

BAIL SUPPORT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Report to Corrections Victoria, March 2008

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the outcomes of an evaluation of the Bail Support Program (BSP) – a Victorian court-based program aiming to divert unsentenced people from prison by providing early intervention and access to drug treatment, legal, welfare and housing services, therefore enhancing the probability of defendants being granted and successfully completing bail and to secure stable longer term housing.

The conclusions of the evaluation are informed by a number of sources. These include statistical analysis of a range of client and case-related data items for 2,743 referrals to CREDIT/BSP¹ over a 2-year period and the number of referrals over a longer period; the characteristics of and outcomes for program clients entering transitional housing and receiving housing-related support under the program; first bail application outcome statistics per year for each Victorian Magistrate's Court over a seven-year period; daily average number of persons held on remand per month, also over a seven-year period; and other specific data sources maintained by service providers or established for the purpose of the evaluation.

Qualitative sources of information include structured interviews with 17 program clients and over 40 stakeholder consultations, which included structured interviews with the Program Manager and Regional Team Leader, case managers, magistrates, senior registrars, Victoria Police, Legal Aid, Office of Housing, Drugs Policy and Services Branch (Department of Human Services), Courts Development Program Unit (Department of Justice), Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO), Centrelink, HomeGround Services, and Victorian accommodation providers funded to provide Transitional Housing properties.

Information was also derived from an international research and practice literature review of good practice features and critical success factors documented about comparable programs operating elsewhere; examination of other Australian bail support programs based on reviewing program documentation or discussions with relevant officers; and analysis of program policy and procedures documentation, as well as other relevant material about the policy and operating context in which the program operates.

The design of CREDIT/BSP as outlined in program documentation and the operation of the program as confirmed in consultations with program management staff and case managers was found to be consistent with the good practice features identified as important for program effectiveness in comparable programs operating elsewhere. Critical success factors identified across stakeholder consultations reinforced these literature-derived good practice features and were also consistent with documented and consultation-based descriptions of program policy and practice.

The consultation responses also showed that there is generally agreement across the range of stakeholder groups that the program produces benefits – at both individual and system level – and provides an appropriate and effective response to a target group with high needs and complex issues.

¹ the BSP was amalgamated with the Court Referral and Evaluation for Drug Intervention and Treatment (CREDIT) Program in 2004 and currently operates as an integrated program at seven Victorian regional courts

The consolidated findings across the various information sources are summarised below against each specific evaluation objective and reporting the key evidence used to form conclusions.

Objective 1: determine whether and to what extent program deliverables have been met

Conclusion: Program deliverables in the form of an annual target established for funding purposes and based on annual number of referrals specifically for BSP services have been met, and in fact exceeded, in each of the past three financial years. However, the target for number of referrals to CREDIT/BSP per month per case manager has not been consistently met in the seven courts at which the program currently operates. Referral numbers vary from month to month and are sometimes exceeded in some locations in some months. The extent to which the target is regularly reached varies across courts.

Number of referrals to CREDIT/BSP varies from month to month and monthly targets set for individual case managers targets of monthly numbers of referrals to CREDIT/BSP referral numbers have not been consistently met in the seven courts at which the program currently operates.

Evidence base:

- Based on the statistics maintained by Courts Division, annual targets for BSP services have been met, and in fact exceeded, each year. Annual referral numbers for BSP services were 774 in 2004-05, 756 in 2005-06, and 665 in 2006-07 – higher than the annual target of 600 by 29, 26 and 11% respectively
- Average number of monthly CREDIT/BSP referrals per case manager for the period January 2006 to August 2007 have ranged from 8.8 to 14.5 at the seven courts where the program is currently operating, but there is substantial variability, with all courts experiencing shortfalls in some months and all except one exceeding the target (15) at various times.

Objective 2: determine whether program targets are suitable given resource, content and administrative considerations

Conclusion: The continuing utility of the existing program-wide target of 600 BSP referrals per year is questionable, since it applies an artificial distinction given the way the amalgamated program currently operates. Individual case manager targets do not appropriately reflect differences in size of the pool of potential program clients at the different courts. Also, they do not sufficiently consider ongoing caseload demands that vary with differences in magistrate take-up rate across courts and therefore the target has limited utility if intending to be applied as a comparative workload measure.

Evidence base:

- Program policy and procedures documentation and program staff consultations show that CREDIT/BSP currently operates as an integrated program and no distinction is made in practice between a BSP and a CREDIT client – the differentiation is relevant only for the purpose of reporting to separate funding bodies.

- The number of first bail applications is over twice as high in some courts than others, with implications for capacity to consistently meet a flat-rate target in the smaller courts.
- Rates at which referrals are accepted onto the program differ between 56 and 81% across courts, so that the same target figure of 15 monthly referrals (assuming the same average period of time spent on the program) would translate to an active caseload in the regional court with the highest take-up rate that is almost 50% higher than that of the court with the lowest take-up rate.
- Consultation-derived information shows differences in the operating environment that impact on workload, for example, the lack of availability, suitability or responsiveness of local community services that places additional demands on some case managers by requiring them to take a more active role in addressing client needs than in a more 'service-rich' area.

Objective 3: determine whether and to what extent the program has resulted in the successful completion of bail by defendants who would otherwise be remanded in custody

Conclusion: The program has contributed to successful completion of bail by defendants.

Evidence base:

- Program statistics recording exit reason as 'successful program outcome' for 54% of 1,720 clients entering and exiting the program over a two-year period and a further 12% as partially completed (ie attended all court hearings and some treatment but not consistently enough to be considered as fully successful completions). This figure needs to be considered in the context of the client profile, which shows many of the features that the international literature has demonstrated to be linked to high risk of failing bail.
- Outcomes comparable with or better than those of similar programs reported in the research and practice literature that have been acknowledged as successful approaches to increasing bail completion rates.
- Magistrate perceptions of the program's achievements and qualitative information provided by case managers and other stakeholders about the success of the program, grounded in case examples.
- Individual client statements about what their circumstances would have been if they had not become involved with the program.

Objective 4: determine whether and to what extent the program has reduced the number of defendants remanded due to lack of accommodation or treatment/support in the community

Conclusion: The program has contributed to reducing the number of defendants remanded for those reasons.

Evidence base:

- Statements from all interviewed magistrates that they would have remanded individuals were it not for the program, and commonly stated views that provision of community support/treatment and housing were important elements in this decision-making. In some cases, the potential impact was

substantial – for example, one magistrate estimated that at least one in four contested bail applicants appearing before him would have spent at least some time on remand were the program not available and another estimated there would be 10 to 20% more bail refusals without the program

- Case manager provided qualitative information, for example, hearing comments when present at court made from the bench to particular defendants that he/she would be in custody if not a client of the program.
- Individual client statements about what their circumstances would have been if they had not become involved with the program.

Objective 5: determine whether housing available to defendants is adequate, in terms of location, size and dwelling type

Conclusion: There are issues about the location of THM housing available to defendants under the program but the THM properties appear to be adequate in terms of size and dwelling type for the client group, especially given the flexible approach adopted where properties available to CREDIT/BSP may be swapped with another property allocated under other justice programs to better meet client needs at the time (issues about sufficiency of housing availability is discussed under the next objective).

Evidence base:

- Analysis of HomeGround Services referrals to 12 advertised THM vacancies, showed numerous cases where the property was a significant distance away from the applicant's current residence – for example, a client living in Bacchus Marsh was referred to a Mitcham THM property and a Healesville client for a Noble Park property.
- Statements by HomeGround Services that a number of THM properties are not located in geographic areas of the highest need, based on their experience with the program to date – this includes properties within the relevant catchment area but located at the outer perimeter of the area, and therefore not well situated in relation to services or other amenities.
- Comments by some case managers about lack of availability in the local area and the adverse impacts on clients – for example, Ballarat clients needing to relocate to Melbourne to take up THM housing, which many are reluctant to do given it means losing locally-based family and community supports, as well as substantial travel to meet regular court and local treatment provider appointments.
- Issues about THM housing being adequate in terms of size and dwelling type relative to client need were not raised during stakeholder consultations or in the client interviews. Clients with diverse housing needs have been successfully placed in THM properties, including one client recorded in HomeGround Service's database as having 10 children.

Objective 6: determine whether and to what extent program design, delivery and outcomes are contributing to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness

Conclusion: The program's design and delivery and those outcomes assessable through sources available to the evaluation are considered to contribute to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness.

Evidence base:

- The program's design and operational practice shows the good practice features reported to characterise effective bail support programs in the international research and practice literature.
- Stakeholder perceptions of program impact on re-offending, based on their experiences with program participants. This includes examples given by numerous case managers, magistrates and other stakeholders of individuals with long histories of regularly appearing at court remaining offence-free, or in some cases, returning to the criminal justice system only after a much longer offence-free period than previously, following completion of the program.
- Case study examples, where interviewed clients stated that they would have continued with a lifestyle of ongoing offending and homelessness without program intervention.
- HomeGround Services data showing that clients in the program's THM properties, who had extensive histories of homelessness, have moved into stable accommodation after successfully managing the THM tenancy period.
- Program outcome data on successful completions which indicates most program participants did not re-offend during the bail period – although there is no baseline data to assess this impact quantitatively, the client profile and stakeholder-derived information confirms that this is a target population at high risk of re-offending.

Overall findings

The findings of the evaluation support a conclusion that this program is well-designed and consistent with good practice features for programs of this type, is delivering services to an appropriate target group, generally has high credibility across diverse stakeholder groups, is operating effectively and achieving a range of outcomes, and there is satisfaction expressed about the way the program works among both its clients and its key end users (magistrates).

As with any program, there are areas where outcomes could be enhanced. For this program, the evaluation evidence does not point to a need to change program design or strategic direction. The main issue is resources. There are also aspects of the program's operation where there is scope for improving particular outcomes, although many of these issues are already known and being addressed as part of the program's continuing development.

Key action areas

The approach taken in this evaluation has been to establish an evidence base upon which people responsible for the program can make informed decisions about its future direction. It is not an approach where the evaluators make 'expert' judgements and specific recommendations about action that should be taken on the program. Decisions about a program's operation, resourcing, and future directions are a matter for those responsible for the program to determine, taking into account the policy context in which it operates, developments in related programs, and resource availability against other organisational priorities, not only the findings of the evaluation in isolation of those wider aspects. This evaluation report therefore does not make specific recommendations about what should or should not be done.

Instead, it presents options for enhancing program outcomes in a number of action areas, based on the evaluation evidence, and discusses implications of those options, as an input for consideration in that wider decision-making context.

The key action areas are listed below. Operational issues considered less substantive and within the immediate control of program management have generally been discussed with program management staff during the course of the evaluation and are described in the sections on evaluation findings. Generally, these are already being addressed or considered for take-up by program staff, or they relate to individual instances rather than systemic issues and the people that had identified the matter also stated that there were effective inter-agency relationships in place at management level to discuss such concerns where they arise. Only those issues considered of substantive value for sustaining or improving program outcomes, or where the matter is not within the control of immediate program management staff, or where there are different views about whether a matter should be taken up are covered in the action areas below.

Given the terms of reference for the evaluation, the focus is on those elements relevant to the bail support aspects of the combined CREDIT/BSP rather than those matters dealing exclusively with CREDIT assessment, referral and treatment processes.

The key action areas where conclusions drawn from the evaluation evidence point to ways of potentially improving and/or sustaining the program's outcomes in the future are:

- increasing the number of case managers to match location-specific current demand and location-wide future demand;
- expanding the stock of THM properties allocated for program client use in areas where there is evidence of particularly high demand for this specific type of housing and its associated housing-related support service;
- a concerted and focused effort to enhance relations, improve mutual understanding, and develop and trial new working arrangements with local homelessness assistance service providers;
- promoting the program's scope as a comprehensive bail support strategy that is not limited only to defendants with illicit drug issues, particularly among referrers and magistrates;
- promoting consistent information across stakeholders about the program's current objectives and outcomes and reinforcing the program's purpose(s) at this point in the CREDIT/BSP's evolution;
- continuing to build and maintain central and local-level relations and feedback practices with police to increase understanding about the program's purpose and its effectiveness;
- reviewing both the program-wide and the individual case manager targets;
- developing a parallel approach of priority assessment and treatment for alcohol management issues as that established for illicit drugs under the CREDIT program component; and
- including information about prior program participation and outcomes as part of the standard information provided to the court when determining program placement.

BACKGROUND

An external evaluation of the Bail Support program was commissioned in March 2007. Corrections Victoria managed the project through the Research and Evaluation Unit of the Strategic and Financial Services Branch, in consultation with the Housing Sector Development Branch of Housing and Community Building Division of the Department of Human Services. The tender document specified the evaluation is of program integrity, program effectiveness and options for improvement to better achieve the dual objectives of reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness. The evaluation is to focus in particular on the Transitional Housing Management (THM) Bail Advocacy Housing Pathways Initiative – a core component of the Bail Support Program.

The tender specifications established that the key objectives of the evaluation were to determine:

1. whether and to what extent program deliverables have been met;
2. whether program targets are suitable given resource, content and administrative considerations;
3. whether and to what extent the program has resulted in the successful completion of bail by defendants who would otherwise be remanded in custody;
4. whether and to what extent the program has reduced the number of defendants remanded due to lack of accommodation or treatment/support in the community;
5. whether housing available to defendants is adequate, in terms of location, size and dwelling type; and
6. whether and to what extent program design, delivery and outcomes are contributing to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness.

METHODOLOGY

The conclusions of this evaluation were informed by various sources:

- Courts Division statistics on the number of program referrals per month, commencing July 2004 until December 2006;
- number of program referrals for the seven courts at which CREDIT/BSP currently operates, commencing January 2006 and provided up to August 2007 – the end of the data collection period for the evaluation;
- statistical analysis of the characteristics and outcomes of 2,743 referrals to the program over a two-year period (January 2005 to December 2006)²;
- statistical analysis of client characteristics and outcome data on program clients entering transitional housing provided under the program and

² a database of client characteristics and outcomes developed by Courts Division includes clients as of 1 January 2005

receiving services through HomeGround – the program’s coordinator of housing services under the Bail Advocacy Housing Pathways Initiative;

- client exit interview feedback on HomeGround provided services;
- program case manager returns on whether all new referrals to the program in July and August 2007 were identified as having accommodation-related issues;
- outcome data on first bail applications for each Magistrate’s Court per year for the period 2000-01 to 2006-07;
- daily average number of persons held on remand per month for the period June 2000 to July 2007³;
- consultations with agency representatives including: Program Manager and Regional Team Leader, program case managers in each of the seven courts that the program is currently operating⁴, magistrates (at 6 of the 7 program location courts as well as the Chief and Deputy Chief Magistrate and others), senior registrars, Victoria Police, Legal Aid, Office of Housing, Drugs Policy and Services Branch (Department of Human Services), Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO), Centrelink, Courts Development Program Unit (Department of Justice), HomeGround, and accommodation providers funded to provide Transitional Housing Management properties;
- structured interviews with 17 program clients;
- analysis of program documentation;
- international research and practice literature review; and
- examination of other Australian bail support programs through program documentation or discussions with relevant officers.

Further details of the methodology used are provided in the Appendix.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Program background

The Bail Support Program (BSP) commenced in January 2001 as a pilot – the Pilot Bail Advocacy and Support Services Program. It was initially managed by Corrections Victoria and conducted out of the Melbourne Magistrates’ Court. Following an evaluation in 2003, the pilot was expanded and its management was transferred to the Magistrates’ Court of Victoria. In December 2004 it was combined with the Court Referral and Evaluation for Drug Intervention and Treatment (CREDIT) Program.

³ based on Corrective Services statistics and will not include all prisoners held in police custody

⁴ Ringwood, Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Frankston, Heidelberg, Geelong and Ballarat - in line with the terms of reference for the evaluation, the CISP program is not part of this evaluation and therefore Melbourne, Sunshine and Moe courts were excluded from the consultations, although statistical data is included for the period prior to CISP succeeding CREDIT/BSP at these courts

The CREDIT/BSP currently operates at Ballarat, Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Frankston, Geelong, Heidelberg, and Ringwood courts. Although some public material describing the program has referred to a Rural Outreach Diversion Worker being located at the Bendigo Magistrates Court and providing a service two days per week, the Program Manager has advised that this position is not part of the CREDIT/BSP program as it currently operates.

In Melbourne, Sunshine, and Latrobe Valley Magistrates Courts, the CREDIT/BSP was superseded with the introduction of the Court Integrated Services Program (CISP) in December 2006 on a trial basis. As of 2007, bail support is also provided through the Neighbourhood Justice Centre in Collingwood. These two initiatives do not fall within the scope of the evaluation.

A key element of the program is the THM Bail Advocacy Housing Pathways Initiative. Many people involved with the criminal justice system are homeless or at risk of homelessness⁵ and stable appropriate accommodation is a critical issue for people on bail while they are waiting for their court hearing⁶. The Victorian Homelessness Strategy⁷ was initiated in 2000 to examine and improve Victoria's response to homelessness. It has been a key driver in identifying people leaving prison among vulnerable target populations who are at particular risk of homelessness and by encouraging cross government or 'joined up' initiatives with a focus on preventative and early intervention responses. The Bail Support Program's THM Bail Advocacy Housing Pathways Initiative is an example of such 'joined-up' initiatives.

The CREDIT/BSP is supported by internal policies and procedures documentation and information about the program is disseminated through various program brochures available at courts and through various government websites. As at 30 August 2007, the program's policies and procedures documentation was in the process of being revised and the most current draft version available at that time was provided to the evaluation.

Program aims, objectives and outcomes

The aims, objectives, and/or outcomes of the CREDIT/Bail Support Program are variously described in different program documentation.

The *CREDIT Bail Support Program Guidelines 2005*, provided as source information to the evaluation (and also a document posted on the Department of Human Services *Victorian Government Health Information* website⁸), gives the same aims for the combined program as the objectives for the pilot program. The program objectives are cited in the guidelines document as:

⁵ documented in numerous sources eg AHURI 2004; Baldry et al 2005; Meehan 2000; Ward 2001

⁶ documented in various Australian and international sources eg Victorian Law Reform Commission 2005, 2007; Sentencing Commission for Scotland 2005; Lake 2006; Collaborative Institute for Research, Consulting and Learning in Evaluation 2003; RMIT University Research Team 2001; SACRO 2004; Henderson 1998; Hadaway 2005; Thomas 2005; Graffam et al 2002 ; Kiely 1999; Jones et al 2007; Midgely, 2004

⁷ Department of Human Services 2002 *Directions for Change*

⁸ at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/pubs/cbsp.htm> (accessed at 25 August 2007)

- delay or reduce further offending behaviours;
- help defendants become more productive members of the community;
- reduce direct costs to the justice system; and
- improve the quality of life for clients.

The program brochure displayed at courts in 2007 (and also set out in program information posted on the Magistrates Court website⁹ and included in the 2007 *Guide to Court Support and Diversion Services*¹⁰) gives the objectives for the CREDIT/BSP as:

- provide early treatment and access to drug treatment/ rehabilitation programs;
- provide access to accommodation, welfare, legal and other community supports;
- provide clients' and the court with monitoring and support of clients' on the program for a period of 3-4 months;
- minimise harm to the client and the community by addressing the issues related to substance abuse; and
- reduce risks of further re offending.

The program outcomes cited in this source are:

- successful completion of bail by defendants who would otherwise be remanded in custody;
- successful placement of defendants in drug treatment/rehabilitative programs;
- reduction in the number of defendants remanded due to lack of accommodation or treatment/support in the community; and
- long term reduction in involvement of defendants in the criminal justice system.

Differently worded program objectives are set out in the *Court Referral and Evaluation for Drug Intervention and Treatment (C.R.E.D.I.T.) Bail Support Program (B.S.P) Policies and Procedures 2006* document and continued in the draft *CREDIT/Bail Support Program Policies and Procedures 2007* document as:

- divert defendants with substance issues away from incarceration and into drug treatment;
- provide immediate respite services;
- make linkages between eligible defendants and support services;
- work towards harm minimisation; and
- facilitate compliance with bail conditions.

⁹ at

<http://www.magistratescourt.vic.gov.au/CA256CD30010D864/page/Court+Support+and+Diversion+Services-C.R.E.D.I.T.+--+Bail+Support+Program?OpenDocument&1=45-Court+Support+and+Diversion+Services~&2=50-C.R.E.D.I.T.+--+Bail+Support+Program~> (accessed at 25 August 2007)

¹⁰[http://www.magistratescourt.vic.gov.au/CA256902000FE154/Lookup/Parallel_Services_Docs/\\$file/Guide_to_Court_Support_Services.pdf](http://www.magistratescourt.vic.gov.au/CA256902000FE154/Lookup/Parallel_Services_Docs/$file/Guide_to_Court_Support_Services.pdf) (accessed at 25 August 2007)

The specific aims for the BSP were given in the evaluation tender documentation as¹¹:

- providing defendants with links to community and government services and supports;
- providing defendants with access to housing while on bail;
- supporting defendants undertaking the program;
- responding to individual defendants' needs and characteristics, such as gender, age and cultural background, in the provision of appropriate social development, rehabilitation, housing and support services; and
- reducing risks of further re-offending by diverting offenders from prison and supporting offenders in making helpful links, including access to and establishing stable longer term housing arrangements.

There are also variations in the citing of the CREDIT/BSP objectives in key public documents, such as the Victorian Law Reform Commission consultation paper for the review of the Bail Act, which sources Melbourne Magistrates Court documentation.

Despite the different wording of aims/objectives and outcomes across the different information sources, these are consistent with the program aim described¹² in the evaluation tender documentation as: "to divert unsentenced people from prison by providing early intervention and access to drug treatment, legal, welfare and housing services, enhancing the probability of defendants being granted and successfully completing bail and to secure stable longer term housing". The evaluation uses this overarching aim and the objectives set out in the *CREDIT/Bail Support Program Policies and Procedures* documentation.

Program services and features

Client eligibility is described in all sources (except the 2007 draft policies and procedures document) as any person eligible for bail who is not on a current court order and complying with the conditions of the order, although those in breach of their court order may be eligible. The 2007 draft refers to any person eligible to be admitted to a period of bail, defendants on a current Corrections order that does not encompass access to drug counselling, and defendants in breach of a current order who are no longer eligible to access drug treatment services via the order or who require accommodation and other supports as eligible for referral to CREDIT/BSP. This reflects changes to program policy over time.

The services provided through the program include referrals to: income support, legal, medical, employment, Centrelink, transitional housing and drug treatment services. Practical and material support may be provided. Program case managers also provide regular reports to the court on a defendant's current circumstances.

¹¹ source: Corrections Victoria 2006 *RFT Specification for evaluation of the Bail Support Program*

¹² source: Corrections Victoria 2006 *RFT Specification for evaluation of the Bail Support Program*

Specific services provided through the program are described in publicly available documentation¹³ as including the following:

- assessment;
- treatment and support plan;
- support and monitoring whilst on bail and follow-up (up to 4 months);
- case management;
- court reports;
- referral to COATS for access to drug treatment services including detox and rehabilitation programs; drug and alcohol counselling;
- referral to Government and non-Government support services;
- referral to and payment of short term crisis accommodation;
- passport photos for identification and medical purposes;
- referral to pharmacotherapies and payment of short term medication;
- referral to outreach services for clients requiring intensive support;
- referral to employment programs for training/employment assistance;
- travelcards/ food vouchers and access to material-aid;
- payment of keypass where required; and
- court date reminders/diaries.

The 2007 draft *CREDIT/Bail Support Program Policies and Procedures* document sets out the services provided by CREDIT/BSP case managers as:

- in-custody/community assessments of defendants and development of individual treatment and support plans;
- court reports, including written progress reports and/or verbal reports throughout the bail period;
- accommodation assistance, including referral to housing officers for assistance with long-term housing options;
- active support for and encouragement of clients on bail to comply with bail conditions;
- facilitate family support for clients;
- provide support and other assistance to ensure clients meet legal obligations and attend medical and/or treatment appointments;
- maintain contact with clients throughout the 4-month period by assisting and encouraging the client to attend court as required;
- provide clients with Centrelink letters;
- provide clients with Travel cards;
- provide clients with access to drug treatment agencies, including detoxification programs, rehabilitation and drug/alcohol counselling;

¹³ source: *Guide to the C.R.E.D.I.T/Bail Support Program*, brochure, Magistrates Court of Victoria

- link clients to employment programs;
- refer clients to doctors and pharmacies for pharmacotherapy;
- provide identification size photos for clients' pharmacotherapy appointment (or payment of);
- refer clients to welfare agencies for food vouchers, travel assistance, etc;
- liaise with Court Services, magistrates, police and external agencies; and
- facilitate referrals to external agencies.

The program uses a case management approach that is set out in the policies and procedures documentation. Standard referral forms, need assessment templates, client information release forms, and court report formats are used. A case plan of no more than four months duration is developed jointly by the program case manager and the client, which provides access to medical and drug treatment, counselling, housing, employment, support in the community as appropriate, and a proposed exit plan.

Brokerage funds are available to case managers to pay for emergency accommodation (for up to one week), pharmacotherapy, and assessments¹⁴ where required. There are regular (usually fortnightly) meetings held between client and case manager. Clients generally exit the program at 4 months, but may be exited earlier if the matter for which they are bailed has been dealt with by the court, the client is remanded on new charges for which bail is not being sought, or the case manager determines that the client is not participating adequately in the program.

The role of the case manager is described in the most recent draft of policy and procedures documentation as:

- managing a client caseload, including assessment of 15 clients per month;
- assessing clients in custody and providing the court with a detailed support/treatment plan;
- providing follow-up reports to the court, as required;
- providing linkages for clients to government and non-government agencies in the community for treatment and support;
- forming networks in the community and accessing supports for clients;
- providing program reports to management, as required;
- conducting clinical drug assessments if accredited and referring clients for clinical drug assessments if not accredited; and
- keeping accurate case notes and records and keeping the program database up to date.

Defendants may be referred to the program at different stages in their involvement with the court prior to sentencing. The point of referral could be prior to the first bail hearing by a court, for example, an assessment may be carried out on a person held in police custody who has been referred by Legal Aid. It can occur at the first bail hearing, for example, a magistrate may call for an assessment to be made for suitability for the program before making a bail determination. A referral could also be made at a subsequent bail hearing for a defendant who has been held on remand for

¹⁴ noting that drug and alcohol assessments are funded separately – brokerage funds are used, for example, for psychological or psychiatric assessments

a period of time where the initial bail application had been refused or for a defendant who has been released on bail but a referral is made, for example, because the legal representative may consider that bail would be withdrawn at the next hearing unless the client were placed on the program.

Where bail is granted and made subject to participation on the program, the court makes this one of the conditions of bail. Failure to comply may result in withdrawal of bail by the court.

For clients participating in the program, there is regular reporting back to the court about their progress. Usually this timing coincides with the regular process of the court considering a further period of bail, although in some instances, magistrates may order the defendant to appear at an earlier interval to confirm the client is properly engaged with the program and to review progress. The client is formally exited from the program when the magistrate makes a sentencing determination, unless exited earlier for other reasons (for example, failure to participate as required in the program or breach of other bail conditions).

Program targets

A target of 15 referrals per month to CREDIT/BSP per case manager has been established for the program. The 2007 draft policies and procedures documentation defines a referral, for this purpose, as a client who has had the initial needs assessment completed.

There are also program-wide targets for reporting to funding bodies. For BSP, which is funded by Corrections Victoria, the established target is 600 referrals per year. For CREDIT, the target is 1,768 referrals per annum¹⁵.

Better Housing Pathway

The Transitional Housing Management Bail Advocacy Housing Pathways Initiative is a core component of the program, aimed at providing housing assistance to people who are at risk of being remanded in custody and of homelessness. Twenty THM properties were initially allocated to the program with another ten made available for dedicated use by female CREDIT/BSP clients and their children under the Better Pathways Strategy in 2007.

