

Implementing the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness in Queensland

Report to Parliament 6 : 2012-13



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February 2013

The Honourable F Simpson MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Madam Speaker

This report is prepared under Part 3 Division 3 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, and is titled *Implementing the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness in Queensland*.

In accordance with s.67 of the Act, would you please arrange for the report to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Greaves', with a long, sweeping underline.

Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General

Contents

Summary	1
Conclusions	1
Key findings	2
Recommendations.....	4
Reference to agency comments (Appendix A)	5
1. Context	7
1.1 Counts of homeless people	7
1.2 Causes of homelessness.....	8
1.3 The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.....	9
1.4 The Queensland Implementation Plan	10
1.5 Initiatives audited in detail.....	11
1.6 Structure of this report	12
2. Queensland's plan to reduce homelessness.....	13
2.1 Background	14
2.2 Conclusions	14
2.3 Queensland's funding co-contribution	15
2.4 Coordinating the initiatives.....	16
2.5 Evaluation.....	19
2.6 Recommendations.....	20
3. Contract management of homelessness services	21
3.1 Background	22
3.2 Conclusions	22
3.3 Defining the service	23
3.4 Monitoring homelessness services	24
3.5 Client satisfaction with services	26
3.6 Recommendations.....	28
Appendices	29
Appendix A - Comments	30
Appendix B - Audit details.....	34
Appendix C - Additional information on homelessness in Queensland	35

Summary

The Australian states and territory governments signed the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) in December 2008. The former Department of Communities had overall responsibility for coordinating this agreement up to April 2012, when the newly established Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS) assumed responsibility.

The aim of the NPAH is to reduce homelessness by targeting key groups: rough sleepers; people experiencing homelessness more than once; people escaping violence; children and young people exiting care and protection; Indigenous people; and people exiting social housing and institutional care such as health, mental health, juvenile justice or adult prisons.

The Australian and Queensland Governments committed joint funding of \$284.6 million over five years to reduce homelessness by seven per cent by 2013. Queensland's contribution is \$149.5 million (52.5 per cent).

Queensland is implementing 31 new or expanded initiatives with the joint funding, both for capital projects and for the delivery of services to the homeless.

Responsibility for the 31 initiatives is spread across:

- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (23)
- Department of Housing and Public Works (1)
- Department of Community Safety (3)
- Queensland Health (2)
- (former) Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (1)
- Department of Justice and the Attorney-General. (1)

The delivery of 19 of the 23 initiatives by DCCSDS has been outsourced to non-government organisations (NGO). These 19 initiatives have budgets totalling \$140.97 million over the life of the NPAH.

This audit assessed whether DCCSDS is implementing the NPAH as intended, achieving the planned outcomes and realising the expected benefits. This included auditing services delivered by two NGOs to test DCCSDS controls over outsourced services.

Conclusions

The prevalence of homelessness has decreased, but there are more homeless people in Queensland now than six years ago. It is not evident this adverse trend will be reversed in time to achieve the NPAH target of reducing homeless numbers in absolute terms by seven per cent by 2013. This means that the ultimate outcome sought from just over \$280 million of specific-purpose state and federal expenditure will not be achieved.

The results to date are not for want of action—the 31 initiatives in the Queensland Implementation Plan are being implemented as agreed—but rather they indicate either that not all the activities funded have been effective, or that the original targets were unrealistic.

The challenge for both the Australian and state/territory governments is to determine which initiatives are the most cost-effective in reducing homelessness, and where future investment in homelessness services can deliver the most value for taxpayer dollars. This challenge is made harder because the Queensland and Australian Governments do not monitor outcomes achieved by each initiative, and the output measures are not comprehensive. Integrity checks over the data being reported by DCCSDS to the Australian Government are weak and confidence in the veracity of reporting is eroded.

These limitations in performance monitoring and weaknesses in data integrity are mirrored in the oversight by the state of the NGOs that provide many of the services under the NPAH. The output measures used to track NGO performance tell only part of the story. While this is a significant improvement over past approaches, (when contracts with NGOs were managed on an input basis) and DCCSDS can now report that a service was delivered; it cannot report on whether those assisted receive a timely or quality service that met their needs. A move to outcome-based contracts would provide greater flexibility and accountability on the achievements for clients and identify what is working and what is not.

In relation to the targets set for the NPAH, the number of homeless people is subject to many external influences and confounding variables, most outside the control of DCCSDS. Natural disasters, unemployment rates and housing affordability are factors that affect homelessness. It is unrealistic therefore to attribute changes in either the number or rate of homelessness solely to the NPAH initiatives, and is an exercise in futility to measure its success or otherwise in these terms. Such important high level strategic outcomes and targets for homelessness are better set, monitored, and performance measured, by the state, at a whole of government level.

Key findings

Achievement of NPAH targets

NPAH targets are to reduce overall numbers of homeless people by seven per cent, rough sleepers by 25 per cent, and Indigenous homelessness by 33 per cent, by 2013. The targets and baselines are informed by the census collection conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) every five years. The ABS estimates of homelessness in 2006 and 2011 indicate that these targets are unlikely to be achieved in Queensland, or any other jurisdiction.

ABS estimates that between 2006 and 2011 the number of homeless people in Queensland increased in absolute terms by five per cent from 18 856 to 19 838. The numbers of homeless children increased in this period by six per cent from 5 158 to 5 452.

However, a different story emerges when this result is analysed on a per head basis. Between 2006 and 2011 the rate of homelessness per 10 000 of the population fell by five per cent, with the largest relative decline in the proportion of those homeless sleeping rough. This rate fell by 22 per cent from 2006 to 2011.

Progress reports to the Australian Government

The state reports annually to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), and the Ministerial Council for Federal Financial Relations. The reports include the number of people or families assisted, and dwellings purchased or built as per the agreement, based on information from NGOs, other government departments and internal business units.

DCCSDS meets FaHCSIA reporting requirements on its implementation plan by monitoring and reporting internally and externally on the number of clients assisted and the cost.

We identified errors in the reports to FaHCSIA for two of the four initiatives audited, and the data from the Housing Register was misreported in 2011-12. DCCSDS quality assurance processes did not identify errors in these reports.

DCCSDS reports to the Ministerial Council for Federal Financial Relations on revenue and expenditure each financial year. We identified that the figures reported to the Australian Government on the NPAH funding and expenditure were incorrect for the 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 returns. DCCSDS omitted state revenue and expenditure for these three years thereby under-reporting expenditure by \$65 million. Since we identified these errors, DCCSDS has submitted revised returns to FaHCSIA.

The former Department of Communities did not set up account codes to allow the funding for 31 initiatives to be tracked by source. As a result DCCSDS is not able to reliably monitor expenditure of Australian Government and state funds independently and readily demonstrate that the state has met its commitment to match the Australian Government's contribution.

The Queensland Implementation Plan

The plans and documentation to support each initiative in the implementation plan are fit for purpose. Once the NPAH was signed, DCCSDS used the increased funding to consult and research innovative models of service delivery and to develop clear service specifications to inform the design and delivery of the initiatives.

The NPAH initiatives are being delivered as agreed in Queensland's Implementation Plan.

DCCSDS monitors all the initiatives quarterly, has an evaluation strategy and access to national reports on specialist homelessness services. Evaluations of 19 of the initiatives and case studies from NGOs, show that clients are benefiting from the support they receive. The implementation plan uses performance indicators based on outputs to monitor progress. While this includes measures on the quantity and cost of the services provided, there are no measures of quality and timeliness. This prevents DCCSDS from fully assessing if the homelessness services are being delivered effectively and efficiently.

Plans to conduct longitudinal studies will allow DCCSDS to demonstrate the long-term outcomes. However, four years into a five-year agreement these studies have not commenced. As such, the data from the evaluations and national reports complement, but cannot replace, comprehensive monitoring of individual services.

Contract management of NGO homelessness services

DCCSDS outsources 19 of the 23 initiatives to NGOs. Risk-based frameworks and resources are in place to develop, manage and monitor service agreements with NGOs. Each NGO is required to sign and comply with a service agreement, provide quarterly financial acquittals as well as output and performance reports.

For the four initiatives examined in detail, current service agreements are in place. The agreements clearly specify the objectives, target client groups, service models, output measures and targets. However, the output measures in the agreements only cover the quantity and cost of the services, and not their quality or timeliness.

Management of the service agreements is split between the regional Community Service Officer (CSO) and a central Grants Management Team. The CSOs manage the service agreements locally and check that the quarterly reports are provided on time and are complete. The central Grants Management Team manages payments to the NGOs.

NGOs delivering the four initiatives provide the quarterly financial and output and performance reports via the online reporting portal as required.

The CSOs check that the performance report is submitted on time and that all the fields are complete. However, they do not perform any data integrity checks over the NGO performance data. The responsibilities of CSOs to analyse the performance data are not clearly documented. There are no forecasting and analysis tools to help them track performance and identify under-performance or errors. As a result, the output and performance reports are not rigorously analysed as part of the grant payment process.

