

CHAPTER 3

CRISIS ACCOMMODATION

Youth Services Scheme

The majority of youth refugees are funded under the Youth Services Scheme. This is a joint Commonwealth/state scheme whereby money provided by the Commonwealth is matched dollar for dollar by the states. It is a pilot program which commenced on 1 July 1979 and was due to finish on 30 June 1982. However, on 23 March 1982 the Minister for Social Security announced that the Commonwealth Government will provide continued financial assistance to the Scheme in 1982-83. This extension of time will allow the Commonwealth and the state governments to make an assessment of the evaluation of the pilot Youth Services Scheme.

The initial proposal for the scheme was put forward in November 1978 at the Welfare Ministers' Conference. The state Ministers asked the then Minister for Social Security, Senator the Honourable Dame Margaret Guilfoyle, to provide Commonwealth funding to assist them to meet increasing demands for emergency accommodation specifically for young people. They stressed that these adolescents needed a higher level of supervision, counselling and support than was available in other services which catered mainly for older homeless persons. It was proposed by the Minister for Social Security that \$1 million per year would be provided by the Commonwealth for a period of three years and that the states would match the grants. The allocation in each state for the three year period is shown in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: Youth Services Scheme—Funding over Period 1979-80 to 1981-82

	<i>Available from Commonwealth</i>	<i>Matched by States</i>	<i>Total allocated</i>	<i>Commonwealth funds not taken up</i>
	\$	\$	\$	\$
N.S.W.	1 005 360	1 205 360(a)	2 210 720	
Victoria	789 300	1 064 300(a)	1 578 600	
Queensland	460 740	303 677	764 417	157 063
S.A.	277 740	209 998	487 738	67 742
W.A.	251 400	215 808(b)	251 400	114 579
Tasmania	95 460	95 460	190 920	
N.T.	36 000	36 000	72 000	
A.C.T.	84 000	..	84 000	
	3 000 000		5 603 795	

(a) N.S.W. contributed an additional \$200 000 to the Scheme in 1981-82. Victoria contributed an additional \$275 000 in 1979-82.

(b) Funded agencies in W.A. receive only Commonwealth funds: W.A. estimates this amount to be expended on similar State funded services. At the commencement of the Scheme, Western Australia stated it was already spending \$65 000 per annum. This has now increased to around \$73 000. (Transcript of evidence, p. 3609).

Source: Commonwealth Department of Social Security.

The Department of Social Security's definition of the scheme is 'a youth shelter program with support services to be focussed on youth aged to 18 years. At the discretion of sponsoring agencies, youth aged over 18 may be assisted through the program when appropriate'.¹

The emergency accommodation is provided in residential dwellings which offer lodgings for periods ranging from overnight to three months. These dwellings may provide accommodation for longer periods or on an intermittent basis in exceptional circumstances. However, it is not intended that this program provide long-term accommodation. The scheme also allows for payment to approved households which make available bed space for periods ranging from overnight to three months.

Support services are also provided in the program. It was anticipated that these would include counselling and information services for children and their parents; supervision of young people in accommodation; rent/lease guarantees to landlords; and subsidies.

Usually grants are made to community agencies. However, state or local government sponsorship of projects is permissible where no suitable community agency is available to sponsor a project. Grants are provided mainly for recurrent funding of projects. Capital grants for new buildings are not available, although the cost of reasonable modifications to existing facilities may be considered.²

Under the Youth Services Scheme, 68 agencies are funded and they offer 86 separate services. There are 51 refuges, 13 family placement/boardings services, six referral/co-ordination officers, nine detached youth workers, and seven bond/loan/cash assistance services.³ Altogether, these services provide about 750 beds for emergency accommodation. Table 3.2 shows the number of beds in each state:

Table 3.2: Youth Service Scheme—Number of Beds in Refuges

<i>Period 1: October–November 1980</i>									
	<i>N.S.W.</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>S.A.</i>	<i>W.A.</i>	<i>N.T.</i>	<i>A.C.T.</i>	<i>Total</i>
Refuge Beds	160	79	16	49	17	(a)	10	8	339
Family/boardings places	35	73	6	0	0	(a)	0	0	114
No. of services returning data	17	14	2	5	2	(a)	1	1	42
<i>Period 2: October–November 1981</i>									
	<i>N.S.W.</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>S.A.</i>	<i>W.A.</i>	<i>N.T.</i>	<i>A.C.T.</i>	<i>Total</i>
Refuge Beds	187	80	40	49	32	98(b)	10	17	513
Family/Boarding Places	18	214	6	0	0	6	0	0	244
No. of services returning data	21	22	4	4	4	5	1	2	

(a) Scheme not commenced. (b) Of these 98, approximately half are hostel beds which were available prior to the commencement of the Scheme.

Source: Commonwealth Department of Social Security.

In New South Wales the Youth Services Scheme is administered by the Department of Youth and Community Services. Twenty-two emergency accommodation services have been funded under the Scheme. Twenty of these are youth refuges, one is a fostering program called 'Stretch-a-Family' and one is a service comprising crisis and medium term accommodation, and housing information and referral.⁴

In Victoria the program is administered by the Department of Community Welfare Services. Within the program there are four service components:

- Residential Units (Youth Refuges)
- Boarding and Lodging Schemes
- Regional Housing Officers with associated Referral Services and Housing Information
- Bond and Rental Assistance.

The range of youth refuge services extends from large units operating on a rostered staff basis to smaller services utilising cottage parent staff.⁵

The Board and Lodging Schemes place and support young people in a variety of living arrangements.⁶ One part of this scheme is the Family Placement projects which recruit and train volunteer families to take young people into their homes on an emergency basis. The service also offers support for the young person and the family during placement.⁷

A development within the Youth Services Scheme in Victoria has been the funding of six full time and three part time regional Youth Accommodation Officers whose responsibility is to develop locally based accommodation services for young people. A Housing Information Service for young people in the inner city area has been established and a Regional Co-ordination and Information Agency has been set up in the Outer East Region.⁸

In Queensland there are 11 approved projects funded under the Youth Services Scheme. About seven of these are youth refuges, one is a family boarding scheme and there are five detached Youth Workers.⁹

In South Australia there are four projects funded under the Youth Services Scheme. All of these are refuges.¹⁰

In Western Australia there are seven projects funded under the Scheme. Three of these are youth refuges. The others include family boarding schemes, information services, street workers and bond and rental services.¹¹ The Youth Services Scheme has had major difficulties in Western Australia due to differing interpretations on practice and policy issues between this state and the Commonwealth.¹² Because of this, funding was delayed for over a year and a half. Finally, the Commonwealth agreed to give the funds as a specific purpose grant rather than a matching grant.¹³

In Tasmania the Youth Services Scheme funds six youth accommodation services. Four of these are youth refuges, one is a bond and rental subsidy scheme and one is a street work project.¹⁴

The Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory each have one youth refuge funded under the Youth Services Scheme.¹⁵

Refuges not funded under the Youth Services Scheme

Eight refuges (total of 128 beds) are funded under the Homeless Persons Assistance Program¹⁶ but many receive no government funding at all. Refuges receiving no government funds are usually run by voluntary agencies or church groups.

As noted in the previous chapter, the limited data that is presently available relates almost exclusively to programs funded under the Youth Services Scheme. Very little is known about the unfunded schemes and the extent to which they are able to meet the varying demands of homeless youth. While they may be part of a state-wide youth accommodation network, no attempt has been made by either state or Commonwealth Governments to assess their contribution.