HomeGround is the contracted provider of housing support services for clients of the CREDIT/BSP (as well as CISP and the Neighbourhood Justice Centre) who are homeless and accommodated in dedicated Transitional Housing Management (THM) properties. As well as dealing with accommodation-related issues, HomeGround Services assists clients to maintain bail conditions in various ways including practical support (such as providing transport, public transport tickets, phone reminders to support a client's attendance at appointments) and therapeutic support such as

¹⁵ Commonwealth diversion program monies fund illicit substance treatment services provided under CREDIT

motivational interviewing techniques and/or cognitive behavioral counselling skills to challenge offending behaviors¹⁶.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The following section of this report discusses the outcomes of the analysis of the various information sources used to inform the evaluation. Each analysis area outlines the purpose of the analysis relative to the six key evaluation objectives, describes the information source on which it is based, documents the outcomes of the analysis, discusses the implications of the findings, and provides supporting information from other relevant information sources, particular consultations, to confirm the consistency of the results across diverse information sources.

Analysis of good practice for program design and delivery

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below compares conclusions drawn from a review of the international research and practice literature about good practice lessons with the features (i) outlined in CREDIT/BSP program documentation and (ii) critical success factors described by program staff and other stakeholders, in order to establish whether the program as it is designed and operated shows the good practice features established as underlying effectiveness of comparable programs operating elsewhere.

Information source(s)

Information on established good practice features for programs of this type is drawn from both published reports about programs identified through web searches on keywords relevant to bail support and internal reports identified and made available through the consultation process.

A review of the Australian and international research and practice literature on bail support and related programs identified very few references to evaluated programs for adult defendants that focus on bail support rather than bail supervision, with reported evaluations often relating to programs for children and young people only. Reports of evaluations of a number of English, Scottish and Irish bail support and supervision programs, the Queensland Conditional Bail Program and the Youth Bail Accommodation Support Service (YBASS), and previous evaluations of the Victorian program were reviewed and critical success factors identified.

Several evaluations of housing service provision for different target populations were also reviewed for factors relevant to the Program's THM Pathways initiative.

The information on critical success factors for the program is sourced from structured consultations with program staff (Program Manager, Regional Team Leader, and

¹⁶ source: HomeGround Services tender documentation November 2006 provided to the evaluation by HomeGround Services

Case Managers at the seven courts at which the program currently operates), magistrates at the courts the program is operating (generally the Regional Coordinating Magistrates) as well as the Chief and Deputy Chief Magistrates and other magistrates with particular involvement with the program, senior registrars, Victoria Police, Legal Aid, Office of Housing, HomeGround Services, THM service providers, Drugs Policy and Services Branch (Department of Human Services), ACSO-COATS program, Centrelink, and Courts Development Program Unit. Details of the consultation methodology are given in the appendices.

Outcome of analyses

Literature-derived good practice features:

The available literature identified various features linked to successful outcomes for bail support services. They include:

- cross-agency collaboration in providing a holistic response to client needs¹⁷;
- detailed assessment for program suitability¹⁸;
- good working relationships with (and confidence of) court officers and effective liaison arrangements with other service providers¹⁹;
- specialist staff/program coordinators located at court²⁰;
- program flexibility and individually tailored approach to support and referral²¹;
- consistency of philosophy and practice²²; and
- immediacy of intervention and ongoing support²³.

A review of program documentation shows that these literature-identified features are included in the CREDIT/BSP design and operating policies, specifically:

- the focus of the program is on a holistic approach, linking clients to community-based supports and treatment agencies as determined by the assessed needs of each client – this is a primary consideration established in the program design, set out under objectives in program documentation, expressed as the key focus by stakeholders, and operating in practice;
- there is a formal assessment process using standard tools that assess diverse client need areas – such as housing, mental health, intellectual disability, acquired brain injury, drug and alcohol use, physical health, violence and anger management, employment, problem gambling, grief and loss, and lack of community supports;

¹⁷ King & Hegarty 2002; Reynolds, Inglis & O'Brien 2002; Social Policy Research Centre 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Venables & Rutledge 2003; Deloitte MCS Ltd 2006; Gilmore 2004

¹⁸ McCraig & Hardin 1999; Sentencing Commission for Scotland 2005; Elseworth et al 2003; Nacro Cymru 2001; Thomas 2005

¹⁹ Thomas 2005; Warner & Mclvor 1994; Alberti, King & Swan 2004; Deloitte MCS Ltd 2006; Graffam et al 2002; Gilmore 2004

²⁰ Deloitte MCS Ltd 2006; Alberti, King & Swan 2004

²¹ Elseworth et al 2003; Alberti et al 2004; Deloitte MCS 2006; Thomas 2005; Gilmore 2004

²² Gilmore 2004

²³ Graffam et al 2002, Edmunds et al 1998

- inter-agency liaison arrangements are established at both program-wide and individual case manager level and the importance of strong and positive working relationships is widely acknowledged and reinforced;
- case managers are based at the courts and operate from that location as officers of the court;
- the program provides for a flexible and tailored response to individual client needs and, while there are program guidelines set out in policy and procedures documentation or clear instructions from program management staff (for example, on maximum duration of time on the program or on the purposes for which brokerage funds are to be applied), in practice case managers have been authorised to go outside these guidelines to respond to an individual client need and some magistrates have taken a flexible approach at times to the length of time a person is placed with the program;
- there is a strong consensus across program staff, at both program management and case manager level on the overarching philosophy under which the program is designed and operated and strong consistency between this approach and practice at each court; and
- there is an emphasis on immediately addressing client practical needs such as emergency accommodation, pharmacotherapy, or access to Centrelink payments, as well as making arrangements for assessment and treatment interventions as early as practicable (may be made before the client leaves the court that day) as well as on ongoing case management and support.

Consultation-derived critical success factors:

There was generally agreement across stakeholder groups as to what features of the program were considered to be important for program effectiveness.

Court-based service

That the program is located at courts and seen as a court-based service was identified as a critical element by a number of case managers, magistrates, and senior registrars. Reasons cited were the importance of the program being seen by clients and by stakeholders as being court mandated and delivered by court officers who report directly to magistrates on program progress and breaches. This gives the program authority and is seen as being a key factor in promoting compliance. Cited reasons also included the fact that by being located within the court, program services can be commenced directly upon magistrate determination without the client leaving the court, so that there is an immediacy of treatment and other services being delivered at a point in time that the client is particularly open to motivational change.

Integration with other court delivered services was also cited as a relevant reason, for example, cross-referral to court based Indigenous services, domestic violence programs, and community agency assistance such as that provided by the Salvation Army and other community agencies that have office space at some courts.

Benefits for program staff and court administration were also described, whereby case managers are part of the team of court staff rather than isolated, and share the professional respect and support accorded other core court program workers.

Overall program and individual case manager credibility

Program and individual case manager credibility with magistrates and other stakeholders was one of the most consistently identified critical success factors across stakeholder groups, with several magistrates noting that the degree of confidence magistrates had in the particular case manager was pivotal as to whether they placed referrals onto the program. Confidence that the case managers will disclose program breaches was explicitly cited by several magistrates as a critical factor for credibility of both the individual case manager and the program as a whole.

Holistic case-managed response to client issues

The fact that the program addressed the range of client needs using a case management model and considers client welfare issues rather than purely compliance requirements was also commonly identified across stakeholder groups. It was cited as a critical element in ensuring both successful bail completion and contributing to longer term reduction in re-offending. Putting in place structural supports tailored to the particular range of individual client needs that link the client to community-based services and supports was seen as particularly important to achieve positive client outcomes.

Availability of THM housing and related support services were commonly cited as essential elements of a holistic response by program staff. One magistrate specifically stated that a rehabilitation program cannot be put in place without accommodation support. Other magistrates reinforced the importance of a program addressing the immediate needs of clients in a practical way, for example, by arranging accommodation, providing food and addressing basic subsistence needs, rather than dealing only with client drug-related offending issues in isolation.

Immediacy of intervention and access to a range of services

Program staff, magistrates and service providers consistently commented on the importance of program clients being able to be referred to suitable service providers in the community and that the referrals are made 'on the spot' to ensure timely and appropriate responses to client issues. Some explicitly cited access to appropriate mental health services as a particularly critical factor, given the profile of the client population where a significant proportion have a dual diagnosis of substance abuse and psychiatric issues.

Quality of inter-agency working arrangements

Given the nature of the program model, effective collaborative working relationships and regular contact across agencies and stakeholders (explicitly identified as including treatment providers, legal professionals, and police) were identified across all stakeholder groups as critical success factors. Some program staff specifically mentioned open and direct communication with police informants as a critical issue for credibility.

Voluntary model

The program is described as a voluntary rather than a coercive model, in that the person is free to choose to participate or not participate up to the point at which the court makes the program a condition of bail. Program staff in particular cite this feature as critical in facilitating program commitment and supporting long-term behavioural change.

In-custody assessments

Conducting assessments on defendants held in custody was seen by several magistrates and program staff to be a critical element of the program, without which more time would be spent on remand for some clients.

Strength-based program philosophy

The overall program philosophy, described as a strength-based approach of empowering and motivating clients to change behaviour and improve their life choices, was cited as an essential element by many case managers, given the client profile and program objectives.

Program flexibility

Although there are program guidelines set out in policy/procedures documentation (such as the standard length of time on the program), most case managers, magistrates as well as other stakeholders flagged the importance of program elements being able to be tailored to individual client needs and circumstances. Several program staff cited the autonomy of case managers as an important issue, allowing them to be flexible in their approach, which produced better client outcomes.

Program flexibility was also acknowledged as important by magistrates. However, several magistrates also considered that case manager discretion was subject to magistrates always being made aware of any key matter relevant to a client's entering and/or continuing participation on the program.

Quality of case manager and client relationship

All program staff considered a non-punitive, non-judgemental, client-focused and participative therapeutic approach to client relationship management to be a critical element in fostering client commitment and long-term behavioural change. The fact that case managers, unlike community corrections officers, do not breach a program client directly for non-compliance but do report to magistrates about failure to comply with program requirements was cited by a number of case managers as a positive feature. It enables them to establish positive and effective client relationships within a compliance framework where program breaches still have significant consequences.

One magistrate specifically stated that the approach of using case managers who focus on addressing client issues rather than the more 'bureaucratic' approach required of corrective services officers who are bound by strict constraints of a compliance model focusing on reporting was a critical success factor – a view consistently shared by program staff. Other magistrates mentioned the importance of gaining client trust and effective client relationship management for program success.

Regular reporting back to court and quality of court reports

The program requirement to report back to the court on a monthly basis was strongly supported by a number of magistrates as a key feature of the program, in that it allowed them to directly monitor client progress.

Some magistrates identified good quality and timely court reports based on solid and credible information sources as being an important factor, in that it provides useful information to inform their decision-making for both bail determinations and

sentencing. The importance of reporting to magistrates about non-compliance with program conditions was explicitly cited in a number of cases.

Availability of case managers

Several magistrates, court staff and legal officers (for example, Legal Aid) cited the importance of case managers being immediately and continuously available every day and during all hours that the court is operating as essential. Various stakeholders cited examples of where the lack of availability of the case manager while on leave or absent for other reasons had a significant negative impact on program uptake and credibility as well as adverse consequences for individual clients.

Continuity of case manager support

The continuing and active involvement of the program case manager was identified by some program staff and other stakeholders as an important factor in coordinating across services provided to the client and integrating those outcomes with court requirements and attendance. This was seen as particularly important in the early period of the program and regardless of the extent of individual support provided by other caseworkers from referred services. The same issue of an active case managed approach over a sufficient time period was also identified as important in providing accommodation support.

Active and continuous magistrate involvement

Some magistrates stated that active judicial involvement, including monitoring of client attendance and progress particularly in the early weeks of the program, was critical to ensure clients were engaged with the program.

The same magistrate dealing with the client throughout the program period was identified by some case managers and magistrates as an important element in that it allows the magistrate to better follow progress and therefore make a final determination based on continuing involvement with that defendant over the period. However, other magistrates considered that this was not critical and some stated that while it would be useful, it would be impractical in a larger court.

Brokerage resources

Availability of brokerage fees was identified by all case managers and some other stakeholders (magistrates, court staff, and Legal Aid) as essential, allowing case managers to provide the practical support necessary to address immediate client needs such as crisis accommodation, food and pharmacotherapy where required.

The capacity to seek and gain approval from program management staff for use of brokerage funds outside of the scope of established guidelines where warranted by individual client circumstances was also cited as an important area of flexibility that provided for improved client outcomes while maintaining accountability.

Drug treatment funding

The funding of drug treatment services and/or the priority arrangements for assessment and treatment referral were cited by some program staff, magistrates, and treatment service providers as critical factors. This immediate access to necessary drug services is seen as an important facilitator of behavioural change.

Flexibility in accommodation provision

Capacity to swap THM properties across justice program elements so that there is flexibility to match a vacancy in a particular geographic area to client need while retaining the overall allocation per program was cited as an important flexibility issue by some stakeholders.

Tenant engagement and long-term accommodation planning

The need for housing support workers to immediately and effectively engage THM clients and to commence and ensure completion of plans for long-term accommodation as soon as practicable was commonly identified in consultations with THM managers. Doing so means clients are able to exit THM properties into stable long-term housing more quickly and in line with policy targets, thereby freeing up THM properties for use by other program clients.

Implications of analysis findings

The design of the CREDIT/BSP as outlined in program documentation and the operation of the program as confirmed in consultations with the program management staff and case managers is consistent with the good practice features identified as important for program effectiveness in comparable programs operating elsewhere. Critical success factors identified across stakeholder consultations reinforced these literature-derived good practice features and were also consistent with documented and consultation-based descriptions of program policy and practice.

Supporting information from other sources

Internal evaluation reports and discussions with officers responsible for bail support programs in other jurisdictions reinforced the critical success factors identified from the published literature review. For example, consultation with the Bail Coordinator for the recently established WA program for women reinforced the importance of the program being court based and of worker credibility and experience.

Trends in program referrals

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below provides information on trends in use of the program over time and a basis against which to compare bail outcome and remand population trends in later analyses. It addresses the first evaluation key objective of determining whether and to what extent program deliverables have been met.

Information source(s)

The information is sourced from a database reporting number per month as of July 2001 for referrals to CREDIT program services and as of July 2004 for BSP services, maintained by Courts Division and used for financial reporting purposes to funding bodies. Monthly referral numbers are available from this source up to December

2006 when the CISP database was introduced, which was later merged with the CREDIT/BSP program database (CBS). Courts Division have advised that individual monthly figures after December 2006 are not available.

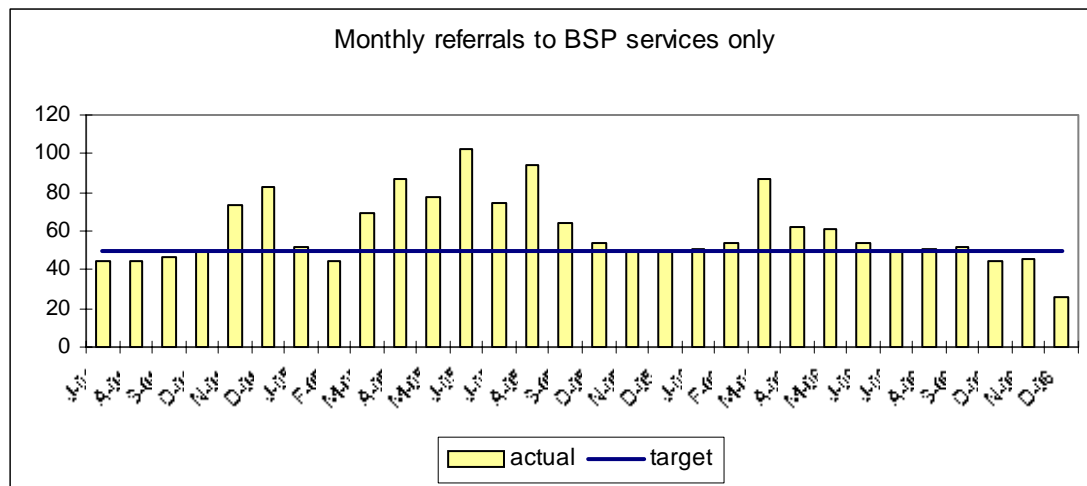
Under financial reporting arrangements with each funding agency, Courts Division report on the number of program referrals for Bail Support Program services (which is funded by Corrective Services), separately to the number of referrals for CREDIT drug assessment and treatment services (which is provided under Commonwealth Government funding). However, the same client may be receiving both drug related services under CREDIT arrangements and other bail support program services. Therefore referral numbers from this source will differ from referral counts derived from the CBS database used in other analyses.

Information on referrals at each of the seven courts at which CREDIT/BSP currently operates is sourced from a database maintained by program management staff as of January 2006.

Outcome of analyses

The number of referrals (for BSP services only) has reached or exceeded the target of 50 per month²⁴ in most instances over this 30-month period as shown below. Where the monthly target has not been met, this is by 6 cases or less (up to a 12% shortfall from the monthly target) in all except one month – December 2006²⁵.

Based on these statistics maintained by Courts Division, annual targets for BSP services have been met, and in fact exceeded, each year. Annual referral numbers for BSP services were 774 in 2004-05, 756 in 2005-06, and 665 in 2006-07 – higher than the annual target of 600 by 29, 26 and 11% respectively.

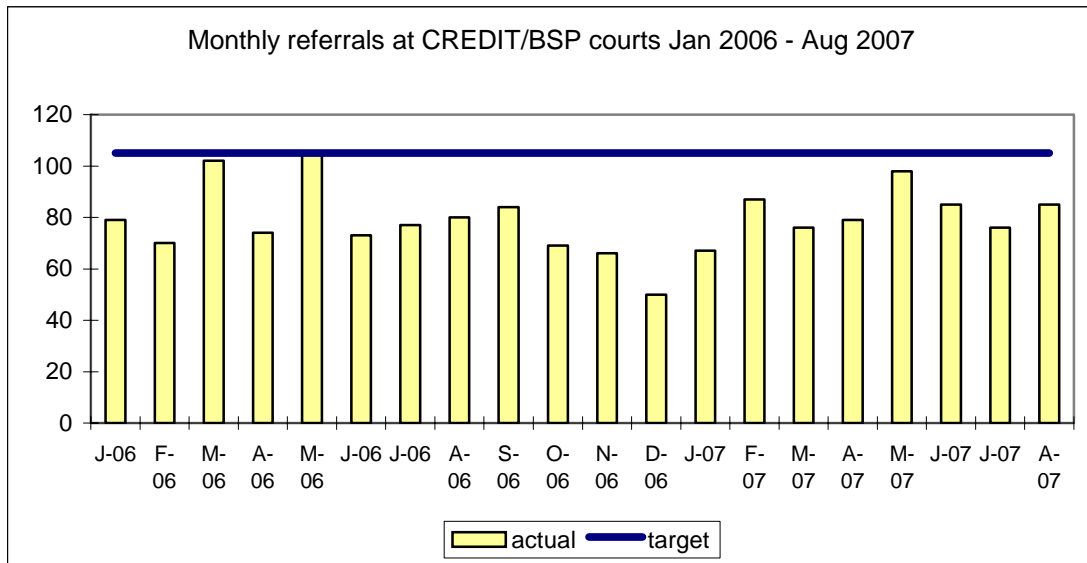


²⁴ targets of 50 referrals for BSP services and 147 or 148 referrals for CREDIT services per month at non-CISP locations have been set by Courts Division to produce the annual target figure of 600 and 1,768 referrals respectively established with the relevant funding agency

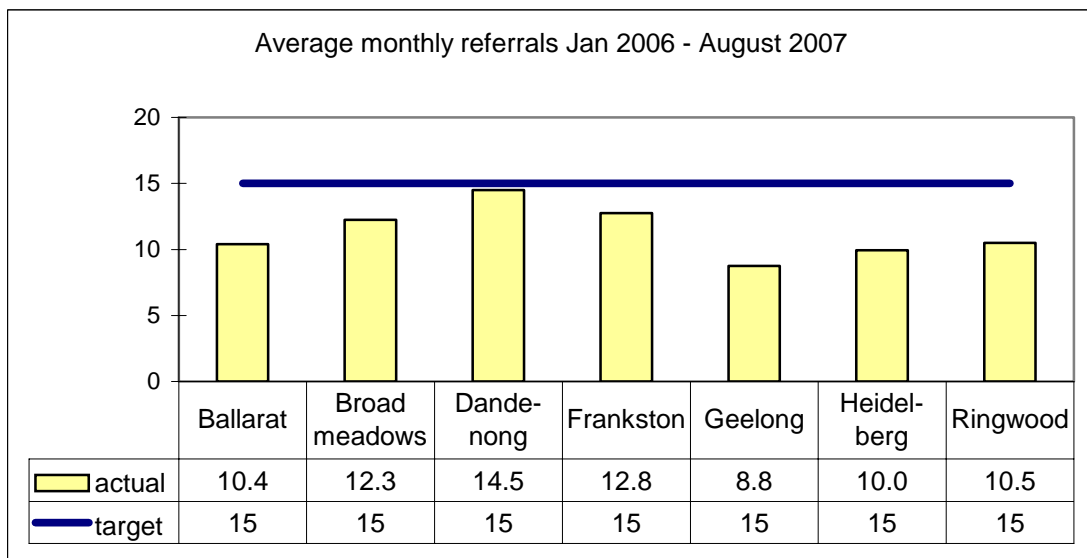
²⁵ noting that the introduction of the CISP program in December 2006 may have affected program numbers and/or recording of referrals for that month – individual monthly figures are not available after December 2006 although an annual figure for the full 2006-07 year is reported in Court Division statistical information

The analysis above refers to program-wide targets. It is based on statistics relating to all courts at which the program operated during the period including those where it is now superseded by CISP and relates only to figures for BSP services provided under the combined CREDIT/BSP program. The analyses below relate to the location-specific target for CREDIT/BSP referrals and are limited to the seven courts at which CREDIT/BSP currently operates.

The figure below shows actual number of referrals per month generally falls below a target of 105 – based on the figure of 15 referrals to the CREDIT/BSP amalgamated program per case manager per month aggregated across the seven courts.



The figure below gives the average number of referrals at each court, calculated over the 20-month period. Only one court's average is close to the monthly target.



The number of CREDIT/BSP referrals per individual case manager per month shows significant variability over time and across courts. Relative to the monthly target of 15 per case manager, figures have ranged from a shortfall of 15 (where zero referrals

were made during one month at one court) to 25 referrals – 67% over the monthly target at another.

The monthly target has been exceeded at least once during the 20-month period January 2006 to August 2007 at all except one court and every court has experienced shortfalls of varying levels at different times. Reasons for these differences and issues about suitability of the current target to all courts are discussed in later sections.

Analysis conclusions and implications

Based on this information source, the program-wide BSP target deliverable of 50 referrals per month has generally been met each month and the annual target of 600 referrals per annum agreed under funding arrangements with Corrections Victoria exceeded. However, individual court targets at the seven courts that the program is currently operating have not been consistently reached as of January 2006.

Supporting information from other sources

Senior officers in Courts Division advised during consultations that target deliverables for Corrective Victoria funded program services have been consistently met or exceeded since responsibility for the program was transferred to Courts Division. Case managers acknowledged during interviews that their referral numbers can vary substantially over time and that it is often difficult to reach the monthly targets at some courts.

Program uptake

Purpose of analysis

The analyses below provide information on the extent of and variation in program uptake. There are several levels of uptake assessed. One is the extent to which program referrals are assessed as suitable by case managers – this information contributes to conclusions about whether the program is appropriately understood and/or used by referrers. Another is the extent to which magistrates place referrals recommended as suitable for the program by case managers onto the program – this information contributes to conclusions about program effectiveness. A third is the source of referral, which contributes to conclusions about the extent to which targeted referrer groups use the program. This section also includes analysis of referral-related factors, which provides additional information about the manner in which the program is used that relates to the evaluation objective being assessed, for example the proportion of in-custody referrals.

These analyses address the fourth evaluation key objective of determining whether and to what extent the program has reduced the number of defendants remanded due to lack of accommodation or treatment/support in the community, given that the extent that the program is used is a key consideration in its overall effectiveness. The analysis also contributes to process evaluation conclusions and the final objective of determining whether and to what extent program design, delivery and outcomes are contributing to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness.

Information source(s)

The information is sourced from the CBS database, which commenced in January 2005. Data on referrals to CREDIT/BSP over a two-year period (January 2005 to December 2006) was provided to the evaluation. The database does not distinguish between clients referred for CREDIT services or for BSP services. The database records referrals to CREDIT/BSP and the initial outcome of the referral – that is, whether accepted onto the program or not – and the reason for non-acceptance if not accepted, including ‘does not fit criteria’, ‘refused bail’, and 15 other categories of reasons for non-acceptance. It also records the source of referral by agency/type and whether it was in an in-custody assessment.

Outcome of analyses

Acceptance of program referrals

Over two-thirds of referrals where initial outcome of the referral is recorded²⁶ were accepted onto the program – 68.5%. Of those that were not accepted, the most commonly recorded reasons was on the grounds of bail refusal.

Recorded reason for non-acceptance	no.	% of non-accepted referrals	% of total referrals ²⁷
Refused bail	300	35.4%	11.1%
Had matters heard	118	13.9%	4.4%
Bailed - magistrate denied CBS condition	95	11.2%	3.5%
Does not fit criteria	76	9.0%	2.8%
Bail application withdrawn	70	8.3%	2.3%
Requested no assistance	50	5.9%	1.9%
Community referral - external agency/program	36	4.2%	1.3%
Adequately supported by external program	30	3.5%	1.1%
Presents as not motivated for treatment	22	2.6%	0.8%
Currently on other court order	21	2.5%	0.8%
Referred to other court service – juvenile justice	9	1.1%	0.3%
Referred to other court service - corrections	8	0.9%	0.3%
Referred to other court service - disability	4	0.5%	0.1%
Referred to other court service - diversion	4	0.5%	0.1%
Referred to other court service – Salvation Army	2	0.2%	0.1%

²⁶ information is not recorded for 47 cases, for example, where the referral was made late in the two-year period for which data was provided the evaluation and court outcome had not yet been determined and/or recorded at the time the database information was extracted

²⁷ calculated as the percentage of cases where an outcome is recorded - 2696

Referred to court service - Aboriginal Liaison Officer	2	0.2%	0.1%
Referred to other court service - Forensicare	1	0.1%	0.04%
total	848	100%	31.5%

Two of these categories directly relate to magistrate uptake of the program²⁸ – bail refusal and bail granted without applying a program condition. These two categories combined represent almost half of the reasons for non-acceptance onto the program (47%) and comprise 15% of total referrals (that is, all referrals where the referral outcome is known whether accepted and not accepted onto the program). On the basis of this analysis, it represents a high uptake rate by magistrates – 85% if excluding only these two categories from total referrals made.

Two categories may be considered as ‘unsuitable referrals’, that is, cases where the person referred does not meet program criteria or is currently on another order that would have precluded being placed on the program. Arguably, such referrals would not be made if referrers were aware of and/or appropriately considered the program’s eligibility criteria before referral. This is distinguished from cases where the referred person is determined to be unsuitable for other reasons, which would only be properly determined after a detailed assessment by the case manager. These two categories represent 11% of the reasons for non-acceptance onto the program and 4% of total referrals. On the basis of this analysis, it represents a low rate of program refusal on the grounds of unsuitability criteria that could be appropriately determined prior to assessment.

Three other reason for refusal categories relate to unsuitability for the program, but as they cannot necessarily be determined without detailed assessment, are therefore not considered ‘unsuitable referrals’ in the same sense as above. They cover cases where the person assessed does not elect to be involved in the program, or is assessed as not being motivated for treatment, or is determined to already be adequately supported by another program. These three categories represent 12% of the reasons for non-acceptance onto the program and 4% of total referrals. On the basis of this analysis, it represents a low rate of program refusal on the grounds of assessed unsuitability for the program.

