

The post welfare state and homelessness: few exit points but more extensive and intensive intervention.

Introduction

With the increasing integration of national economies into the global economy in the 1980s came the imperative to be competitive in the international market. Subsequently, in the 1980s and 1990s the deregulation that facilitated the operation of an unfettered market place of supply and demand, preoccupied Governments from both sides of politics in Australia. This heralded what was to become the mantra of the 1980s until the present, namely, smaller government, deregulation, industrial relations and taxation 'reform', lower company and personal taxation, and 'make the user pay'.

The consequences for the welfare state were dramatic. According to Adam Jamrozik (2001:8) a 'dominant feature' of the post welfare state 'is the use of social policy as an instrument of support for the free-market economic policy, rather than, as was the aim of the welfare state ... alleviating the excesses of inequality generated by the market.' (Jamrozik 2005: 9). Particularly since the election of the Howard Government in 1996 'government policies in the post welfare state [have tended] to aggravate the excesses of inequality generated in the free market' (Jamrozik 2005:9). With the concomitant prevalence of negative attitudes to those most disadvantaged by the transformation in social policy (Parker and Fopp 2004a), the criteria of "deserving" and "undeserving" ... again [became] an important factor in practice. The post-welfare state is becoming increasingly coercive towards the poor - the losers of the free market economy' (Jamrozik (2001: 11).

Social policy about housing and homelessness has not been immune from the transition to the post-welfare state. As this paper will argue, in the context of the emerging post-welfare State, a national program for people who are homeless has been increasingly adapted to meet the reduction in affordable housing options for clients about to leave this program. After the program has been introduced, the Chapter considers what is known as the lack of exit points and demonstrates their impact on agency funded by the program.

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program – background

This Chapter is about the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (usually known by its acronym SAAP). Prior to SAAP there was a diverse range of largely un-coordinated State and Commonwealth government programs for people who were homeless. The new Program, launched in 1985, was intended to streamline the different programs with their different funding criteria, and co-ordinate funding arrangements between the States and the Commonwealth. As such, SAAP is a jointly-funded Federal, State and Territory Government Program (Jamrozik 2005: 302). It grants funding to non-government agencies to enable them to provide supported accommodation and other forms of support to people who are homeless.

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Since the original SAAP, or SAAP I (1985-1989) as it became known, the Program has been evaluated nationally, and subsequently the Agreement has been renewed on four occasions. These official National Evaluation Reports have provided an assessment of each SAAP, formed the basis for policy development and the subsequent new agreements and legislation between the Federal and State Governments. Thus, SAAP II (1989-1994), III (1994-99) and IV were enshrined in new legislation in 1989, 1994 and 2000 respectively (SEAC and AHURI 1999: 2; Erebus Consulting 2004: 1-4). As will be outlined, all four National Evaluations have confirmed, and drawn attention to the implications of, the lack of exit points for clients post-SAAP.

The lack of exit points

'Exit points' refers to affordable and appropriate independent tenancies to which persons or households can reside after leaving accommodation in SAAP (Neil and Fopp 1994). They are usually a rental property in the private or public sector, or in what is known as community housing such as that run by co-operatives (Jamrozik 2005: 293-300). There are several principle reasons for the difficulties experienced by clients ready to leave SAAP accommodation. Firstly, the percentage of such households on low incomes has increased nationally, and while there has been an increase in the number of private sector properties for rent, there are disproportionately few in the more affordable end of the market suitable for SAAP clients trying to move to an independent tenancy (Fopp et al 2003: 3).

Secondly, in the transitions in the post-welfare State, Government spending has been used to boost the private housing sector at the expense of the public sector. As Adam Jamrozik has pointed out, Commonwealth Rent Assistance and the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement assist low income earners to rent in the private sector by, respectively, providing cash payments to supplement their ability to pay rent and providing bond loans which are prerequisites for rental housing (Jamrozik 2005: 299). However, contrary to the mantra of smaller government, deregulation and a free market, the private sector is also stimulated by government incentives (and other policies such as negative gearing, the First Home Owners Assistance Scheme (FHOG); Fopp et al: 2003: 4). Thirdly, in deference to lower government spending, there has been a decline in public housing stock and the public housing sector has become almost entirely 'welfare housing', that is, for households on government pensions and very low incomes.

