likely to only result in temporary and/or local displacement, whilst overall cycles of incarceration, alcohol treatment and public place dwelling continue. In preparing legislation that is motivated by a need to move Indigenous public place dwellers, authorities may also run the risk of breaching anti-discrimination legislation. Forced physical removal to distant remote settlements is also equally repugnant and a violation of civil liberties. As a general principle any movement of Indigenous people from their occupied public spaces due to conflicting public needs, should be carried out through a process of negotiation no matter how protracted, and accompanied by a planned set of alternate accommodation and servicing options acceptable to all parties.

4.2.2 Patrols and Outreach Services

A variety of services are provided by either individuals, pairs or small groups of field workers, who seek out Indigenous itinerants or public place dwellers in the locations they are known to

11 Sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.15 are extracted and adapted from Memmott et al (2002:63-68).

frequent. Within this broad category come Aboriginal Night Patrols, Wardens and Outreach Workers, although the precise nature of their services varies. The functions of night patrols and warden schemes include: intervention in situations of substance abuse (especially alcohol) and violence, mediation and dispute resolution between people in conflict, and the removal of disruptive or potentially violent persons from public or private social environments. Outreach workers tend to take a stronger 'case file' approach, attempting over a period of time to assess clients' needs and establish linkages to relevant wider service agencies in response to those needs (eg accommodation, health, employment, transport).

4.2.3 Diversionary Strategies

This approach normally involves taking people who are intoxicated, and possibly aggressive or otherwise at-risk from their own actions or those of others, and placing them in managed accommodation until they can become sober, sleep and have a meal. The approach can be regarded as a short-term, reactive strategy. It is 'diversionary' because it aims to keep at-risk, intoxicated individuals out of the watch-house in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC). The collection of such people is usually performed by either the Police, an Aboriginal Patrol, or both. The 'managed accommodation' to which they are taken may be the house of a relative, a Sobering-Up Shelter, a refuge or other such facility. The utilisation of the diversionary approach is now widespread in many parts of Australia.

A variety of additional strategies can be incorporated into the basic diversionary model in an effort to expand its short-term and reactive qualities into the medium or long-term. Examples of these include: follow-up 'shaming' and 'square-up' sessions between offenders and aggrieved members of the community; the presence of a 'detox' centre in proximity to the Sobering-Up Shelter; the opportunity to move directly to a residential facility in an alcohol treatment centre; and the presence of a Day Centre adjacent to the Sobering-Up Shelter for recreational or entertainment facilities.

4.2.4 Addressing anti-social behaviour

Only in a few of the case studies reviewed by Memmott et al in 2002 was there any emphasis given to the role of Traditional Owners in dealing with public place dwellers. These were found in Alice Springs and Darwin. They both involved Traditional Owners taking exception to the anti-social behaviour of certain public place dwellers, particularly those involved in intoxication, begging, alcohol violence, and enacting sexual and excretory functions in public places. Traditional Owners saw this behaviour as 'shaming' their own people and their law and custom, and they were adamant about asserting their authority in an effort to prevent it.

One reason for including local Traditional Owners in a public place dwellers' response strategy, particularly in more traditionally oriented areas, is that such itinerant people may be more inclined to respect Aboriginal Law than non-Aboriginal Law. Therefore a more effective approach may emerge and one that is more clearly Aboriginal-directed. The role of local Traditional Law Holders has primarily involved the establishment of models of appropriate versus anti-social behaviours (in terms of Aboriginal value systems) of public place dwellers, and territorial rules concerning where particular individuals or groups should dwell.

4.2.5 Philosophies of client interaction

In addition to respecting and working through customary principles of Aboriginal law and custom, the literature search conducted by Memmott et al (2002) uncovered several other professional philosophies adopted by various service providers. The Perth Centrecare approach emphasised the need to guide and empower families and individuals in finding their own solutions not imposed ones, through a long-term personal and amiable relationship with clients, and using a combination of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff. Coleman (2000) extends this to include a healing therapy that encourages self-exploration of the many underlying issues and causal factors behind the circumstances of public place dwellers.

A number of researchers emphasize the community development philosophy in working with Indigenous public place dwellers. Through participation in the process of addressing their problems, qualities of group cohesion, leadership, problem-solving capacity and self-esteem

are fostered. There is a need for public place dwellers to have sufficient ownership of the process in order to be prepared to participate in it in a meaningful way; one that results in real lifestyle changes and does not further entrench welfare dependency. A common and parallel acceptance of this approach is required by all local stakeholders (government departments, local councils, charitable organizations).

4.2.6 Alcohol strategies

In addressing the needs of public place dwellers, whether it be their health, the impact of alcohol violence on other group members, or the impact of intermittent anti-social intoxicated behaviour on the general public, there is clearly a need to formulate a strategic response to the prevalent heavy-drinking lifestyle, which is a common characteristic of many of these groups. Responses to alcohol abuse by public place dwellers involve multiple strategies. These include: patrols or outreach services; meals; sobering-up shelters; women's refuges; detox centres; legislative supports (including licensing restrictions and restricted public zones of consumption); approved gathering and camping places; rehabilitation programs (including counselling, education, group therapy, co-dependants support, excursions and activities); residential options; and support.