A referral may not be accepted onto the program despite being assessed as suitable because other court services or other programs are considered more appropriate for the individual’s circumstances. In those cases, the case manager may refer the person directly to another program (see table above for onward referral types). This represents 8% of the reasons for non-acceptance onto the program and 2% of total referrals. Because this type of reason for refusal may include both referrals considered eligible for the program but other available programs are deemed to be more suitable for the individual’s circumstances, as well as referrals that may not meet the program eligibility criteria but the case manager has made on onward referral in the particular case, figures for this type of reason for non-acceptance are presented separately from the previous analyses of uptake.

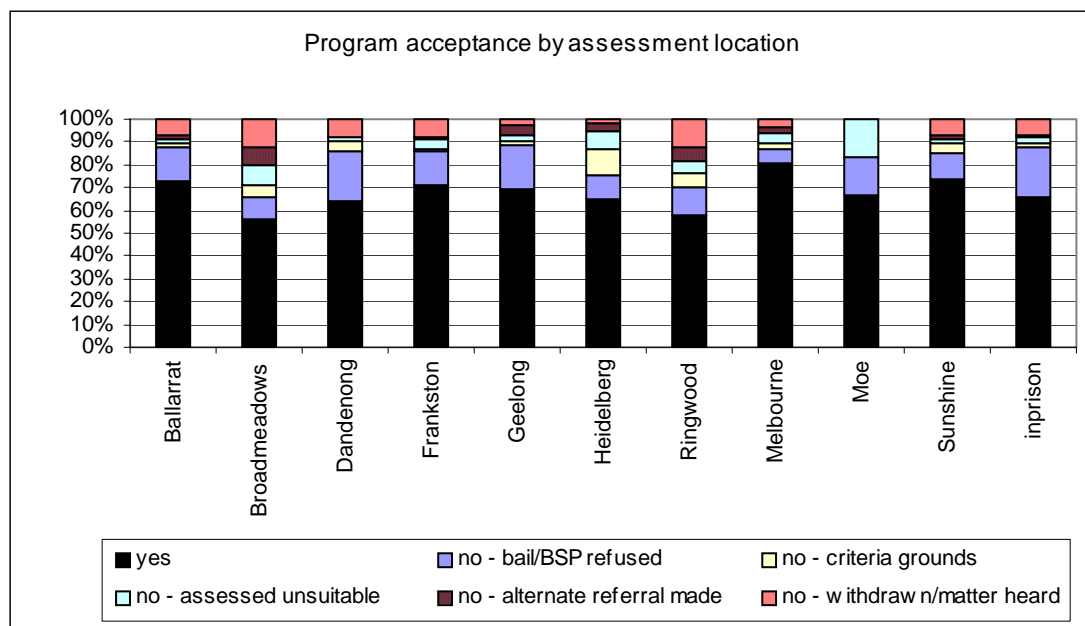
²⁸ While the category ‘matters heard’ could also arguably be considered as reflecting magistrate attitude to the program in that it could include cases where a magistrate has decided to deal with the matter directly rather than consider a program condition, this category may also include other reasons not related to program uptake and has therefore not been combined into this particular percentage calculation.

The final category covers referrals that are not taken up either because the court hears the matter or the program application has been withdrawn prior to a determination being made about program suitability. This represents 22% of the reasons for non-acceptance onto the program and 7% of total referrals.

It is not possible to clearly establish from the database whether the categories of referral to other programs/agencies and cases where the application is withdrawn or the matter is heard relate to cases where the case manager may have assessed the person as suitable for the program but that recommendation has not been taken up by the magistrate. If considering accepted referrals as a percentage of only those referrals where there is a determination of recommended suitability for the program that has been taken up or not taken up by the magistrate (ie accepted referrals plus the bail refusal/bail granted without program condition, the take-up rate is 82%.

Variation across locations in acceptance of referrals

Program acceptance figures and reason for non-acceptance show some variation across assessment locations over the period. Acceptance rates, calculated as the number accepted against all referrals, vary from 56% to 81% across both the 10 individual courts at which the program operated over the two-year period and the total number of assessments occurring in locations other than at these courts²⁹.



Source of referrals

Most referrals were made by a legal representative (80%) with the next highest being Magistrates (11%) and self-referrals (5%). Police referred 1.2%. Around 1% were referred by each of family, friends, and support agencies. Those accepted onto the program showed similar patterns for referring source as for total referrals, with

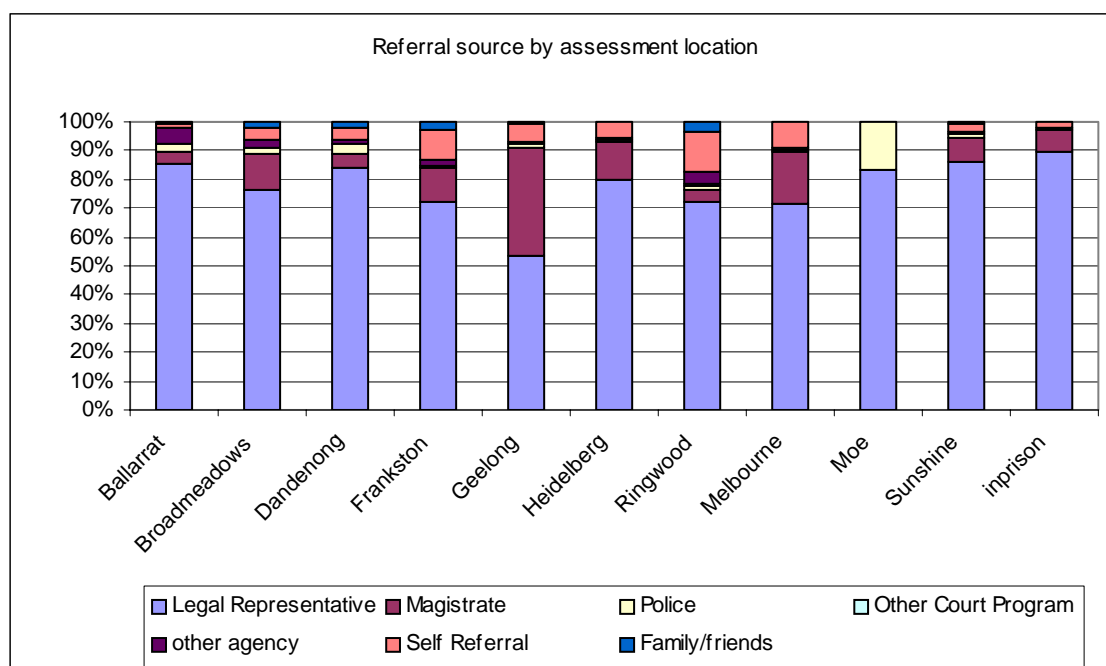
²⁹ court locations include the seven courts where CREDIT/BSP currently operates as well as the three current CISP locations where the program operated during the two-year period; the other locations include assessments conducted at the Melbourne Custody Centre, prison locations, the Thomas Embling Hospital, and one case recorded as 'video-link'

slightly lower levels for legal representatives (77%) and a higher proportion of Magistrate referrals (15%).

Referral source	no.	as % of total referrals	as % of referrals accepted on the program
Legal representative	2,183	79.6%	76.5%
Magistrate	308	11.2%	14.7%
Police	33	1.2%	1.5%
D & A treatment agency	8	0.3%	0.1%
Other support agency/service	28	1.0%	0.9%
Other court program	7	0.3%	0.4%
Other eg prisoner's support worker	6	0.2%	0.3%
Self referral	139	5.1%	5.0%
Family	11	0.4%	0.2%
Friends	20	0.7%	0.5%
total	2,743	100.0%	100.0%

Variation across locations in source of referrals

There is variation across assessment locations over the period, although all are consistent in legal representatives being the major referral source (53-90%).



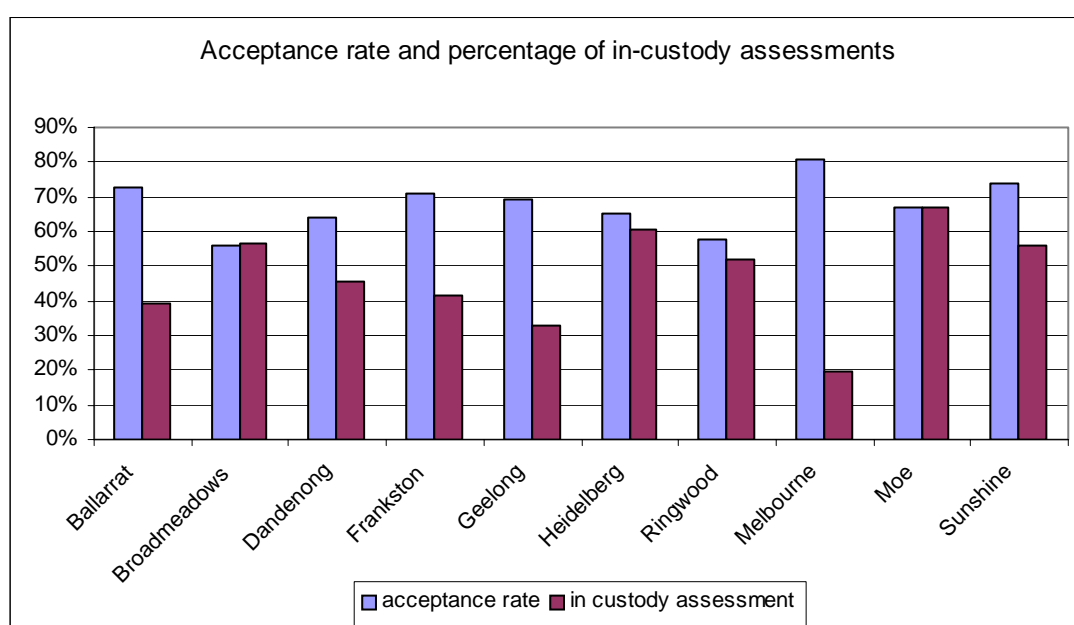
note: Moe percentages are based on a very small number of cases – the 17% figure of referrals by police is based on only a single case of a total of 6 referrals over the period

Magistrates constitute a much higher percentage of referrals at Geelong court³⁰ (38% compared to under 18% at other locations) but there is also a relatively wide range in the use of self-referrals across courts (from under 2% in two courts to 14%).

Levels of in-custody referrals and variation across locations

Over half of referrals were in custody assessments – 56%. Accepted referrals were slightly less likely to relate to clients held in custody at time of assessment (48%).

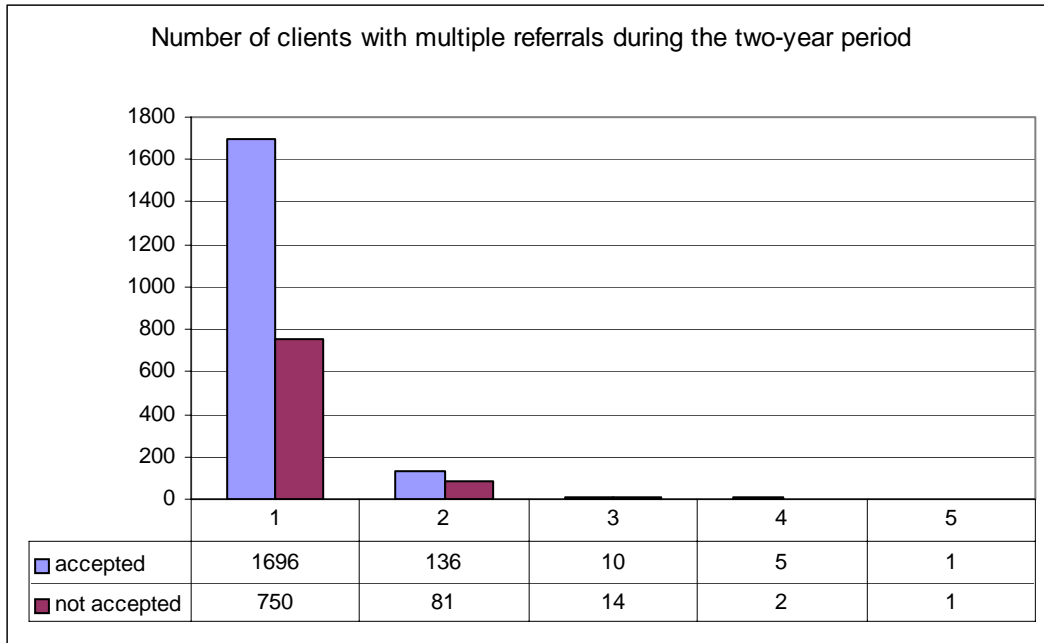
There was considerable variation between the courts at which the assessment was conducted, ranging from 33 to 67% of assessments being in-custody referrals. As shown in the figure below, there is a tendency for courts with lower program acceptance rates to have high proportions of in-custody assessments (noting that Melbourne Magistrates Court figures are affected by the Melbourne Custody Centre being counted as a separate assessment location and Moe by the small number of cases overall – a total of 6 referrals).



Proportion and characteristics of referrals with prior program experience

A significant proportion of clients had more than one referral to the program during the two-year period. Of all referrals received between 1 January 2005 and 30 December 2006, 9% were cases where the same client had been referred more than once within this two-year period, including 9 clients (0.4%) with 4 or 5 referrals. People with only a single referral comprised a slightly higher percentage of accepted program referrals (92%) than of those not accepted onto the program (88%).

³⁰ Following a decision by the Regional Coordinating Magistrate, Geelong currently operates on the basis that only a Magistrate can make a referral to the program.



* excludes 47 cases where information is not available

People with more than one referral during the period were much more likely to be self-referrals than those with only a single referral during the period – 16% of people with multiple referrals were self-referred compared to only 4% for those with only a single referral during the period.

Analysis conclusions and implications

The overall level of take-up rate of acceptance to the program is consistent with figures for bail support programs reported in the literature when considering the percentage of total referrals. For example, a UK national evaluation of bail support schemes found 69% of bail proposals were accepted by the courts (Thomas 2005) and evaluations of two Scottish bail supervision and support schemes (McCraig & Hardin 1999) reported 63% and 41% of accused assessed as suitable for the program were granted supervised bail by the court. The CREDIT/BSP take-up rates are substantially higher than these international figures when calculating uptake as a percentage of only those referrals where there is a determination of recommended suitability for the program that has been taken up or not taken up by the magistrate by either placing the person onto the program, by denying bail or by granting bail without program participation a condition of the order.

Only a small percentage of total referrals (4%) are recorded as not accepted onto the program because they do not meet program eligibility criteria or are excluded because currently on an order that precludes their involvement with the program – evidence supporting a conclusion that referrers are generally referring appropriate cases to case managers for assessment.

Referrals come from a range of sources, consistent with program policy, but predominantly by legal representatives. Although police are considered an important referral source, they comprise only a very small percentage of referrals over the period (1.2%).

There is variation across locations in the pattern of referrals and rates of acceptance onto the program, reflecting local policy and practice in some instances but also potentially influenced by real differences in the characteristics of the referred population.

Supporting information from other sources

During consultations, case managers described their experiences of program operation at their individual locations that were consistent with this pattern of results.

Client profile

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below provides a profile of clients referred to CREDIT/BSP and of clients accepted onto the program. It provides a basis for comparison with client-related characteristics established in the literature as predictive of bail refusal and/or unsuccessful bail completion, and therefore an indication of whether referrals to the program are an appropriate population given the program objectives.

It addresses the third evaluation key objective of determining whether and to what extent the program has resulted in the successful completion of bail by defendants who would otherwise be remanded in custody and the fourth evaluation key objective of determining whether and to what extent the program has reduced the number of defendants remanded due to lack of accommodation or treatment/support in the community. It also contributes information relevant to process evaluation conclusions.

Information source(s)

The information is sourced from the CBS database described above. The database records basic socio-demographic characteristics (eg date of birth, gender, Indigenous status, country of birth, marital status and number of children, education, level, employment status), presenting issues and other program-relevant information (for example, psychiatric or intellectual disability, current and history of substance use, accommodation issues, history of violence, etc) and legal and offence related data³¹ such as number of charges, offence type, current orders, and history of order or bail breach, for referrals to CREDIT/BSP.

Outcome of analyses

Clients referred to the CREDIT/BSP program over the two-year period, regardless of whether they were accepted onto the program, showed the following socio-demographic characteristics³²:

- average age of 31 years;

³¹ although this information is not consistently provided for all referrals

³² percentages are based on numbers where the item is recorded, and therefore excludes unknown cases

- predominantly male – 84%;
- less than 4% were Indigenous;
- 1 in 6 (17%) were currently married or in a defacto relationship and 10% recorded as 'significant other' – most were single;
- one in 3 had children (35%) and almost half of those clients were identified as having children in care;
- most were Australian-born (81%) – the rest were from a very wide diversity of countries from around the world³³, with the most common group being those born in Vietnam (5%);
- almost all would be considered as proficient English-speakers as less than 1% were identified as requiring an interpreter;
- the majority had year 10 education or less (62%) and a further 26% had year 11-12 education; and
- most were in the workforce (82%) although almost three-quarters (73%) of those in the workforce were unemployed – of those in paid work, about half were in full-time employment and half worked part-time or on a casual basis.

Clients who were accepted onto the program on at least one occasion, regardless of whether there was a previous or subsequent unsuccessful referral for that client, showed an almost identical socio-demographic profile to that described above for all clients referred to the program.

The following characteristics and presenting issues were also recorded for referrals to the program:

- a small proportion of clients³⁴ referred to the program had an intellectual disability flagged – 1%;
- 6% of clients had psychiatric issues flagged;
- 1% of clients were flagged as sex offenders and 9% as violent offenders;
- current substance use was recorded for 1,169 referred cases, most commonly cannabis, heroin and alcohol, with most reporting more than one type of substance – the majority also showed a long history of use³⁵;
- the most common form of accommodation recorded³⁶ was with family (40%), with friends (12%) or in private rental (13%), with 8% in public housing, 7%

³³ eg Canada, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Germany, India, Iraq, Israel, Malta, New Guinea, New Zealand, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Timor, United Kingdom, and others

³⁴ analyses referring to clients are based on the count of unique clients (n=2,487 over the period) rather than the number of referrals (n=2,743) where the same person will be counted more than once if he/she received more than one referral during the period

³⁵ 28, 22 and 21% respectively for cannabis, heroin and alcohol as a percentage of all recorded substances – most referrals had more than one substance recorded in this datafile, so that these figures should not be interpreted as the percentage of clients using this particular substance; 52% of all substances recorded showed a 10 years or greater period of use – again, these percentages will not necessarily reflect the proportion of clients with this level of use

³⁶ based on 2,130 episodes recorded across 1,732 referrals – multiple (up to five) episodes were given per individual referral where there was a change of address recorded for the client during the period on the program

each in boarding/rooming house and emergency/crisis accommodation, and a small percentage in each of privately owned housing, supported accommodation, residential rehabilitation, caravan park, homeless, or 'other' category;

- case issues were recorded for 2,452 referrals, with most clients identified with two or more specific issues – the most common were illicit substance abuse (shown as one of the presenting issues among 86% of referrals for whom this item was recorded), lack of appropriate supports (31%), alcohol abuse (25%), employment needs (23%), and housing (20%), with between 10 and 14% each for anger management, existing mental health issues, unclear mental health status, and grief and loss, and under 7% for each of physical health problems, prescription medication abuse, domestic violence, acquired brain injury, intellectual disability, and problem gambling; and
- of those clients for whom this information is recorded³⁷ 11% were identified as currently involved with the Department of Human Services, although the type of involvement was not available through the database provided to the evaluation.

There are also legal and offence data recorded for a proportion of referrals:

- 827 referrals had past court order information recorded on the relevant datafile, most commonly a Community Based Order (61% of these referrals included a CBO), with 40% showing a prior custodial sentence – almost 1 in 3 of these referrals (30%) had a previous bail order recorded;
- 1,584 referrals had legal details recorded on the relevant datafile, which includes prior history of failing to appear on bail and breach of a court order – 125 were identified as breaches for non-compliance and 285 for re-offending;
- 1,091 referrals had one or more bail conditions recorded in the datafile for this item, with 92% identified as carrying a CREDIT/BSP condition, and the next most common being a 24-hour notification address requirement (44%), reporting to a police station (39%), having a static address (28%) and curfew condition (16%);
- 1,399 referrals had arrest data shown in the datafile for this item, with an average of 9 charges shown for each of these referrals – an analysis of the most serious charge³⁸ recorded per individual referral shows the most common being property offences such as theft (31%), drug offences (20%), assault (14%) and burglary (11%); and
- information on active orders is recorded for 984 referrals in the relevant datafile, of which 65 are coded as 'none' – of the remainder, the most common is bail (83%) with suspended sentences making up 10%, community-based orders 3% and less than 1% for each category of other order such as fine, bond, YTC, ICO, custodial sentence or parole.

The profile of presenting issues was broadly consistent across the different courts, although there were some areas of variation. The following shows the number of program referrals where the case manager identified that the particular presenting issue coded in the database occurred, expressed as a percentage of clients for whom at least one presenting issue was recorded in the CBP database.

³⁷ based on 1,592 clients – 37% of clients records show missing information on this item

³⁸ using the ABS Australian Standard Classification of Offences (ASCO) hierarchy for determining the most serious charge

Presenting issue (%)	Blt	Bdm	Ddg	Fks	Glg	Hdb	Mlb	Moe	Rgw	Ssh
Illicit substance abuse	84	84	83	83	85	78	87	33	77	90
Alcohol abuse	46	25	42	35	36	25	18	0	26	11
Prescription medication abuse	4	2	4	3	5	7	4	0	9	2
Housing issues	22	44	16	10	25	6	16	33	34	16
Anger management issues	11	11	17	11	21	10	11	0	12	8
Domestic violence	4	3	1	3	3	0	1	0	3	2
Employment needs	15	42	40	14	16	16	15	33	23	25
Acquired Brain Injury	3	0	1	2	2	3	2	0	3	0
Intellectual disability	0	1	1	0	4	0	2	0	0	2
Physical health problems	9	6	9	5	17	0	5	33	6	9
Grief and loss	3	13	11	19	24	6	9	0	12	5
Problem gambling	0	2	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	1
Existing mental health issue	15	8	19	20	16	18	11	33	12	13
Unclear mental health status	13	10	23	8	34	4	7	33	14	7
Lack of appropriate supports	9	68	58	5	71	36	22	0	25	13

Housing need shows a particularly high level of variation, ranging from 6% of Heidelberg court clients to 44% of those at Broadmeadows court. Alcohol abuse also shows substantial difference, ranging from 46% in Ballarat and 42% in Dandenong over the period to 11% in Sunshine (Moe's zero percentage need to be interpreted with caution as Moe figures are based on only 3 referrals in total).

Analysis conclusions and implications

The client profile and presenting issues are consistent with characteristics commonly described in the research and practice literature³⁹ for people at higher risk of both failing to secure bail and of not completing the bail period successfully. They include being male, unemployed, not in a partner relationship, substance abuse, multiple charges, charges with property offences, and prior offending and history of involvement with the correctional system, including previous breaches of bail or sentencing orders.

³⁹ For example, NSW Bureau of Crime Research and Statistics (Chilvers et al 2002) research shows bail absconders were more likely to have prior convictions, to have multiple charges, and be persons charged with theft offences (receiving, break enter and stealing) and disorderly conduct offences in the lower courts. A New Zealand study (Lash 1998) found higher rates of re-offending on bail among young males, those with prior convictions, multiple charges, and charged with a property offence. UK research (Morgan & Henderson 1998; Lloyd 1992) identified a range of factors related to bail breach including age, prior record, offence type, prior bail breach, unemployment and homelessness. Allan et al's (2003) analysis of Perth court data identified drug use and prior breaches reasons cited by Magistrates and a large number of charges as predictive of bail refusal.

The differences in profiles of presenting issues across the different courts indicates that there are geographic differences in the pattern of client needs to be taken into account in future planning of service delivery.

Supporting information from other sources

Where during consultation case managers referred to client characteristics or profiles for their caseload, these were consistent with this pattern of results. Some magistrates also considered there were regional differences in the characteristics of defendants relevant to the program – for example, alcohol being a more critical issue than illicit substance abuse in one region and lack of accommodation particularly highlighted in others.

Case management

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below provides information about key aspects of case management recorded in the database made available to the evaluation, such as length of time on the program and time elapsed between key event dates, for example date of referral and date of completed assessment. It provides a basis for establishing whether the program is consistently implemented in accordance with documented policy and procedures.

The analysis also contributes to process evaluation conclusions and the final objective of determining whether and to what extent program design, delivery and outcomes are contributing to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness.

Information source(s)

The information is sourced from the CBS database described earlier. The database records basic event information, such as dates for program referral, needs assessment, program commencement and exit, as well as information on treatment plans, case reviews and treatment agency attendance.

Outcome of analyses

The average time between the date of referral and the date recorded for the needs assessment was 2 days. The majority of needs assessments occurred on the day of referral (77%) with 86% occurring within 3 days.

The average time⁴⁰ spent on the program was 102 days, or 3.4 months. This is the time between recorded program start and exit dates and does not include time between the date of referral or the date of assessment where these differ from the

⁴⁰ as measured by the arithmetic mean – using the median shows a similar figure of 101 days

recorded case start date. The interval between the program start data and program exit date recorded in the database ranged from zero to 524 days⁴¹.

Twenty-nine percent of program clients had spent more than 4 months on the program either upon recorded program exit date or at the point at which the data was extracted for the evaluation for clients still on the program at that time, with 12% spending more than 5 months. There was a tendency for the proportion of clients spending over 4 months on the program to be more prevalent earlier in the two-year period. Three clients were recorded as spending over one year on the program.

Taking a very strict criterion where the number of days between the recorded start and end of the case dates falls precisely between 3 and 4 months (the program period identified in program documentation), less than one-third of all referrals where a program exit date is recorded fall into this group.

The most common type of program support recorded in the database as being provided was drug and alcohol support, received by 92% of clients. Over one-third of clients (36%) received some other type of support.

Of the accepted referrals, 92% had treatment plan data recorded for drug and alcohol issues, 17% for pharmacotherapy, and 1% each for mental health, medical or vocational matters. A wide range of attending 'other interventions' was also recorded, with only a small percentage of accepted referrals – less than 3% in any case – shown as receiving this intervention as part of a treatment plan. The most common categories were GP, housing services, and anger management (2.8, 2.5 and 2.4% respectively).⁴² These figures need to be interpreted with caution. They are calculated taking the number of cases that had an entry recorded on the database in the particular datafile that referred to this item against the total number of accepted referrals. This analysis assumed that if no entry was recorded in the database, then the person did not receive any assistance about the issue. However, this may not necessarily be the case, so that the percentages may underestimate action taken by a case manager in response to the particular issue.

A separate datafile on case note information records a range of case review matters⁴³, documenting over 20,000 unit records across the two-year period. These fall mostly in the 'case manager review', 'client', and 'treatment agency liaison' category. They also include 362 housing related reviews across 139 referrals.

Analysis conclusions and implications

Most needs assessments are conducted either on the day of referral or within a short period of time, so these processes are generally applied as intended. However, the majority of cases are recorded as being involved with the program for less or more time than the standard period of 3 to 4 months described in program documentation.

⁴¹ The Regional team Leader advised that in exceptional circumstances, a client has been maintained on the program for an extended period and that this has occurred for a small number of clients only.

⁴² the database allows recording of multiple treatment plans for a particular issue for an individual case referral - percentages have been calculated against whether a particular case referral has one or more treatment plan entries for a single presenting issue

⁴³ such as legal liaison, court review, medical, housing, Centrelink, ACSO/COATS, police, DHS, etc

Although drug and alcohol issues predominate in needs assessments and drug and alcohol interventions in case planning (for over 9 in 10 clients in each case), one in three clients also receive some other form of intervention or support⁴⁴. The range of presenting needs and program support services provided are diverse and indicative of a client population with multiple and complex needs.