DCCSDS has invested time and resources into an online acquittal database and the NGOs invest considerable time and effort into reporting. The quarterly installments are released to the NGOs based on an analysis of only the financial reports, and not of the output and performance reports. Neither the regional CSOs or the central Grants Management Team analyse the data reported to determine if the service is operating as agreed. This means no checks are undertaken on outputs to confirm they are being delivered as agreed.

The cost per client serviced by each NGO is an important measure to gauge the relative efficiency of the contracted services. However, while the data to determine this is available, this measure is not calculated or used by DCCSDS to monitor the service agreements.

DCCSDS is developing and implementing a streamlined contract management approach. The new approach is partially implemented and is intended to reduce red tape and streamline DCCSDS's grant processes. As part of the Streamlined Contracting Project, performance controls for funded services are being reviewed. DCCSDS is considering investigating routine statistical checks to improve data quality.

DCCSDS now requires all funded specialist homelessness services to comply with the Standards for Community Services, and the services will soon be required to be accredited under the Human Services Quality Framework. The first phase of implementation of the Human Services Quality Framework aims to increase the consistency and rigour of quality standards, including third party auditing of homelessness services.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services:

- 1. report and track base spending, state matched funding and Australian Government funding separately in management reports for National Partnership Agreements**
- 2. develop relevant and verifiable output performance measures for the quality and timeliness of services for each initiative**
- 3. strengthen the quality assurance framework for data collected and reported for monitoring and accountability purposes**
- 4. collect and analyse consistent and comparable client satisfaction data to create benchmarks for service quality.**

Reference to agency comments (Appendix A)

In accordance with section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, a copy of this report was provided to the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services with a request for comments.

Agency views have been considered in reaching our audit conclusions and are represented to the extent relevant and warranted in preparing this report.

The full comments received are included in Appendix A of this report.

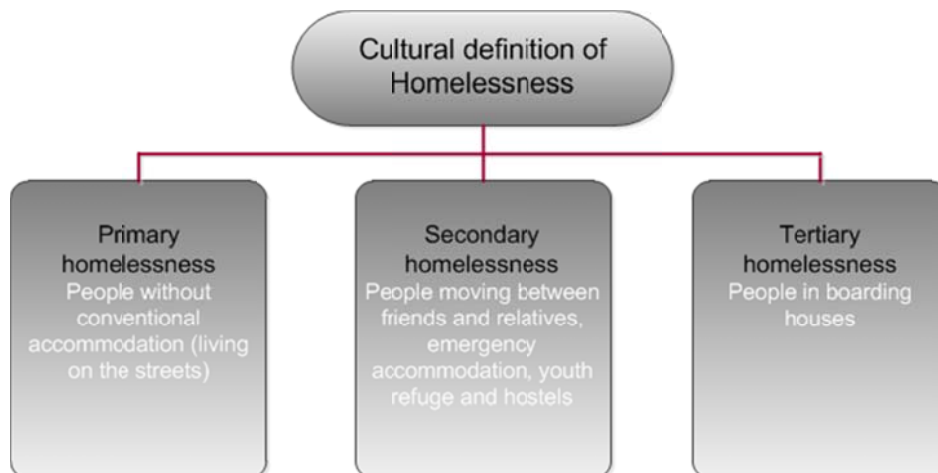
1 Context

1.1 Counts of homeless people

The baseline estimates in the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) used definitions from an approach to estimating homelessness in the 2008 *Counting the Homeless* report. This report was a cooperative venture between researchers at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Swinburne University, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. The analysis of the 2006 census required supplementary information from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection.

Figure 1A shows the three categories of homelessness developed and used by the researchers to estimate homelessness in Australia at the time the NPAH was developed. This cultural definition was used for the baseline data in the NPAH to set targets.

Figure 1A
A cultural definition of homelessness



Source: QAO based on *Counting the Homeless*, Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 2008

In 2012, ABS published official homelessness estimates for the 2006 and 2011 census collections based on a new official definition of homelessness. This official ABS definition replaces previous estimates of homelessness from an earlier approach used in the *Counting the Homeless* report. The ABS official estimates recalculated the number of people in each of the categories of homelessness (Figure 1B).

The new ABS categories for counting homeless people are:

- persons who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
- persons in supported accommodation for the homeless
- persons who are staying temporarily with other households
- persons who are staying in boarding houses
- persons in other temporary dwellings
- persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings.

Figure 1B
Estimate of the number of homeless people in Queensland

Homeless	Original Queensland 2006 baseline from Counting the Homeless report	ABS recalculated Queensland baseline 2006	2013 targets per cent reduction
Homeless Queenslanders (including people in overcrowded dwellings)	26 782	18 856	7
Homeless Queenslanders (excluding people in overcrowded dwellings)	n/a	13 983	7
Queenslanders sleeping rough	5 165	2 026	25
Homeless Indigenous Queenslanders	2 148	4 780	33

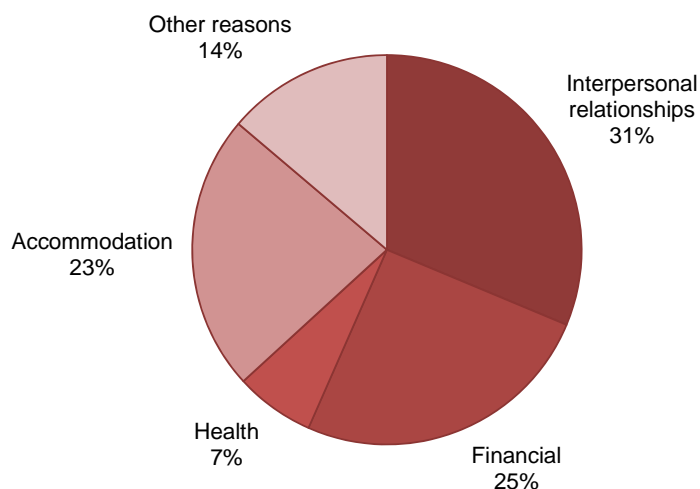
Source: QAO, based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2006 and Queensland Implementation Plan for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness September 2012

The change in the definition of homelessness affected the estimates of homeless people in Queensland. As the NPAH was not targeting overcrowding, the recalculation of the estimates almost halved the target group from 26 782 to 13 983. This has reduced the size of the target group by 12 799 people. In effect there is twice as much funding available per homeless person as initially forecast.

1.2 Causes of homelessness

According to the 2010-11 Queensland SAAP National Data Collection report, issues arising from interpersonal relationships were the most common reason for seeking assistance for homelessness services (31 per cent), followed by financial issues (25 per cent).

Figure 1C
Main reason for seeking assistance



Source: 2010-11 Queensland SAAP National Data Collection, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

The ABS *Information Paper - A Statistical Definition of Homelessness* identifies that people who had experienced homelessness at some time in the previous 10 years were much more likely to be socially excluded than those people who had never been homeless. Overall, people who had experienced homelessness were:

- more likely to have lower levels of educational attainment
- more likely to have a disability or long-term health condition
- more than four times as likely to report that they had a disability type or restriction which was psychological
- nearly three times as likely to report having been a victim of violence in the previous 12 months
- more likely to live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- nearly five times as likely to report multiple types of cash flow problems, such as being unable to pay bills on time, and 10 times as likely to have gone without meals because they could not afford them
- much more likely to be unemployed
- twice as likely to be supported by government pensions or allowances.

1.3 The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

In December 2008, the Australian Government released the white paper on homelessness, *The Road Home*, which called on all levels of government, business, the not-for-profit sector and the community to join together to reduce homelessness.

In *The Road Home*, the Australian Government adopted two headline goals:

- halve the rate of overall homelessness by 2020
- offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who seek it by 2020.

As part of *The Road Home*, the Council of Australian Governments established a National Partnership Agreement. Under the agreement the Australian Government committed to provide additional funding for homelessness to the states and territories who agreed to match Australian Government funding, and deliver services and capital projects that contribute to an overall reduction in homelessness.

The key objective of the NPAH is that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion. The role of the NPAH is to assist the Australian Government, states and territories to work together to improve outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The NPAH sets the following targets to be achieved by 2013:

- reduce overall homelessness by seven per cent
- reduce rough sleeping by 25 per cent
- reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness by 33 per cent.

Queensland accepted these targets in the September 2010 implementation plan.

The agreement allocates \$135.1 million of Australian Government funding over five years to reduce homelessness in Queensland. Other Australian Government and state funded initiatives not part of the NPAH may also contribute to reducing homelessness in Queensland.

The Australian, state and territory governments have agreed on implementation plans that set out new initiatives and additional services that will make a substantial contribution towards achieving interim targets to reduce homelessness by 2013. The long-term goals remain to halve homelessness and offer all rough sleepers supported accommodation by 2020.