The Committee did receive submissions and took evidence from a number of unfunded refuges. For example, in Victoria the Committee took evidence from the House of the Gentle Bunyip¹⁷ (located in Melbourne and Shepparton), and the Christian Alternative Remand Accommodation, Melbourne.¹⁸ A submission from the Barwon Regional Consultative Council listed a number of unfunded refuges or hostels that were catering for homeless youth in their region. In Tasmania the Committee took evidence from the North West Shelter Committee¹⁹ which runs a refuge for homeless girls.

The Committee also received evidence from organisations that have been involved in institutional care programs for state wards for many years. However, due to the changing attitude towards institutional care, many of these places have now closed down or are under threat of closure. In order to continue to provide a caring service for young people, many institutions have begun to modify their programs so as to help meet the needs of homeless youth.²⁰

The extent of unfunded refuges is not at all clear. While not all organisations outside the Youth Services Scheme could be said to be operating youth refuges along the lines of refuges under the Scheme, it does appear that they do provide some beds within their premises for crisis accommodation purposes. In order to gain a more comprehensive picture of the extent of crisis accommodation for homeless youth, the Committee believes that greater consultation should be encouraged between government funded programs and other programs.

The role of youth refuges

The role of youth refuges under the Youth Services Scheme has been formally set out by the Department of Social Security in the following terms:

- To provide accommodation places on a short term basis for youth (to about age 18) in need of emergency shelter.
- To assist the present clients to move into a stable living situation.²¹

The Department has also outlined the objectives which are necessary to achieve these goals. They are:

- To provide beds for temporary accommodation in specific purpose facilities and/or to sublet within private residences; also, to use other means as may be approved.
- To employ support and counselling personnel in such numbers and with appropriate training and competence to cater for the counselling or information needs (in terms of returning to a stable living situation) of each client.
- To provide material assistance in the form of loans subsidies or guarantees to assist those clients assessed as requiring such assistance to obtain a long-term stable living situation.²²

Many refuges continue to support young people after they have left the refuge. Some adolescents continue to visit the refuges and often participate in their activities.

Refuges provide convenient places for government welfare and legal bodies to place children. Several witnesses said that police welfare agencies and the courts refer children to them.²³ The data from the Youth Services Scheme reveals that of its sample about nine percent of those accommodated in the refuges were from institutions or foster care. While the data records both the young persons last place of living immediately prior to approaching the refuge and their last living situation of three months or more, it still does not indicate whether other clients have at some other stage experienced institutional or foster care. As stated above there has been some doubt over recent years

about the success of large institutions for children and many of the traditional childrens homes are closing. It may be that refuges are becoming an unofficial alternative to these institutions and this factor should be considered when decisions about funding of refuges are being made.

The movement away from formal institutional care has led to a situation whereby the responsibility for the care and protection of young people in need is not at all clear. This matter was discussed at some length in the Report to the Minister for Social Security - 'Families and Social Services in Australia'; Canberra 1978. Appendix 1 of this Committee's report contains a number of extracts from that report, particularly extracts dealing with legal and constitutional matters.

Youth refuges may provide a cooling off place for young people to consider their situation realistically. The Youth Services Scheme data reveals that about half of the children in refuges have come directly from home. Of this group about 42 percent return to their parents but there is no indication as to whether this return is of a temporary or permanent nature.

Another important function of refuges is to provide the first step in finding satisfactory long term accommodation for these young people where family reconciliation is not possible. Refuges provide a base where the client can be assessed in order to determine the most suitable type of accommodation to meet his needs.

The evaluation of the Youth Services Scheme included an assessment of the number of people requiring support services and the ability of the various programs in selected states to provide those services. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 were produced by the National Evaluation Committee as an assessment of the support services provided by the various youth refuges funded under the Scheme.