Supporting information from other sources

Consultations confirmed that time spent on the program could vary markedly from the standard period. One Magistrate noted that she had elected to continue to keep one bailee on the program for over 9 months, considered the most appropriate course of action given the circumstances of the individual case. Two magistrates indicated they did not feel bound by the program period, and would finalise a case in under 3 months if they felt that the period on the program for that client showed a significant enough period of progress for them to make a decision about case outcome at an earlier point in time.

The CBP database does not provide figures on current caseload – that is, the number of clients being managed at any single point in time. Case managers generally gave figures of 20 to 30 clients on hand any single day, up to 40-50 at one court. Figures of 20-30 were generally agreed to be manageable caseloads.

Program completion outcomes

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below provides information on the final outcome for the program recorded on the CBS database. It provides the case manager's assessment of whether the client completed the program successfully or not, and if the latter, the basis for this being recorded as a non-successful exit from the program.

It addresses the third evaluation key objective of determining whether and to what extent the program has resulted in the successful completion of bail by defendants who would otherwise be remanded in custody. The analysis also contributes to process evaluation conclusions and the final objective of determining whether and to what extent program design, delivery and outcomes are contributing to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness.

Information source(s)

The information is sourced from the CBS database described earlier. It records the reason for exit from the program according to 15 categories. The 2007 draft program documentation provides definitions for each category and guidance on what is covered under each one. The database also provides for recording of final sentence according to type of sentence imposed (eg custodial, community-based order, fine).

⁴⁴ This is consistent with numbers documented in the Courts Division database used for reporting to funding bodies, where clients counted as receiving BSP services are about one-third of the number of clients recorded as receiving CREDIT services each month.

Outcome of analyses

Over half of all referrals accepted onto the program where an exit reason was recorded⁴⁵ showed 'successful program outcome (54%) and another 12% showed 'partially completed'⁴⁶. Eleven percent were exited because they were remanded and 10% because they did not attend court.

Recorded program exit reason	no.	%
Successful program outcome	929	54.0%
Partially completed	200	11.6%
Remanded, attended treatment	38	2.2%
Remanded, attended some treatment	92	5.3%
Remanded, did not attend treatment	58	3.4%
<i>Total remanded</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>10.9%</i>
Did not attend court, attended treatment	17	1.0%
Did not attend court, attended some treatment	79	4.6%
Did not attend court, did not attend treatment	75	4.4%
<i>Total did not attend court</i>	<i>171</i>	<i>9.9%</i>
Did not attend assessment	23	1.3%
Did not attend any treatment	80	4.7%
Unable to locate	44	2.6%
Unsuccessful program outcome	72	4.2%
Other outcome eg client death, transferred to CISP	13	0.7%
total	1,720	100%

Sentence outcome data was recorded for 969 referrals, of which 238 were identified as completed but with court matters continuing. Of those referrals where a court outcome was recorded, most resulted in a community-based order, fine or suspended sentence. Eleven percent received a custodial sentence, almost half of which were under three months duration.

Analysis conclusions and implications

These outcomes are reasonably comparable with those reported for bail support programs operating elsewhere. For example, an evaluation of the Queensland Conditional Bail Program cites a 72% successful completion rate (Venables & Rutledge 2003). A 2005 UK national evaluation of bail support schemes reported a 54% program completion rate, and of those sentenced, sentences were most

⁴⁵ 1720 of the 1848 case referrals had a program outcome recorded – 7% had not completed the program at the end of the two-year period for which data was provided to the evaluation

⁴⁶ 'partially completed' is described in the draft 2007 policy and procedures documentation as referring to clients who attended all court hearings and attended some treatment, engaged well, and made progress but did not attend treatment consistently enough to be considered as a fully successful program completion

commonly a community-based order (Thomas 2005). The rates are also comparable with those for the CREDIT program prior to its amalgamation with the Bail Support Program, where 61% were identified as successfully completed and 10% as partially completed in 2002-03 (Alberti et al 2004).

Supporting information from other sources

During consultations, magistrates generally commented that they considered that the program had a high success rate, and a number stated that they considered successful outcome on the program as a major consideration in making a non-custodial sentence.

Impact on bail outcomes

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below provides an indication of whether the program's introduction has had an observable impact on trends in bail outcome decisions over time, at statewide and individual court level. It contributes to addressing the fourth evaluation objective of determining whether and to what extent the program has reduced the number of defendants remanded due to lack of accommodation or treatment/support in the community. The analysis also contributes to process evaluation conclusions and the final objective of determining whether and to what extent program design, delivery and outcomes are contributing to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness.

Information source(s)

The information is sourced from outcome of first bail applications (both formal and 'on the day' applications) recorded on the Courtlink database for each Magistrate's Court per financial year for the period 2000-01 to 2006-07. Only information on first bail applications where an electronic record is produced is available for analysis⁴⁷ and these figures will not represent all bail applications heard at a court.

The database from which bail outcome data is provided does not provide the capacity to identify program clients, so that analysis of program impacts is of necessity based on a gross measure of impact comparing trends between individual courts at which the program operates against those where it does not.

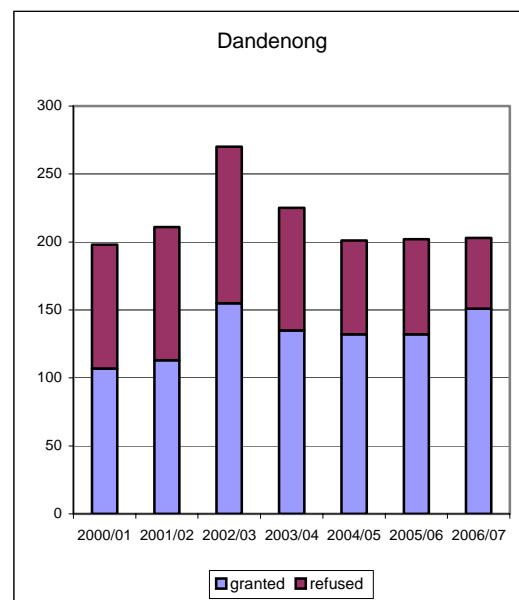
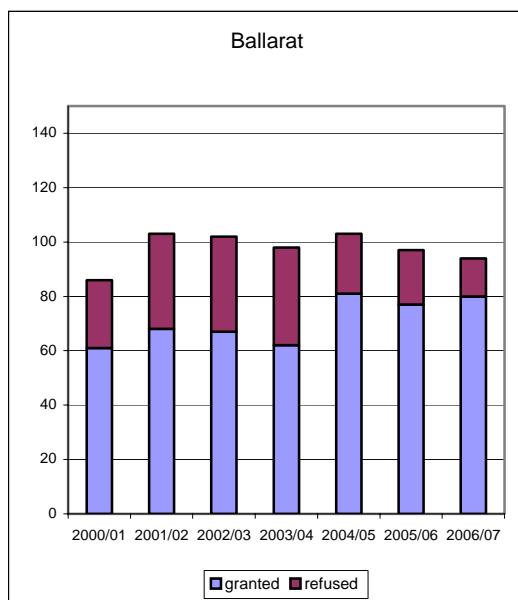
Outcome of analyses

The table below shows the percentage of first bail applications to the court that are granted by the court for each financial year.

⁴⁷ Following discussions with Courts Division staff on the availability and reliability of other bail information accessible through electronic records, it was determined that this was the most appropriate data breakdown able to be provided and that data requests for other trend statistics or more detailed information would not provide sufficiently comprehensive or reliable data for evaluation purposes.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Ballarat	70.9	66.0	65.7	63.3	78.6	79.4	85.1
Broadmeadows	71.8	70.1	75.3	83.4	81.6	92.6	88.7
Dandenong	54.0	53.6	57.4	60.0	65.7	65.3	74.4
Frankston	63.9	73.3	62.7	73.4	82.0	79.0	71.8
Geelong	72.9	76.5	79.9	77.8	68.8	69.0	77.7
Heidelberg	65.2	59.6	88.2	81.1	71.2	74.2	77.7
Melbourne	79.0	78.3	80.0	83.5	85.3	88.5	90.6
Moe	76.0	72.8	83.1	83.1	88.8	78.1	80.6
Ringwood	66.9	67.9	71.3	81.7	77.1	73.5	80.3
Sunshine	67.8	73.4	75.2	62.9	67.5	71.4	79.9
other courts	77.2	76.6	82.7	82.6	80.3	84.7	86.3
all courts	73.4	73.9	76.5	78.3	79.2	81.2	84.5

There is a tendency for the percentage of applications granted to increase at a number of courts where the program operates in the years following the Bail Support Program's rollout and amalgamation with CREDIT. For example, Ballarat and Dandenong show a consistent rise in the number of first bail applications granted and a fall in those refused from 2003-04, as shown below. However a general trend of an increase in the proportion of first bail applications granted also appears, although to a lesser extent, across other courts where CREDIT/BSP does not operate.



Analysis conclusions and implications

Program impact is not reflected in any obvious change in trends over time in first bail application grant/refusal proportions across all courts at which the program operates, but the level of analysis able to be conducted from available statistics is limited and

may not be sensitive enough to show even a moderate to strong positive impact. At individual court level, there are some examples of consistent increases in the proportion of bail applications granted over time, which may reflect a growing tendency by magistrates and referrers to use the program over time at those courts.

Supporting information from other sources

Several Case Managers advised during consultations that they perceived a growth in use of the program over time, as both the program and the particular case manager built operational credibility and trust with the magistrates.

Impact on remand numbers

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below provides an indication of whether the program's introduction has had an observable impact on trends in number of persons held on remand. It contributes to addressing the fourth evaluation key objective of determining whether and to what extent the program has reduced the number of defendants remanded due to lack of accommodation or treatment/support in the community.

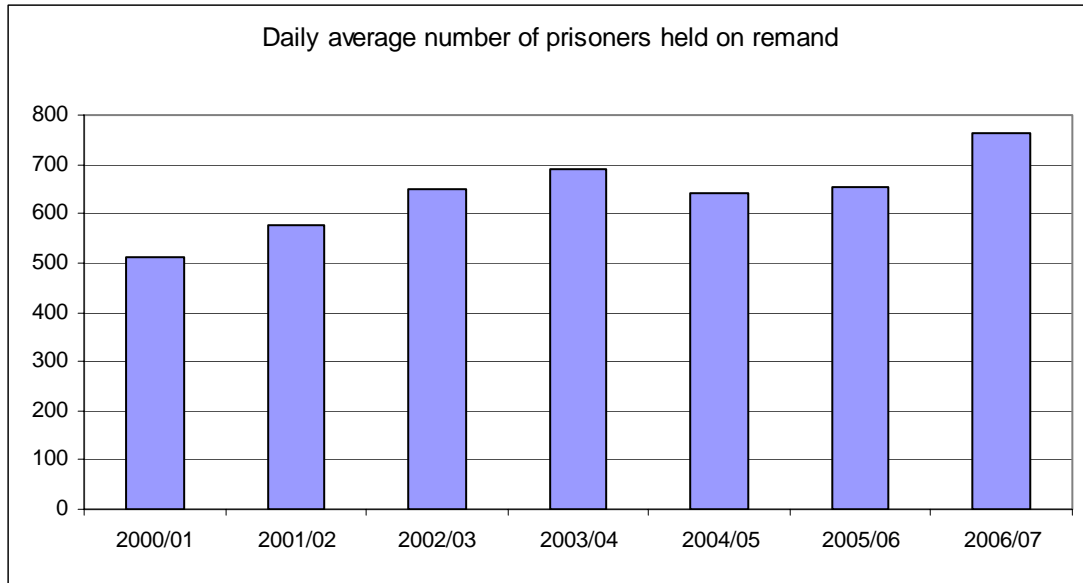
Information source(s)

The information is sourced from Corrections Victoria data on daily average number of persons held on remand only (that is, not concurrently serving a period on sentence while remanded in custody) per month for the period June 2000 to July 2007.

Although data on number and characteristics of people held on remand in prison facilities is maintained in Corrections Victoria records, this does not include information about a remandee's participation in court programs such as CREDIT/BSP, so it was not possible to compare remand data for program clients to those of remandees not involved with the program.

Outcome of analyses

Annual trends of the daily average number of persons held on remand in prison facilities showed a decline between 2003-04 and 2005-06, which was maintained in the following year. However there was a sharp rise in 2006-07.



Analysis conclusions and implications

Although there is a decline in remand numbers in the financial year in which the program was implemented across courts, this has not continued in subsequent years. However, the level of analysis able to be conducted from available statistics is limited and may not be sensitive enough to show even a moderate to strong positive impact.

Supporting information from other sources

Magistrates consistently advised during consultations that had the program not been available, they would have remanded a number of the people referred to the program to be held in custody. Some magistrates considered the program impact on remand numbers to have been substantial. This is discussed in more detail in later sections of the report.

THM housing demand, uptake and outcomes

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below assesses the level of demand relative to advertised vacancies for Transitional Housing Management (THM) dedicated for use by program clients and an analysis of housing outcomes for clients accommodated in these properties. It also provides a profile of clients referred to HomeGround Services in response to advertising of vacancies for THM properties available to the program.

This analysis addresses the fifth evaluation key objective of determining whether housing available to defendants is adequate, in terms of location, size and dwelling type. It also contributes to process evaluation conclusions and the final objective of determining whether and to what extent program design, delivery and outcomes are contributing to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness.

Information source(s)

The information is sourced from data held by HomeGround Services, primarily using a database⁴⁸ of socio-demographic and housing outcome information for program clients accepted into THM accommodation under the Justice Service Program. The information provided to the evaluation from that database includes CISP clients, so that the analyses below are not specific to CREDIT/BSP. Information on number of referrals to THM property vacancies is sourced from a referral book data covering 63 CREDIT/BSP and CISP client referrals to 12 advertised THM property vacancies in 2007 up to August when the data collection stage of the evaluation was completed.

Outcome of analyses

Housing demand

On average, there were seven referrals made for each vacancy⁴⁹, usually including at least several cases reporting a long-term history of homelessness (over 5 years for 11 referrals and between 3 and 5 years in another 5 cases).

Although referrals are most commonly made to a vacancy for clients currently residing in or near the area where the THM property is located, there are numerous examples of clients applying for a THM vacancy a significant distance away. For example, a client living in Bacchus Marsh was referred to a Mitcham THM property and a Healesville client for a Noble Park property.

THM client profile:

A total of 64 CREDIT/BSP and CISP clients were recorded on the HomeGround database as at August 2007, of which 29 were identified as 'active', that is, currently engaged with the Justice Housing Support Program services provided by HomeGround and 5 as 'infrequent', that is, the client had moved into Office of Housing (OH) non-transitional accommodation and HomeGround was continuing to provide interim support. The remainder were closed cases where HomeGround involvement had ceased.

About two-thirds (66%) of clients were male. Average age at registration was 31. Most were English-speaking (95%) and Vietnamese was the language recorded for the remaining 3 clients. Three percent were Indigenous. About one in three had children (36%), of which just over one-third had more than one child, with one client with 10 children. One in 4 cases recorded another adult in the household.

Over half of clients (55%) were identified as having mental health issues. Over three-quarters (78%) were identified as having a substance abuse history involving illicit drugs and 33% involving alcohol.

⁴⁸ HomeGround have been providing services to the program since 2005 and there is only a relatively small client pool to date, given the number of properties available and average length of stay. The data available at this time is therefore based on a relatively small number of cases and the analyses that can be done for the purpose of this evaluation are necessarily limited, with longer-term outcome data not available for most cases.

⁴⁹ in 1 in 5 cases, the same client was referred to both of two advertised vacancy occurring at around the same time

History of homelessness⁵⁰ ranged from 1 to 15 Centrelink-confirmed episodes with the average total period of homelessness per client being 1.7 years where this information was recorded.

THM housing outcomes

The average time⁵¹ spent in a THM property for clients who had exited the property was 10 months and 3 months to date for those continuing to reside in the same property at August 2007. The maximum time recorded for a tenancy was 21 months. Seven clients had transferred between THM properties for various reasons, including on the grounds of sale of the property, safety concerns (domestic violence), to be closer to area supports, and 'neighbourhood fatigue'.

Twenty-five of the 64 clients had a recorded outcome to date. Nine had moved to OH properties upon exit from transitional housing⁵², four had moved into private rental accommodation, and 3 were recorded as 'family reunification'. Six clients exited because they had been incarcerated – in two cases the records stated that this was not on the grounds of re-offending but resulted from charges pending at referral. One client moved interstate with family, one returned to regional Victoria because the metropolitan-based THM property was too distant from the client's supports, and one outcome was recorded as "At risk tenancy due to domestic violence, safety issues, neighbourhood fatigue".

Analysis conclusions and implications

The analysis supports the conclusion that program clients entering THM accommodation have a history of homelessness and other needs warranting the type of housing-linked support services provided under the program⁵³.

Housing outcomes for clients in transitional accommodation provided through the program and being supported by HomeGround Services are generally positive, with non-incarcerated clients exiting the properties to various longer-term options, of which about half are identified as moving to Office of Housing accommodation.

The average tenancy period of 10 months and the length of time spent in some properties – up to 21 months – have implications for the number of program clients able to access this resource.

The analysis shows a level of demand about seven times higher than supply when considering Case Manager referrals in response to advertised property vacancies.

⁵⁰ covering a range of categories of accommodation types including: couch surfing, living with friends/relatives (rent-free), caravan parks, private boarding/rooming house/motel, emergency accommodation, institutional setting, transitional housing property, and others

⁵¹ using the median - average time using the arithmetic mean was 11 months for clients that had exited the property and 5 months for those who were currently residing in the property

⁵² including one client who had exited the property due to being incarcerated but post release was recontacted and supported to move into an OH property and referred to SHASP by HomeGround

⁵³ noting one early case where the HomeGround Services database states that a client was already in place in THM accommodation when HomeGround commenced service delivery but was not considered to be homeless – that tenancy ceased in December 2005

Supporting information from other sources

HomeGround Services and THM accommodation providers officers advised during consultations that the client population for the Justice Housing Support Program⁵⁴ had significant levels of housing support needs.

THM accommodation providers confirmed during consultations that justice program clients generally spent longer periods of time in THM properties than provided for under standard arrangements. However, this was not an issue exclusive to justice program clients, with longer than standard periods also reported among other tenant groups.

Case Managers, the CREDIT/BSP Program Manager and Regional Team Leader, and HomeGround Services officers advised during consultations that THM availability under the program was insufficient to meet program client demand for such housing.

Accommodation need as assessed by case managers

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below provides information on assessed accommodation needs for a sample of program referrals received during the evaluation period. This supplements information described in previous analyses based on the CBP database. It addresses the fifth evaluation key objective of determining whether housing available to defendants is adequate, in terms of location, size and dwelling type.

Information source(s)

The information is sourced from returns completed by CREDIT/BSP case managers for the evaluation that recorded whether or not all new referrals over a two-month period (July-August 2007) were identified as having accommodation-related issues.

Outcome of analyses

Overall, case managers at the seven courts at which the CREDIT/BSP currently operates assessed 24% of all new referrals received during the July-August period as having accommodation issues. There was wide variation between the different locations, ranging from 3% (a single case among 32 referrals) to 79%.

Analysis conclusions and implications

This analysis confirms previous analyses showing housing is a prominent issue for a significant proportion of program referrals.

⁵⁴ although the focus of the evaluation was made explicit, service providers often did not differentiate between CREDIT/BSP, CISP, or other justice program clients in their consultation responses

Supporting information from other sources

The overall level of identified housing issues based on a recent time period at the seven courts at which the program currently operates is consistent with the levels found in the previous analysis of the CBP database over the two-years to December 2006 across the 10 courts at which the program operated over that period - 20% of referrals based on the CBP database and 24% based on the case manager return.

Client satisfaction

Purpose of analysis

The information below provides qualitative information about program services received derived from a group of program clients. It provides case study examples in relation to the third, fourth, fifth and sixth evaluation key objectives.

Information source(s)

Structured interviews were conducted with 17 program clients at seven courts who had volunteered to take part in confidential interviews about their experiences with the program. Most were currently on the program, but several were past program clients that had maintained informal contact with program staff. A copy of the interview schedule is provided in the appendix. As described in the evaluation plan, client interviews were intended to provide a source of qualitative information, presented as case examples of selected clients' issues, experiences, and views on the program. Clients were not selected on the basis of random sampling methods and it would be inappropriate to undertake statistical analyses and present these as representative of the general client population.

Additional information about client satisfaction with THM housing services was available from eight THM client exit interviews made available to the evaluation by HomeGround Services, of which five relate to the Bail Housing Support Program and three refer to the 'Justice Program'.

Outcome of analyses

The 17 CREDIT/BSP clients interviewed for the evaluation represented a diverse group – 3 women and 14 men, aged 22 to 51, living across Melbourne and two living in country Victoria, some currently in long-term relationships and others not, some with children (8 in one case), varying in the length and type of offending behaviour (up to 28 years involvement with the criminal justice system for one person). They had different histories of prior and current involvement with the program, and varied in the particular problem areas they described as facing when entering the program. Drug and alcohol use were the most common but others included housing, acquired brain injury, violence, bereavement, anxiety disorder, financial difficulties, employment, parenting difficulties, family relationship breakdown, self-esteem, and other personal issues.

All those interviewed reported high levels of satisfaction with the program and the outcomes it provided to them. Clients commented that without the program they

believed they would have been jailed, continued to stay heavily involved in drugs or drink, been homeless, remained separated from their children and families, or dead.

The quality of case manager support, the empowering and non-judgmental approach taken by the program, and the practical support provided, particularly assistance with accommodation, transport, food, and Centrelink arrangements, were commonly identified and very positively commented on.

Examples of client feedback include:

- a client who noted that the program is a very positive thing in his life, it keeps him on track, and gives him the opportunity to fit into society, and in particular, he feels he is always treated “as a human being” – “When I read the court reports it gives me respect for myself.”;
- a client describing a very chaotic lifestyle who stated that the program kept him focused, motivated to complete the order, and making slow steps back to work, and for whom the keeping of appointments for the first time was a major achievement – the program and the case manager’s support was credited with motivating him to make those achievements; and
- one client with current physical and mental health issues and an extensive history of drug use and homelessness felt she would not have survived without the practical assistance and level of support provided by the case manager, stating that if not for the program “I would have been in the gutter”.

The THM program clients providing exit interviews also gave positive feedback about HomeGround services, including on the nature of support received and housing outcomes. Examples of Bail Housing Support Program client comments include:

- in relation to housing outcome: “got me almost straight into transitional housing. Very appropriate, got me off the streets into a good place so I could get work”;
- in relation to the quality of support provided: “I would have been lost without xx and xx – they did and cared more than my own family (I have a big family)”;
- in relation to the service generally: “One of the best services I have experienced, would have been lost without them.... very needed service in Melbourne. Helped me get my life in order.”.

Analysis conclusions and implications

Interviewed program clients reported very positive experiences with the program including, where received, services provided by HomeGround. THM clients providing exit interviews also reported being very satisfied with HomeGround services.

Supporting information from other sources

The nature of responses provided in the program client interviews and the HomeGround Service exit interviews supported comments made by stakeholders during consultations about client outcomes. The features identified in these interviews by program clients as important to them and as particularly helpful for

them in achieving positive life changes reinforced the critical success factors discussed in earlier sections of the report.

Stakeholder perceptions of program benefits, relevance and outcomes

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below provides information on key stakeholder perceptions about the program's benefits and appropriateness as well as stakeholder views on whether the program is successful in achieving key outcomes. This analysis addresses all six evaluation key objectives, in particular, the final one of determining whether and to what extent program design, delivery and outcomes are contributing to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness. It also contributes information relevant to process evaluation conclusions.

Information source(s)

The information is sourced from structured consultations with a range of key stakeholders previously described, using structured interviews described in the appendix. Although the specific questions and focus of the consultations varied according to the nature of the stakeholder's involvement with the program, all consultations explored the common themes of perceived program relevance and benefits as well as perceptions about whether the program is deemed to be successful in achieving key outcomes and the evidence base used in forming that judgement. Summary information derived from individual program client interviews (described in further detail below) are provided as case examples of particular program benefits.

Outcome of analyses

Program benefits and relevance:

All stakeholder groups considered the program to be relevant and identified a range of program benefits.

Reduced time spent on remand:

This was consistently identified as a benefit of the program from both an individual client and a criminal justice system perspective, particularly by program staff and magistrates. All magistrates stated that there were defendants that would have been remanded without the program although the extent of estimated impact varied. Some indicated the impact on remand accommodation was substantial. For example, one estimated that at least one in four contested bail applicants appearing before him would have spent at least some time on remand were the program not available and another estimated there would be 10 to 20% more bail refusals without the program.

However, one Magistrate stated that the diversionary impact on remand accommodation was over-rated, in that most people would normally be bailed anyway, while another stated that while most clients would ultimately be bailed the immediate availability of the program meant that at least some clients would avoid several days on remand that would otherwise have been the case. This was seen to

be particularly the case for those appearing on a Friday afternoon, who would otherwise be held in custody over a weekend because, for example, accommodation arrangements would not normally be initiated until the following working day.

Case example

A 22 year-old single male with a history of chronic drug use was referred by Legal Aid while on remand. He had been homeless for 6 months, living at friends' houses or in his car. His drug induced erratic lifestyle had left him with few possessions, lapsed Centerlink contact (so no income) and no solid support systems available.

The program arranged emergency accommodation, which provided him with an address in order to qualify for bail.

He was subsequently assisted with: accessing drug rehabilitation, doctor's appointments for detox treatment, re-establishing Centerlink connections, and with applications for long term public housing, and was provided with counselling and support during the bail period through weekly progress meetings. The rent for two weeks stay at a boarding house was met by the program and financial help with public transport costs to attend appointments was given until Centerlink payments were received. He saw the prompt action to secure him emergency accommodation that first night as very positive and felt good about committing to the program. He stated that the encouragement, support and basic treatment without being punished was greatly appreciated and helped him in keeping to the conditions set.

He considered that if not for the program, he would probably still be incarcerated.

Successful bail completion

Various stakeholders commented that being on the program increased the client's likelihood of successfully completing the bail period, for example, because of the supports and services to which the client was linked that addressed factors underlying the offending behaviour and the regular reporting back to case manager and to the court on attendance and progress.

Case example

A 32-year old male who has been on the program for 2 months considered that, because of his prior history, there was a 50/50 chance of not getting bail and possibly no change in his use or attitude towards drug use if he had not been accepted onto the program.

He has weekly support meetings with his case manager, which he sees as giving him the motivation and guidance to complete the bail order, to keep straight and off drugs, and is the path to eventually getting back to work. He notes that his case manager had "explained perfectly" about the magistrate's bail orders and his obligations for completing those orders.

Sentence reduction following successful program completion:

Magistrates stated that they considered progress while on the program as providing important information in deciding whether a non-custodial sentence would be appropriate for clients they would otherwise have given a custodial penalty to, since experience on the program had demonstrated the client's capacity to develop the routines and discipline needed to meet the conditions of a community-based order and its reporting requirements.

Health and psychological benefits for the client:

Several magistrates noted that they had seen marked and obvious improvements in the health and physical appearance over time in people on the program. Program staff consistently described examples of client benefits in this area. A number of case managers and magistrates provided anecdotal evidence in the form of case study examples of significant client change directly attributed to the program and a number indicated that some clients maintain contact after program completion and they continued to show long-term improvement. One case manager provided written testimonials received from several clients and client family members attributing major life changes to health and wellbeing as a direct result of being on the program.