1.4 The Queensland Implementation Plan

Queensland has a long history of providing support services to a range of people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, going back as far as 2004. Appendix C provides a history of homelessness services in Queensland.

The former Department of Communities had oversight of the Australian Government and state funding to deliver new or additional services and new capital projects that would contribute to an overall reduction in homelessness. In April 2012, a machinery of government change saw the capital programs transfer to the newly formed Department of Housing and Public Works while the homeless services stayed with the newly formed Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. Queensland's Implementation Plan details the budgets from the Australian Government and the state for all the initiatives in the agreement. The Australian and Queensland Governments have jointly committed funding of \$284.6 million over five years for new and expanded initiatives. Queensland's share of the funding is \$149.5 million (52.5 per cent).

The Queensland Implementation Plan aims to reduce homelessness by implementing 31 initiatives under three broad strategies set out in the NPAH. The three strategies and related actions are:

1: 'Early intervention' strategy - effort directed to prevent and intervene early to stop people becoming homeless

- A focus on young people—early intervention is a priority to prevent young people becoming homeless and assist in their transition to independent living. New and expanded initiatives will deliver integrated support and innovative accommodation options.
- Helping people sustain tenancies—initiatives include support for vulnerable tenants who are having difficulties in the private rental market or social housing to help them to maintain existing tenancies or help overcome barriers to accessing new tenancies in the private rental market.
- Integrated support tailored to meet client needs—initiatives will support people at risk of becoming homeless by providing job preparation assistance and links to employment and education services, as well as support to improve their economic and social outcomes.
- Better access to social housing—the Australian Government's *Nation Building and Economic Stimulus Plan* will provide more than 4 000 new social housing dwellings in Queensland over three years.

2: 'Breaking the cycle' strategy - investing in services that can help people get back on their feet, find stable accommodation and, wherever possible, obtain employment with better targeting and better response

- A Place to Call Home—a specific measure required by the Australian Government under the NPAH to support homeless people and families to move directly into long-term housing and deliver tenancy and other support for the first 12 months.
- No exits to homelessness—support services for people exiting the care or custody of the state to reduce the risk of homelessness.
- Street to Home initiatives for rough sleepers—support for people until they are ready to move into permanent accommodation, intensive support to assist them to resettle, and establishment of long-term accommodation that incorporates features of the 'Common Ground' model.
- Targeting Indigenous homelessness—minimise barriers experienced by Indigenous people accessing services.

3: 'Improving and expanding the service system' strategy - the key to achieving long-term sustainable reductions in the number of people who are homeless

- Working with local communities and services—homelessness services in targeted locations will be supported and strengthened to improve service delivery and maximise outcomes from existing and new investment.
- System improvements and coordination—community services will be streamlined and services will be better coordinated to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Initiatives include improved case management of clients, data collection and reporting to measure progress in addressing homelessness.

Joint funding of \$82.2 million has been specifically earmarked for the Place to Call Home program, with the balance of joint funding of \$202.4 million allocated across all other initiatives in the implementation plan.

The Queensland Implementation Plan includes a complete listing of all the initiatives, budgets and output targets, which are listed in Appendix C.

1.5 Initiatives audited in detail

Figure 1D
Initiatives audited in detail

Initiative	Location	Funding budget		Output targets (No. of people to be assisted)
A Place to Call Home	Statewide	Federal	\$35.70m	23 families 491 individuals
		State	\$46.50m	
		Total	\$82.20m	
HomeStay support	South East Queensland and major regional centres	Federal	\$19.01m	4 200 individuals
		State	--	
		Total	\$19.01m	
Safety upgrades program	Gold Coast Sunshine Coast Townsville	Federal	--	40 individuals
		State	\$0.66m	
		Total	\$0.66m	
Breaking the cycle of domestic and family violence	Rockhampton	Federal	--	1 800 individuals
		State	\$2.70m	
		Total	\$2.70m	

Source: QAO

1.5.1 A Place to Call Home

A Place to Call Home provides coordinated long-term social rental housing and family support for families who are homeless or who are at high risk of homelessness. Queensland is providing at least 143 dwellings over five years between July 2008 and June 2013 for people who are homeless.

1.5.2 HomeStay support

The HomeStay support services assist people who are at risk of becoming homeless to maintain independent accommodation. Clients are supported to address social and financial issues putting their tenancies at risk. Services provide both early intervention and post-crisis support to assist clients to improve their social supports and connect to their families, friends and community.

1.5.3 Safety upgrades program

Safety upgrades program enables victims of domestic and family violence to remain in their homes, where it is safe to do so, by upgrading the security of the property. The program is available to victims of domestic and family violence who have a domestic violence order that includes an 'ouster' condition requiring the perpetrator of the violence to vacate the family home.

1.5.4 Breaking the cycle of domestic and family violence

Breaking the cycle of domestic and family violence includes funding for a range of services including court support, safety upgrades, brokerage support and case management. This initiative aims to ensure more timely and cohesive services are available for people affected by domestic and family violence in Rockhampton. It improves the integration of human and justice service systems through better information-sharing and coordinated service delivery.

1.6 Structure of this report

This report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 examines Queensland's plan to reduce homelessness.
- Chapter 3 examines contract management of non-government organisations.
- Appendix A contains responses received.
- Appendix B contains the objective and approach of the audit.
- Appendix C contains a history of the homelessness service system in Queensland, a listing of the initiatives in the Queensland Implementation Plan and details of homelessness groups in Queensland by area.

The total cost of the audit was \$360 000.

2 Queensland's plan to reduce homelessness

In brief

Background

In 2008, the former Department of Communities developed an implementation plan to coordinate planning, monitoring and reporting on progress towards the outcomes of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). The NPAH required the department to report annually on expenditure of the funds and achievement of the outputs for all the initiatives to the Australian Government.

Key findings

- Estimates of the numbers of homeless people in Queensland show a five per cent increase since 2006. However, the rate per 10 000 has decreased by five per cent over the same period.
- The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS) is not able to reliably report on expenditure by funding source, Australian Government, state matching or base funds. Incorrect reports have therefore been submitted to the Australian Government on revenue and expenditure. Since we identified the error, revised reports have been provided to the Australian Government.
- The quality assurance and data validation processes at DCCSDS did not identify errors in the annual reports to the Australian Government on the outputs of the plan.
- The planning and documentation to support the individual initiatives in the implementation plan are fit for purpose.
- Monitoring of the outputs of the individual initiatives measures quantity and cost but not quality and timeliness.
- DCCSDS conducted evaluations of key initiatives, and plans to undertake longitudinal research.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services:

- 1. report and track base spending, state matched funding and Australian Government funding separately in management reports for National Partnership Agreements**
- 2. develop relevant and verifiable output performance measures for the quality and timeliness of services for each initiative.**

2.1 Background

The Queensland Implementation Plan identifies 31 initiatives to reduce homelessness in Queensland, in partnership with non-government organisations (NGOs). The 31 initiatives in the plan build on existing services and include new and innovative models.

Implementing the plan is a significant undertaking that requires the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS) to effectively coordinate, plan, monitor and evaluate the initiatives individually and collectively over five years.

To meet the commitments in the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) and contribute to the national targets DCCSDS needs to have in place:

- financial reports to demonstrate that Queensland is meeting its funding commitments in the NPAH
- clearly documented governance arrangements to coordinate the efforts of the agencies and NGOs delivering the initiatives across the state
- plans based on research and evidence to deliver services that are effective and efficient
- a performance management and evaluation framework that monitors and reports the difference made for homeless people or those at risk of homelessness.

This chapter examines how DCCSDS coordinates Queensland's commitments, plans and monitoring of the initiatives to reduce homelessness.

2.2 Conclusions

The NPAH provided DCCSDS with opportunities to plan for and trial new and innovative models to reduce homelessness. DCCSDS planned initiatives based on research and evidence. It used the existing grants management process to implement many of the initiatives. While there were delays in the first two years of the plan all the initiatives are now being delivered.

Under the NPAH, Queensland committed to match the Australian Government's total contribution. However, DCCSDS does not track or report expenditure by funding source for the initiatives to reduce homelessness. Errors in the reports to the Australian Government meant that Queensland's contribution to the agreement was under-reported. This reduces confidence in the reliability of the data for decision-making and accountability purposes.

DCCSDS meets the Australian Government's output reporting requirements on the quantity and cost of the services delivered, but the output measures are incomplete because they do not monitor the timeliness and quality of the initiatives. This reduces the ability of DCCSDS to assess whether the initiatives are being delivered effectively.

The high-level trends in homelessness are tracked nationally but changes in the homeless population reported every five years by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data cannot be attributed to the individual initiatives. Due to the complexity of drawing conclusions about the attribution of the different and interrelated responses to homelessness, a framework to measure the high-level outcomes for the NPAH was to be coordinated nationally. However, this has not occurred and in the absence of a national framework to report outcomes, responsibility falls to the individual state and territories to monitor and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of the individual initiatives. After four years little progress has been made in developing whole of government measures or longitudinal research to assess the impact of the NPAH.