SAAP and the lack of exist points

All four official National Evaluations of the Program have emphasised the lack of exit points. For example, the first National Evaluation noted that 'improvements in SAAP are dependent on major changes in related health, welfare and housing systems' and the need for more public housing (Chesterman 1988: 36; 87). The second Evaluation (1993) also drew attention to the fact that SAAP workers were 'constrained' by the 'lack of access to suitable housing for many of their users' (Lindsay 1993: 46). According to the authors, contributors to the Evaluation recognised that the 'lack of exit points ... was a serious barrier to SAAP's fulfilment of its role as a program in transition' (Lindsay 1993: 60). It also stated that '*the most intractable problem facing*

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SAAP is the lack of suitable, affordable housing for SAAP users when they leave SAAP services' (Lindsay 1993: 107; emphasis added).

The problem of exit points did not diminish in the 1990s. Regarding the aim of moving to independent living, the third National Evaluation reported that agencies had enormous difficulty assisting clients to become independent in 'the *absence of adequate exit points* or when clients have high and complex needs' (SEAC and AHURI 1999: 105; emphasis added). Reiterating previous findings, the authors of the fourth National Evaluation reported that the 'SAAP aim to make its clients independent is impeded by *the lack of affordable and appropriate housing as exit points from SAAP*, the impact of high rates of unemployment and poverty, and the diversity of problems faced by clients including mental health and domestic violence' (Erebus Consulting 2004: 5; emphasis added). The Report (Erebus Consulting 2004: 100) also stated:

It must be acknowledged that the interaction among structural, institutional and individual causes [of homelessness] is strong. It would appear that *the most influential structural cause relates to the lack of affordable, sustainable long term housing*. Compared to other countries Australia has a very low proportion of public and social housing ... and people who are homeless have limited number of options. The work of SAAP agencies to achieve significant and lasting outcomes for their clients is substantially constrained by the lack of long term affordable options. Indeed until this issue is resolved, it is difficult to address the issue of appropriate exit points from supported accommodation in many instances (Erebus Consulting 2004: 139).

The consequences of the lack of exit points

Remaining in SAAP longer

Thus far, the emphasis has been on the lack of exit points *per se*. There is, however, a significant consequence which follows, namely, that devoid of independent living options in their own tenancy in the private or public sector, clients have no alternative but to remain in SAAP agencies longer than necessary.

This too has been a continuing theme in the history of the Program. As the first National Evaluation noted:

Improvements in the SAAP system are dependent on major changes in related health, welfare and housing systems. For example, *women will stay in a refuge longer than is necessary or appropriate because they have no possibility of getting a public housing placement*. (Chesterman 1988: 36; emphasis added)

More than once the second National Evaluation made similar findings (Lindsay 1993: 46, 75, 107, 120) but the following is representative: 'The absence of suitable "exit points" has significant detrimental consequences for SAAP, *forcing users to remain in services longer than would otherwise be necessary, thus undermining the transitional focus of the Program* (Lindsay 1993: 4; emphasis added). In turn, the above have contributed to other mutations in the Program.

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Bottlenecks and backlogs

An additional consequence of the lack of exit points is that, because clients have little option but to remain in SAAP longer than is necessary, it is more difficult for potential clients to enter the program. The first National Evaluation noted that demand for services was increasing and that clients ready but prevented from moving on, were 'forced' to remain in SAAP services (Chesterman 1988: 36, 87). The second National Evaluation stated that 'half the people who seek assistance from SAAP services are unable to obtain it, either because the service is full or for some other reason (Lindsay 1993: 37). The same Report also concluded that the lack of exit points 'forces' people who are ready to leave to remain in SAAP (Lindsay 1993: 75) and it 'forces others to move to inappropriate accommodation where their risk of becoming homeless and returning to SAAP is greatly increased (Lindsay 2003: 107). As the third National Evaluation (SEAC and AHURI 1999: 57) also reported: '[m]ajor concerns were expressed about the inadequacy of existing arrangements with respect to "entry" and "exit" points from SAAP.'

The fourth National Evaluation found similarly. In a data collection period in 2001-02 on average, 55 per cent (573) of potential clients seeking immediate accommodation nationally could not be met each day. This coupled with the relatively few clients exiting SAAP services because they could not find accommodation post-SAAP, meant that finding accommodation in a SAAP agency 'was difficult for some' (Erebus Consulting 2004: 96). Further, devoid of viable options, some clients 'have taken recourse to temporary and stopgap accommodation, resulting in frequent moves and in some case cases overcrowding' (Erebus Consulting 204: 139).