Table 3.3: Number of Cases Requiring Support Services in Each State

	<i>N.S.W.</i>		<i>Vic.</i>		<i>Qld</i>		<i>S.A.</i>		<i>A.C.T.</i>	
	<i>Cases</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Personal Counselling	979	75	581	71	547	58	36	55	73	74
Family Counselling	483	37	360	44	166	18	18	27	43	43
Basic Living Skills	629	48	441	54	406	43	39	59	53	54
Housing Information	386	30	452	56	399	42	28	42	66	67
Breathing Space	573	44	443	54	190	20	27	41	54	55
Assistance to seek —										
Employment	523	40	318	39	386	41	35	53	24	24
Benefit/Pension	260	20	242	30	308	33	13	20	24	24
Treatment (Drug/Alcohol)	126	10	122	15	150	16	4	6	8	8
Contraception Advice	107	8	106	13	48	5	5	8	10	10
Legal Advice	150	12	154	19	249	26	1	2	5	5
Other	66	5	24	3	72	8	4	6	4	4

Source: Supplementary evidence from the Department of Social Security.

Table 3.4: Percentage of Those Requiring Support Services Who did not Obtain Them

	<i>N.S.W.</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>S.A.</i>	<i>A.C.T.</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Personal Counselling	12	9	8	0	10
Family Counselling	46	50	48	44	65
Basic Living Skills	16	8	4	0	6
Housing Information	14	6	5	21	5
Breathing Space	2	4	0	4	0

	<i>N.S.W.</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>S.A.</i>	<i>A.C.T.</i>
	%	%	%	%	%
Assistance to seek --					
Employment	20	19	38	40	21
Benefit/Pension	17	10	3	15	4
Drug/Alcohol Treatment	57	20	59	25	13
Contraceptive Advice	11	9	8	0	11
Legal Advice	7	5	34	0	0
Other	8	21	1	0	25

Source: Supplementary evidence from the Department of Social Security.

The Committee is unclear as to what is meant by each service and what constitutes an ability on behalf of a refuge to provide that service. Unfortunately, the tables do not give an indication of the quality of the service provided and whether or not the obtaining of the service proved successful.

As a result, the Committee is most reluctant to make any meaningful comments about the figures contained in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. The Committee believes that counselling and the provision of other support services are an integral part of the youth refuge network. It is therefore important that appropriately trained staff are made available to ensure that these services are properly maintained and conducted. The Committee has taken into account this important factor when making its recommendations concerning youth refuges.

The Committee was concerned that the proliferation of refuges may encourage children to leave home when it is not imperative for them to do so. Many witnesses were asked for their views on this issue and the response was varied. Some felt that refuges would not encourage children to leave home²⁴ because refuges are not attractive alternative places to live.²⁵ Some witnesses believed, however, that a small minority of children could be encouraged to leave home prematurely.²⁶ The Committee, however, would certainly not regard the possibility of such usage as a justification for the closure of youth refuges. The Committee **RECOMMENDS that the Youth Services Scheme guidelines issued by the Commonwealth Department of Social Security should state clearly that youth workers must attempt to ascertain the circumstances of a child becoming homeless and, wherever possible, should reunite the young person with his parents.**

While there already exists a clear legal responsibility for youth refuge workers to notify parents or a designated social welfare worker about the whereabouts of all people under the age of 16 years, the Committee also believes that, where appropriate, parents of all youth staying at a refuge should be notified that their child is safe and is being given food and shelter. In this respect, it would be seen as the first step in any future family reconciliation.

The need for youth refuges

It is impossible to measure the need for youth refuges as there is no adequate data on the extent of youth homelessness. The only available estimate of need is the measured demand for youth refuges under the Youth Services Scheme. Table 3.5 sets out the demand for government funded refuges and indicates to what extent this demand is, at present, being met.