The evaluation strategy developed by DCCSDS includes a longitudinal study of client outcomes. However, it has not yet commenced. Monitoring the long-term impact for homeless clients poses challenges and the national data is often incomplete, ambiguous and inconclusive. Improving the completeness and accuracy of the output measures would allow DCCSDS to monitor the individual and combined contributions of the initiatives delivered by the range of entities involved.

2.3 Queensland's funding co-contribution

Under the NPAH, the states and territories must match the Australian Government funding dollar for dollar. This matched funding must be for new effort and may either be new, recurrent and/or capital funding provided in state and territory budgets. Base funding of homeless services funded by the state must also be maintained. Queensland's Implementation Plan includes detailed budgets breaking down the funding from the Australian Government and the state for all the initiatives in the agreement. Appendix C provides a detailed breakdown by initiative.

Under the Intergovernmental Agreement, each state treasurer is required to provide a report to the Ministerial Council for Federal Financial Relations within six months of the end of each financial year on revenues and expenditure under National Partnership Agreements.

DCCSDS reports annually to the Australian Government on revenues, expenditure and any over or underspends. These reports are part of the terms of the agreement. We identified errors in the 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 reports.

The revenue and expenditure reported to the Australian Government by DCCSDS for the 31 initiatives in the Queensland Implementation Plan and the revised figures are provided in Figure 2A. Queensland's reports to the Australian Government omitted state revenue and expenditure. However, after we identified the error, revised figures provided by DCCSDS are now reporting that Queensland is meeting its commitments.

Figure 2A
Revenue and expenditure reported to the Australian Government and revised figures

Report period	Reported revenue	Revised revenue	Reported expenditure	Revised expenditure
2008-09	nil	\$21.921m	\$8.839m	\$25.991m
2009-10	\$24.942m	\$52.104m	\$20.620m	\$41.836m
2010-11	\$37.955m	\$71.159m	\$34.349m	\$61.883m
Total	\$62.897m	\$145.184m	\$63.808m	\$129.710m

Source: Unaudited figures provided by DCCSDS

The budget forecast total funding from 2008-09 to 2010-11 of \$140.277 million. However, Queensland was reporting that it had spent \$63.808m million. The Australian Government also did not identify these errors.

Based on the revised figures Queensland is meeting its funding commitments. By the end of the 2011-12 financial year total expenditure since 2008-09 was \$196.609 million. This is in line with the budgeted forecast of \$196.036 million.

2.4 Coordinating the initiatives

DCCSDS has a Homelessness Governance Arrangements Framework. The groups and reporting arrangements are well documented and structured. Key governance groups provide oversight and monitor homelessness programs. The key governance groups are:

- Housing and Homelessness Services Executive Management Committee
- Queensland Homelessness Intersectoral Forum
- Homelessness Reforms Program Board.

Prior to the machinery of government change in April 2012, the governance groups had clear roles and responsibilities, well-documented terms of reference and reporting structures. The terms of reference for all three groups were up to date with clearly communicated mandates that included roles with respect to governance, risk management and control. They also included a purpose statement, composition, frequency of meetings and core agenda items. The governance groups met regularly and kept well-documented minutes of actions and decisions. Since the machinery of government change in April 2012 and subsequent restructure to DCCSDS the governance arrangements are under review.

2.4.1 Planning

Four initiatives were examined in detail: A Place to Call Home, HomeStay support, Safety upgrades program and Breaking the cycle of domestic violence. Overall, the planning documentation for the initiatives was satisfactory.

The planning documentation for the three state-based NPAH initiatives audited (HomeStay support, Safety upgrades program and Breaking the cycle of domestic violence) is supported by evidence, research and evaluation reports. The HomeStay support, Safety upgrades and Breaking the cycle of domestic violence initiatives are supported by detailed program specifications and funding information papers that were evidence based. However, for A Place to Call Home, which is an Australian Government initiative, DCCSDS was not able to provide any planning or research documentation.

Increased funding from the NPAH provided opportunities to research and develop new and innovative models of service delivery. Existing initiatives had their funding increased and began providing more services to more clients from July 2009. The initiatives based on new models were implemented progressively from July 2009 to June 2011. There were some delays in the first two years due to the time and effort spent to do the planning and procurement thoroughly.

2.4.2 Monitoring

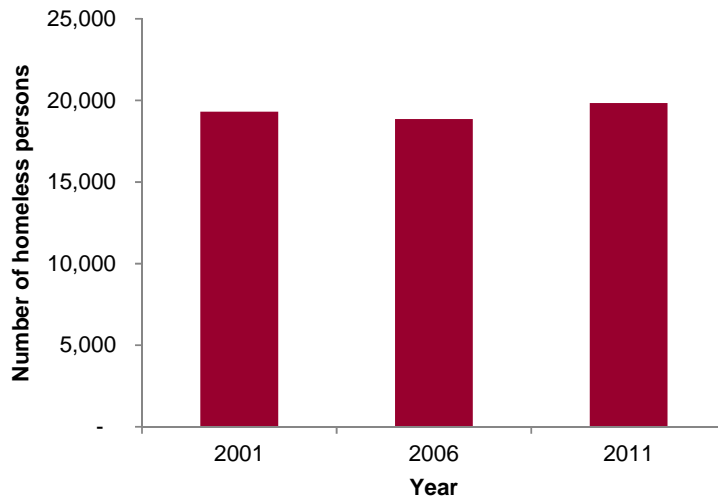
DCCSDS reports annually to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Ministerial Council for Federal Financial Relations. Initially reports to FaHCSIA were monthly. Internal management reports are produced quarterly for each of the initiatives and NGOs report quarterly on outsourced services.

Reporting on the national outcomes

ABS estimates the number of homeless people based on a count on census night every five years. Census data on homelessness is available for 2001, 2006 and 2011. ABS released a discussion paper *Methodological Review of Counting the Homeless, 2006*, on 31 March 2011, proposing a new official methodology for using census data to count the homeless population. The paper proposed a revised estimate of 18 856 homeless persons in Queensland for the 2006 census. This is a decrease from the earlier estimates of 26 782 based on the ABS official methodology.

The challenge for DCCSDS in contributing to targets based on ABS census data is that it cannot attribute changes in the homeless population directly to its actions and initiatives. The number of homeless people is subject to many external influences outside the control of DCCSDS, such as natural disasters, unemployment rates and housing affordability.

Figure 2B
Overall number of homeless people in Queensland



Source: *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness Australia, 2049.0 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012*

To monitor and report progress between census collections DCCSDS supplements the ABS data with a proxy measure and individual measures and targets for each initiative. The proxy measure reports on the number of Queenslanders listed on the waiting list for social and community housing assessed as being homeless or at risk of homelessness. This measure expressed need only, and is not a representation of the general homeless population. It does however, provide DCCSDS with trends on the demand for social and community housing. The proxy data is useful to supplement the census data.

Data on the number of clients who maintained or obtained safe and secure accommodation can be difficult to collect but would allow DCCSDS to effectively assess the results of the initiatives and therefore be held accountable. The proxy data generated from the Housing Register (2009-10 and 2010-11) is accurate and reliable.

Monitoring the individual initiatives

Performance indicators measure and assess the progress of activities and the achievement of objectives. To be of value, indicators need to be specific, measurable, achievable, timely and relevant to the desired result supported by benchmarks and targets. A comprehensive set of performance measures should cover quantity, quality, cost, time and impact.

DCCSDS collects measures of expenditure to budget (spending), milestones and outputs to targets (activity). This meets the reporting requirements to the Australian Government.

DCCSDS regularly monitors the Queensland Implementation Plan. The reports track progress against planned expenditure and output targets. The output targets are measures of quantity and cost but do not include measures of quality or timeliness.

DCCSDS reports internally and to FaHCSIA on how many people accessed the various homelessness initiatives but not how quickly their:

- needs were assessed
- case plans were developed
- services were delivered
- immediate needs were met.

The targets for each initiative in the implementation plan are listed in Appendix C. Target numbers are either the number of people or families assisted or the number of properties acquired.

The following case study is an example of the data collected by DCCSDS from a NGO. Case studies provide a valuable insight into the difference the initiatives are making for clients.

Case study - making a difference for clients

Street to Home

G is a 42 year old male who identifies as Indigenous, as a person with a physical disability as a result of a violent attack, and who has been sleeping rough on and off for several years. G's history includes drug use and when he first joined the Street to Home program he would consume large amounts of alcohol on a regular basis. As a result of excessive alcohol usage G suffers from alcohol-related seizures and nightmares due to traumas he has experienced in recent years. G has strong family connections in Townsville and Palm Island and is particularly close to his grandchild whom he sees often. He still grieves over the loss of his mother who recently passed away.