Thus, the lack of viable exit points contributes (1) to a bottleneck of clients in SAAP, (2) it prevents eligible clients entering SAAP accommodation which, in turn, creates a backlog of demand, and (3) it necessitates that some clients make post-SAAP accommodation choices that are less than ideal and may be even doomed to fail.

There are, of course, other factors which may cause a tenancy to falter. Research has found that such factors include lack of income to meet living expenses, the resumption of domestic violence, and issues with drug and alcohol particularly if housing is near areas of previous usage (Fopp et al, 2004: 89-90.). The fact that a 'home' to which a client exited had little or no furniture, or no curtains or heating or cooling (as with public housing) were major issues predisposing the tenancy to prove unviable (Fopp et al 2004: 95).

Nonetheless, the point being made here is about the lack of appropriate and viable independent tenancies. Thus, whether the lack of viable options means that clients must make less than ideal choices, and return to SAAP services, or they must remain in SAAP transitional accommodation for longer, the net result is the same. There is a bottleneck in SAAP because clients cannot exit. There is a backlog of first-time and returning clients seeking accommodation because clients ready to enter their own tenancy cannot move on.

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SAAP Mark I-IV - Program transitions

The National Evaluation Reports are an important form of 'official' assessment and information and, as such, they provide a source suitable for policy analysis. On scrutiny, it becomes clear that there have been major shifts in the Program since its inception which can be explained at least in part, by the lack of exit points. In the following, several salient shifts in policy will be traced.

From crisis and emergency accommodation to transitional accommodation

The original objective of SAAP Mark I was to provide funds to non-government agencies so they, in turn, could provide:

...a range of supported accommodation services and related support services to assist men, women and young people and their dependents who are permanently homeless, or temporarily homeless as a result of crisis, and who need support to move to independents living, where possible and appropriate.

(Chesterman 1988: 10-11).

There are two objectives here: (1) to provide supported accommodation and support services so that SAAP clients are able (2) to move to independent living. According to the SAAP I Objective, the supported accommodation and supported services provided by SAAP are the *means* or *methods* by which the Program's ultimate *end* or *goal* is to be realised. Were the reverse to occur, were support or the supported accommodation in SAAP ever to become the primary end or goal, then the objectives of the Program would have been undermined (Fopp 1996: 212).

Yet a move in this direction is precisely what can be discerned in subsequent iterations of the Program. For example, the SAAP Mark II Objective states that (National Evaluation 1993: 23, emphasis added):

The objective of this agreement [SAAP Mark II] is the provision ... of *transitional supported accommodation services* and related support services to people who are homeless and in crisis to help them move to independent living, where appropriate, *or other alternatives such as long term supported accommodation as soon as possible.*

While retaining the moving to independent living objective the emphasis in SAAP II was on transitional housing. In SAAP Mark I the supported accommodation was intended to be crisis or emergency accommodation for 2-4 weeks, whereas in SAAP II '*transitional supported accommodation*' and '*long term supported accommodation*' (that is accommodation in SAAP) refers to 3, perhaps even 6 months, accommodation. Of course, the two forms of accommodation are not mutually exclusive; after 2-4 weeks clients could move from a SAAP crisis shelter or refuge to transitional longer term SAAP accommodation.

Beginning with SAAP II, however, the '*transitional supported accommodation*' and '*long term supported accommodation*' referred to longer periods of accommodation *within* the SAAP agencies. This is entirely different from the prime objective of the SAAP I which was to assist clients to move to an independent tenancy *outside* SAAP

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in the private or public housing sector. As a consequence, the objective of SAAP Mark II was tempered to allow for alternatives other than independent accommodation, and to permit longer stays in SAAP services and to provide for the lack of exit points. The transition from *short-term crisis* to medium-long term *transitional accommodation* in SAAP was retained in SAAP III and IV.

In this way broader economic and housing policy has had a deleterious impact on the program, clients and agencies. The lack of exit points has not only resulted in clients remaining in agencies for longer periods of time. It has also triggered a change in the objectives of the program as SAAP adjusts to slow exit rates and clients remaining for longer periods.

From housing to residualist problematisation

SAAP I was intended to provide support in order for homeless people to move to their own rental tenancy (in either the private or the public sector). However, the first National Evaluation (Chesterman 1988: 46-47) made a distinction between those who were houseless, on the one hand, and those who were in crisis, on the other, and suggested that only potential clients who were homeless and in crisis should be the target group of the Program. With this distinction the process of constructing a 'problem' which SAAP could remedy had begun.