Table 3.5: Demand (i.e. requests for emergency accommodation—period 1.10.80–30.9.81)

	<i>N.S.W.</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>S.A.</i>	<i>W.A.</i>	<i>N.T.</i>	<i>A.C.T.</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total No. of requests	4 870	3 407	1 874	1 575	331	(a)	58	189	12 304
Per cent met	38	35	88	74	34	(a)	78	77	51
Per cent not met because service was at capacity	27	36	6	12	22	(a)	..	5	23
Per cent not met — other reasons	35	29	6	14	44	(a)	22	18	26
Total	100	100	100	100	100	(a)	100	100	100
No. of services in response	18 22 14 21	2 6	4	4	(a)	1	1	44-59	

(a) No data available.

NB: Variations in percentage totals due to rounding.

For Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory data was collected only for the period 1.4.81–30.9.81. The data is incomplete in all States. South Australian services have noted that workers are not covering services 24 hours, and that referral agencies do not make referrals when they are aware that services are at capacity.

Source: Commonwealth Department of Social Security.

Once again, extreme care has to be taken when drawing any conclusions from Table 3.5. First, the possibility of multiple counting must be considered. The Committee is very sceptical about using the number of requests as equating demand for crisis accommodation. During questioning of witnesses at the public hearings it was agreed that one youth could make many inquiries within a particular city until such time as he found an appropriate place to stay. Each inquiry would be recorded as a request for accommodation but in actual fact it is only one person who is seeking such accommodation.

Secondly, the Committee was told that for many reasons, many young people move from one refuge to another, and for some their mobility takes them from one state to another. This can be very significant when one considers that the average length of stay in a refuge is around two to three weeks, with around 35 to 45 per cent staying less than a week. On these two factors alone, multiple counting would be very significant.

It has also been said that whilst acknowledging the significance of multiple counting, the figures are probably a reasonably accurate picture of the situation simply because many people who are homeless do not approach refuges or welfare agencies for help. It is anyone's guess as to whether the unrecorded demands for crisis accommodation compensate for the double or multiple counting in the recorded requests for emergency accommodation. However, the Committee would not be prepared to undertake specific policy initiatives based on these figures alone. The Committee has endeavoured throughout the course of its inquiry to determine reliable estimates from which it could make specific recommendations. It has not succeeded in this endeavour.

The data in Table 3.5 would suggest that demand exceeds capacity and it could therefore be expected that refuges would be fully accommodated most of the time. However, the occupancy data in Table 3.6 (which is also subject to qualifications) shows that this is not the case (except for Victoria).

Table 3.6: Occupancy (beds occupied on one Wednesday night during the period(a) expressed in numbers and in percentage of capacity)

	<i>N.S.W.</i>		<i>Vic.</i>		<i>Qld</i>		<i>Tas.</i>		<i>S.A.</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Period 1: October—November 1980												
Refuge beds	100	63	77	97	10	62	41	83	12	70	240	72
Family/Boarding places	19	54	32	44	3	50	(b)	..	(b)	..	54	47
No. of services returning data	17	..	14	..	2	..	5	..	2	..	..	..
	<i>N.S.W.</i>		<i>Vic.</i>		<i>Qld</i>		<i>Tas.</i>		<i>A.C.T</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Period 2: October—November 1981												
Refuge beds	128	68	78	97	31	77	11	22	4	44	252	67
Family/Boarding places	18	100	139	65	(b)	..	(b)	..	(b)	..	157	66
No. of services returning data	21	..	..	..	4	..	2	..	1	..	..	..

Period 1: Data not available for Western Australia, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory.
 Period 2: Data not available for South Australia, Western Australia and Northern Territory.

(a) The date on which this count was taken varies from state to state, and in some cases from service to service. In Period 1 some refugees completed a return on the date of commencement of service, rather than from the requested date. (b) Denotes no beds/places.

The major observation about this data is the high proportion of gaps due to incomplete data or no response. This reflects the extreme difficulty in obtaining this data. The occupancy data cannot be regarded as reliable because of the gaps, and because it is known to be unrepresentative.

Family/Boarding places are treated separately from refuge beds because of high fluctuations in capacity from period to period. Also, while places may be nominally available (capacity) staff are obliged to be selective in placements. Occupancy of 75–80 per cent is regarded as tantamount to utilisation at full capacity.

