SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE BILL 1985

Date Introduced: 27 March 1985
House: House of Representatives
Presented by: The Hon. B. Howe, M.P., Representing the Minister for Community Services

Purpose

To implement an agreement between the Commonwealth, the States and the Northern Territory relating to the provision of supported accommodation and related services. The agreement will operate from January 1985 to 30 June 1989.

Background

This program has been developed as a result of recommendations of a 1983 review of Crisis and Youth Accommodation. This review went to Cabinet in August 1983 and was the subject of a joint Ministerial Statement to the Senate.[1]

The review found that programs for the homeless were in need of co-ordination and simplification and proposed co-ordinated action by the Commonwealth and States. Following the joint Statement, consultations were held with the States and the Northern Territory and agreement was reached on the structure and administration of assistance. As a result of the review and consultations, the proposed Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) is intended to bring together the Homeless Persons Assistance Program, the Women's Emergency Services Program, the Youth Services Scheme and related sections of the Family Support Services and the Children's Services Program.

Under the Homeless Persons Assistance Act 1974 grants and subsidies are made to non-profit organisations and local authorities for capital and re-current costs, including salary costs, of providing accommodation, meals and care to homeless people.

The Women's Emergency Services Program was begun in 1983 and is designed to assist women's refuges, halfway houses and refuge referral services. The basic aim of the Program was to strengthen the viability of existing State-
funded services which were seen as being stretched to the limit.

The Youth Services Scheme has, since 1979, provided funding for emergency accommodation to adolescents up to 18 years of age. Funds are provided on a cost-shared basis with the States and the Northern Territory.

Outline

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) would have three sub-programs; General, Women's Emergency Services and Youth.

Payments would be made to non-government organisations and to local authorities.

The States and the Northern Territory would match certain parts of Commonwealth funding.

Administration, including program approval, will be jointly agreed upon and involve consultation with non-government groups.

The Commonwealth may enter into and amend agreements with a State or the Northern Territory. Such an agreement would be substantially in accordance with the Schedule set out in the Bill (clause 4).

The appropriation ($27.2m) for the financial year commencing 1 July 1985 is authorised under clause 6.

Main Provisions

The provisions discussed below relate to the form of agreement in the Schedule to the Bill.

Clause 4 sets out matters of interpretation including the organisations that will be eligible to receive assistance.

Details of coverage and the organisation of programs, sub-programs and services are set out in clause 7.

Administration arrangements are given in clause 8 and broadly allow for guidelines to be adopted and varied jointly by the Commonwealth Minister and State Ministers.

Financial assistance to each State and the Northern Territory is set out in clause 10. The amount will total $11.719m for the 6 months to 30 June 1985; at least $27.242m for the following 4 financial years with an option
for increased payment and, under sub-clause 10(4) an adjustment for salary growth. Advance notice by the Commonwealth would be given of financial assistance under sub-clause 10(5). Allocation between sub-programs will be determined by the Commonwealth after consultation with the State, under sub-clause 10(6).

The conditions attached to grants are set out in clause 11. Three major conditions are: that expenditure is for the purpose set out in the Schedule; organisations would be bound by the conditions of the agreement; and that a State or the Northern Territory would contribute to finances as set out in clause 12.

The financial contribution of a State or the Northern Territory would be required to match 90 per cent of the relevant Commonwealth grant (clause 12). Excluded from the calculation are specified amounts equivalent to Commonwealth payments under the Homeless Persons Assistance Program prior to 1 January 1985.

Clause 19 allows the provisions of the agreement to be varied by agreement between the parties.

For further information, if required, contact:

18 April 1985

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Reference