Case example

A 41-year-old separated mother of four whose behaviour at time of arrest was described as erratic and threatening and she posed a danger to herself and others due to a disturbed mental state caused by alcohol and drug abuse. For about 9 years she had abused all manner of drugs (prescription and illicit) and her alcohol consumption was as high as two 5-litre casks of wine per day. She acknowledged she was 'out of control', unable to function appropriately in society at almost any task, was very vulnerable out on the streets, barely aware of where she was, and had no realistic appreciation of her situation. Her physical health had deteriorated. She experiences severe anxiety, has phobias including of crowds and open spaces, rapid mood swings, self-doubt and low self-esteem.

Over this 9-year period, she estimates she had moved over 150 times. She has lived in nearly every boarding house, motel/hotel, emergency shelter, and caravan park in the area and even at times on the beach out in the open. Recently she had been living in a rented caravan (no water, no electricity, public toilet facilities only) with a male drinker/friend paying \$120/week. Due to a domestic assault she had to flee the caravan and found another male drinker/friend to rent her a spare room.

Since commencing the program she has acquired a single room in a boarding house, which she is very happy with, as it is hers alone, and despite the current accommodation being of poor quality, she is reluctant to move at present as she feels settled and secure there.

Assistance provided by the program includes:

- twice weekly support meetings (with follow up if the appointment is not kept);
- arranging the current accommodation and working to provide her with better accommodation;
- referral to drug and alcohol counselling (an effective, positive working relationship was established with the counsellor and is ongoing);
- monitoring her alcohol intake (currently down to a 6 pack of heavies per day) and encouraging her with her steady progress;
- assistance with travel costs (train tickets);
- monitoring her health – medical check ups are arranged and food has been provided at times when she is not eating adequately;
- organising visits to the Salvation Army for help with clothing, food and essentials; and
- offering to refer her for sexual harassment support and counselling, given her experiences, although this was not taken up by the client.

The case manager has also networked with community, police, and other services in the area so that should she have problems or issues arise, he would be contacted promptly. This arrangement has become somewhat permanent and is viewed by all concerned as the best method to reduce the risks of losing the gains made and keeping on top of the client's needs before anything occurs that might see her relapse.

She considers the program has assisted her in improving her health, reducing her alcohol and drug consumption, and that the support counselling has improved her ability to function and increased her awareness. Her outlook for the future is much more positive and her accommodation situation improved. If not for the program she believes she would either be in jail or “in the gutter still drinking”.

Behavioural change by clients:

Consultees across the different stakeholder groups identified one of the prime benefits of the program as the promotion of behavioural change at a critical point for the individual that has the potential to provide long-term and permanent change in offending motivation and action. For example, the program manager estimated 70% of clients benefited from the program through improved self-esteem, changed motivation, and other aspects based on her experience with program clients since its inception. Case managers and some magistrates described examples of program clients who had resumed employment, re-engaged with family and community, and maintained an offence-free lifestyle, which was attributed to the effects of the program on initiating and supporting motivational and behavioural change.

Case example

This 34 year-old divorced male and father of two young boys had a serious head injury two years ago which left him with residual left side paralysis and bruising to brain. This has impaired his memory and there have been changes in his behavior, physical and emotional states, with some permanent damage and some very slow improvements.

The life he was living prior to the accident was such that he was constantly involved in serious drugs, crimes, intimidation, aggression, violence and was well known to police. After a long period in hospital he struggled with almost all aspects of life. He was divorced, no longer accepted by associates from his past, unable to work, frustrated with his still quite poor health, not mentally able to cope, had few supports, and was living in unsuitable shared housing. His situation and mental state led to anger, loss of control, inappropriate behavior, and poor judgment – all increasing further deterioration in his social state. It was within this setting that he was arrested and was assessed by the case manager while in jail.

He doesn't remember how he was referred but stated it has to given him a chance to change his lifestyle through providing the supports he needed. At the first meeting he recalls being given a rundown on how it all worked and what help would be given. The supports offered have been weekly anger management, weekly support meetings, assistance to move to a caravan at his parent's house (including assistance with family relationships), court progress reports, and ongoing phone contact support.

He is certain that because of his past he would have gone to prison if not for the program. He credits the supports and case manager contact with keeping him out of jail presently. He thinks things are going well, stating that the program has been “his life saver” and “has brought me back to ordinary living”. The anger management is helping and he is much happier with his living arrangements (under less pressure). He feels inspired by the case manager to keep up the changes made, can see improvements in his health are still occurring, and is now looking for work.

Immediate access to services:

Several Magistrates and some other stakeholder groups identified the priority access to drug treatment services provided under the program (described as ‘queue-jumping’ for treatment and beds by one) as a key benefit in that motivation for

behavioural change arising from the court process is directly acted upon and supported, and therefore more likely to result in behavioural change. Facilitated access to stable housing was identified as a key benefit for reducing long-term homelessness by other interviewed stakeholders.

Case example

A 44 year-old single male with a chronic alcohol addiction and associated offending history described a 30-year rotating cycle of evictions from boarding houses (due to alcohol abuse or poor behaviour, anger and fighting) and living on the streets four or five times over that period. He had never managed to acquire a “home” due to drinking, poor finances (on a disability pension) and a real estate market unwilling to consider him.

The first program contact was described as “sounding good, it explained a lot of things, how it worked”, and gave an encouraging outlook. He was sent for both brain injury assessment and anger management counselling assessment. He meets weekly with his drug and alcohol and housing support workers and regularly with the case manager. Home Ground was contacted right away and was able to provide a worker and transitional housing within three weeks and also assisted with furniture and household goods. Paperwork for long-term housing was completed and lodged.

He states that all issues identified at his assessment were promptly addressed and was surprised about being able to get housing organised so quickly and for workers to actually do what they said they would do. At time of interview he had been living in a THM property for 3 weeks and was very satisfied, stating that the property suited his needs and was “close to everything”, and that he will get long-term housing. He believes everything set up at that time has helped to address his issues and ongoing supports are currently working well.

With this support and resolution of his housing situation, he has remained alcohol free and very focused on his recovery. Without the program he believes he would be “still on the grog or in jail”. He noted that magistrates have commented several times that they are amazed with the changes after such a long history. He is very positive about his future and sees the program as the best thing he has ever heard of and giving him a chance to change his life.

Indirect benefits for clients:

One stakeholder described longer-term benefits of the support provided by the program in that local police can see positive changes in the client’s appearance and behaviour over time, which translates to improved long-term police-client relationships for the individuals concerned.

Family and local community benefits:

A number of stakeholders described positive impacts on members of the client’s family and local community, based on client feedback as well as direct examples of community feedback. For example, one Somali client visited the case manager after program completion to express his appreciation accompanied by 32 members of his local community. Other case managers gave examples of clients who were disengaged with their families at the start of the program but had returned home to live and would often be seen accompanied by family members to court later in the program. Examples of family reunification cited by other stakeholders include young single mothers regaining custody of children when gaining stable accommodation through the housing pathway of the program.

Case example

A 33-year old single female who described her childhood as one of happy times, loving, well to do parents, private school, wanting for nothing. In her early 20's she became involved in the drug scene. This period was described as chaotic, with periods of being on the run from the law and drug dealers, and unstable housing, finances and employment as well as the complete breakdown of family relationships due to deception, cheating and lies.

As well as providing her with weekly interviews, organising drug and alcohol and other counselling, self esteem exercises and regular homework, court reports, keeping lawyers informed of progress, and open mobile phone contact/support if needed, the case manager helped her to reintegrate with her very wary family so that she had a stable place to live while on bail and working on her issues.

She is now living with family, is drug-free, has improved health and higher self-esteem, and states that the re-established relationship with her family was above all her expectations. She was certain that if not for the program she would have spent time in jail "scarring her for life" and continued to use drugs.

Testimonials from her family to the case manager note that it has been a long time since they have seen her so happy or positive about her future and that they were very grateful that she had been offered this opportunity.

System coordination benefits:

Several program staff and other department and agency officers identified improvements in the relationship between different criminal justice sector agencies (police, court officers and legal professionals) as well as with service delivery agencies, such as community-based drug and alcohol treatment providers, and other government-provided or funded services (for example Centrelink) as a result of joint working arrangements under the program. Flow-on effects from this collaborative working on the program were cited as also benefiting other policy and service delivery areas unrelated to the program, but which were more effectively coordinated and operated because of the improved relationships engendered by the program.

Consistency with new developments in judicial practice:

Several magistrates noted that the program provided the judiciary with a structure for putting into effect the principles of therapeutic jurisprudence, and thereby providing an opportunity for Victorian courts to take up new developments in judicial practice and philosophy, and to be acknowledged for such initiatives.

Attitudinal change:

A number of program staff identified change in the attitude of magistrates, prosecutors, and police informants as a result of their experience with the program over time, resulting in a more positive and client-focused attitude supportive of long-term changes in client behaviour and recidivism. Change in attitude of prosecutors and police to the program over time was specifically commented on by two magistrates. Benefits of such attitudinal change were seen to impact both on individuals appearing before the court, in that there was a better informed understanding of the issues faced by defendants often resulting in a more therapeutic rather than a purely punitive response, and on improved court administration and efficiency, in that there was less time spent in contesting bail in such cases.

Individual agency benefits:

Several stakeholders described particular benefits of the program for their own agency's or other agency operation. For example, police noted that a stable address where the program provided accommodation to previously homeless people made it easier for operational officers to locate the individual if required. One court officer noted that dealing with a case manager may defuse an agitated and potentially aggressive defendant and thereby prevent court disruption. One Legal Aid stakeholder noted that their agency benefited from not needing to assist some clients with seeking accommodation or making community service provider links because the case manager had already facilitated that.

One case manager had established referral arrangements with Youth Justice Services where young people come to attention of the program case manager. Given that there was not a youth services officer located fulltime at the court, young people may have been held in custody for longer otherwise.

Some stakeholders also identified benefits for community corrections officers, for example, by the program building routines and establishing regular reporting regimes for clients described as having chaotic lifestyles and therefore being previously unable or unwilling to meet regular reporting requirements. Therefore they were more likely to comply with the requirements of a community-based order upon sentence because of their experiences on the program.

Longer-term community benefit:

Several magistrates and other stakeholders stated that the program provided longer-term community benefits because of reduced re-offending by those clients who had broken the cycle of recidivism upon successfully completing the program.

Case example

This 48-year old has maintained long-term contact with program staff since his referral 4½ years ago. He had spent 28 years of his life in jail and was usually only out a few months between sentences. He had a serious heroin addiction (up to \$500/day habit), described as the root cause of most of his problems, which also included homelessness (several times living on the streets in squats or hostels) and being left with some permanent head injury following an assault.

The supports he describes receiving through the program included:

- assistance with different housing needs;
- fortnightly support meetings;
- organised medical referrals for ABIA assessments and general medical health;
- organised referrals for methadone and assisted with initial costs;
- organised referral for psychiatric assessment and treatment for depression;
- assistance with initial phone and electricity setup deposits;
- counselling/help on managing finances;
- constant encouragement, assessment and planning guidance;
- court reports and support at court appearances;
- help with obtaining furniture and household goods; and
- ongoing drop-in and phone support.

He stated that the supports offered by the program meant he has been out of jail now for over 5 years, is no longer involved in crime, is clean from heroin, has contact with his son, is managing life in his own flat and is on the waiting list for permanent housing. He was adamant that if not for the program, he would be 'back in prison for sure'.

Perceived program outcomes:

Most stakeholders considered that the program had successful outcomes, as evidenced by their own experience with program clients. Success was generally viewed as positive outcomes for individuals on the program, for example, improvements in health and wellbeing and reductions in offending behaviour. Other examples of outcomes have been described in the benefits section above.

It was generally acknowledged that the program resulted in both successes and failures in individual cases. Several magistrates stated that overall they considered there were more program successes than failures. Case managers consistently said that they believed the over-riding majority of their clients had benefited from the program in some way, even if not completing the overall program – for example, improvements in an otherwise chaotic lifestyle in that some regularity of attending appointments was established and some treatment services had been accessed even though program conditions had not been fully complied with.

The importance of the individual being ready and willing to participate in the program was described as an important factor for successful outcomes by some program staff. It was acknowledged that, for some clients, there was a high risk that the person would not continue to remain drug-free in the long-term, and that there would be program failures and/or return to re-offending in the future given the cycle of substance abuse and the long-standing histories of illicit drug and alcohol misuse experienced by many.

However, it was also considered that unwillingness to engage in the program or program failure at one point in time did not necessarily predict future failure, given that the individual concerned may be experiencing very different motivation and circumstances at a later stage and achieve positive long-term gains from being involved in the program at another time.

Client interviews showed examples of where this had occurred.

Case example

A 26 year-old defacto father of five young children has had two contacts with the program. About three years ago, while in cells on remand for drug offences, he heard about the program from other remandees. He asked his lawyer about it, who referred him for assessment. At that time he says he was not serious or committed to following the program or giving up drugs so lasted only three weeks. The case manager confronted him on his lack of any commitment. He says “the worker lost faith in me” and reported this to the courts and he ended up serving an 8-month sentence.

The second contact was two months ago and a self-referral. At this time he had been in cells on remand for about one week, and was very distressed and concerned for the welfare and safety of his family. He explained that he and his family had been living in a “dump” – a house in a very, very poor condition, but which was all he could get considering his poor finances, drug use and prison history. One night while he was out, the house was attacked by a gang sent to menace him over drug dealings that had gone wrong. They virtually destroyed the building (drove a truck through the front door) and terrorized his children and partner. Later that night he was involved in a traffic accident, arrested and remanded. The partner and children had to go to her parents for shelter, but given the parent’s involvement with a bikie gang, this only heightened his concerns for his family’s welfare and added to the distress at being incarcerated and unable to help.

After the assessment he was very positive towards the program. He states the supports offered gave him the initiative to get off drugs and put his life back together. His case manager organised referral for drug and alcohol counselling, assessment with a psychiatrist, referral for anger management, a minimum of weekly support meetings (more if required), and a referral for emergency housing.

These supports have helped him by reducing his stress after the house attack. He feels "his life is leveling out, not in a plane crash". He is very grateful for the provision of appropriate emergency housing for himself and his family and is currently working with the appointed housing worker on the application for long-term housing. He left home at 15 and has been homeless, used refuges and has had problems getting and keeping accommodation most of his life.

He states that the case manager has helped him to keep off the drugs, keep him out of jail, and with the progress of getting his life in order and, he believes, did everything that a case manager could have done to help right from the start. He is sure that otherwise he would have been sentenced to time in jail, would not have got bail, and his family's situation would have been dire. He considers the best thing about the program was getting housing and introduction to a good drug and alcohol counselor. The worst thing for him is the concern about "stuffing up" and letting down family and counselors if something goes wrong and he ends up being sent back to the courts with a bad report.

Analysis conclusions and implications

The consultation responses showed that there is generally agreement across the range of stakeholder groups that the program produces benefits – at both individual and system level – and provides an appropriate and effective response to a target group with high needs and complex issues.

Supporting information from other sources

The conclusions derived from the consultation responses are consistent with the outcomes of the statistical analyses reported earlier.

Consultation-identified program issues and enhancement areas

Purpose of analysis

The analysis below provides information on issues raised during consultations across the range of stakeholder groups in response to questions about views on specified matters as well as on what improvements could be made to enhance the program's outcomes. This analysis addresses all six evaluation key objectives, in particular, the final one of determining whether and to what extent program design, delivery and outcomes are contributing to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness. It also contributes information relevant to process evaluation conclusions.

Information source

The information is sourced from structured consultations with a range of key stakeholders previously described, using a structured interview format detailed in the

appendix to this report. Although the specific questions and focus of the consultations varied according to the nature of the stakeholder's involvement with the program, all consultations explored common themes of: views on program design and service model; appropriateness of the target group and any equity concerns for particular client groups; views about the program's credibility and sustainability; and opinions on emergent issues or developments that may impact the program in the future.

The common themes also covered issues with any area of program operation or policy, probing as relevant across specific areas of program uptake, referral, assessment, case management, outward referrals for services/support, monitoring, exit processes, relations with HomeGround Services and with local area accommodation providers, program targets and workload implications, efficiency and resource issues, relevant program administration issues such as policy and procedures documentation, staff management and supervision, or professional development opportunities, and views on any coordination or duplication/gap areas with other relevant programs.

Ideas for enhancement to improve outcomes or processes were also asked of every stakeholder interviewed.

Outcome of analyses

Program design and service model:

Where stakeholders made comment on the program design and service model, they generally indicated support for the model. A case management approach where clients are directly linked to a range of community supports and services and a court-based worker has overall case management responsibility was seen as an appropriate and effective model for addressing presenting issues across stakeholder groups.

Magistrates mostly agreed that the 3-4 month timeframe was an appropriate period given the purpose of the program, although most added that there needed to be flexibility to allow magistrates to extend or reduce that time if necessary for individual cases. Some mentioned they had maintained a defendant on the program for longer periods, including one for over 9 months – this was described as an exceptional situation but a necessary response given the circumstances of that individual case. There was also support by most magistrates for the monthly reporting back to the court on program progress.

There were some differences in views on whether referrals should be limited or be accepted from a range of referral sources. Policy and procedures documentation provides for referrals from court officers, legal professionals, police, agencies, family and friends, as well as self-referrals. However, one court's practice has been to limit program referrals to magistrates only, stating that judicial control on who is referred is a more efficient use of program resources. This limitation on sources of referral was not an approach generally supported by those magistrates at other courts who commented on the practice.

One stakeholder group (police) and a Magistrate and Registrar identified the lack of a ceiling on the number of times that the same person could return to the program as a critical issue. Other Magistrates, when specifically questioned on this issue, responded that they did not support a standardised limit on the number of times a

client could participate in the program over a set time period, viewing that as an issue for judicial discretion.

All stated they would want to have information available to them about prior program participation and outcomes so as to make an informed decision about a recommended referral. Most commented that they would not refuse a referral purely on the grounds that a client had participated in the program on several prior occasions, even if unsuccessfully completing prior episodes. However, having that information about prior participation available would allow them to make a more informed judgement about what was, as stated by one magistrate, access to a valuable but limited resource.

There were few specific suggestions for enhancement to the overall program design and service model, and of those that were proposed (such as limitation on number of referrals to the program over a set time period and restricting referrals to magistrates), none were consistently endorsed across stakeholder groups.

Program up-take and related issues:

Most stakeholders across the different groups considered there has been a high and growing take-up of the program since its commencement. Take-up was linked in some magistrate and case manager consultations to the individual case manager, in that referral rates and granting of bail on program conditions varied when case managers changed. Take-up was also widely agreed as being contingent on the attitude of individual magistrates to the program, although it was also noted that the program had achieved growing credibility and acceptance over the years of its operation, and was currently viewed positively by the majority of magistrates.

Broadening referrer and magistrate understanding about the program was suggested as a way of increasing take-up rates – for example, so that the program is not perceived as being limited only to illicit drug related offending, or that it is clearly understood that there is no requirement for a defendant to admit guilt for the charged offence in order to access the program, as well as a better and more informed understanding about the program's objectives and purpose generally. Visiting magistrates who had not had much prior experience with the program were considered a particular important group to target.

Target group appropriateness and equity issues:

There was consistent agreement across stakeholder groups that the target group was appropriate (except for the issue of excluding defendants who had had multiple prior experiences with the program as described previously).

There was also general agreement that most defendants had equitable access to the program. There were no inequities identified by any stakeholder group based on gender, age, family status, or other broad equity considerations. However, there were two groups that were identified in some consultations as potentially less likely to receive program services – Indigenous people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. For the former, it was felt that this might be less an issue of any particular barriers to program access, and possibly due to the availability of other court-based services specifically targeting Indigenous people. In the latter, English language proficiency was identified as the barrier, mainly because it limits the community agencies to which a person could be referred.

No specific suggestions for enhancement were identified by any stakeholder.

Program sustainability:

Stakeholders generally did not identify any barriers to sustainability, other than the cessation of federal funding for the illicit drug treatment service side of the CREDIT program at the end of the period for which Commonwealth funding was committed to this initiative. It was generally agreed that the program's design, operation, credibility, and take-up rate supported its sustainability into the future.

Program credibility:

Program credibility was described as high among almost all stakeholder groups. Victoria Police considered that the issue of repeat program users described above had a significant impact on the program's credibility among operational police, particularly where the individual had been arrested by local police for re-offending or a breach of bail conditions while on the program in the past, been refused police bail for the current charge, but been subsequently released on bail with a program condition. It was noted that there was a view among operational police that the program was a tool misused by solicitors to gain release for defendants who police deemed poor bail risks and it carried little or no penalty for non-compliance with its requirements.

It was suggested that the program's credibility with operational police would be enhanced by introducing a limit on the number of times a person could be placed on the program. Providing information about program outcome rates and on successful progress for individual cases to police informants was also identified as a way of improving the program's credibility with police, given that officers are generally unaware of those cases where a program client has successfully completed and has benefited from the program, but are all too aware of program failures when the person comes to their attention for offending or bail breach.

Program operation and practice issues:

A range of issues were raised across stakeholders in response to specific questions about program operations (including referral to the program, assessment, case management, outward referral for services/support, monitoring, and exit processes) and working arrangements with key service providers, particularly in the area of housing provision, including housing support provided by HomeGround Services, management of program THM properties, and local homelessness assistance services. Key issues are discussed below.

Access to suitable accommodation and housing support:

Lack of suitable, safe and affordable long-term and crisis accommodation was the most consistently cited problem area for program operation. It was raised as a concern by all program staff, by officers of housing services, and by some magistrates. Examples cited included cases where the only available crisis accommodation available in one area to which to refer a client with alcohol management problems was rooms above the local hotel, and in another area,

options for a vulnerable young female client were limited to hostel and hotel rooms where all other boarders were young males.

Having THM dedicated properties available for program clients was widely seen as a critical factor for the success of the program. However, their number and location relative to demand were identified as concerns. Similar cases were described as those documented in the previous analysis of HomeGround Services referral book data. An example was also cited where a property in one area, targeted for use by female clients, remained vacant for some months, while there were multiple referrals for any vacancy in THM properties located in other areas of Melbourne over the same time period for male clients.

It was suggested that the program could be enhanced by ensuring that any future purchases of stock for the program was done in consultation with HomeGround Services, to better match their location to the most appropriate geographic areas relative to program demand.

Lack of availability of THM properties in the geographic areas outside the metropolitan area was identified as a particular problem, in that clients requiring such accommodation needed to move away from local area supports in order to access that service.

Several case managers identified lack of responsiveness by some homelessness assistance services as a major difficulty, noting difficulties in getting through to a housing worker and delays in responding to requests for return calls as particularly problematic when under time pressure to provide a response to the court for the initial bail hearing. Other problem issues found with some services was the level of assistance provided to clients, for example, in making OH segment 1 applications.

During consultations with THM providers who also provided general homelessness assistance services, it was noted that the workload demands on housing workers was very high, and that there was not necessarily an understanding of the need for a priority response to a program worker call because a defendant may be held in custody pending a successful placement in suitable accommodation⁵⁵. Two service providers were open to discussing and piloting ways of streamlining processes in such cases. One suggested it may be appropriate to include program clients as a designated priority group in the local area's policy framework.

The practical difficulties associated with accommodation placements for people on the sex offender register was raised in one consultation, given the legislative restrictions on where such defendants could reside, which makes placement more difficult. It was suggested that this group might be more efficiently serviced by another agency that had more ready information about whether a proposed address met the criteria at which a registered sex offender could reside.

Some program staff and some housing services suggested expanding the THM stock dedicated to the program or purchasing dedicated crisis accommodation space for the program. However, the cost and practical difficulties of achieving this, particularly

⁵⁵ the international research and practice literature shows that there is sometimes a perception that being held in police custody or prison at least assures a person of a bed, which may be seen by workers having to prioritise housing demand in circumstances of very limited supply as less unpalatable than not finding a bed for those that would otherwise have to 'sleep rough'

in the wider context of limited affordable accommodation for addressing homeless needs of the wider population in the local area, were also generally acknowledged.

Several THM providers specifically suggested that exit planning processes needed to be put in place much earlier in the tenancy, so that time spent in transitional housing was reduced and therefore more program clients would be able to access the resource. However, they also noted that this was an issue common to other THM client groups. Specific suggestions included: shorter leases to put greater pressure on moving to long-term housing; engaging the client in exit planning within the first week; tenancy reviews every 2-3 weeks to ensure support workers are engaged and exit plans are in train; early joint exit planning in the first month between client and all support workers; greater focus on exit planning and long-term housing rather than simply bail issues; and building greater mutual awareness of what constitutes an exit plan and a support plan.

Networking and better mutual understanding of the demands and constraints on both housing workers and bail program staff were identified as strategies for improving program client access to mainstream services.

Case managers were very positive about the housing-linked support for program clients in THM properties provided by HomeGround Services. Other stakeholders reinforced the importance of having a systematic approach, such as the assessment against established criteria used by HomeGround Services – a professionally objective and systematic approach rather than the discretionary practices that were considered to have operated in the past.

Some THM providers raised issues about operational practice in the provision of housing-related support to justice program THM property tenancies. This included issue-based concerns cited by more than one consultee, such as delays in starting exit planning processes (discussed above), and the limitations in using a support service provider located at some distance away, in terms of being able to effectively engage with local community supports as well as the impact on frequency and flexibility of face-to-face contact with a client given the travel distances involved.

There were also single case examples cited where they had not been satisfied with the support workers actions for various reasons, such as failure to provide paperwork needed by the agency to terminate a tenancy, or lack of advice that support had been withdrawn for one client, or tensions in the advocacy stance taken by the housing worker in a tenancy dispute. However, it was acknowledged that HomeGround Service management staff were very open to discussing issues of concern. These were also single case examples reported by different THM providers, rather than systemic issues across providers or consistent over time.

One case manager raised the need for continuity of housing support outside of current parameters under the program, citing the experience of one client who needed to find and move to alternate public housing accommodation because of domestic violence issues with her partner. Because the client was no longer living in a THM property, having moved to permanent OH housing, she was considered ineligible for housing support under the program. However, there have been instances described by another case manager and HomeGround Services where a flexible approach was taken, and clients were provided with support although technically outside the program parameters, for example, HomeGround continuing to work with a client who lost THM accommodation as a result of a period of imprisonment.

Access to other services:

Some program staff and magistrates also identified lack of access to other services at local level, especially the availability of mental health and of alcohol treatment services, and residential rehabilitation services in particular. Some also cited lack of responsiveness by existing services as a problem, noting waiting lists and delays for access to drug treatment services in some instances. One magistrate specifically cited the lack of capacity to use CREDIT funding to address alcohol management issues as a major gap in the program⁵⁶, particularly given the high rate of repeat drink-driving offenders appearing before the court.

As stated by one magistrate, the service the program provides is only as good as the services that can be arranged to address the issues identified for that individual.

Court report timeliness and quality:

Magistrates were consistently positive on the timeliness, quality and content of reports provided by case managers.

There was a commonly held view across magistrates that information about an individual's past history with the program should be made available to them as part of the reporting process. Several stated that they would like to see this as a standard section in the initial report putting forward the referral. However, there were concerns raised in discussions with program management staff that this may be counterproductive because some magistrates less familiar with the cycle of substance misuse may refuse a client access to the program simply on the grounds of a prior failure, regardless of the underlying reasons for that program failure or the changed circumstances that resulted in an assessment that the person would be suitable for the program at the current time.

Impact of accreditation on workload:

Several program staff raised the issue that case managers who are accredited drug and alcohol workers are required to undertake the drug and alcohol assessment while those case managers who do not have this accreditation access external services to do the assessment on their behalf. This was seen as being a significant workload issue, with an estimate of 2.5 hours identified by several program staff as the time needed for the average assessment⁵⁷.

Purposes to which brokerage funds can be applied

Several case managers suggested there would be benefit in extending the policy on use of brokerage funds, which is currently limited to payment for crisis accommodation, pharmacotherapy and some assessments. It was suggested that brokerage funds be authorised for use by case managers for additional purposes at their discretion.

