



INFORMATION FOR SAAP SERVICE PROVIDERS: 2008/2009 Service Specification Template

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The 2008/2009 SAAP service specification template is now being used by DoCS Partnerships and Planning Teams when negotiating SAAP service specifications with individual service providers.

As part of the process of familiarising the SAAP funded services with the 2008/2009 SAAP service specification template the DoCS non-government organisations (NGO) Training Program developed a training session specifically focusing on the template. Training for SAAP service providers commenced in late January 2009.

Information about the training can be found on the DoCS website www.community.nsw.gov.au/ngotrainingprogram, as part of the NGO Short Course Calendar, January to June 2009.

Questions arising from the training sessions for SAAP funded services have been developed into Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that have been posted on the DoCS website. DoCS Regional staff and SAAP service providers are encouraged to regularly check the DoCS website for updates.

One of the more frequently asked questions in the training sessions is about the calculation of Service Levels and unit costs. The unit costs contained in the 2008/09 SAAP service specification template are indicative and represent the average amount that SAAP service providers might expend to provide one unit of a particular Service Activity. The unit costs were agreed with the three SAAP Peaks and the process of development included a survey across a range of SAAP service providers. The unit costs assist DoCS to work out what Service Level it is fair to ask a SAAP agency to provide given the total SAAP funding the agency receives.

It is important to remember that because the unit costs are indicative and are an average some services will find their costings fall outside these averages (under or over). For example, models based on congregate accommodation for large numbers of clients will tend to have a lower unit cost.

The negotiation of the service specification allows both parties to clarify the outcomes and Service Levels being purchased with the funding available and the results that the service will be required to report on. The negotiation should consider whether the particular service provider is typical or atypical in terms of an average unit cost. When completing the Service Levels table in the 2008/09 service specification, Community Program Officers (CPOs) and

service providers are to include the full range of Service Activities that the agency is currently providing.

It is acknowledged that some agencies might be currently providing a higher level of service (eg more bed nights or more case management support) than the level that DoCS can contract with them to provide based on the indicative unit costs and the total SAAP funding to the agency. The agency however will only need to report to DoCS on the contracted Service Level.

The 2008/09 SAAP service specification template and unit costs are being **trials** for a seven month period from December 2008 to June 2009. One of the aims of the trial is to assess how the 2008/09 SAAP service specification template and unit costs work in the real world. In late April 2009, DoCS and the three Peak organisations for SAAP funded agencies will be asking for feedback from the sector and Regional staff about the template and the unit costs. There is no expectation that any changes will be made to the way services operate during the trial period if they are currently operating within SAAP Guidelines.

The SAAP service specification template is an organic document that will continue to grow and evolve in response to changes in the sector and feedback from funded agencies, SAAP Peak organisations and the DoCS Partnerships and Planning Teams.

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