G first became a client in January 2011 when he was completing a stay at a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility. His support worker linked to this facility informed him of and referred him to the Street to Home service. One of the goals G identified with his caseworker was to obtain and maintain permanent accommodation upon completion of the rehabilitation program. Other goals he identified were to improve and maintain good physical and emotional health and to abstain from drinking.

G was housed in permanent accommodation in March 2011. Since this time, he has successfully maintained his accommodation and he has not received any breaches of his lease. He is also working hard to maintain/improve his emotional wellbeing and tries to attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings at the rehabilitation centre on a weekly basis. He also expresses he would like to continue to be involved in the Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre's men's group. The Street to Home program encourages and supports G to attend these meetings and offers to provide transport for him to get to the rehabilitation centre. His physical health has improved and since he has decreased his level of alcohol consumption he is experiencing seizures less frequently. His confidence has grown significantly since he started achieving his goals and he is feeling happy and optimistic about the future.

Validating data for reporting

DCCSDS does not rigorously validate the data in the annual reports to FaHCSIA. The figures in annual reports for two of the four initiatives examined were incorrect.

A Place to Call Home:

- 2009-10 annual report, the number of properties purchased was understated by 8 (27 per cent), the 22 reported was actually 30
- 2010-11 annual report, the number of properties purchased was understated by 2 (7 per cent), the 33 reported was actually 35
- 2010-11 annual report, the number of people assisted was overstated by 20 (21 per cent), the 117 reported was actually 97.

Breaking the cycle of domestic violence:

- 2010-11 annual report, the number of clients with complex/multiple support needs referred out by the Breaking the Cycle Team for intensive case management and support was overstated by 6 (7 per cent), the 92 people reported was actually 86.

Proxy data from the Housing Register

- 2011-12 annual report, the 2010-11 figures were mistakenly reported again.

Management relies on data in reports to be accurate and reliable for decision-making and accountability purposes. While in some cases the errors were not material, the risk of not validating data for internal and external reporting is that management makes poor decisions based on incorrect data.

2.5 Evaluation

DCCSDS developed an evaluation strategy for the initiatives that was based on new and innovative approaches. The strategy was designed to provide a stronger evidence base on homelessness program effectiveness. All of the evaluations identified successful practices and recommended improvements in the initiatives. Evaluations of the initiatives based on existing service models in the implementation plan have also been undertaken and provide evidence on effectiveness and inform delivery and design. Examples of some of the evaluations undertaken include RentConnect and Breaking the cycle of domestic and family violence in Rockhampton.

DCCSDS has also selected five high priority initiatives (total of \$13.36 million) for intensive external evaluations:

- Youth Housing and Reintegration Service, including After Care (commenced March 2012)
- Supervised Community Accommodation (commenced March 2012)
- Street to Home (commenced December 2011)
- Common Ground Brisbane (not commenced)
- HomeStay support (not commenced).

DCCSDS has evaluated five of the 31 initiatives and another 14 are underway. The evaluation reports provide DCCSDS with evidence of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the initiative. This information supplements DCCSDS's quarterly monitoring of expenditure, milestones and outputs (numbers of clients, beds, hours). The planned evaluations of the HomeStay support initiatives and Common Ground Brisbane are on hold due to resourcing issues.

DCCSDS put in place an evaluation strategy to provide valuable evidence on the impact of 20 of the initiatives at points in time. This information can inform future strategies to reduce homelessness and determine which initiatives need to be redesigned or halted. However, continuous periodic monitoring of the outputs ensures the services are being delivered as intended and delivering the service as agreed.

2.6 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services:

1. report and track base spending, state matched funding and Australian Government funding separately in management reports for National Partnership Agreements
2. develop relevant and verifiable output performance measures for the quality and timeliness of services for each initiative.

3 Contract management of homelessness services

In brief

Background

Of the 23 initiatives delivered by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS) 19 are outsourced to non-government organisations (NGO). Oversight of service delivery by these NGOs is a significant activity for DCCSDS, and brings particular challenges and risks.

We examined four outsourced initiatives: A Place to Call Home, HomeStay support, Safety upgrades program, and Breaking the cycle of domestic and family violence.

Key findings

- The service agreements (contracts) for the four initiatives audited clearly specify the service to be delivered and have performance measures and targets.
- DCCSDS cannot monitor the effectiveness or efficiency of the homelessness service agreements because the NGO output reports measure quantity and cost but not quality or timeliness.
- The quarterly performance data provided to DCCSDS by NGOs is not being analysed as part of the grants payment process. This reduces the ability of DCCSDS to monitor the cost-efficiency of the service agreements.
- DCCSDS is developing and implementing a streamlined contract management approach. The new approach is partially implemented and is intended to reduce red tape and streamline DCCSDS's grant processes.

Recommendations summary

It is recommended that the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services:

- 3. strengthen the quality assurance framework for data collected and reported for monitoring and accountability purposes**
- 4. collect and analyse consistent and comparable client satisfaction data to create benchmarks for service quality.**

3.1 Background

In the *September 2010 Queensland Implementation Plan*, 19 of the 23 Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS) initiatives are delivered by non-government organisations (NGO) through a grants process. Therefore, oversight of service delivery by these NGOs is a significant activity for DCCSDS and brings particular challenges and risks.

The *Financial Accountability Handbook* lists two fundamental aspects of monitoring grant recipients – financial monitoring and performance monitoring. Financial monitoring determines whether relevant financial accountability procedures are being or have been complied with, while performance monitoring determines the extent to which desired outcomes are being or have been achieved.

Regular reviews of the results of both financial and performance measures assist agency management to assess grant recipients' performance both progressively over the term of their agreements and at their conclusion. The results of monitoring assessments are also useful to:

- inform future funding decisions (for example, a recipient's non-compliance with the terms of a grant agreement may be recorded to preclude that recipient from future funding opportunities), or
- enable benchmarking of similar recipients within or across grant programs (for example, to identify if a particular recipient has higher administrative costs in comparison to other recipients).

This chapter examines how well DCCSDS manages the outsourcing of the initiatives contracted to external providers.

3.2 Conclusions

The current agreements for outsourced services clearly specify the service to be delivered and the intended outcomes for clients. The outsourced initiatives are monitored on outputs. The output measures include quantity and cost but not quality and timeliness. This focuses on the number of clients rather than the quality of the service and client satisfaction.

Quarterly instalments are paid in advance to NGOs, based on the previous quarter's financial data. DCCSDS and NGOs invest considerable resources using an online reporting tool to monitor outputs. However, DCCSDS releases payments to organisations without fully considering the output and performance reports. This reduces DCCSDS's ability to drive efficiency in the delivery of outsourced services.

DCCSDS takes a risk-based approach to accountability for outsourced services; providing important benefits in terms of reduced red tape and innovation. This is in line with the concept of earned autonomy, providing organisations assessed as low risk, fewer reporting requirements. However, this approach is not yet supported by sufficiently close attention to performance and risk assessment, including making better use of data provided by NGOs, to assess whether their services are being delivered cost-efficiently and meeting the needs of the clients.

3.3 Defining the service

3.3.1 Service specifications

DCCSDS developed information sheets in May 2010 for the following initiatives:

- Brisbane supportive housing
- Street to Home
- Supported accommodation for young people
- HomeStay support services
- Service system planning and coordination.

The information clearly specifies the target groups, service delivery expectations (including outcomes) and the performance measures. The *Homelessness Program Guidelines*, November 2011 provided further information about the services. The service specifications were used by regional office staff to develop the service agreements and by the NGO in responding to the agreements.

The services were well supported by research and an evidence base that was used in the development of the contracts with NGOs.

3.3.2 Standard service agreements

DCCSDS uses standard service agreements with NGOs to set and agree to the terms and conditions of the contract. The agreements include:

- service specifications including objectives and outcomes for clients
- clear requirements for quarterly reporting on inputs and outputs
- roles and responsibilities of both DCCSDS and the service provider
- a specification of what the service is and how it will be delivered, monitored and reported.

Overall, the service agreements meet the grant management standards contained in the *Queensland Treasury Financial Accountability Handbook*. The four initiatives audited delivered by NGOs have current service agreements in place.

Similar to the measures for the initiatives, the measures in the service agreements are based on outputs. The output measures are consistent and based on a common data dictionary however, there are no measures of quality or timeliness. This reduces DCCSDS's ability to monitor the contracts.

Performance indicators need to be specific, measurable, achievable, timely and relevant to the desired result supported by benchmarks and targets. A comprehensive set of performance measures in the service agreement should cover quantity, quality, cost, time and impact.

3.3.3 Funding services

The decision to fund a NGO to deliver a service is well supported by a funding memo. The key steps in the process are:

- Step 1 - Identification of services for ongoing service delivery and to determine initiative parameters
- Step 2 - Preparation of statewide funding memo and spreadsheet and review specific issues memos and progress for Ministerial approval
- Step 3 - Post Ministerial approval processes.

The initiatives and services audited had approved funding memos in place for the current service agreements. The funding approval process includes an assessment of the performance of the NGO on previous services. There is however, room to improve the assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of previous service agreements as part of the re-funding approval process.