For example, one case manager suggested allowing payment of transport costs of a family member to accompany the client when visiting Melbourne for treatment visits,

⁵⁶ Clients with alcohol abuse issues can be referred to and engage in treatment with local services, but the treatment agency is not paid for service provision under the Commonwealth funded diversion programs.

⁵⁷ however ACSO staff noted in consultations that in their experience a routine assessment would normally take an experienced drug and alcohol worker 30-45 minutes on average

where the family member or friend could provide the travelling client with much needed support and assistance. Another suggested that the scope of use of the funds be extended to cover purchase of clothing and fees for therapeutic or vocational courses. A third saw benefits in applying brokerage funds for secondary interventions such as lifestyle, recreational or wellbeing programs that link a client directly into wider community networks and support systems. Several suggested that there be the capacity for case managers to use their discretion in assisting with payment of other prescription medication other than the strictly limited pharmacotherapy for which brokerage funding was authorised.

It was noted by case managers that program management staff were open to requests for use of brokerage funds outside of the guidelines on a case-by-case basis where justified by client need, and case managers were mostly satisfied with the process and outcomes of that arrangement. As stated by program staff, in some instances, this approval would not be granted, for example, funding prescription medication was considered inappropriate and assistance with payment of secondary interventions was deemed to be the responsibility of other agencies.

Several case managers gave examples of where they successfully utilised other avenues to address client financial needs. For example, one negotiated with the court-based Salvation Army officer to fund a client's license renewal so that he could resume his employment as a driver. Another maintains a clothing basket in his office, donated by a range of sources for client use.

Scope of assistance to clients

One case manager identified the court-based role as being somewhat restrictive, in that it limited capacity to assist clients who required broader support than was established under the program parameters. For example, a client with dental problems desperately needed transport, assistance and support to attend treatment appointments, but no external support worker was available and the case manager was unable to take on that role.

Police referrals

Several case managers noted there was scope to increase the number of referrals from police, seeing this group as an important source but currently providing only a low volume of referrals. Quality of relationships with operational police and awareness about the program's existence, as well as a sound understanding of the program and its objectives among police informants who were aware of the program, were seen as important factors in increasing referrals from this source.

More information dissemination about the program was identified as an area for enhancement by both program staff and police. Several case managers noted they would be making presentations about the program and holding discussions with local police in the future.

Appropriateness of referrals

Deliberate 'bending' of the program's purpose was identified in several consultations. In particular, this related to legal practitioners attempting to have their client referred to the program when clearly unsuitable – for example, using the program as an attempt to obtain bail for clients in breach of their sentence when bail is clearly not indicated, or in the case of a very high profile and well-off client with ample capacity to pay for needed services and with extensive community supports.

This was not presented as a weakness in the program's design or delivery – in fact, it could be considered a testament of the program's perceived effectiveness and potential usefulness. The solution was seen to be one of case manager 'savvy' in identifying and standing firm against inappropriate referrals by legal professionals. Several case managers acknowledged that they had in fact done so, refusing to take on such unsuitable referrals.

Appropriateness of program targets and workload implications:

There were varying views on the appropriateness of the 15 referrals per month per case manager target. Several case managers advised that they struggled to reach the target figure in most months, given the court numbers and flow-through.

There was also a consistent concern voiced that the referral targets did not appropriately reflect ongoing workload. Were a court to have a 100% take-up rate, the target of 15 referrals per month would translate into 15 accepted cases, resulting in an active caseload of 45-60 clients at any single point in time, assuming a standard 3-4 months on the program for all clients. At a court with only a 50% take-up rate, the case manager would carry an active caseload of half that number.

Actual acceptance rates across the seven courts at which the program currently operates were given in the statistical analyses in an earlier section of the report and ranged between 56 and 81% over the two-year period. Assuming the full 15 referrals per month is reached every month and each client were to remain on the program for 3.5 months (the mid-point of the 3 to 4 month period cited in program documentation), the case manager at the court with the lowest take-up rate would carry an active caseload averaging around 29 clients on any single day while the case manager at the court with the take-up rate of 81% would be responsible for 43 clients – almost 50% more cases.

This simplistic analysis is based purely on referral numbers and does not take into account differences in the level of individual client demand on case manager time and resources. Clients with complex and multiple needs and few existing community supports will require far more case manager time than those with fewer presenting issues. The extent of ready availability and responsiveness of service provision within the local area will also affect case manager capacity, as in areas where this is limited the case manager would need to spend far more time in identifying and following-up with diverse agencies to link the client into necessary services.

Regardless of the actual level at which it is set, use of a target figure to set a ceiling on program numbers was raised by one registrar as a barrier to magistrate confidence in and their uptake of the program. However, the application of a target to manage program intake relative to case manager capacity was not raised by any magistrate as an issue of concern.

Efficiency considerations and resource issues:

Resourcing was the most consistently raised issue in this area. This section relates to program resources other than program-funded THM housing, which has been discussed previously.

Case manager workload and coverage:

One of the most consistently cited issues across program staff and also noted by a number of magistrates and court staff was program resources, particularly case manager capacity and coverage. Lack of coverage when a case manager is on leave or absent for illness or other reasons was cited as a major problem by a number of magistrates and Legal Aid officers.

The difficulties of being a 'single-person operation' and the resultant worker isolation was also described as a concern for other reasons, such as limited capacity to debrief on case issues or receive other professional support from colleagues. Although it was acknowledged that the Program Manager and Regional Team Leader provided excellent support in this area, this was not seen by some staff as able to replace the support that could be provided by a co-located peer.

Brokerage funding levels:

Some case managers stated that the amount of brokerage funds was inadequate, while others considered the amount available to be more than sufficient. The nature of the client population and the availability of affordable accommodation in the local area were cited as significant factors. For example, one case manager stated that one week's accommodation in the area would cost about \$140 and one week's methadone treatment costs \$35, with clients needing about a month to stabilise, leaving a significant shortfall from the funding allocation of the \$150 allocation per client for the whole program period. However, the fact that not all clients require accommodation funding was also noted, giving case managers flexibility to access additional funds for other clients if required.

One case manager with a very high proportion of clients entering the program directly from remand noted that capacity to meet client immediate and basic requirements would be extremely difficult without the assistance of a court-based Salvation Army office that supplements program-provided food vouchers and provides other practical assistance that cannot be funded by the program. Another case manager flagged that when there is a high proportion of referrals with crisis accommodation needs, there is very little funding left to broker other client requirements such as pharmacotherapy, given the particularly high cost of housing in the local area. The case manager at a court located outside Melbourne flagged that brokerage resources were often insufficient to cover the transport costs for clients, given the distances involved in attending treatment services.

Although increasing the amount of brokerage funding allocated per client was suggested by several program staff, this was not consistently viewed as necessary across most case managers and was not endorsed by program management staff. There was general agreement that program management staff were supportive, approving additional brokerage funding where justified in particular cases.

Case manager salary levels

The adequacy of case manager salary levels was raised by various stakeholders, given (i) the difficulty of recruiting and retaining workers at the current time, where skilled drug and alcohol workers are in high demand across a range of organisations, and (ii) the intensive demands of the role, where case managers tend to work long hours often without financial recompense in the form of overtime and where it is difficult to take time in lieu because this means the court would be left without a service being available when required.

Other efficiency considerations

Several suggestions were made to enhance efficiency for other agencies. For example, one Legal Aid representative suggested Legal Aid be routinely advised whether the next bail application would be a rollover or would need a duty lawyer to attend. Making all relevant forms used between the program and service agencies available as electronic proformas to allow online completion and return by appropriately encrypted transmission was identified as a major time-saver by one agency worker. Another agency raised issues about paperwork timeliness and completeness of information provided to them in relation to referrals as an area where efficiency gains could be made to better service the program.

Relevant program administration issues:

Staff continuity was seen as an important issue by several magistrates and registrars, who reinforced the importance of worker experience and the development of magistrate trust in a particular worker's judgement and practices as key factors affecting success of the program. Financial incentives and access to program-funded resources, such as cars, were identified as a possible solution.

There were few concerns raised by case managers about adequacy of policy and procedures documentation, staff management and supervision practices, availability of professional development opportunities, or other similar program administrative matters. More regular visits by, and personal contact with, program management staff was identified by some case managers, although it was acknowledged that the workload demands on both officers made this difficult.

Several case managers noted the administrative demands on the position were high and that the amount of paperwork and data entry was an issue, but also stated that while this could be taxing on their time, it was agreed as being necessary and part of the job, and that they did not see any other viable option.

One case manager suggested that there be more systematic court orientation and training about the court environment and practices, so that program staff could better understand court processes generally rather than learning 'on the job'.

Location of the program office at one court and its layout/size at another were identified as issues of concern for potential safety reasons by the relevant case manager. In both cases, relevant program and court staff had already been made aware of the concerns.

A commonly raised issue was lack of parity in referral workload demands between case managers who were accredited drug and alcohol workers, and therefore personally undertake the drug and alcohol assessments on clients, and those that were not accredited and therefore referred clients for external assessment. This is a long-standing issue and has been the subject of much discussion between program management staff and case managers.

Coordination/duplication/gap areas with other relevant programs:

There were no issues of concern raised in any consultation about duplication with other existing programs or lack of coordination with related programs. Gap areas

where raised were in the context of services available to the program at local level, rather than gaps in program design or system gaps in the development of an appropriate response to the target group.

Other issue areas and suggested enhancements:

Some stakeholders individually identified other issues and barriers not covered by the topic areas above.

Lack of acceptance of the program by some magistrates because it is not explicitly legislatively mandated was raised by a program officer but was not cited as a concern in any of the magistrate or other stakeholder interviews.

Program management staff raised concerns that some stakeholders were attempting to change the program to a compliance rather than support model, which would have adverse impacts on outcomes for clients since the existing voluntary model and approach of therapeutic support was considered to be more effective in promoting client change. However, it was not evident in the magistrate interviews that there was dissatisfaction with the program's current focus.

Lack of understanding about the program and its requirements by some service delivery agencies was cited as a major barrier by one case manager, stating that, for example, drug and alcohol treatment agencies sometimes operated under the false impression that the court mandated a particular type and frequency of treatment.

One consultee noted that this program contributes adversely to court delay figures, as does any court-based therapeutic intervention, which poses a potential barrier to its uptake.

Level of unmet demand for access to the program was cited by one stakeholder, but case manager and magistrate interviews did not consistently support this concern, with monthly targets unable to be filled at a number of courts over particular periods of time and target ceilings being reached and exceeded in others at peak periods. The issue of unmet demand may be more one of resources relative to location-specific demand rather than an overall level of unmet demand relative to overall program capacity. This issue is discussed further in later sections of the report.

There were surprisingly few suggestions made in response to the standard question on how the program could be enhanced to improve process or outcomes, with most comments not consistently identified across the range of stakeholder groups and often qualified as being personal ideas rather than being put forward as representative of the wider agency position or being deemed to be views shared by others. The main exceptions were improving access to suitable accommodation and more program resources, and these are discussed in the following section.

Other individual suggestions for program improvement not previously covered included:

- allowing oral presentations to the court with only the final report being required to be in writing;
- expanding the list of agencies to which brokered funds can be applied; and

- providing program-dedicated services to respond to identified training and employment related needs⁵⁸.

Several consultees cited the CISP model as providing an enhanced operating model for the program, in that it allows specialised case management responses in areas such as mental health and intellectual disability as well as providing a team model that overcomes issues of single-case manager operation described earlier. However, this was not a consistently shared view, with one worker noting that the local area had very well established networks and strong program-agency links and therefore the CISP multi-worker model would not significantly value-add in that location.

Emergent issues or developments:

There were few specific responses made in this area. Where comments were made, this was generally along the lines that people felt existing trends would continue into the future.

Analysis conclusions and implications

The stakeholder consultations almost universally supported the appropriateness of the program's design and service model and its relevance to the target group and few raised concerns in any of the specific issue areas asked about, such as program sustainability, credibility, administration, coordination or duplication with other relevant programs, or applicability given emerging developments.

The most consistently raised concerns were program resources and access to available housing. Suitability of targets and capacity to meet established monthly referral numbers under these targets at some locations were also commonly raised.

The most consistently identified enhancements were increasing the number of program case managers and expanding the stock of THM properties available for dedicated use by program clients.

Various issues about operational practice were raised in some consultations, in relation to both the CREDIT/BSP program and the housing support service provided by HomeGround Services. However, these tended to be more in the form of individual case examples rather than systemic issues about operational practice over time and across locations, and where raised, the agency concerned also acknowledged that the issue had been resolved and/or that program staff or HomeGround Services management were very open to discussions to resolving the matter and to work jointly to improve practices.

Supporting information from other sources

Interviewed program clients rarely identified any area where the program could be improved to better fit their particular circumstances, although some suggested ways that the program might be improved for other clients, for example, more housing.

⁵⁸ early in the program's operation, there was dedicated support provided by an agency (WISE) which program management staff advise was subsequently withdrawn on funding grounds

Summary of evaluation findings

The consolidated findings across the various information sources are summarised below against each specific evaluation objective and reporting the key evidence used to form conclusions.

Objective 1: determine whether and to what extent program deliverables have been met

Conclusion:

Program deliverables in the form of an annual target established for funding purposes and based on annual number of referrals specifically for BSP services have been met, and in fact exceeded, in each of the past three financial years. However, the target for number of referrals to CREDIT/BSP per month per case manager has not been consistently met in the seven courts at which the program currently operates. Referral numbers vary from month to month and are sometimes exceeded in some locations in some months. The extent to which the target is regularly reached varies across courts.

Evidence base:

- Based on the statistics maintained by Courts Division, annual targets for BSP services have been met, and in fact exceeded, each year. Annual referral numbers for BSP services were 774 in 2004-05, 756 in 2005-06, and 665 in 2006-07 – higher than the annual target of 600 by 29, 26 and 11% respectively.
- Average number of monthly CREDIT/BSP referrals per case manager for the period January 2006 to August 2007 have ranged from 8.8 to 14.5 at the seven courts where the program is currently operating, but there is substantial variability with all courts experiencing shortfalls in some months and all except one exceeding the target at various times.

Objective 2: determine whether program targets are suitable given resource, content and administrative considerations

Conclusion:

The continuing utility of the existing program-wide target of 600 BSP referrals per year is questionable, since it applies an artificial distinction given the way the amalgamated program currently operates. Individual case manager targets do not appropriately reflect differences in size of the pool of potential program clients at the different courts. Also, they do not sufficiently consider ongoing caseload demands that vary with differences in magistrate take-up rate across courts and therefore the target has limited utility if intending to be applied as a comparative workload measure.

Evidence base:

- Program policy and procedures documentation and program staff consultations show that CREDIT/BSP currently operates as an integrated program and no distinction is made in practice between a BSP and a CREDIT client – the differentiation is relevant only for the purpose of reporting to separate funding bodies.

- The number of first bail applications⁵⁹ is over twice as high in some courts than others, with implications for capacity to consistently meet a flat-rate target in the smaller courts.
- Rates at which referrals are accepted onto the program differ between 56 and 81% across courts, so that the same target figure of 15 monthly referrals (assuming the same average period of time spent on the program) would translate to an active caseload in the regional court with the highest take-up rate that is almost 50% higher than that of the court with the lowest rate.
- Consultation-derived information shows differences in the operating environment that impact on workload, for example, the lack of availability, suitability or responsiveness of local community services that places additional demands on some case managers by requiring them to take a more active role in addressing client needs than in a more 'service-rich' area.

Objective 3: determine whether and to what extent the program has resulted in the successful completion of bail by defendants who would otherwise be remanded in custody

Conclusion:

The program has contributed to successful completion of bail by defendants.

Evidence base:

- Program statistics recording exit reason as 'successful program outcome' for 54% of 1,720 clients entering and exiting the program over a two-year period and a further 12% as partially completed (ie attended all court hearings and some treatment but not consistently enough to be considered as fully successful completions). This figure needs to be considered in the context of the client profile, which shows many of the features that the international literature has demonstrated to be linked to high risk of failing bail.
- Outcomes comparable with or better than those of similar programs reported in the research and practice literature that have been acknowledged as successful approaches to increasing bail completion rates.
- Magistrate perceptions of the program's achievements and qualitative information provided by case managers and other stakeholders about the success of the program, grounded in case examples.
- Individual client statements about what their circumstances would have been if they had not become involved with the program.

Objective 4: determine whether and to what extent the program has reduced the number of defendants remanded due to lack of accommodation or treatment/support in the community

Conclusion:

The program has contributed to reducing the number of defendants remanded for those reasons.

⁵⁹ acknowledging that this number does not reflect all bail applications heard by the court, however, it is the only reliable bail statistic available through electronic databases and therefore accessible to the evaluation within its timeframe

Evidence base:

- Statements from all interviewed magistrates that they would have remanded individuals were it not for the program, and commonly stated views that provision of community support/treatment and housing were important elements in this decision-making. In some cases, the potential impact was substantial – for example, one magistrate estimated that at least one in four contested bail applicants appearing before him would have spent at least some time on remand were the program not available and another estimated there would be 10 to 20% more bail refusals without the program
- Case manager provided qualitative information, for example, hearing comments when present at court made from the bench to particular defendants that he/she would be in custody if not a client of the program.
- Individual client statements about what their circumstances would have been if they had not become involved with the program.

Objective 5: determine whether housing available to defendants is adequate, in terms of location, size and dwelling type

Conclusion:

There are issues about the location of THM housing available to defendants under the program but the properties appear to be adequate in terms of size and dwelling type for the client group, especially given the flexible approach adopted where THM properties available to CREDIT/BSP may be swapped with another property allocated under other justice programs to better meet client needs at the time (issues about sufficiency of housing availability is discussed under the next objective).

Evidence base:

- Analysis of HomeGround Services referrals to 12 advertised THM vacancies, showed numerous cases where the property was a significant distance away from the applicant's current residence – for example, a client living in Bacchus Marsh was referred to a Mitcham THM property and a Healesville client for a Noble Park property.
- Statements by HomeGround Services that a number of THM properties are not located in geographic areas of the highest need, based on their experience with the program to date – this includes properties within the relevant catchment area but located at the outer perimeter of the area, and therefore not well situated in relation to services or other amenities.
- Comments by some case managers about lack of availability in the local area and the adverse impacts on clients – for example, Ballarat clients needing to relocate to Melbourne to take up THM housing, which many are reluctant to do given it means losing locally-based family and community supports, as well as substantial travel to meet regular court and local treatment provider appointments.
- Issues about THM housing being adequate in terms of size and dwelling type relative to client need were not raised during stakeholder consultations⁶⁰ or in the client interviews. Clients with diverse housing needs have been

⁶⁰ although concerns were raised about suitability of one unit within a block of units on the grounds of both 'neighbour fatigue' and support worker safety

successfully placed in THM properties, including one client recorded in HomeGround Service's database as having 10 children.

Objective 6: determine whether and to what extent program design, delivery and outcomes are contributing to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness

Conclusion:

The program's design and delivery and those outcomes assessable through sources available to the evaluation are considered to contribute to reducing re-offending and reducing homelessness.

Evidence base:

- The program's design and operational practice shows the good practice features reported to characterise effective bail support programs in the international research and practice literature.
- Stakeholder perceptions of program impact on re-offending, based on their experiences with program participants. This includes examples given by numerous case managers, magistrates and other stakeholders of individuals with long histories of regularly appearing at court remaining offence-free⁶¹, or in some cases, returning to the criminal justice system only after a much longer offence-free period than previously, following completion of the program.
- Case study examples, where interviewed clients stated that they would have continued with a lifestyle of ongoing offending and homelessness without program intervention.
- HomeGround Services data showing that clients in the program's THM properties, who had extensive histories of homelessness, have moved into stable accommodation after successfully managing the THM tenancy period.
- Program outcome data on successful completions which indicates most program participants did not re-offend during the bail period – although there is no baseline data to assess this impact quantitatively, the client profile and stakeholder-derived information confirms that this is a target population at high risk of re-offending.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The findings of the evaluation detailed in previous sections support a conclusion that this program is well-designed and consistent with good practice features for programs of this type, is delivering services to an appropriate target group, generally has high credibility across diverse stakeholder groups, is operating effectively and achieving a range of outcomes, and there is satisfaction expressed about the way the program works among both its clients and its key end users (magistrates).

⁶¹ several case managers spoke of program clients who maintained contact with the case manager over lengthy periods of time, for example, dropping in every few months for a brief exchange as to what was happening in their lives

As with any program, there are areas where outcomes could be enhanced. For this program, the evaluation evidence does not point to a need to change program design or strategic direction. The main issue is resources. There are also aspects of the program's operation where there is scope for improving particular outcomes, although many of these issues are already known of and being addressed as part of the program's continuing development.

The approach taken in this evaluation has been to establish an evidence base upon which those people responsible for the program can make informed decisions about its future direction. It is not an approach where the evaluators make 'expert' judgements and specific recommendations about action that should be taken on the program. Decisions about a program's operation, resourcing, and future directions are a matter for people responsible for the program to determine, taking into account the policy context in which it operates, developments in related programs, and resource availability against other organisational priorities, not just the findings of the evaluation in isolation of those wider aspects.

This evaluation report therefore does not make specific recommendations about what should or should not be done. Instead, it presents options for enhancing program outcomes in a number of action areas, based on the evaluation evidence, and discusses implications of those options, as an input for consideration in that wider decision-making context.

The key action areas are discussed below. Operational issues considered less substantive and within the immediate control of program management have generally been discussed with program management staff during the course of the evaluation, and are described in the sections on evaluation findings. Generally, these are already being addressed⁶² or considered for take-up by program staff, or they relate to individual instances rather than systemic issues and the people that had identified the matter also stated that there were effective inter-agency relationships in place at management level to discuss such concerns where they arise. Only those issues considered of substantive value for sustaining or improving program outcomes, or where the matter is not within the control of immediate program management staff, or where there are different views about whether a matter should be taken up are presented below.

Given the terms of reference for the evaluation, the focus is on those elements relevant to the bail support aspects of the combined CREDIT/BSP rather than those matters dealing exclusively with CREDIT assessment, referral and treatment processes.

Program staffing

Capacity of case managers to meet demand at some courts and the gaps in service provision that result when any case manager is absent on leave or because of illness or other reason have been identified as major issues for the program⁶³.

⁶² For example, the issue of different program aims/objectives/outcomes across different sources of program information being addressed in a new program brochure which was already under development and a decision to review what information is publicly available about the program on different websites following a discussion of preliminary evaluation outcomes.

⁶³ as at March 2008, a workload review is being investigated to address issues raised

Demand on case manager time is affected by several key factors:

- size of the potential population at the particular court – the seven courts at which the program currently operates vary substantially in the number of bail applications heard (based on statistics available to the evaluation, from 98 to 216 first bail applications per annum averaged over the past 7 years);
- use of the program by magistrates at the court – for example, the number of persons placed on the program as a proportion of those bailed varies from 56 to 73% across the seven courts at which the program currently operates over the two-year period 2005 and 2006; and
- the amount of time taken per referral and per accepted client – that, in turn, will vary according to both the profile of the area's client population (for example, differences in complexity and type of presenting issues) and individual case manager approach (which could range from monitoring progress of clients referred to community service providers for all presenting issues once effectively linked to all those services at one end of the continuum through to a more direct involvement in the therapeutic response where the case manager takes on an active counselling role, perhaps because of lack of availability of necessary services in the area or other reasons).

Annual trends in number of first bail applications have not shown consistent growth over time⁶⁴, so there is no evidence that program demand will increase on the basis that more bail applications will be heard by courts in the future. However, there is no simple linear relationship between bail application and program referral numbers.

For example, Frankston Court statistics have generally shown smaller numbers of first bail applications each year for the past seven years than any of the other four metropolitan courts where the program currently operates, but referral and accepted client numbers are among the highest. The program is viewed very positively by the Regional Coordinating Magistrate and other magistrates at that court, reflected in the level of uptake – for example, 71% of referrals at Frankston court accepted onto the program compared to between 56 and 65% at the other four metropolitan courts over the two-year period recorded in the database used in the evaluation analysis reported earlier. The take-up rate at the Melbourne Magistrate's Court over the same two-year period was even higher⁶⁵, reflecting the attitude of key magistrates operating from this court and the credibility established by the program over its longer history of operation from this location.

The Chief, Deputy Chief and many Regional Magistrates expressed views that the program's take-up rate will increase over time, given both growing acceptance by the current magistracy as well as high turnover in the immediate future where a significant proportion are approaching retirement and those replacing them will be

⁶⁴ An analysis of trends in first bail applications over the seven year period from 2000-01 to 2006-07 shows a decline in absolute numbers across all Victorian Magistrates Courts over this period of 12.5% following a rise over the first 3 years and a sharp decrease in 2006-07. Although the seven courts where the program is currently operating have shown a 5% increase over the seven-year period, this is mainly due to a large increase between the first two years of this 7-year period and the 2002-03 year – numbers aggregated across these 7 courts have consistently declined from that peak level each year.

⁶⁵ based on an assessment location recorded in the database as either Melbourne Magistrate's Court, the Melbourne Custody Centre and the Metropolitan Assessment Prison combined – those conducted at the Melbourne Magistrate's Court only showed an 81% take-up rate.

entering an environment where the program is an established part of a court's core operating practice. Program demand is therefore predicted to grow independently of any change in the size of the bail population.

Consultations with case managers and program management staff confirmed that the program was being operated as intended⁶⁶ (that is, a case managed approach using referrals to other agencies to provide the necessary intervention responses to address client needs) but that, at least for some clients, what was needed was a very active involvement by the case manager. In practice, this often included filling the gap where local service provision is inadequate, which places more demands on case manager time than a simple referral approach in a service-rich operating environment. The complexity of client needs and the availability of and pressure on community treatment and support services is unlikely to change for the better in the immediate future. The capacity for case managers to change their working practices to address growing caseload while maintaining an effective service within this context is therefore limited.

The earlier analyses have shown that demand consistently exceeds case manager capacity⁶⁷ at several locations and that there are periods, for example because of leave or illness, where there has been limited or no coverage for at least some period of time at every location. Assuming growth in program take-up rate over time, that situation would worsen in the immediate future unless additional resources were made available to maintain the program's operation at the current standard.

There are several issues to be considered if increasing the number of case managers:

- the overall number of extra positions that would provide the most cost-effective solution to address current and projected aggregate demand across all locations at which it operates;
- the particular location of any extra positions to best fit consistent need for additional resources at some locations as well as meet variations in demand from time to time at other courts;
- the best skill base to supplement/complement existing case manager roles and the operating environment at a particular location – for example, the earlier analysis showing variation in assessed presenting issues across the different locations indicates some locations where there might be greater benefits in recruiting an officer with mental health expertise or with a more extensive background in alcohol management issues than a generalist drug and alcohol worker; and
- equity issues – the importance of peer support⁶⁸ and the difficulties of being a single operator was highlighted by a number of case managers, and there

⁶⁶ with the possible exception of time spent on the program – as shown in the earlier analysis, actual time spent on the program is often longer than the standard period set out in program documentation, however, as noted in magistrate consultations, magistrates expectations are that the program is flexible in this regard and some have stated that they have specifically elected to maintain a defendant on the program for a much longer period given the circumstances of the case

⁶⁷ in terms of meeting the target number of referrals of 15 per month as well as perceptions about what is a manageable active caseload at a given point in time

⁶⁸ acknowledging that all case managers receive regular supervision and support by the Regional Team Leader, who attends each court where the program operates fortnightly and is

may be benefits in providing part-time or scheduled intermittent attendance by a second case manager at all locations.

The approach taken by program management staff has been to seek a rotating position to assist at different locations at peak demand times as well as cover scheduled leave periods⁶⁹. This approach provides a flexible model and is likely to produce a cost-effective solution in an operating environment of variable demand. However, a single rotating officer position would not be sufficient to provide leave coverage and reduce current pressure of consistently high referral numbers at several courts, let alone address the expected growth in program numbers over time.