Source: Commonwealth Department of Social Security.

The data in Table 3.6 is supported by the observations of the Committee, which found that only a minority of refugees were at maximum capacity at the time members of the Committee visited.

According to the Department of Social Security, this seeming discrepancy in data is 'attributable to difficulties with respect to data collection rather than lack of demand of services'. The Committee would argue that this reason makes a mockery of the whole exercise of obtaining the data. It highlights the ill-conceived approach taken by the planners at the very beginning of this pilot program in assuming that everyone involved in the scheme would have the time, resources and expertise to collect what is very sensitive, complex and subjective data. As it was a pilot program, it should have been imperative at the very beginning to ensure that data collected from participants would be uniform and consistent. It is regrettable that at the end of the three year pilot program, the Department is acknowledging the shortcomings of its data collection action methods. It is also regrettable that the Department is little better informed about the extent of youth homelessness than prior to the evaluation.

The Committee feels that the demand for emergency accommodation is high but that the situation is not as serious as the figures in Table 3.5 indicate. Our main concern is not that there is an overall lack of refugees, but that there is a shortage in certain

regions. In evidence, a representative from the New South Wales Association of Child Caring Agencies said:

'In the last couple of days under your government programs, a project was funded just down the street from this agency to try to get a property and open it. It would not be a mile away from where these 300 beds are. That \$40,000 was given to another group to try and start a program. To me that is idiocy and that is occurring every day because of the lack of planning. No one is looking at what resources are available and making the optimum use of those and recycling them. They are constantly coming up with new programs.'²⁷

Members of the Committee visited this new refuge in Blacktown and were disturbed to find a total occupancy of one, at that particular time, when the capacity was six.

Much has been said about the number of refuges that have sprung up in the Kings Cross/Darlinghurst area. This area attracts a large number of young people and it might be argued that the proliferation of refuges there encourages them to stay. The Committee strongly believes that no new refuges should be established in the area. Relocation of one or two of these refuges to other areas within the Sydney metropolitan area should be seriously considered. This would then enable many young people to stay in areas where they have already established some sort of network and are familiar with the services available.

In the Committee's opinion, the present geographical spread of government funded youth refuges is inappropriate and needs to be rationalised. For example, the Committee was concerned at the lack of facilities in the Latrobe Valley, Victoria, and in Gladstone, Queensland. Indeed, the Latrobe Valley was one of the very first areas to demonstrate a need for a youth refuge and yet it has still not received any government funding.

The future of youth refuges

The Committee was favourably impressed with the work of some refuges. However, they are not the solution to the problem of homelessness. The Committee believes that the most effective response to this problem is to provide medium and long term accommodation. This is fully discussed in Chapter 4. It is felt that if longer term accommodation is provided, much of the demand for refuges would be eliminated. Nonetheless the Committee **RECOMMENDS that the Commonwealth/State funded Youth Services Scheme be continued but that there be a rationalisation of existing services.** For most young people their support network is in the region where they have lived for many years. Hence, some refuges should be closed down and relocated in areas where there is a demonstrated need for their service. Access to public transport and other services must be given consideration when choosing locations.

Staffing

The Committee was informed that many refuge staff work long hours,²⁸ and that 'burn out', as a result of stress and fatigue, is a serious problem. The National Committee for Evaluation of the Youth Services Scheme has noted that 'burn out' is a particularly serious problem in New South Wales and Queensland. It reports that

information on this matter is not available from other states, but that Victoria seems to have the least problem in this respect.²⁹ Mr Thomas Keating, Co-ordinator of the Youth Accommodation Services in Victoria, attributed the situation to the different approaches taken by states in staffing their projects. He told the Committee that ' . . . our (Victorian) major shelters . . . have a staffing component of four and a half workers, which means that there tends to be much more support for workers. They are not working as long hours as for instance workers do in New South Wales.'³⁰

In recommending the continuation of the Youth Services Scheme, the Committee maintains that it is necessary to ensure that proper staffing ratios are maintained in each refuge. High staff turnover is not conducive to the successful provision of support services within the refuges.