4.2.7 Regional strategies

An in-depth understanding of Indigenous public place dwelling and homelessness in metropolitan and regional urban centres necessitates a regional approach that examines Indigenous migration and residential mobility patterns. In order to reduce the numbers of Indigenous public place dwellers and discourage their numbers from growing in urban regional centres, it is necessary to examine the nature and dynamics of regional migration to understand why people leave their home communities, or what prevents them from returning.

Being based on such an analysis, a regional strategy dealing with Indigenous itinerancy and homelessness must include a shared set of values and a communication system between the regional centre's service providers and the communities of the outer parts of the region. This facilitates shared decision-making in addressing the needs of individual clients. This in turn may be accompanied by a regional education programme concerning urban lifestyles and values, and what might be expected of Indigenous people when visiting large cities, both in terms of mainstream and Aboriginal laws, and behavioural values. A converse requirement is education materials for non-Aboriginal Australians and tourists on Aboriginal values and lifestyles and the need for mutual cross-cultural accommodation of such values. Finally the migration of Indigenous people to urban centres generates serious questions for public servants and politicians in Aboriginal Affairs and Community leaders and Councillors concerning the quality of lifestyle in remote and rural Aboriginal communities, as well as the distribution and licensing of alcohol outlets throughout such a region.

4.2.8 Accommodation options

A standard accommodation approach involves a threefold progression: first establish emergency or crisis accommodation for use over one or a few nights. This may comprise of Women's Refuges, Safe Houses and/or Sobering-Up Shelters. Secondly, a medium-term accommodation option, sometimes referred to as transitional housing, must be provided for use until conventional rental housing becomes available. Finally a range of miscellaneous management services may be required to assist people into all of these categories of accommodation and provide ongoing support. The types of accommodation can include: housing units, safe houses, town camps, temporary visitors' camps, hostels, flats, boarding houses, and large and extended family houses and hostel attached to hospital.

When planning a sequence of supported accommodation - from crisis facilities to medium-term and longer-term solutions, and eventually to mainstream public housing - an onus is placed on housing authorities and agencies to ensure that there are effective connections between each stage of this sequence. If such strategies for moving people successfully through the system are not in place, clients may return to residing in the earlier stages of supported accommodation (crisis and medium-term) and possibly in public places.

A knowledge of the social structure, cultural identity and lifestyle of Indigenous public place dwelling groups is required to understand their needs and social dynamics when providing separate accommodation areas in accordance with traditional socio-spatial structures. More challenging accommodation responses in terms of public policy and governance, involve recognizing the right of public place dwellers to their outdoor lifestyle and providing forms of managed and serviced camps. There is also an increasing call for targeted accommodation services for Indigenous women (with or without children), youth, single men, and elderly people experiencing homelessness and living in public places, but little research is available to understand these different categories of specialised need.

Providing targeted accommodation facilities for Aboriginal public place dwellers usually brings with it a formidable range of local political problems. These can include fear and discrimination on the part of local residents and conservative reactions by local politicians who fear potential negative political impact. Obtaining suitable land is the first obstacle; there is a need to counter this problem through a more proactive approach to urban planning to ensure suitable land is set aside when development opportunities arise. The same problems apply to providing dedicated service centres or gathering places.

4.2.9 Dedicated service centres and gathering places

Research on Indigenous people in metropolitan centres has revealed that they have always had regular meeting or gathering places where those arriving from remote communities can find support while they orientate themselves to city life. Providing meals to homeless people at such gathering places in parks and other public places has been carried out in the past largely by charitable organizations such as St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army. There is potential in situations where such food is distributed to promote 'capacity building'. A service provider could take advantage of such a concentrated gathering of clients to establish a working relationship with them and provide more proactive outreach services aimed at improving itinerants' quality of life.

Another ambitious approach involves the provision of a dedicated building, at which a range of services can be offered whilst public place dwellers gather and socialise nearby. The most notable of these have been the Toonooba Day Activity Centre on the bank of the Fitzroy River in Rockhampton and the 'Designated Space' in the New Farm Park near the banks of the Brisbane River. The latter facility is one of the very few services reported in the Memmott et al (2002) study for which there is a formal evaluation study. 'Hope Street' in South Brisbane is the longest running service centre (over 18 years) and it is located centrally in the urban locale of parks, sidewalks and vacant lots where its clients dwell. The Port Hedland Breakfast Service cleverly combines the attributes of the mobile food van with the in-situ service centre. The proposed location of a planned service centre for Indigenous street dwellers requires careful consideration in terms of the territorial and other constraints imposed by both public place dwelling groups and local stakeholder groups.

4.2.10 The physical design of public spaces

Recognizing that Indigenous people either have a right to dwell in public places, or at least should be provided with modest comforts until such times as they are able to attain a more conventional type of accommodation, a few local authorities have provided physical improvements to public places. Examples include groves of casuarinas in parklands to provide a soft under-bed of pine needles on which Aboriginal and other homeless people could sleep, storage shelves for public place dwellers, and a design for a park bench that can be transformed into a nocturnal shelter.