For example, based on the following parameters:

- take-up rates of 73% at every court (which reflects a program acceptance rate slightly higher than the regional court with the highest current uptake rate of the seven courts at which CREDIT/BSP currently operates but lower than for Melbourne Magistrates Court over the two-year period) – this figure assumes a growing up-take rate over time at the regional courts to levels closer to those of Melbourne Magistrate Court which arguably represented a fairly stable level given the length of time the program operated at this location;
- an average time on the program of 3.4 months – representing average actual time between program start date and end date recorded for clients in the two-year period analysed;
- a maximum manageable caseload of 30 clients on the program at any single point in time, based on case manager views that 20-30 clients is a manageable caseload for this client group; and
- a reasonably consistent flow-through of cases across a year, rather than the more likely scenario of peaks and troughs over time, where active caseload may be high in some months and low in others in line with flows in court activity and incoming referrals.

then expected caseload numbers would exceed this manageable caseload figure by 24% if the current target of 15 referrals per month were maintained. The break-even point under this scenario is 12 – that is, a relatively consistent flow-through of 12 referrals each month and a take-up rate of 73% and average time spent on the program of 3.4 months would result in a caseload at any single point in time of 30 clients.

Applying this method of calculation to the average figures derived from the analysis of the two-year period 2005 and 2006, but using actual take-up rates and actual average number of referrals per month for the period⁷⁰, shows that two courts (Frankston and Dandenong) were over this manageable caseload ceiling figure over that period. Calculations for the other five courts at which CREDIT/BSP currently operates give figures between 21 and 26 over the period, which fall within the perceived manageable caseload range. As noted above, such a calculation assumes

available for phone and email contact daily and that program staff meetings are held bi-monthly

⁶⁹ in early 2008, a full-time officer was employed on an ongoing basis to act as a relieving position available to attend courts and undertake assessments and case manage existing clients when while the case manager for the court is on leave

⁷⁰ that is, using 14.5 average number of referrals per month at Dandenong court and 12.8 at Frankston and take-up rates of 71% and 64% respectively

a consistent flow-through across the year, and does not take into account the variation in demand between different months identified in the earlier analyses, which places additional pressure on capacity at peak times.

The conclusion drawn from the findings of the evaluation is that the program's outcomes under its current operating model would not be sustained in the future without some additional case manager resources made available to address (i) current excess demand in some locations and (ii) expected growth across locations.

The wider adoption of the CISP model to other courts has been mooted and the outcomes of a current evaluation of that program⁷¹ will provide input to this decision. Should the CISP model be extended, this will potentially address the case manager staffing issues identified in the current evaluation by establishing a team-based arrangement involving other workers located at the court. The analysis of differences in client presenting issues across the seven courts given earlier in the report may provide useful input to decisions about the particular skill base or team member composition most suitable for that location.

Accommodation availability and suitability

The Better Housing Pathway is a key element of the BSP and a specific focus for the evaluation. Accommodation has been confirmed in the evaluation findings as an issue affecting a significant proportion of clients – about one in five. There are two major areas⁷²:

- immediate urgent housing need, for example, where a client is held in custody and a successful bail application is contingent on having a fixed address; and
- long-term stable accommodation need, for example, affordable housing appropriate to the person's individual and family circumstances.

In both cases, program clients are faced with the same problems faced by other groups in the population that are in housing need – a shortage of crisis and short-term accommodation in many local areas and a chronic lack of affordable housing generally. Public housing – one of the few affordable options – has a long waiting list and despite action by Office of Housing to increase the amount and suitability of public housing stock, demand continues to exceed capacity. In effect, program clients are just one group among many that are competing for a resource that is in very limited supply. particularly given pressure on the rental property market in the past 12-18 months.

In this competing market, there are several policy approaches to improving client access to housing:

- program-specific accommodation: for example, dedicated accommodation for exclusive use by program clients so that program-specific resources are available outside of mainstream demand and supply processes;
- program client prioritisation: formally designating program clients as a priority group so that the system response requires they be given greater access to

⁷¹ The CISP evaluation results were not available to the BSP evaluation at the time of completing this report.

⁷² acknowledging that accommodation-related support, including assisting people to establish and sustain long-term housing is also an area of need, but this is discussed separately

mainstream housing than afforded by routine processes of services delivered or funded by government;

- promoting awareness: increasing understanding among service providers of the particular needs of this group and the specific impacts of their continued homelessness, so that they are allocated a more suitable priority for access to mainstream housing by service delivery officers making judgements about relative need among applicants than might otherwise be the case without that understanding – this may involve service providers themselves according the group a particular priority at local level; and
- overcoming process barriers: ensuring housing workers making judgements about relative need between applicants have available to them the best information about an individual program client's needs and circumstances at the time the information is needed and at the level of detail required, so that there are no barriers to the program client's application being given full and proper assessment on existing criteria.

The first approach is one that has been adopted under the Better Pathways Initiative, using a linked housing and support response where THM properties have been dedicated for CREDIT/BSP client use and support is provided to those clients through a funded provider. HomeGround Services provides this support service, but does so only for THM tenancies, and does not fill the gap for clients with housing and related support needs that are not able to access the program's THM properties. Many clients in housing need still have to rely on mainstream accommodation and case managers still need to link clients into homelessness assistance services as part of the case managed approach to addressing the range of client issues.

The allocation of THM properties for program client-specific use is widely acknowledged as a critical element of the program and a key success factor. Capacity of existing THM properties to meet demand is contingent on (i) actual numbers of clients in need of such housing at any particular point in time, (ii) average length of stay – the longer the tenancies, the fewer the number of people that can access such housing, and (iii) suitability of the properties in terms of the fit between their location, size and dwelling type and clients' individual and family circumstances.

The earlier analysis has shown that there are multiple referrals by case managers for every THM property vacancy becoming available. Demand clearly exceeds supply under current circumstances where there are 20 properties allocated under the program (with a further 10 recently allocated specifically for female client use). Increasing the number of THM properties dedicated to program clients would require substantial resources to address the shortfall. For example, based on the following parameters:

- one in five program clients in housing need (based on earlier analyses);
- 1,114 clients entering the program per year (based on 2006 actual figures);
- an average stay of 10 months (based on earlier analysis); and
- no property vacant for any length of time between tenancies (current guidelines specify no longer than 10 days between tenancies).

then 186 THM properties would have been required to extend the same service to all program clients estimated to be in housing need in 2006.

If average length of stay were able to be restricted to a much shorter period, say 3 months⁷³, the number of properties needed (56) would still be higher than the number available. Even on a scenario that assumes only half of the clients identified by case managers as having housing issues meet the formal criteria for homelessness and supported housing need that fully justifies priority access to THM housing and its associated support services, and assuming the average stay can be halved to 5 months with zero vacant time between tenancies, the number of properties needed would be 46.

These estimates do not taken into account geographic considerations or dwelling suitability criteria. As shown earlier, the location of existing properties does not necessarily align with the those areas where clients in housing need are located and where there are benefits for them to continue to live, given local community supports that may be lost if moving and location of locally-based services they may have been referred to which could require substantial travel time and costs to attend if living elsewhere. To meet current needs and be responsive to future changes in demand at area-specific level, would require additional numbers over and above a base figure of stock needed if planned only on the basis of total numbers across all locations and assuming a one-fits-all standard size and dwelling type.

Neither do these estimates take into consideration growth in program client numbers nor future changes in level of housing need in line with changes in availability of affordable accommodation in the general housing market that may create need among clients who are presently borderline-managing in the current private rental market.

There is strong support across stakeholder groups (program staff, magistrates, housing service providers) for expanding the number of THM properties allocated to the program. The recent Victorian Law Reform Commission review of the Bail Act also drew this conclusion, making a specific recommendation that “the Department of Justice and the DHS should consider allocating more crisis and longer term accommodation for accused people on bail” and that “DHS should provide more supported accommodation for accused people on bail who have multiple needs.”⁷⁴

In particular, stakeholders identified a need for THM properties to be provided in non-metropolitan locations where none currently operate (such as Ballarat) and the north-eastern suburbs where a high proportion of referrals are identified as having housing needs (particularly at Broadmeadows and Ringwood courts) and where availability of affordable accommodation is particularly limited.

However, given the figures involved, it would be unrealistic to assume that the solution to resolve program client accommodation needs lies in simply calling for expanding the number of THM properties dedicated to program client use. Such an approach may also be less cost-effective from a system point of view, in that it delivers a ‘one-size-fits-all’ response to clients identified as being in housing need rather than considering how a service delivery response could best be targeted to meet variation in need. For example, while there are program clients with multiple and complex needs that require appropriate support⁷⁵ and therefore definitely warrant

⁷³ the legislatively mandated point of first review

⁷⁴ recommendations no. 148 and 149, p.18 Victorian Law Reform Commission 2007

⁷⁵ appropriate care or support refers to “the range of health, housing or community services or assistance that would enable the person to maintain their current tenancy by reducing any adverse effects of their high or complex needs on their circumstance” (AIHW 2007)

the supported housing response provided through THM properties and the HomeGround Services support delivered to these tenancies. However, other clients may simply require assistance in finding affordable accommodation and with the practical and financial requirements of moving in, rather than requiring ongoing support with the tenancy over a longer period.

The second approach of granting program clients priority status over other groups in housing need requires system-level policy change. While program clients as a group would gain benefits in accessing mainstream resources, this is likely to be perceived as being at the expense of other groups. Getting policy agreement in the first instance, and then implementing workable arrangements, poses significant challenges.

The third and fourth approach involve working within existing systems and policies, but in a manner that maximises a program client's likelihood of gaining access to mainstream accommodation in accordance with assessed relative need. Based on consultations with both homelessness assistance providers and case managers, there appears to be scope for enhancing processes under which program clients with housing need are brought to attention, assessed, and their relative priority for available accommodation determined. While this option would not have the same level of direct impact as the other approaches discussed, neither does it face the same major resource or policy barriers to being adopted.

Various issues have been raised during consultations with both program staff and providers about meeting accommodation needs of program clients when using mainstream services. They include: perceived lack of responsiveness of some services to individual clients considered by case managers to have urgent housing needs; difficulties experienced in contacting housing workers or having calls returned in some places; instances of time taken to produce housing assessments delaying the production of reports to the court; and the information provided about a client not providing the level of detail needed by a housing worker at that point of the process.

Both program case managers and housing workers have in common the fact that they work in a busy and demanding environment where there are limited resources available and demand consistently exceeds supply. Both groups face time pressures in that action often needs to be taken quickly to avoid adverse consequences – for example, further time in custody if an in-custody referral needs a stable address to be granted bail in the case of program clients specifically and the likelihood of other housing applicants experiencing continuing domestic violence, physical health risks of 'sleeping rough', children being at-risk through living in unsuitable accommodation, and other adverse consequences if suitable alternative accommodation is not arranged by housing workers. There will inevitably be friction at the interface of the two such operating environments when expectations around service delivery or the requirements to initiate that service are not met.

As is the case generally across any service delivery area, some of these frictions may be reduced through, for example, a better mutual understanding of respective processes, service delivery needs, and operating environment constraints. Knowing more about the other agency's processes and requirements allows both requests and responses to be better targeted.

For example, there may be limited understanding by some housing workers of the time constraints under which case managers operate in reporting to the court and of the adverse consequences of failure for an in-custody assessment if the person isn't placed. Similarly, there may not be a complete understanding among all case

managers of the assessment processes a housing worker needs to undertake to make valid judgments about prioritising need across housing applicants that, in a context where demand exceeds supply, will invariably mean some people in housing need cannot be assisted at the time, and therefore of what critical information needs to be put forward to facilitate the assessment being completed as quickly as possible and to maximise the outcome for their program client.

Several THM providers identified networking and relationship management as very important for working effectively in the field, in that those agencies that have established strong, ongoing and well-managed relationships at local level with homelessness assistance service providers have an edge in this environment of competing demand for limited supply. Officers of such agencies generally have the trust of housing workers that the information provided is complete, accurate, and informed by a sound understanding of relevant housing policies and local allocation practices. Those officers have a better understanding of timing and process considerations of housing workers in making assessments and organising placements, so have realistic expectations about what can be delivered in what timeframe combined with how best to take advantage of this knowledge in their client's interests. They will often know which housing worker is best able to respond to their particular requests and usually have direct access to contacting those officers without needing to work through the general office number as some case managers have had to rely on.

Although many program staff have been active in establishing relations with housing service providers, the benefits can be lost unless there is continuing work to maintain effective relations on an ongoing basis and to promote understanding about the program and its requirements over time. For example, one THM provider had experienced significant staff turnover and new staff were not very familiar with the program, despite contact in the recent past between the Regional Team Leader and case manager with that service.

During consultations, two homelessness assistance services were very positive toward exploring ways of providing a better service for program clients. One expressed openness to trialling processes where program clients are given priority for assessment and the case manager is provided with more immediate and direct access to housing workers. Another suggested program clients might be added as one of the priority groups in the region's policy.

The program has achieved considerable success in promoting better awareness and an improved service delivery response for clients at local level by working closely with Centrelink. There appears to be the potential for similar gains to be made by concerted action to enhance links with homelessness assistance services. Although HomeGround Services will be contributing to a better understanding of the program through interaction with THM providers about clients that are tenants in the program's THM properties, their role does not extend to housing workers that are assessing and placing other program clients in mainstream accommodation.

Addressing program client housing needs would benefit from concerted and focused action to establish strong relations and effective working arrangements between case managers and homelessness assistance service providers at all locations and to work jointly to develop and trial new practices with those providers that have already indicated a willingness to do so. There would be benefits in this being done by a dedicated project officer employed on a time-limited basis, or under a commissioned or purchased service arrangement, given both the current workloads and competing demands on case managers and program management staff, as well as the benefits

derived from this work being done by someone with a background and established networks in the housing service area.

The conclusion drawn from the findings of the evaluation is that addressing housing needs is a priority for a significant proportion of clients. The provision of program-specific housing and its linked support service is a highly valued element of the program, deemed critical for responding to homelessness among this group. However, the current number of THM properties does not meet client demand. In particular, there are gaps in responding to program clients of courts located in metropolitan areas where availability of affordable accommodation is particularly limited (such as the north-eastern suburbs where Broadmeadows and Ringwood courts are located) and in regional areas such as Ballarat.

While expanding the number of properties available would contribute to reducing the shortfall between demand and supply, this does not necessarily represent the most cost-effective approach to responding to every client in housing need. Some clients' housing needs might be effectively met in other ways, such as improving their access to mainstream accommodation by promoting a better service response for this group among housing information and referral services. A concerted and focused effort to establish more effective networks and working arrangements in some places, promote mutual understanding at local level between program and housing service providers generally, and to develop and trial new practices with those providers that have already indicated a willingness to do so would enhance program outcomes.

Program awareness across stakeholders

The program has a strong focus on addressing illicit drug issues, but there appears to be a perception among at least some stakeholders that this is the exclusive focus of the program. While it is generally understood that effectively responding to illicit drug use necessarily involves addressing other client circumstances, such as lack of stable accommodation or mental health issues, the amalgamation of the CREDIT and Bail Support programs has shaped some stakeholder's perceptions that referrals need to be illicit drug users to access the program's services. In some courts, there is still a continuing reference to 'clinician' rather than 'case manager' by magistrates and the misperception that someone had to be a drug user to be referred to the program was identified as a barrier to referral in several consultations.

Some stakeholder consultations also identified other misconceptions that could act as barriers to referral, such as a belief that the client had to acknowledge guilt for the offence as a condition of entry to the program. However, these were not identified as widely prevalent.

The amalgamation of CREDIT and Bail Support programs was generally (but with one strongly voiced exception) seen to be an appropriate approach. The combination of the two separate programs resulted in an amalgamation of different objectives. This blending of two program's outcomes and objectives has been an evolving process, appearing in different form in various published documents over time, some of which are still in concurrent use as described in earlier sections of the report. Not unexpectedly, there are different views about what the CREDIT/BSP's main purpose is among key stakeholders.

Some magistrates, based on the information provided during consultations, focus in particular on CREDIT/BSP's utility in assisting sentencing decision-making. For them, the program provides an opportunity for a defendant to demonstrate capability of complying with a non-custodial order. Reduction in sentence length was identified as

a potential outcome of successful program completion. For others, the purpose of the program was directed less at future sentencing decision-making than on immediate decisions about granting bail and on increasing the likelihood of successful bail completion. There appear to be different views held about the program's primary purpose(s), with implications for consistency of practice among magistrates and referrers.

This is not to imply that the program should be applied in exactly the same manner in every location or circumstances. One of its critical success factors was widely acknowledged to be its flexibility. However, if the program's purpose is viewed in a narrow way, perceived as intended to achieve only one or some of its stated objectives, then users may be missing out on other benefits potentially gained from a wider application. An informed understanding about the program's intended objectives and expected outcomes is an important factor in maximising the benefits for what is, in effect, a multi-purpose program with wide-ranging objectives.

Program staff have been active in generating awareness about the program among stakeholders, at both local and central level. Program policy and procedures documentation was being updated and new program material developed and distributed during the evaluation period. There have been presentations about the program and its purposes in the past at relevant events, for example, Magistrate's conferences and service provider network meetings. The importance of continuing to produce consistent and updated program documentation clarifying program objectives and outcomes and to present information about the program at key stakeholder practice forums and initiate information sessions at regular intervals should not be underestimated.

The conclusion drawn from the findings of the evaluation is that there are different views about the program's purpose and some misperceptions among some stakeholders about its target group and eligibility criteria that, if systematically addressed, would improve program outcomes. Although program staff are active in promoting awareness about the program and producing updated program material, there are further gains to be made, particularly in reinforcing across stakeholders the program's purpose(s) at this point in CREDIT/BSP's evolution.

Program targets

Determining suitability of the program's targets is a specific evaluation objective. Program targets operate at two levels. The first is the program-wide annual targets used for reporting to funding bodies – established at 600 referrals for the BSP element and 1,768 referrals for the CREDIT side of the program⁷⁶. The second is court-specific targets. These have been set at a flat rate of 15 CREDIT/BSP referrals per month at each of the seven courts that the program is currently operating.

The appropriateness of these program-wide targets for the BSP component of CREDIT/BSP relative to overall target population need is difficult to determine without undertaking substantial research outside the scope of the current evaluation – for example, a representative survey of all bail applicants over a period of time to establish level of need for services of this type.

⁷⁶ these annual targets also cover the courts where the program has now been superseded by CISP

However, there is some evidence indicating these annual targets may be low relative to need (appropriateness of the targets relative to resources is discussed separately below). For example, based on statistics reported by Court Services, referral numbers for BSP services per year in 2004-05, 2005-06, and 2006-07 exceeded the annual target by 29, 26 and 11% respectively. The earlier analysis of trends in referral numbers showed the number of times where referrals were above the monthly target figure, sometimes quite substantially. For example, it was consistently exceeded over the seven-month period April to October 2005 – by 104% in one month.

There is also some qualitative evidence. For example, some case managers reported there have been times where they were unable to take on a new referral because of high workload demands and targets already being exceeded for the month and some other stakeholders interviewed believed there was a level of unmet demand but were unable to quantify it.

Suitability of targets relative to workload cannot be determined for the BSP element of the program separately from CREDIT, given that this target is based on referrals to the CREDIT/BSP program as a whole, reflecting the integrated way that CREDIT and BSP operate. The following discussion relates to suitability of the CREDIT/BSP target of 15 referrals per month at each of the seven courts at which it currently operates.

There is substantial variability in ability to meet the monthly target between courts, as shown in the earlier analyses and confirmed in interviews with case managers. Two issues in particular need to be considered in assessing the suitability of a target established at a flat rate across all seven courts and based only on referral numbers:

- appropriateness of the target figure relative to the potential target population; and
- implications for ongoing workload given differences between courts in rates at which referrals are accepted onto the program.

In relation to the first issue, there are substantial differences between the seven courts in the bail population that forms the pool of potential referrals. For example, the number of first bail applications at each court in 2006-07 ranged from 98 in Ballarat to more than twice that number at 203 for both Dandenong and Broadmeadows magistrate's courts. As noted earlier, the bail-related statistical information available to the evaluation is limited to the number of first bail applications recorded in the courts database. This does not include all bail applications that might be heard by a court, and therefore provides only partial information about differences in the eligible pool of program clients. However, it does indicate that there are substantial differences in capacity to achieve an annual target of 180 referrals at individual courts.

A target that takes into consideration differences between the size of the bail population at different courts would be more appropriate than a flat rate across all courts. Without more comprehensive data on the number of total bail applications or the nature of the bail population from which to calculate comparisons about the size of the pool of potential program clients, it is not possible for the evaluation to provide further information on this issue.

In relation to the second point, the target is based on referrals and does not take into account other workload aspects and the impact of ongoing caseload on case manager capacity to take on new referrals. Different take-up rates across courts means that the same target of 15 referrals per month will translate into very different

ongoing caseloads and therefore demands on individual case manager time and capacity. As shown in an earlier analysis, at current take-up rates and assuming the same average length of time on the program at each location, meeting the target of 15 referrals per month would translate into an ongoing caseload of around 29 clients on any single day at the court with the lowest acceptance rate while the case manager at the court with the highest rate would be responsible for 43 – almost 50% more cases.

A target based only on referrals addresses its purpose where agreements with funding bodies are based on the number of referrals but its utility is primarily limited to that purpose. Unless referral numbers correlate directly with ongoing caseload, a referral-based target is not suitable for establishing caseload capacity or as a comparative workload measure.

The conclusion drawn from the findings of the evaluation is that the continuing utility of the existing program-wide target of 600 BSP referrals per year is questionable, since it applies an artificial distinction given the way the amalgamated program currently operates. Although the location-specific target of 15 CREDIT/BSP referrals per case manager per month used to structure a way of meeting these program-wide targets to the two funding bodies is more aligned with the way the amalgamated program operates in practice, there are other issues about its appropriateness, such as differential capacity to meet the target across courts with differently sized bail populations and take-up rates by magistrates. There would be benefits in reviewing both the program-wide and the individual case manager targets, and upcoming developments in response to the cessation of the period of Commonwealth-provided funding for CREDIT and strategic decisions about expansion of CISP to regional courts would be an opportune time to do so.

Police referrals and police-program relations

Police are explicitly identified as a source of referrals to the program in its policy and procedures documentation, but very few such referrals have been made. There is a perception among some program staff that more referrals should be sought from police and action has been taken or planned by some case managers to enhance relations with local police and to promote police awareness about the program in order to do so. There is also regular contact between the Program Manager and the drug diversion project officer at Victoria Police about program-related issues.

Consultations with police identified that a significant barrier is operational police officer attitudes towards the program. While there are reservations in general about programs that facilitate bail for defendants that police consider should be held in custody until the matter is heard, particularly where police bail has been denied following considerable efforts to locate the individual or where the person is known to have a history of bail failure, there are additional reservations about this program. There is a perception that the CREDIT/BSP program ‘lacks consequences’, in that a person can be placed on the program time and time again, regardless of prior performance. Particular frustrations were expressed about situations where police had taken action against a defendant who was on the program for failing to comply with bail conditions or for re-offending while on bail, only to find the individual bailed and placed on the program at a future time, and for this to occur multiple times in the space of a relatively short period of time.

Police perceptions are affected by both their direct experience with the program and its clients as well as by the prevailing attitude held by their colleagues. Direct

experience with program clients is coloured by the fact that their contact is often limited only to those situations where the program has apparently failed – for example, where required to take action against a client in breach of bail conditions. An officer is much less likely to become aware of examples of successful program outcomes. In consultations with police, it was considered that there would be benefits if the informant officer was routinely notified about the program's outcome for the individual concerned.

More information about the program, especially its effectiveness, was seen as a way of potentially changing general attitudes. This poses particular challenges in the police environment, where there are limited opportunities in training or information sessions to present information about core police programs to operational police let alone about other agency activities, and where operational police often feel flooded by paperwork, so will not necessarily give priority to reading or fully considering written material about something that is not seen as core business.

As was succinctly put by one stakeholder, credibility of the program for an operational police perspective must be improved if what is wanted is active police involvement with the program, but it was also acknowledged that differences in paradigm and approach may limit the extent to which it is realistic to expect that police would become a primary point of referral.

The conclusion drawn from the findings of the evaluation is that, if more active police involvement with the program is considered to be a strategic priority, then there would be benefits in identifying and negotiating effective feedback processes that increase police officer awareness about the purpose, rationale, and its effectiveness. In particular, this information needs to address misperceptions that the program is insufficiently 'hard'. For example, generating greater awareness about the program's policy on taking action for non-compliance, with examples of instances where case managers have initiated action resulting in the client being removed from the program and bail being withdrawn.

Alcohol treatment brokerage

As discussed earlier, CREDIT/BSP has a strong focus on drug use and one of its central elements is the funding and brokerage of priority assessment and treatment services for illicit drug use. A number of stakeholders have identified alcohol as a major issue among the client population, but this does not fall within the scope of the Commonwealth-funded diversion program services available through CREDIT processes. While case managers may assist clients whose substance abuse issues are limited to alcohol misuse by linking them to community service providers or providing other assistance, this is not funded in the same way nor is there a formal priority access to treatment services or facilitated processes for assessment and referral as apply in the case of illicit drug use.

There is a growing acknowledgement of the need to extend drug diversion programs to alcohol misuse in the wider arena. For example, expanding the criteria for diversion programs to include drug users with alcohol misuse problems is a specific recommendation of a recent Australian National Drug Council review⁷⁷.

⁷⁷ Australian National Drug Council 2007 *Compulsory treatment in Australia*

The conclusion drawn from the findings of the evaluation is that program outcomes could be enhanced by introducing parallel processes for alcohol assessment and treatment as currently operate for illicit drugs under CREDIT. Obviously the viability of doing so will depend on availability of funding. National developments in drug and alcohol policy could provide a source of Commonwealth funding in the future that might be usefully explored and/or negotiated at wider strategic policy level.

Standard provision of information about prior program history to magistrates

As described earlier, some stakeholders expressed strong views about restricting the program's availability in cases where an individual has previously been on the program. Others did not support this view. Magistrates consistently stated that this should be an issue for magistrate discretion, but that magistrates should be made aware about prior program history so as to make an informed decision.

There are a number of potential benefits in providing magistrates with past program information on a standard basis as a part of the information made available to the court in considering whether to place a defendant onto the program:

- The decision to provide another opportunity to be involved on the program is one made by the magistrate with full knowledge about the individual's prior program experience. There is then no question that this is not a clear judicial decision based on full knowledge of all the facts. This may assist in overcoming some police concerns about appropriateness of clients being placed on the program if they have been on it before.
- The fact that someone has completed or made substantial progress on the program in the past may be a determining factor in placing the person on the program again because it demonstrates capacity for success that might otherwise be in doubt in the case of a first-time applicant.
- Case managers may be able to identify particular reasons for past program failure that can be managed differently under current circumstances, which may result in tailored bail conditions addressing those specific circumstances that better support successful program and bail completion.
- Some magistrates have apparently asked for this information when considering a particular case. Having that information already available in a standard format means that the case manager does not need to rely on partial information to hand or have the court delay in order to search the database in response to an ad-hoc request for such information.

However, program staff raised concerns about introducing a standard requirement to provide information about past program history to the court, in that they felt it could disadvantage some clients. In particular, they identified the risk that some magistrates, failing to fully understand the cycle of illicit drug use, might exclude a client from the program based simply on the fact that they had been on the program before, regardless of suitability to participate at the current time. Program staff noted that different circumstances at different points in time will have a critical influence on a client's motivation and successful outcomes – program failure and drug use relapse at one time does not mean that the person will not be successful at a different time.