Assessments of the performance of a NGO in delivering a service are based on an assessment of:

- financial acquittals (inputs)
- performance reports (outputs)
- service assessments (internal processes)
- risk assessments (internal processes)
- other evidence (evaluations reports if available).

DCCSDS does not analyse the existing data on the costs per client (efficiency) and does not collect the results for the clients (effectiveness).

3.4 Monitoring homelessness services

3.4.1 Reporting on service agreements

DCCSDS collects and stores the financial and performance data of NGOs in a central repository. NGOs input their data directly into DCCSDS's computer database called the Online Acquittal Support Information System (OASIS). The database is web based and easily accessible by NGOs and department staff.

NGOs submit two reports each quarter; a financial report and a performance report. The Grants Management Team in Central Office assesses the financial acquittals. The Community Service Officers (CSO) in each region assess the Output and Performance Reports.

The Grants Management Team uses computer generated projections to track NGO expenditure against budget and identify under or over expenditure prior to releasing the next quarter's grant instalment. When the expenditure varies from the budget by greater than 10 per cent or more than \$20 000, the Grants Management Team contacts the regional CSO to investigate and resolve prior to release of the next quarterly payment. This ensures that payments are not made if a NGO may need to pay back any unapproved over-expenditure.

The CSOs check that the report is submitted on time and that all the fields are complete. However, the CSOs do not perform any data integrity checks over the NGO performance data. The responsibilities of CSOs to analyse the performance data are not clearly documented. There are no forecasting and analysis tools to help them track performance and identify under-performance or errors. As a result the output and performance reports are not rigorously analysed as part of the grant payment process.

The two NGOs audited used different counting rules to report to DCCSDS on the number of clients receiving personal support. At one NGO this meant that the number of clients was overstated by double (32 was actually 16) at the other NGO the number of clients was only incorrect by one (30 instead of 31).

DCCSDS has invested time and resources into an online acquittal database and the NGOs invest considerable time and effort into reporting. The regional CSOs or the central Grants Management Team do not analyse the data to determine if the service is operating as agreed.

Grant payments are released by DCCSDS, based on an assessment of financial acquittal reports rather than an assessment of the achievements. It does not consider performance data and whether NGOs are delivering services as agreed by the service agreements. As a result, the risk that payments could be made to NGOs that are not operating effectively or efficiently or providing quality services to people at risk of homelessness, is unmanaged.

To illustrate, Figure 3A shows an analysis of the relative cost efficiency of three providers delivering the same service in the same town to similar groups of clients. An analysis of the cost per client by the three different providers would have enabled DCCSDS to identify the significant disparity in the cost per client and investigate the reasons behind it.

Figure 3A
Monitoring efficiency of contracts with non-government organisations

Providers delivering the same service in the same centre	Expenditure for June Qtr. 2012	Number of clients reported through OASIS	Cost per client
Provider A	\$29 863	32	\$933
Provider B	\$90 925	21	\$4 329
Provider C	\$40 866	12	\$3 406

Source: QAO

3.4.2 Brokerage funds

DCCSDS provides brokerage funds as a component of grant funding for some organisations under the Homelessness Program Domain. Brokerage funds of typically \$20 000 per case worker (for homelessness initiatives) are provided to organisations supporting people who are experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness. The aim is to assist people to move into independent accommodation or to maintain their existing accommodation.

DCCSDS's brokerage funds guidelines allow NGOs to buy or pay:

- cash equivalent assets, such as food and taxi vouchers
- portable and attractive items, such as mobile phones
- phone, electricity bills
- medical expenses
- rent.

At one of the two NGOs audited, 14 transactions totaling \$10 757 were tested, and we found that nine transactions totaling \$8 371 did not comply with the terms of the contract. The CSO and the Grants Management Team did not identify these breaches.

At another NGO the CSO had identified and investigated a suspected breach of the contract. However, a further breach detected during the audit was not identified by the CSO at that NGO. The NGO is not required to report on its use of brokerage funds under the new 'streamlined' service contract. This means that DCCSDS has no way of checking whether the NGO was using the funds to provide a different service from the one agreed.

3.4.3 A proportionate approach to monitoring and oversight arrangements

Accountability for service delivery can be proportional to the risk of delivering the associated service; it is not necessary to use a one-size-fits-all reporting framework. As the Department of Finance and Regulation notes in its report *Sharpening the Focus - A Framework for Improving Commonwealth Performance*:

'Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach to regulation, an earned autonomy model should be implemented. This would be based on specifying a core set of minimum requirements across all entities and varying those requirements based on the risk profile of an entity. The nature and extent of oversight and regulatory intervention exercised by the centre will depend on an entity's risk profile and performance.'

The concept of earned autonomy is premised on the notion that devolution provides important benefits ... in terms of agility, innovation and improved performance. The emphasis on devolution needs, however, to be supplemented with appropriate attention to performance and risk. The system should reward good performance and discourage poor performance, while minimising perverse incentives.'

DCCSDS has undertaken a review of its grants management processes to reduce red tape and the reporting burden on NGOs. This includes:

- single account manager (in a lead region) for NGOs delivering across service streams and regions, with fewer regional contract managers per NGO
- single annual financial viability and risk assessment to determine a NGO's level of monitoring and reporting
- reduced financial reporting for social inclusion services
- quarterly payments based on outputs rather than financial acquittals, require audited annual report only
- reduced monitoring
 - 70 per cent of NGOs assessed as low risk and performing submit quarterly report - no visit.
 - 30 per cent of NGOs assessed as high risk or non-performing are monitored with frequency and intensity proportional to issue.

However, it is too early to judge how effective these changes are in maintaining accountability while reducing red tape.

3.5 Client satisfaction with services

DCCSDS does not collect or require NGOs to collect client satisfaction data from users of the homelessness services.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet identified the value of measuring client satisfaction and released a guide in July 2001. The Better Practice Guide identifies a set of 'core' questions that measure the key drivers of satisfaction – those elements or attributes of the service experience which, when present, ensure high levels of satisfaction. These core elements; based on qualitative and quantitative research, have been used in Canada for more than 10 years, and recently been adapted for use in New Zealand and some Australian jurisdictions.

The guide recommends six themes for all surveys across government. Figure 3B lists the themes and questions.

**Figure 3B -
Core client satisfaction questions**

Theme	Recommended question type/scale	On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you?
Timeliness	Rate delivery of services 'within agreed timeframes' – to allow flexibility among business areas depending on their service level agreements	... with the timeliness of the service?
Ease of access	Rate understanding of services provided and how to access services. Provide feedback on service delivery channels and channel preferences	... that it was easy to access the service?
Staff	Rate staff characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledgeable • understands the needs of the client / problem-solving • helpful • easy to work with. 	... with the way the service was provided by staff?
Quality	Rate the quality of service (delivered to expectations)	... with the quality of service?
Outcome	Rate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • satisfactory outcomes achieved • met business requirements. 	... with the outcome you achieved?
Overall satisfaction	On a scale of X, how satisfied are you with the service provided by XYZ?	Overall, how satisfied are you with the service provided?

Source: Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Client satisfaction with a service is a good proxy measure of the quality of the service. Both NGOs audited had developed client satisfaction forms and used the feedback to help improve their services. While the departmental CSOs are aware that this data is collected, they do not seek to access or make use of this information to assess the quality of the services.

The following case study shows how one provider collects client satisfaction data to inform service improvement.

Case study - Quality services

Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast Inc.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast (DVPCGC Inc.) established in 1992, is a not-for-profit community based specialist domestic violence service. The organisation provides a range of services and supports including crisis response intervention, safety planning, counselling and groups for women and women and their children, domestic violence court support, men's domestic violence education and intervention programs, community education, training and community awareness raising activities. DVPCGC Inc. is also the key driver of the innovative Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response.

The Safety Upgrades Program has dedicated domestic violence intervention workers who support victims (mostly women) of domestic and family violence to remain in their homes where it is safe to do so, by upgrading the security of the victim's property. The program also provides a range of high risk responses to further enhance safety. The safety upgrade is intended to reduce the need for victims to have to leave their own home and seek shelter in women's refuges and other crisis accommodation and thus preventing homelessness.

The program is available to victims of domestic and family violence who have a domestic violence order that includes an ouster condition requiring the perpetrator of the violence to vacate the family home. The safety upgrade includes a safety audit by a qualified safety expert, new window and door locks, security screens, and the issuing of a Safe T Card, an innovative 24/7 device which when activated alerts a security company.

From 4 January 2010 to 13 September 2012 there have been 145 clients. From 1 July to 31 December 2012 half-financial year, there have been over 70 clients who have accessed the program, indicating a greater utilisation and demonstrated effectiveness of this type of intervention.