4.2.11 Education strategies

The customary practices of camping without any shelters, in mild tropical climates, contributes to the ease with which Indigenous people can readily 'fall' into the itinerant lifestyle in regional centres. Although such a lifestyle may be acceptable to more tolerant citizens, such tolerance may be quickly eroded by regular alcohol consumption, subsequent intoxication and other anti-social behaviour enacted by public place dwellers. Externally-oriented living is but one of a number of cross-cultural differences that can lead to

misconceptions amongst non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal public behaviour. To offset such value differences, cross-cultural awareness programs are recommended for the non-Indigenous community, to inform people on culturally-specific lifestyle choices and define appropriate urban behaviour guidelines. Another potential role of a public educational campaign is to reduce the level of unrealistic fear through better information on the circumstances, history and background of Aboriginal itinerants.

4.2.12 Phone-in services

No phone-in services were identified in the National Survey that were specifically for Indigenous homeless persons, although some State Housing Departments have a free-call number for Indigenous housing clients in general. In NSW there is a service for homeless persons which attracts about 6% of Indigenous callers. Although many Indigenous public place dwellers may not be initially inclined to avail themselves of such a service, an outreach worker equipped with a mobile phone may well be able to facilitate such a service on behalf of a person 'on the street'.

4.2.13 Skills and training for field and outreach workers

Despite the potentially demanding behavioural and communication difficulties of working with Indigenous public place dwellers who may be suffering from substance abuse problems, identity crisis and poor physical health, there appears to be few available training options for professional or para-professional field and outreach workers. An exception is the Swinburne/Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal and Drug Worker training courses in Victoria. Equally lacking are educational texts, information kits or videos relevant to Indigenous homelessness and public place dwelling, exceptions being the Homeless Handbook Medical Guide (Daly et al 1996) and the Queensland female prisoners 'Release Kits'.

4.2.14 Partnerships

Given the complex needs of Indigenous public place dwellers, it is desirable to develop partnerships wherever possible to deliver inter-related services to such people, whether such partnerships involve Indigenous community agencies, government departments, private sector groups or combinations of these entities. In reviewing such partnerships, an important quality was found to involve a sense of ownership of and responsibility for such partnerships. This should desirably remain with local Indigenous groups or agencies. The available literature contains little detailed information on the advantages of such partnerships in general, although there are profiles of Homelessness Partnerships within particular State Governments.

4.2.15 Holistic Approaches

The existence of partnerships between those agencies providing services for Indigenous homeless people or public place dwellers, is critical to developing holistic approaches that address the needs of these people. The benefits of such partnerships can be improved information exchange, protocols for cooperation between organizations, and culturally appropriate staff training. A holistic approach to Indigenous homelessness addresses both the immediate problems, as well as other underlying issues and causal factors, which may not be necessarily identified by the clients themselves. It involves reactive and proactive components that, according to the nature of the problem, must be both short-term and long-term in their duration.

Important design principles for a holistic strategy are: (a) the need for Indigenous public place dwellers to be involved with the design and the development of any proposed service response in a community development approach; (b) recognition and respect for the strong ties which Indigenous public place dwellers have with inner city public places; (c) the need for Indigenous ownership (empowerment) or shared ownership in the case of a partnership, over the strategy; and (d) the need to attempt to design capacity-building goals for the public place dwellers into the strategy.

Holistic approaches optimally require funding pooled from a number of agencies and the employment of a coordinator to ensure the integration of several parallel strategies or

program components. Such components ideally incorporate intervention in anti-social behaviour and crisis situations, short and long-term ways of addressing alcohol addiction and accommodation related problems, transport to home communities, and public education to establish or maintain tolerant values and cross-cultural respect in local communities and across regions. (End of material from Memmott et al 2002:63-68.)

5 CONCLUSION

The foregoing represents a summary of 15 categories of responses to Indigenous homelessness, based on the Memmott et al (2002) analysis, which in turn described in detail some 73 response types (programs, activities, philosophies, etc). These 15 response categories can be further subdivided into reactive (nos 1-3), proactive (nos 4-9) and holistic approaches (nos 14-15). Collectively these responses address a wide range of needs that reflect the complex circumstances of Indigenous public place dwellers and homeless people.

One of the problems of categorisation is that when applying certain definitions of 'homelessness' the composition of Indigenous groups dwelling in public spaces may be oversimplified and thus their needs may be at best, misunderstood and minimally serviced, or at worst, overlooked and not addressed. So, the categories used to define 'homeless' people directly influence the perception of the needs of this group. An aim of the Final Report of this project will be to clarify further the relation between categories of Indigenous homelessness and public place dwelling on the one hand, and categories of responses to the needs of such people on the other.

Which responses are relevant to a particular place or group will vary across the continent depending on the local environmental and socioeconomic context and the history of culture contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It is from within this body of knowledge of responses that the current authors are selecting good practice case studies for profiling in the next stage of this project. The selection process and findings will be presented in the Final Report on this project.

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