Thus, the second National Evaluation stated that the 'people who seek help from SAAP have a very diverse range of problems, only one of which is homelessness' (Lindsay 1993: 29). Further, 'SAAP users confront a range of complex and sometimes interrelated problems, among which homelessness is but the most obvious' (Lindsay 1993: 38). The third National Evaluation continued the theme (SERC and AGHURI 1999: 106): 'The experience of SAAP services is that the presenting problem for the homeless is "the tip of the iceberg." By this time it was 'estimated that up to 18 percent of all SAAP clients' were categorised as having 'high needs'. This includes clients who have 'intensive needs' thus 'compromising functioning and [the] ability to meet basic needs which often manifest in difficult behaviours and are likely to be ongoing'. It also included 'clients with intensive needs which may compromise functioning but not the ability to meet basic needs, and are likely to be time-limited' (SERC and AHURI 1999: 42).

According to the third National Evaluation, such clients may place 'significant demand on service providers' (SERC and AHURI 1999: 42). The high level of need 'often presents a dilemma for SAAP service providers' who are not funded to deal with the specialist services often required (Erebus Consulting 2004: 50). The point being made here though is that there has been a refocussing of the issues from one of finding housing to dealing with more residual and behavioural issues in the clients which are seen as problematic. Put differently, that an allegedly increasing number of clients could pose difficulties for services is not in question (Erebus Consulting 2004: 50). What is under scrutiny is the refocussing on the Program away from its independent housing objective to emphasise the residual nature of the causes of homelessness and the 'problematisation' of clients.

As with earlier National Evaluations (Chesterman 1988: 46-47; Lindsay 1993 75), the latest makes a similar distinction between SAAP clients being 'houseless' and

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homeless. Thus, the fourth National Evaluation (Erebus Consulting 2004: 103) suggested 'shifting the focus away from homelessness per se (for which the logical outcome is a home) to a focus on resolving and assisting those in crisis for whom homelessness, or the risk of homelessness, is a consequence.' If implemented this would also undermine the original independent living objective of the Program. But that does not deter the authors of the latest National Evaluation (Erebus Consulting 2004: 103-104) who argue that SAAP services should be distinguished from other services providing housing. It would 'allow SAAP services to move away from being seen as accommodation services providers (who are able to take clients on discharge from state programs) to providing crisis support which includes accommodation' (Erebus Consulting 2004: 103).

Undoubtedly, SAAP should not be used by other government programs as an accommodation service unless, of course, the referred clients are without a home and require the support provided by SAAP services to obtain their own independent tenancy. However, the impression is gained that something more is at stake here. Firstly, there is the presumption that a person who presents to a SAAP agency can be homeless but not in crisis. Homelessness *is* a crisis. To suggest otherwise is to deny what people who are homeless are saying, and it displays a monumental lack of appreciation of their circumstances (Liddicoat 2004; Owens 2003; Zufferey and Kerr 2004; Parker and Fopp 2004).

Secondly, the transition advocated exemplifies the very point that is being made in this section, namely, that according to national evaluators, the SAAP target group should be those who have other issues, more personal 'problems', than their lack of an independent tenancy. Furthermore, Erebus Consulting (2004: 104) noted that the 'impact' of a move away from SAAP being an accommodation service to a crisis support service (which includes accommodation) would also involve a 'shift in the outcomes required of SAAP to reflect their role in assisting those in crisis and achieving outcomes other than those related to their housing.' This would also involve a change in the Program and critical diminution of the original independent living objective.

Thirdly, there seems to be an assumption that there are some preconditions of independent living beyond SAAP that some clients cannot realise because of their personal problems. A study in Adelaide, however, has shown that clients who were 'living rough' had similar personal issues and needs as a number of clients who lived independently (Edgar et al 2003). In that research it was not possible to assess the degree of personal need, but the research findings question the presumption that the issues associated with the circumstances that precipitated homelessness, and which are regarded as problematic, must be resolved before exiting SAAP accommodation.

It is interesting to note that the fourth National Evaluation seems to agree with the analysis in this section. It suggests that there 'is an increasing international trend to begin to recognise some of the structural causes of homelessness' while 'in the Australian context there has been a growing emphasis by the Australian Government on the individual and personal factors that increase the risk of homelessness' (Erebus 2004: 138). Ultimately, it will be argued, that the Report perpetuates this explanation

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for homelessness in the Australian context. Furthermore, the above analysis does seem to be the dominant perspective of government and policy makers, and the following transitions, from 'support' to intensive' services', and 'support' to 'management', seem to confirm this.