The conclusion drawn from the findings of the evaluation is that introducing a strict limit on the number of times a person may be considered eligible for the program would be counterproductive, but that there are benefits in providing magistrates with

information about past program involvement and outcome so as to better inform discretionary decision-making.

Summary of action areas

As discussed earlier, this evaluation report does not make specific recommendations about future program direction. Instead it has identified a number of action areas, where conclusions drawn from the evaluation evidence point to ways of potentially improving and/or sustaining the program's outcomes in the future. These are:

- increasing the number of case managers to match location-specific current demand and location-wide future demand;
- expanding the stock of THM properties allocated for program client use in areas where there is evidence of particularly high demand for this specific type of housing and its associated housing-related support service;
- a concerted and focused effort to enhance relations, improve mutual understanding, and develop and trial new working arrangements with local homelessness assistance service providers;
- promoting the program's scope as a comprehensive bail support strategy that is not limited only to defendants with illicit drug issues, particularly among referrers and magistrates;
- promoting consistent information across stakeholders about the program's current objectives and outcomes and reinforcing the program's purpose(s) at this point in the CREDIT/BSP's evolution;
- continuing to build and maintain central and local-level relations and feedback practices with police to increase understanding about the program's purpose and its effectiveness;
- reviewing both the program-wide and the individual case manager targets;
- developing a parallel approach of priority assessment and treatment for alcohol management issues as that established for illicit drugs under the CREDIT program component; and
- including information about prior program participation and outcomes as part of the standard information provided to the court when determining program placement.

Addressing data limitations and future research opportunities

As is often the case with program outcome evaluations generally, the evidence base on which valid conclusions can be drawn about long-term outcomes for the Bail Support Program is limited. No matter how good the record-keeping and statistical databases supporting a program are, unless collection of information on outcomes that extend beyond the period that a client is involved with a program is built into that program's design, statistical data derived from program sources and applied to outcome evaluation purposes will be restricted. The same is true of other information sources that might be examined to compile statistical data for an evaluation, such as individual client files – unless a practice of long-term follow-up is built into a program's operation, the relevant information is not available from those sources.

This should not be seen as a criticism of a particular program's design. Program databases and record-keeping systems are designed to serve operational purposes, for example by recording client information used in case managing the individual, and as a management information tool, for example by monitoring client numbers against targets for funding accountability. Their scope rarely extends to matters that fall outside the period of a program's immediate applicability to its client group. Doing so would provide the capacity to routinely monitor the longer-term outcomes that are often included in a program's stated aims and objectives, and doing so is increasingly becoming a policy imperative across government service provision generally⁷⁸. However this comes at a cost and requires that resources be committed to collecting the necessary information on a routine basis.

In the case of long-term outcomes for the Bail Support Program, building in long-term outcome monitoring would mean following up clients for years beyond their period of direct involvement with program staff. There are practical difficulties in how such information can be routinely captured.

Interrogating databases of other agencies is one option – for example, tracking ex-clients through police information systems to determine subsequent contact with the criminal justice system as a measure of post-program re-offending. However, given the scope of the program's desired outcomes, multiple agency sources would need to be accessed. For example, outcomes about re-offending could be measured, at least in part⁷⁹, through information recorded in police or court records, but housing outcomes would need to consider information held by a range of agencies – Office for Housing, community and social housing service providers, etc – and even then would not be inclusive of those clients who enter the private rental market or acquire their own homes or reside with families or friends or other places and do not access homelessness services or are identified through other sources such as Centrelink.

Another option is routine follow-up contact with ex-clients at established intervals. That would require setting up appropriate consent processes and addressing relevant privacy implications. There are practical difficulties in being able to re-establish contact for follow-up with what is a highly transient client population. There are also resource implications, for example, adding this function to case manager responsibilities will impact on their capacity to meet demands of new referrals and case managing current clients.

Despite broader government policy about routine outcome reporting for service delivery generally, the practical and resource considerations mean that this is unlikely to be achievable in the foreseeable future. Assessing long-term outcomes therefore needs to rely on targeted research or evaluation activity. Given the absence of readily available data on longer-term outcomes discussed above, such research cannot simply rely on existing information sources, and will need to establish collection systems and processes specifically for this purpose.

⁷⁸ for example, the *Report on Government Services* – a mechanism established to report annually on state and territory government performance across a range of government sectors to the Council of Australian Governments – now includes outcome indicators in its performance monitoring frameworks

⁷⁹ noting that this will invariably constitute only some portion of an individual's offending behaviour – there is a substantial body of literature on the difficulties of defining and accurately measuring recidivism and the variation in derived results according to the manner in which it is assessed eg self report, police arrest information, criminal record checks, court appearances, court outcomes, etc

Research specifically targeting longer-term outcomes can take a retrospective or a prospective approach in its design. For example, retrospective research may involve selecting a representative sample of clients who have participated in the program at a selected past point in time and establish what outcomes have been achieved up to the present day, through tracing that client across relevant agency databases and/or attempting to locate and interview the individuals concerned. The transient nature of the program client population will pose challenges for locating a representative sample of ex-clients⁸⁰ and there will also be ethical and privacy issues to address in that those ex-clients will not have given informed consent to be contacted or have the information held about them in different agency records accessed for this purpose. Also, agency records do not necessarily hold all the information needed for drawing valid research conclusions or may do so in a format that is particularly resource-intensive to access and compile. Because of the limitations of establishing comprehensive data on long-term outcomes from agency records only, valid research conclusions require an approach that extends beyond simply reviewing agency records, supplemented by information directly provided by the individuals concerned.

A prospective research design provides the opportunity for appropriate privacy and ethical safeguards to be adopted for subsequent client contact and client consent for information records to be accessed for this purpose, for systematic selection of an appropriately representative sample of clients to be followed-up, and for processes to be established that will allow individuals to be more easily tracked through different agency record-keeping systems and for more detailed research information to be collected at key points.

A prospective research approach targeting long-term outcomes will require a much longer period than an evaluation with limited timeframes and scope (such as the current evaluation) or a retrospective research design. For example, assuming a 12-month follow-up period after clients complete their involvement with the program is sufficient to assess long-term accommodation outcomes, and given that some clients continue to be involved with some of the program's elements such as Homeground Services for relatively long periods (ie an average of 10 months stay in the program's THM properties), and allowing time for research processes to be fully implemented before recruiting clients and at end-point for analysis and report preparation, even a 12-month follow-up period to assess longer-term outcomes would entail a research project of about three years duration.

Regardless of whether a retrospective or prospective approach is adopted, for a research project to draw firm conclusions about the effectiveness of a program there needs to be capacity to assess its results against a comparison group of some kind. A finding that there has been a decline in re-offending or homelessness after participating in the program may be due, in part or in full, to program involvement but could also occur for other reasons – for example, deterrent effect of the court experience, sentence-mandated obligations, operation of other programs (for example, post-prison housing assistance), or the reduced involvement in crime that has been shown to occur as offenders become older. This is critical for assessing incremental impacts required to produce a valid cost-benefit analysis.

⁸⁰ acknowledging that there may also be characteristics of the client population that may make it easier to trace some sub-groups, subject to privacy and ethical considerations being addressed (for example, through police, Corrective Services or Centrelink databases), however, these sub-groups will not necessarily be representative of the total client population and therefore relying on such sources would introduce bias into the sampling process

A prospective research design would provide greater opportunity for establishing and following-up an appropriate comparison group for the same outcomes as being measured for program clients, using the same methodology and measures, than has been possible within the retrospective approach and limited timeframe available to the current evaluation. While this evaluation was able to produce comparative analyses in some areas – for example, first bail application outcomes before and after program introduction at individual courts compared against figures for courts where the program does not operate over the same time period in order to assess program effects on magistrate bail decisions – the conclusions that could be drawn are limited given the limitations of the available data that have been described earlier in the report.

It is generally acknowledged⁸¹ that cost-benefit and similar economic analyses provide a powerful source of evidence for decision-making, but also that producing valid cost-benefit analyses requires a solid base of credible quantitative information for monetising the benefits and costs fully as well as establishing the incremental impact of the program – both of which are often lacking in criminal justice and social policy areas.

To produce a valid cost-benefit analysis for the program requires the following critical pieces of information:

- full costs associated with operating the program (ideally direct, indirect and opportunity costs), whether incurred by the program's funding bodies, related government departments, other agencies, clients and their families, or the wider community – while direct program costs are readily obtainable from budget figures, the wider costs necessary to produce a balanced cost-benefit comparison will be more difficult to obtain;
- monetised values, preferably for the range of benefits produced by the program, or at a minimum for the key outcomes relating to offending and homelessness – there is a limited evidence base available on Australian unit costs relating to homelessness⁸² and crime⁸³ that could be applied once adjusted to present-day dollars;
- program effect size⁸⁴ (incremental impact) – as discussed above, this requires the sort of comparative information best obtained from a prospective research study targeting long-term outcomes in order to determine, for example, the number of days of homelessness saved or offences prevented that are attributable to the program; and
- other statistical data, such as selecting an appropriate discount rate⁸⁵ for calculating Net Present Value – such information is readily obtainable but

⁸¹ eg Department of Premier and Cabinet 2007; Department of Treasury and Finance 2007; Henderson, 2007; Her Majesty's Treasury 2003; Queensland Treasury 2006

⁸² Berry et al 2002

⁸³ eg Henderson, 2006; Mayhew 2003; Taylor & Mayhew 2002

⁸⁴ that is, the amount by which users of the program vary from similar people who have not used the program on specified outcomes, for example, offending, homelessness, substance abuse

⁸⁵ The discount rate refers to the amount by which later year benefits are reduced to take into account that a dollar spent in future years is valued at less than if it were spent in the current year, thereby making costs incurred in the current year more comparable with the value of

requires judgments about the most appropriate rate and should be grounded in contemporary practice and relevant Treasury standards or guidelines.

There is wide scope for future research, particularly in assessing long-term outcomes and producing a cost-benefit analysis for the program, that is beyond the scope and timeframe available to the current evaluation. Such research would need to be designed so as to overcome the data limitations restricting what information was available to the current evaluation within its limited timeframe and scope. These include in particular, but are not limited to:

- capacity to measure long-term housing outcomes for all program clients with identified homelessness issues over an appropriate follow-up period after exiting the program and services funded under the program – the current evaluation was limited to the measures of outcome at completion of THM property tenancies for the limited time period available within the evaluation's timeframes for completion⁸⁶
- assessment of changes in offending behaviour over an appropriate follow-up period, ideally relative to an appropriate comparison group⁸⁷, with capacity to disaggregate agency record information about criminal justice action taken after program completion that related to offences committed before program involvement from new offences committed after program completion
- bail and sentencing outcome information for all program client exits⁸⁸ and aggregate information by individual courts (at a minimum, the courts that the program operates and a sample of the most comparable other courts where it does not) on total bail application numbers, bail application outcomes, bail breach rates, and sentencing outcome information able to be disaggregated according to program participation and able to be adjusted for differences in bail-relevant risk factors, such as offence type, prior breach history, etc – in the current evaluation, reliable trend information available from court electronic databases was limited to first bail application outcomes at each Victorian court, which allowed only limited comparisons about program effects

A prospective research study targeting long-term outcomes would produce findings that allow more substantive conclusions to be drawn about the program's contribution to reducing re-offending and homelessness in the long term and could provide the core information about program effects that are needed to conduct a valid cost-benefit analysis in this area.

benefit values accruing over subsequent years. There are different methods for doing so, but one commonly used is the long-term Government bond rate.

⁸⁶ THM properties and HomeGround Services comprise a major element of the program and constitute a significant focus of this initiative's homelessness response, so is an important focus area for evaluation. However, there are a substantial number of clients with homelessness issues who are assisted by program staff in accessing mainstream homelessness assistance services where information on housing outcomes is not readily available.

⁸⁷ As acknowledged in other evaluations, including the CREDIT program evaluation (Alberti et al 2004), which followed up exits from the program for a 12-month period, comparison groups are needed to assess program effectiveness in reducing recidivism.

⁸⁸ the program client database does not consistently record this information for all clients, for example, where a client was exited from the program without successfully completing it

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APPENDIX: Methodology, interview schedule, information & consent forms

Stakeholder consultations:

An initial list of stakeholders was selected based on stakeholder groups identified in tender documentation and discussion with the CREDIT/BSP manager and Steering Group. During the consultation process, several other individuals were identified and added to this initial list of consultees.

The consultants contacted each individual contact person or agency to seek their agreement to provide input to the evaluation and provided information about the proposed consultation, including forwarding the information sheet *Bail Support Program evaluation* below prior to the arranged meeting if there was an email contact address and verbally advised about the information and a hardcopy at the start of the interview if not. All those contacted agreed to take part.

The consultation was a structured interview, with particular questions varying according to the particular role of the person consulted relative to the program. Core questions common to all consultations were:

- What is your/your agency's role in relation to the program?
- What are your general views about the program?
- Do you see it as relevant? – why?
- Do you think the program is successful – on what basis do you make that judgment?
- What do you see as the particular benefits of the program?
- Why do you think the program is/is not achieving its outcomes?
- What do you feel the critical success factors are?
- Do you have any comments about the program's design or service delivery model?
- Do you have any comments about the way the program operates, thinking about the whole range of processes – program referral, assessment, case management, referral to other services, monitoring, exit processes etc?
- Do you think the target group is appropriate?
- Are there any equity issues – for example, do you think some groups aren't able to access the program fully or don't receive the same benefits as others?
- Do you have any specific comments about the program's efficiency or resources?
- Do you think the program has credibility – why/why not?
- Do you feel the program is sustainable – why/why not?
- Do you believe there is unnecessary duplication with other programs or gap areas where there should be coordination between programs?
- Are there any new developments or emerging issues you are aware that could have an impact on the program in the future?
- Do you have any specific suggestions for how the program could be improved in addition to those you've discussed already?
- Are there any other issues or comments you would like to raise?

These core questions were supported by other follow-up questions and probes where necessary. Other specific questions targeted particular stakeholder groups only, for example, questions about administrative matters and program management issues among program staff or about program up-take barriers among magistrates.

BAIL SUPPORT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Corrections Victoria has commissioned a process and outcome evaluation of the Bail Support Program with external evaluators M & P Henderson & Associates Pty Ltd conducting the project. Its purpose is to establish whether the program is meeting its objectives and to identify ways to improve the services provided, especially in addressing housing needs through the Transitional Housing Management Bail Advocacy Housing Pathways Initiative, which is a core element of the program.

The evaluation includes consultations with a range of stakeholders – program staff, magistrates, service providers, policy and program development staff, and other officers in agencies with functions and roles relevant to the program's service delivery, operating context, or future development. We would like to discuss your views on the program and issues relevant to your (and/or your organisation's) role in relation to the program.

The consultation would involve a series of structured questions, including:

- the nature of your (or your agency's) role in relation to the program and level of direct involvement with the program and/or its staff/clients;
- your perceptions about program relevance, outcomes, benefits, and critical success factors, including the type and level of contribution made to the program's outcomes by your role or agency;
- any issues you wish to discuss about program uptake, service model, appropriateness of the target group, policy, procedures, credibility, sustainability, efficiency/resourcing, current or emerging practice, coordination with other services/programs, or other area of program design or operations;
- any suggestions for enhancing any aspect of the program based on your experience with it or similar programs operating elsewhere

Any information you provide will be used only for the purpose of informing the evaluation, managed as confidential information, and sourced (if needing to be sourced in the report) only to the agency or general role rather attributed to you as an individual - and in those cases, the wording would be agreed with you beforehand. Also, should you prefer it, any or all of your responses can be treated as coming from an anonymous source.

Dr Monika Henderson will be in contact with you to provide you with further information about the evaluation and arrange a time convenient for you to meet or speak by phone should you agree to take part in the consultation process. Her contact details are 07 3899 3559 or monikahenderson@optusnet.com.au should you wish to contact her beforehand.

The Project Manager in Corrections Victoria is Kim Brophy, Senior Research & Evaluation Officer, Research & Evaluation Unit, who can be contacted (03) 8684 6622 or Kim.Brophy@justice.vic.gov.au.

M & P Henderson
May 2007

Should you have any queries or concerns regarding this research, please contact the Secretary to the Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee, Level 21, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne Vic 3000. Tel: 8684 1514.

Client interviews

Case managers at each of the seven courts that CREDIT/BSP currently operates were asked to identify program clients that might agree to take part in the interviews. Given the focus of the evaluation, they were asked to give priority where possible to selecting clients with housing issues. To give a breadth to the case examples to be derived from interviews, they were also requested to select clients that they considered either represented an 'average' client and/or those with specific issues or circumstances that would provide an understanding of the diversity of cases managed.

Case managers contacted individual clients they had selected, either directly by phone or at a regular case meeting, to ask if they would be willing to attend an interview about their experiences with and opinions of the program. Case managers were provided with standardised information about the evaluation to hand out to clients (*Participant Information* form below) and asked to provide that to each client they approached as part of this process of discussion with them about the evaluation. Where a client agreed to attend the interview, a time was arranged for an interview to be held at the court.

At the arranged interview time, the case manager introduced the client to the evaluation interviewer (by first name only) and the client was given another copy of the *Participant Information* form by the interviewer and offered the opportunity to ask any questions about the evaluation or seek clarification about any aspect of the interview process.

He/she was then provided with the *Consent to take part in interview for the Bail Support program evaluation* (see below), confidentiality and anonymity was reinforced, the consent process and form was explained, and the client asked formally whether he/she consented to take part in the interview. The client and interviewer signed the consent form and a witness to the signatures also signed. This was generally the case manager, but on one day another court officer did so in the case manager's absence, as pre-arranged by the case manager. Although arguably an independent witness should be another individual totally unconnected with the process, both the practicalities of the court environment (having someone to hand who can do so at the time required) and in the interest of maintaining a client's privacy and confidentiality, (in that the independent person would then be made aware of the client's status as a defendant on bail and participating in a court-based illicit drug user-focused program), this approach was not used.

The interview was conducted in a room at the court, in private between the interviewer and client. A copy of the interview schedule is provided below.

At the end of the interview, each client was thanked for their participation and provided with \$30.

M & P HENDERSON & ASSOCIATES PTY LTD ABN 76 092 612256
PO Box 35 Coorparoo Qld 4151 ph 0423 016 325

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

BAIL SUPPORT PROGRAM EVALUATION

We would like to ask you to take part in an evaluation of the Bail Support Program. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out whether the program is meeting its objectives and to find ways to improve the services provided, especially in addressing housing needs. Your experiences as a client of the program are important in helping us to do this.

It would involve an interview with a researcher asking you about your experiences on the program, whether and how you feel it's been helpful to you, and exploring ways you think it might be improved. It would take about an hour and be done here at the court, in private between you and the interviewer.

Each person who takes part will be reimbursed \$30 to cover travel and out-of-pocket expenses in attending the interview.

The evaluation is being carried out by independent researchers who are conducting this research for a government agency. Any information you provide to us will be treated in the strictest confidence. Nothing you say will be passed on to anyone without your consent. The only exception is if we are required by law to disclose something you say, for example, some illegal acts that have not been dealt with by the court. Please note, we will **not** be asking you any questions about illegal behaviour. You are advised not to disclose any non-adjudicated matters as this information cannot remain confidential.

Your privacy will be protected. Notes of this interview will not include your name or any identifying details and only be seen by the two researchers. All information will be securely stored in our office and only kept for as long as required for this research project.

Your participation is completely voluntary. There are no consequences of any kind if you choose not to take part. Neither are there any direct benefits to you if you choose to be interviewed, but the information you provide will be used in finding ways to improve the program in the future.

Please contact us on the telephone number above if you would like any further information from us about the research before you make your decision.

If you consent to take part, please let your case manager know and he/she will arrange a time and date for the interview.

M & P Henderson, May 2007

Should you have any queries or concerns regarding this research, please contact the Secretary to the Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee, Level 21, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne Vic 3000, Tel: 8684 1514.

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CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN INTERVIEW FOR THE BAIL SUPPORT PROGRAM EVALUATION

I _____ consent to take part in an interview for the evaluation of the Bail Support Program conducted by Peter Henderson of M & P Henderson & Associates Pty Ltd.

Peter Henderson has discussed the research with me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, received satisfactory answers to my queries, and have read and been given a copy of the Invitation to Participate in Interviews sheet to keep.

I understand the purpose of the research and that my participation involves taking part in this confidential interview to discuss my experiences with and ideas about the Bail Support Service. I know that my participation is completely voluntary and I can withdraw from the interview at any time.

I also understand that I will not be asked any questions about illegal behaviour, but that if I do discuss any illegal act that has not been dealt with by a court, then the researchers can't guarantee absolute confidentiality in relation to what I say about that behaviour.

I consent to results from this research being published as long as there are no details that may identify me.

Signed by participant: _____ Date _____

Signed by researcher _____ Date _____

Signed by an independent witness: _____ Date: _____

(Print witness name in full) _____

Should you have any queries or concerns regarding this research, please contact the Secretary to the Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee, Level 21, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne Vic 3000. Tel: 8684 1514.

**BAIL SUPPORT PROGRAM EVALUATION
DRAFT CLIENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

Interview location & date _____

I'd like to start by recording some general information such as your age and housing arrangements. This isn't intended to identify you, but to provide information that's important for the evaluation. For example, we might find that people in different age groups or those with young children have different requirements from the program. Because one of the main areas for this evaluation is accommodation needs, I'll also be asking you questions about your housing situation at this point.

Age _____ Gender _____ Marital status _____

Children (no. & age group) _____

Cultural background eg Indigenous, ethnic group _____

What sort of accommodation do you currently live in:

rented _____ owned _____ other (describe) _____

if rented: private _____ public _____ other _____

Do you share this accommodation with someone else (if yes, specify relationship):

Does that accommodation fit your needs at this time? **If not**, why not?

Is this the same accommodation that you had when you first came to court in relation to the offence you're currently on bail for? **If not**, please describe what's changed and why? _____

Have you ever been homeless in the past or been at risk of homelessness, for example, had to leave where you were staying without having somewhere else suitable to move to? **If yes**, please tell me about that (probe for when, why, and outcome). _____

Have you had major problems in finding and keeping suitable accommodation in the past? **If yes**, please tell me a bit about that (probe for when, why, consequences of).

Other questions about your housing needs might come up later in the interview, but I'd like to ask you first about your involvement with the Bail Support Program. **Please remember not to tell me anything about the offence that's brought you to court or about any illegal behaviour that hasn't been dealt with by a court.**

When and how did you first find out about the program?

What was the main reason for you to be referred onto the program?

About how long ago was your first contact with a Bail Support Program worker?

Were you happy with how that **first contact** with the program worker went? If yes, why? If not, why not? *probe for:*

- adequacy of information given about the program and what happens next
- responsiveness by the worker to identifying and addressing any urgent issues
- confidence in type and amount of support provided and/or offered at that point

What's been your experience of the Bail Support Program since then? *probe for*

- level and type of contact provided relative to perceived need
- effectiveness of support in achieving needed outcomes eg suitable housing
- quality of relationship with program workers

What specific sorts of assistance have been provided to you through the program and how helpful did you find each?

probe for: referral to service providers, case management, court advocacy/advice, personal support, etc

if specific to housing issues, record below

How often do you have contact with the program workers? Is it often enough?

If housing need previously established:

Did the program assist in improving your housing situation? **If yes**, how?

If not, could it have if it was different. If so, how and what needs to change?

(If referred to HomeGround, clarify this will be asked about separately next and that this question is only asking about Bail Support Program staff)

What particular type of help did you receive from Bail Support Program staff about housing issues, either directly or by referring you to some other person or organisation, and how satisfied are you with what was provided by Bail Support Program staff? *ask for and document concrete **examples** where relevant*

If referred to HomeGround:

What particular type of help did you receive from HomeGround staff about **housing** issues, either directly or by referring you to some other person or organisation, and how satisfied are you with what was provided?

probe for when, why, who, and perceived helpfulness in each area of:

- help in getting settled into the allocated accommodation
- assistance with getting long-term housing
- information provision generally
- other accommodation-related help eg tenancy disputes, etc

*ask for and document concrete **examples** where relevant*

Did HomeGround help in **other areas** than housing assistance? If yes, what and how satisfied were you with what was done?

probe for when, why, who (agency not person), and perceived helpfulness for:

- getting to/from court or other help about the court hearing or legal support
- counselling or other personal support by HomeGround staff
- referral to other services *identify which type eg D&A, mental health, etc*
- other support *identify type eg material assistance, life skills, employment, education, family support, etc*

*ask for and document concrete **examples** where relevant*

Type of support: _____

Who provided: _____

How helpful was it: _____

Type of support: _____

Who provided: _____

How helpful was it: _____

Type of support: _____

Who provided: _____

How helpful was it: _____

I'd like to ask now about your **overall experiences** with the program and your opinions about whether and how it should be improved, both for you specifically or others generally.

What do you think was the single most important issue for you when you were referred to the program?

Is it still a major issue or concern for you?

How did/does the program contribute to addressing that most important issue?

Have other important issues come up since you started on the program and has being on the program helped resolve them.

What do you think things would have been like for you now if you had not been referred onto the program? Again, please don't discuss any illegal behaviour that hasn't been finally dealt with by a court when you answer.

probe if not stated for whether believe (i) would have been remanded rather than bailed and (ii) be unable to successfully complete bail conditions

On balance, do you think being on the program is a positive thing? Why?

What's been the best thing about being on the program so far?

What's been the worst thing about being on the program so far?

Was there anything the program could have done differently to have provided a better level of support or otherwise help you given your particular circumstances?

Do you have an opinion about whether there is anything that could be done to improve the program overall for other people with different circumstances to yours?

Any final comments you'd like to make about on any aspect of the program?

I'd like to summarise what we've talked about to confirm with you that the notes I've taken accurately reflect what you've said. Please don't hesitate to add or correct anything. Interviewer summarises client's responses to key issues of:

- client's overall perceptions of the program as a positive or negative experience and why
- specific issues identified for program improvement
- nature of housing needs (if any) and outcomes of program services and support in addressing them

Thank you very much for giving your time for this interview. We appreciate you sharing your experiences and opinions. I'd like to reinforce again that your privacy will be respected and anything that you've said won't be attributed to you. The information you've given us will be treated as anonymous information and combined with what other clients have told us before being written up in the evaluation report.

where considering use of any provided information as quotes

However, there are some points you've made that we'd like to consider using as anonymous quotes because you've made a particular point that we'd like to use your words to describe. For example, you said: (refer to notes of relevant section). Would you allow us to use that in the report by saying something like: "One interviewee mentioned that....." or in the words of one program participant "....."

identify quote (wording below or refer back to previous question notes)

Do you want me to come back to you with the exact wording that's going to be used in the report if we want to publish that quote? If so, we'd need to work out a process that you are comfortable will protect your privacy and confidentiality because I'd need to contact you in several months time to do so. *Establish and document an agreed contact process if client requires this.*

where considering using provided information as case example description

It would give readers of the report a better understanding if we could give them a couple of examples of what some program participant's circumstances and experiences are like. This would be described in general terms only, expressed in a way that protects people's anonymity.

So, for example, a description might read like: "One program client had been living on the streets and in over 10 different hostels in the 6 months. He was unemployed and his Centrelink benefits had been withdrawn so he couldn't raise a rent bond. He'd been told to leave the hostel he had been staying in and was likely to be refused bail because he would have no fixed address to give the court. Program workers arranged short-term accommodation, assisted with resolving the problem with getting benefits again, and referred him to a community alcohol management service. They also referred him to HomeGround who organised rental housing and helped with a bond."

Would you agree to us using some of the information you've provided for that purpose? *dot point key information agreed to be used*

Do you want me to come back to you with the exact wording that's going to be used in the report if we want to publish this description? If so, we'd need to work out a process that you are comfortable will protect your privacy and confidentiality because I'd need to contact you in several months time to do so. *Establish and document an agreed contact process if client requires this.*