A snapshot survey evaluation on 1 July 2012 feedback was gained from 9 Safety Upgrade participants. Feedback indicated from this small sample was that clients were very satisfied with the practical support that the program provided in enhancing their safety. The feedback also indicated that the Safe T Card was one of the key attributes of the support provided, as women stated they felt much safer with this portable device as they could take immediate action if threatened both inside and outside the home.

The survey results showed that the clients were very satisfied with the quality and the timeliness of the service. The sample was not representative of the client group as a whole and the results are not statistically reliable. The results do, however, indicate that clients are willing to give feedback on the safety upgrade program supports and that it is possible for the NGOs to collect client satisfaction data.

3.6 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services:

- 3. strengthen the quality assurance framework for data collected and reported for monitoring and accountability purposes**
- 4. collect and analyse consistent and comparable client satisfaction data to create benchmarks for service quality.**

Appendices

Appendix A – Agency comments	30
<i>Auditor-General Act 2009</i> (Section 64) – Comments received.....	31
Response to recommendations	33
Appendix B - Audit details	34
Audit objective	34
Reasons for the audit.....	34
Performance audit approach.....	34
Appendix C - Additional information on homelessness in Queensland.....	35
A brief history of homelessness services in Queensland	35
Initiatives in the Queensland Implementation Plan	36
Homelessness groups by area	39

Appendix A - Comments

Auditor-General Act 2009 (Section 64) – Comments received

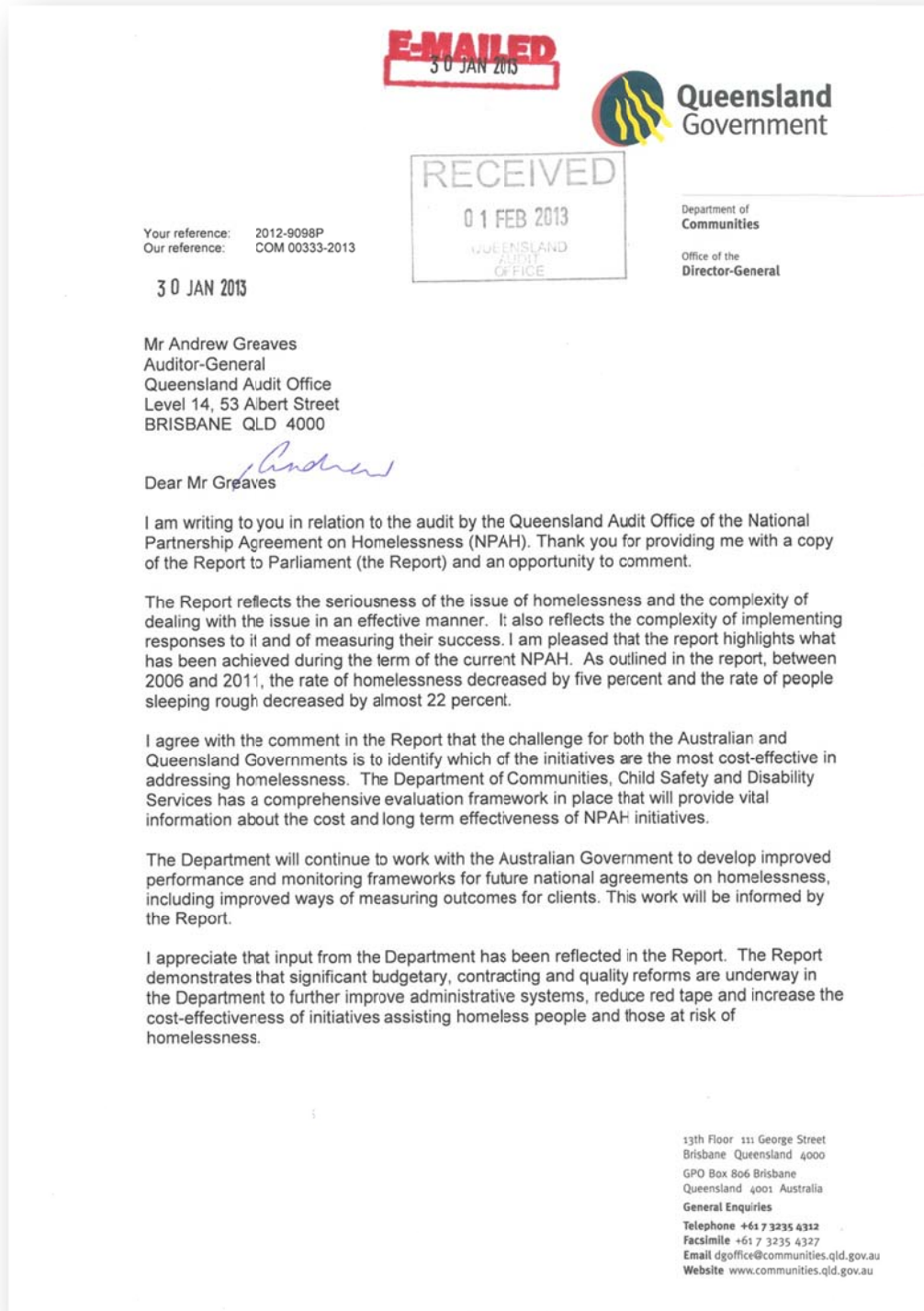
Introduction

In accordance with section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009* a copy of this report was provided to the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services with a request for comment.

Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of the comments rests with the head of this agency.

Comments received

Response provided by the Director-General, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, received electronically on 30 January 2013. (Below is a scanned copy of the response).



Comments received

Response provided by the Director-General, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, received electronically on 30 January 2013. (Below is a scanned copy of the response).

-2-

I note that the Report contains recommendations for the Department in relation to administration of the NPAH and to its grants management processes broadly. I am confident that the Department's planned budgetary, contracting and quality reforms, together with our work with the Australian Government, will address the recommendations relating to monitoring of data and reporting and on the tracking of expenditure across NPAH initiatives.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact Ms Helen Ferguson, Executive Director, Social Inclusion, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on 3006 8700.

Yours sincerely



Margaret Allison
Director-General

Response to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by the Director-General, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on 30 January 2013.



Responses to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by Margaret Allison, Director-General, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on 30 January 2013.

Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for Implementation	Additional Comments
1. Report and track base spending, state matched funding and Australian Government funding separately in management reports for National Partnership Agreements.	Agree	30 June 2014	The Department will establish tracking systems to enable identification of funds for different NPAH initiatives and identification of NPAH funding enhancements from base Queensland Government funding.
2. Develop relevant and verifiable output performance measures for the quality and timeliness of services for each initiative.	Agree	30 June 2014	<p>During 2013/14, in partnership with the Australian Government and other states and territories, the Queensland Government will propose the development of a revised performance and reporting framework for a future NPAH Agreement that takes into account the quality and timeliness of services.</p> <p>The Department will review options for further development and implementation of quality and timeliness measures for relevant programs and initiatives.</p> <p>Options will be framed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o avoid duplication o recognise clients' rights and sensitivities o be cost effective.
3. Strengthen the quality assurance framework for data collected and reported for monitoring and accountability purposes.	Agree	30 June 2014	<p>The Department will develop an output data validation procedure and commence its implementation.</p> <p>Implementation will be staged to align with related contract management reforms and ongoing implementation of output funding and reporting.</p>
4. Collect and analyse consistent and comparable client satisfaction data to create benchmarks for service quality.	Agree	30 June 2014	<p>The Department will continue its work to improve the measurement of client satisfaction.</p> <p>Options for further development and implementation regarding client satisfaction data will be framed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o avoid duplication o recognise clients' rights and sensitivities o be cost effective.

Appendix - B Audit details

Audit objective

The objective of this audit was to determine whether the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH):

- is being implemented as intended, and
- is achieving its planned outcomes and realising expected benefits.

Reason for the audit

The Australian Council of Auditors-General agreed to undertake a concurrent performance audit on the NPAH, within their respective jurisdictions. This approach provided a snapshot of how the NPAH was being implemented nationwide and whether the agreed outcomes were being achieved. It also allowed state audit offices and the Australian National Audit Office to retain complete independence, while facilitating time and cost efficiencies through the sharing of audit methodologies and information. This was the first concurrent performance audit undertaken in Australia.

The NPAH commenced in July 2008 and finishes in June 2013. All states and territories have signed up and each has an implementation plan. States and territories report progress nationally to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and the Committee of Australian Government's Reform Council.

The NPAH specifies the national targets to reduce:

- overall homelessness by seven per cent
- rough sleeping by 25 per cent
- Indigenous homelessness by 33 per cent.

The Queensland Government has developed an implementation plan to meet the targets set by the NPAH in partnership with the community services sector. The plan comprises 31 initiatives and includes new funding of \$284.6 million over five years to reduce homelessness in Queensland.

Performance audit approach

Section 42A of the *Auditor-General Act 2009* provides that the Auditor-General may undertake an audit in collaboration with other Australian state, territory and the Commonwealth Auditors-General.