From 'support' to intensive services

Without appropriate exit points SAAP clients not only remain in SAAP accommodation services for longer but they experience more intensive SAAP services. In the light of the increasing 'problematisation' of clients, it is not surprising that services become more intensive. As the first National Evaluation maintained:

One of the clearest things we can deduce is that without a range of public housing options which cater for SAAP clients they will be forced to utilize the more *costly and intensive SAAP* services, even when they are not appropriate, purely because of the lack of public housing. (Chesterman 1988: 87; emphasis added).

The second Evaluation also noted that the lack of post-SAAP accommodation options 'forces some people to remain in SAAP services *when their need for support has passed*, and adversely affects access by others' (Lindsay 1993: 107; emphasis added). Moreover:

The absence of such housing forces *into SAAP services people who are houseless rather than homeless and who do not need the intensive support* which SAAP is designed to provide. It forces other SAAP users to remain in services long *after their need for intensive support has passed* (Lindsay 1993: 75; emphasis added).

Significantly, in addition to the growing problematisation of the SAAP target group, some clients are 'forced' to experience more extensive and intensive services because of the lack of exit point.

From client 'support' to client 'management'

Originally, the 'support' provided by SAAP-funded agencies was to be low-key. It was intended to assist people to begin addressing the issues which triggered their loss of a home, and to gain independent living whence they would continue to address any remaining personal issues in their independent accommodation. As the First National Evaluation (Chesterman 1988: 47) recommended: 'The support services provided by SAAP should provide a temporary substitute for or enhancement of their (that is, SAAP client's) own support network. Treatment of long-term specialist services are not included.'

It is also noteworthy that the First Evaluation used the term 'a temporary substitute'. In SAAP, 'support' was not intended to be for long periods as it was in transitional accommodation (3-12 months). It was intended to be low-key, informal, a short-term substitute for, or an enhancement of, the client's own support networks. When clients stayed longer in agency accommodation in SAAP II the support began to mutate.

According to the National Evaluation of SAAP III, the aim of transitional services was to 'link SAAP users into generalist (and where necessary specialist) services in the community, and to prepare them where appropriate for a move back to

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independent living in the general community.' (Lindsay 1993: 30). The independent living objective remained but it was recognised that clients would remain in SAAP services for longer periods of time. The more extensive time meant more intensive intervention.

In SAAP II this intervention involved linking SAAP and relevant non-SAAP services such as CentreLink, and mainstream employment, education, health and legal services. However, the more extensive and therefore intensive practices in SAAP did not stop there but advanced into case-management in SAAP Mark III. Case management included 'client identification and outreach, individual assessment service planning, linkage with request services, monitoring of service delivery and client advocacy' (SEAC and AHURI 1999: 83). The functions of a case manager involved 'assessment, goal setting, intervention and services planning, resources identification and indexing, linking clients with resources and services, monitoring service provision, reassessment, outcome evaluation, interagency co-ordination, counselling, therapy and advocacy' (SEAC and AHURI 1999: 83).

In SAAP IV the commitment to case management, and its concomitant, linking clients with other agencies (with similar practices), was re-affirmed and enhanced. Currently then, case management is increasing; the objectives are more refined, and the outcomes clearly stated to determine if they have been met (CDF&CS 2001).

It could be argued that case management was a positive step in SAAP III. As the Third National Evaluation (SEAC and AHURI 1999: 86) argued:

Fundamentally, case management has changed the face of SAAP agencies from being insular and largely unaccountable (to their clients at least) to at least being challenged in their practices to become client focused. Implementation has seen a greater rigour in developing agency and client policies, in evaluating whether existing models of service are client focused, and in assessing whether staff are able to deliver case management approaches.

It might also be argued that this is a positive step for clients. The Program *is* more focused toward clients, the SAAP goals are tighter making them more amenable to assessment and that, in connecting clients with other agencies, it is also efficacious for independent living. However, none of the above changes the greater depth of intervention; in fact, it is re-affirmed.

For example, the third National Evaluation reported that among the appointed Case Management Advisors there was 'broad agreement that the implementation of the case management requires further development under any future response to the needs of the homeless' (SEAC and AHURI 1999: 87). It was also regarded as 'mandatory and not optional for agencies' and 'should include the full spectrum of service, from early intervention and prevention to exit planning and follow-up' (SEAC and AHURI 1999: 87).