Another matter that concerned the Committee was the type of person selected to work in the youth refuges. The Committee was told that the main criteria for choosing staff in many cases is the ability to identify and work with youth.³¹ Often, many of the workers do not have formal training.³² To date, the level of salary and the conditions of work have made it difficult to attract and retain suitable staff. The Committee does not see the need to make formal qualifications mandatory, but it maintains that if the support services are going to be provided properly, then some form of training is essential. For many, the most appropriate form of training would be of an 'in service' nature.

The Committee **RECOMMENDS** that as part of the continuation of the Youth Services Scheme, adequate funds be made available to provide a nationally co-ordinated 'in service' training program. Further, funding of particular programs under the Scheme should be conditional on that program ensuring that its staff undertake some form of approved 'in service' training.

In addition, the Committee **RECOMMENDS** that a rate of pay be determined by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to establish a salary scale for youth refuge workers which would be consistent with other rates of pay in the social welfare area.

Funding for crisis accommodation

Finally, the Committee has considered the level and method of funding that would be appropriate for the continuation of the Youth Services Scheme. There is some debate over the manner in which funds for youth refuges should be allocated to the states. Some state governments³³ told the Committee that they would prefer to have the funds in the form of a block grant. This would give them major control of guidelines, evaluation, data collection, etc. The Committee believes, however, that the problem of youth homelessness should be managed at a national level. This will ensure that all programs have standard guidelines and a uniform basis for evaluation, and that data on the extent and nature of the problem can be collated and used for policy making purposes. The Committee therefore **RECOMMENDS** that the present form of funding for the Youth Services Scheme—Commonwealth/state matched grants—be continued for the majority of expenditure on the Scheme.

As already noted, the Committee was unable to obtain any reliable data from which to make firm and specific recommendations concerning levels of funding, staffing, bed requirements, etc. Consequently, the Committee can only **RECOMMEND** that matching grants provided by the Commonwealth and State Governments should be 'substantially' increased from their present level of \$2 million per annum.

In addition, the Committee **RECOMMENDS** that the Commonwealth provides further funds to ensure that a properly co-ordinated data collection study is undertaken and that a nationally supervised 'in service' youth refuge worker training scheme is established.

Conclusion

It is the Committee's belief that the present level of bed capacity (around 750-800) will be sufficient to meet demand, provided the Committee's recommendations concerning medium to long term accommodation are implemented. However, there needs to be a substantial upgrading of accommodation facilities in most existing refuges. In addition, a certain degree of rationalisation and relocation is necessary.

Without uniform and reliable statistics it is most likely that policy initiatives in this area will be of an ad hoc nature. A properly financed and managed statistical collection must be undertaken to enable more effective and relevant program initiatives.

Because youth refuge work is a relatively new field of employment, it is difficult to determine what type of person and qualifications are most suitable for this work. The Committee believes, however, that the development of an 'in service' training scheme which is nationally co-ordinated will be of substantial benefit to youth workers.

Finally, where possible, all government funded programs should endeavour to complement existing unfunded refuges and hostels in many regions throughout Australia.

Endnotes

1. Commonwealth Department of Social Security, 'Youth Services Program: Profile', unpublished paper, p. 1.
2. Commonwealth Department of Social Security, 'Youth Services Program: Profile', pp. 1-2.
3. National Committee for Evaluation of the Youth Services Scheme, 'Report on the Youth Services Scheme 1979-82'.
4. Transcript of evidence, p. 1104.
5. Transcript of evidence, p. 1708.
6. Transcript of evidence, p. 1745.
7. Transcript of evidence, p. 1708.
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