While this audit was not a collaborative audit for the purposes of the Act, it was undertaken concurrently with other audit offices in Australia. This involved sharing of audit objectives and approaches, but did not involve sharing of agency data or of agency-specific audit findings.

The audit conducted between May 2012 and November 2012, examined the performance of departments relevant to the NPAH, which included Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and Department of Housing and Public Works. The audit also assessed whether funds provided to two non-government organisations (NGO) had been applied, economically, efficiently and effectively and for the purposes they were given. Site visits and interviews were conducted with NGOs under section 36A (1) of the Act.

Relevant documents to the audit including plans, frameworks, reports and contracts were examined as well as input, output and outcome data. The audit was undertaken in accordance with *Queensland Auditor-General Auditing Standards*, which incorporate Australian auditing and assurance standards.

Appendix C - Additional information on homelessness in Queensland

A brief history of the homelessness service system in Queensland

Figure C1

Element	Date	Purpose
Supported Accommodation Assistance Program	From 1984	Provide transitional supported accommodation Provide support services to a range of people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness
Responding to Homelessness Strategy	From 2005	Expand continuum of support to include prevent and early intervention Engage mainstream systems in homelessness efforts, such as health, justice and police
One social housing system reforms	From 2006	Prioritise high needs clients, including homeless people and people at risk of homelessness, for social housing assistance Improve pathways from crisis and transitional to long-term housing
The Road Home White Paper on Homelessness	From 2008	New national approach to reducing homelessness Three strategies: prevention, ending repeat homelessness and improving services National 2020 targets, including halving homelessness
Queensland human services improvements	From 2008	Strengthening Non-government Organisations strategy Framework for Investment in Human Services Streamlining quality systems Common service agreements Output based funding framework
Expanded social and affordable housing portfolio	From 2008	Queensland Future Growth Fund National Rental Affordability Scheme Nation Building and Jobs Plan – Social Housing Initiative National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing
National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness	From 2009	Implement best-practice models, such as Common Ground, Youth Foyer and Street-to-Home Increase local engagement and coordination through Community Action Planning and homelessness system coordinators Expand effectiveness of support options through more flexible and long-term approaches Expand place-based approach to more locations
National homelessness reforms	From 2009	Improve quality of service responses for homeless people Better integrate service system for better client outcomes Improve data collection and usage Workforce development
Queensland Strategy for Reducing Homelessness	From 2011	Cohesive, long-term strategy for reducing homelessness Actions to improve specialist, mainstream and allied responses to homelessness to reach 2020 targets
Machinery of Government Change	April 2012	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services formed Housing programs moved from former Department of Communities to DCCSDS of Housing and Public Works

Initiatives in the Queensland Implementation Plan

Figure C2

Initiatives ¹	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Total	Output targets ²
	\$ mil	\$ mil	\$ mil	\$ mil	\$ mil	\$ mil	
A Place To Call Home ³	11.523	12.041	12.693	13.729	32.239	82.225	491 (23 families)
Common Ground Brisbane ⁴	n/a	0.663 ⁵	1.239	1.239	1.239	4.380	510
Street to Home	n/a	1.0224	1.829	2.783	2.740	8.374	2 580
Homeless Health Outreach	n/a	1.900	2.600	2.600	2.600	9.700	1 050
Crisis accommodation enhancements	3.600	3.6004	3.600	3.600	3.600	18.000	16 350
RentConnect	n/a	1.425	2.282	2.694	3.334	9.735	7 300
HomeStay Support	n/a	3.8034	5.071	5.071	5.071	19.016	4 200
Supported Accommodation for Young People	n/a	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	2.000	88
Participate in Prosperity	0.196	0.218	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.414	150
Integrated Transitional Support Model and Offender Reintegration Support Service	n/a	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	6.000	12 600
Emergency Department liaison	n/a	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	1.600	120
Supervised Community Accommodation ⁶	n/a	0.281	1.345	1.310	1.363	4.299	18-36
Youth Housing and Reintegration Service - independent living units	n/a	0.331	0.580	0.634	0.634	2.179	36-64
Youth Housing and Reintegration Service - support and community-managed youth studios	n/a	1.169	1.922	2.049	2.041	7.181	72-100
Young Adults Exiting from the Care of the State	6.600	6.600	6.600	6.600	6.600	33.000	220
After Care Service – young adults exiting	n/a	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	4.000	695

Initiatives ¹	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Total	Output targets ²
out of home care							
Post Care Support – young adults with a disability exiting from the care of the state	n/a	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	6.000	1 200
Expansion of Resident Recovery Program	n/a	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	4.000	390
Housing and Support Program	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	7.500	995 (94) ⁷
Youth Enterprises Partnership	n/a	0.414	0.874	0.504	n/a	1.792	70
Bridging the Gap – throughcare support services for offenders with impaired cognitive functioning	n/a	0.330	0.530	0.600	n/a	1.460	
Supported Independent Living Services for young people under Child Protection Orders	3.137	3.137	3.137	n/a	n/a	9.411	237
Young Persons Time Out House Initiative – community residential program	n/a	2.159	2.159	2.159	n/a	6.477	250
Breaking the cycle of domestic and family violence in Rockhampton	n/a	1.095	1.607	n/a	n/a	2.702	1 800
Queensland Ambulance Service Vulnerable Client Program	n/a	0.373	0.446	n/a	n/a	0.819	
Homelessness service system planning and coordination: Non-government organisation coordination	n/a	0.6524	0.869	0.869	0.869	3.259	
Homelessness Information Management Program / Evaluation ⁸	n/a	1.7174	1.717	1.717	1.717	6.868	
Homelessness Community Action Planning	n/a	0.2004	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.800	
Safety upgrades program	n/a	0.4404	0.220	n/a	n/a	0.660	40

Initiatives ¹	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Total	Output targets ²
The Special Circumstances Court Diversion Program	1.230	1.300	1.300	n/a	n/a	3.830	
Capital ⁹	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16.900	
Australian Government Total	5.865	24.930	31.419	32.931	39.948	135.093	
Queensland Government Total	21.921	27.342	28.801	22.827	31.699	149.490	
Total	27.786	52.272	60.220	55.758	71.647	284.583	

Legend

¹ = Shaded areas represent the Queensland Government's matching funding. For the purposes of the implementation plan and performance framework, initiatives have been identified against a single output where they make their primary contribution. However, many initiatives contribute to more than one output or performance measure² = Number of people to be assisted

³ = Jointly funded initiative

⁴ = Formerly known as the Supportive Long Term Accommodation initiative

⁵ = Implementation delays resulted in lower than planned expenditure for 2009-10 in several initiatives. The unexpended amounts will be reinvested into Implementation Plan initiatives across the remaining three years of the agreement. The reallocation of unexpended amounts has not yet been finalised in the notated initiatives.

⁶ = Formerly known as Youth Housing and Reintegration Service – supervised community accommodation

⁷ = The number of new clients is shown in parentheses. The 'total' figure represent cumulative, ongoing support delivered to existing clients and new support packages

⁸ = Formerly known as Improved Administrative Systems initiative

⁹ = The outlay across financial years for the capital component has yet to be determined

Source: QAO

Homelessness groups, by area, Queensland 2011

Figure C3

	Persons who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out	Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	Persons staying temporarily with other households	Persons staying in boarding houses	Persons in other temporary lodging	Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	All homeless persons
Brisbane - East	5	88	157			47	350
Brisbane - North	10	232	129	92	0	124	587
Brisbane - South		227	231	298		452	1 219
Brisbane - West			100	25	0	75	225
Brisbane Inner City	72	303	164	1,248	38	118	1 943
Ipswich	41	215	284			498	1 157
Logan - Beaudesert	17	135	280			534	1 066
Moreton Bay - North	20	91	229	26	5	153	524
Moreton Bay - South	3		119		0	56	228
Cairns	201	353	290	468	28	963	2 303
Darling Downs - Maranoa	49	33	128	62	10	21	303
Fitzroy	241	441	264	215	8	177	1 346
Gold Coast	184	216	453	297	35	241	1 426
Mackay	162	221	210	130	15	155	893
Queensland - Outback	185	176	202	101	3	1 463	2 130
Sunshine Coast	133	165	334	55	15	56	758
Toowoomba	13	146	134	125	9	87	514
Townsville	73	276	234	279	7	722	1 591
Wide Bay	159	408	356	100	13	246	1 282
Total	1 568	3 726	4 298	3 521	186	6 188	19 845

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2011, Cells in the table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. As a result, cells may not add to totals.

Auditor-General Reports to Parliament

Tabled in 2012-13

Report number	Title of report	Date tabled in Legislative Assembly
1	Racing Queensland Limited: Audit by arrangement	July 2012
2	Follow up of 2010 audit recommendations	October 2012
3	Tourism industry growth and development	November 2012
4	Queensland Health – eHealth Program	November 2012
5	Results of audits: State public sector entities for 2011-12	November 2012

Reports to Parliament are available at www.qao.qld.gov