In the context of the need for data on the efficacy of case management, the third National Evaluation concluded that it was important to assess the unique strengths of SAAP in delivering case management '...as it is likely that case management (by its

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nature) could *increase the length of involvement of clients with services*' (SEAC and AHURI 1999: 89; emphasis added). This is precisely what is being argued about case-management – that, reflective of SAAP overall, the developments over time have increased the period of intervention and its nature.

In the latest National Evaluation of SAAP IV (Erebus Consulting 2004: 159-164) case management is lauded as pivotal in the process of assisting SAAP clients towards independence. Yet it concluded was that there were 'many examples where SAAP services were delivering assistance addressing discrete aspects of disadvantage in a fragmented, one dimensional manner (Erebus Consulting 2004: 155), and in 'the majority of cases the application of this [case work] methodology has been a decision of individual service providers' which resulted in a lack of coherence in the approach employed and inconsistent application of the governing principles', and 'problematic outcomes for some clients' (Erebus Consulting 2004: 162).

In this instance, it seems that in the post-welfare state the clamour for greater degrees of co-ordination and integration is a substitute for injecting more funds. When the evidence points to defects in meeting such needs, even greater degrees of co-ordination and integration are advocated. It seems that governments attempt to absolve themselves by pointing to putative inadequacies in people who are homeless, and case management of agencies.

The future – priority to housing outcomes to priority to employment outcomes

All previous National Evaluations have emphasised the importance of unemployment as a factor which contributes to homelessness, and that closer links with other mainstream employment and job search agencies should be established to improve employment options and training (Chesterman 1988: 35; Lindsay 1993: 34-35, 85-104; SERC and AHURI: 40, 99-105). Unique to the most recent National Evaluation (Erebus Consulting 2004: 156-157), however, is that it seems to advocate a change in priorities and Objectives in the Program - from the independent housing objective *to* an employment objective. While this may or may not be accepted in the future, it has been advocated as a change in the Program and, thus, warrants close examination.

While emphasising the lack of, and urgent need for, more exit points the last National Evaluation was clear: 'It would appear that the single most influential structural cause [of homelessness] relates to the lack of affordable, sustainable long term housing' (Erebus Consulting 2004: 139). But, they argue, secure housing 'must be accompanied by some form of secure tenure in housing and access to employment opportunities' (Erebus 2004: 139). Many agencies would advocate this, with the caveat that employment should be feasible at that time. The authors of the fourth National Evaluation continue: 'Indeed the inability of entry level and the low level skilled jobs to provide regular income, sufficient to meet housing and living costs is seen as a fundamental inhibitor, to sustaining independent living (Erebus Consulting 2004: 139).

In their Report the authors suggest a 'set of guiding principles' that they believe will assist in the integration of services. The first mentioned guiding principle is that: 'the achievement of sustainable employment will sit *at the top of the hierarchy of outcomes* for participants. Other outcomes such as housing, health and personal

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development will be valid by themselves, *but will be shaped by the employment outcome*' (Erebus 2004: 156; emphasis added). In another part of the Report, the authors qualify the suggestion by recognising that that it is 'unrealistic' to address employment issues for SAAP clients who have been in SAAP for less than a month although for clients who have been in SAAP for over the suggestion seems to prevail (Erebus Consulting 2004: 153).

Conclusion

This paper has explored some of the implications of the interaction of the ideology and priorities of the post-welfare state, on the one hand, and a program to assist people who are homeless, on the other. Beginning with the dwindling availability of affordable accommodation, the decrease in public housing, and the privileging of the private housing sector, this paper has highlighted the impact of the resultant paucity of exit points on SAAP. The ensuing analysis is not a critique of agencies. But it does attempt to identify the way their work is made more difficult because of the lack of exit points. It does attempt to show how the Program in which they operate has been adversely affected by limited post-SAAP housing options and the transitions and shifts in policy which have followed.

Now, it might be argued that the changes in SAAP are positive. Certainly, in the context of clients staying longer, transitional housing in SAAP is imperative. But the purpose of this paper was to explore the possibility that it was the economic and political environment which shaped the Program, which drove the changes.

So the way the independent housing objective was attenuated; that clients remained in SAAP longer – causing bottlenecks within and a backlog of potential wanting to enter SAAP agencies – the move from emergency to transitional accommodation, the increasing 'problematism' of clients who remain in SAAP for more intensive services, the shift from 'informal 'support' to 'case management' and from the primacy of accommodation outcomes to the privileging of employment outcomes, all typify social policy about housing and homelessness in the post-welfare state.

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