Child/Youth Homelessness - housing affordability, early intervention, and preventive care in Australia

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the child/youth homelessness including its preventive care. In Australia my previous paper showed that there were children aged 0-12 years accompanying their family who receive the services from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) in Victoria (34.9% across Australia in 2004-05) and that there were a lot of risks not only of homelessness but of other social problems such as alcohol abuse, substance abuse, family conflict/breakdown and so forth, around young disadvantaged people and these problem are complicatedly tangled with each other (SHIGA, 2008). Child and young people are vulnerable in the respect that their strength, psychologically as well as physically, is limited, and it is difficult for them to solve problems by themselves. For such brittle people, housing is indispensable as well as their food and clothing, and it seems to be more important because it is in their housing that they are able to fulfil their happy life and develop their essential 'home'. In the sense, it could be said that broad investigation into their housing is prior to other transitional factors into homelessness. In addition, from the same point of view of vulnerability of child/young people, prevention to or early intervention into their homelessness is crucial for their recovering.

This paper explores the housing support program implemented across Australia in brief at first, and then profile child/youth homelessness and housing policy. Based on that, it discusses early intervention and preventive methods followed by the conclusion.

2. The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), which commenced in 1985, is the jointly funded Commonwealth, State and Territory program that is Australia's primary response to the needs of people experiencing homelessness and those at-risk of homelessness. The aim of SAAP is to "provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services, in order to help people who are homeless to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence" (Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994), that is, it includes establishment of the capacity of clients to live independently of SAAP. (Erebus Consulting partners, 2004, p78) Three broad sub-sectors operate within the SAAP program: young people, women and children (particularly those experiencing violence) and generalist (predominantly men and families). SAAP clients are diverse, comprising a mix of ages, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Support and accommodation services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless are provided by non-government organisations (SAAP service providers) ranging from short-term crisis support to longer-term transitional services. Service provision is limited with some agencies to case-management of six weeks to three months. (Kunnen and Martin, 2005, p5) SAAP does not perceive homelessness solely as a housing issue but recognises the interplay of complex social, economic and individual factors that impact on pathways into and out of homelessness (MacKenzie & Chamberlain,

2003). Youth SAAP services comprise a range of types from crisis accommodation to long-term youth housing. (Maberley and Coffey, 2005, p15) Repeated use of service of SAAP should not be understood as a failure or deficiency of the service provider or of program "because the process of moving clients from entrenched homelessness to secure housing and participation in the life of the community often takes time and requires ongoing availability of support and accommodation." (Erebus Consulting partners, 2004, p78)

3. Definition of homelessness in the Act

The definition of homelessness stated in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Act (1994) is as follows;

"A person is homeless if, and only if, he or she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing. A person is taken to have inadequate access to safe and secure housing if the only housing to which the person has access:

a) damages, or is likely to damage, the person's health; or

b) threatens the person's safety; or

c) marginalizes the person through failing to provide access to:

(i) adequate personal amenities; or

(ii) the economic and social support that a home normally affords; or

d) places the person is circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing

The definition above is for judging eligibility for services of SAAP. To be noted, "homelessness is not just the absence of physical shelter but includes other considerations such as safety, nurturance and material resources" (Norris et al, 2005, p5). Children / young people are quite vulnerable when they are out of home, and the final lost of their 'home' means the lost of their family at the same time. The high rate of 'family brea kdown' as the reason of their homelessness illustrates a part of such backgrounds (Norris et al,

2005,. xv)

4. Features of children under SAAP

An accompanying child is defined, in SAAP services, as "a person who is under 18 years of age; receives support, accommodation or assistance from a SAAP agency; and has a parent or guardian who is a client of a SAAP agency" while an unaccompanied child is viewed as a person who lives independently or in their own right. (Norris et al, 2005, p6) Children usually range from 0 to 18 years of age according legal definition. However, the targeted population of young people could be from 12 to 24 years of age. It means that the ranges of children and young people overlap each other. (Norris et al, 2005, p6)

In 2004-05, there were 11,300 unaccompanied children aged 17 years and under who did not have supervision from their parents or others and 56,800 accompanying children under the SAAP services across Australia. (AIHW, 2006, p2) The circumstances of both children under the services of SAAP are similar and different in some respects. All of them are most likely to be geographically in the eastern states and their capital cities of Australia. (Norris et al, 2005,xii) Accompanying children are quite young compared with unaccompanied children who are almost adults (Table 1). It seems that younger children certainly depend on their family, and as they get older, they can make a decision of necessity. A number of studies indicate that teenagers usually have their first experience of homelessness when they were still at school (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2002, p28)

5. Characteristics of young people under SAAP

In 2001-02 period, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program provided support to approximately 11,100 young people under 25 of age in Victoria, Australia. This means that 38 per cent of the 29,000 clients accessed the homelessness services.

Table 1. Features of Accompanying/unaccompanied children (Norris et al, 2005,xiii; AIHW, 2006, p2)

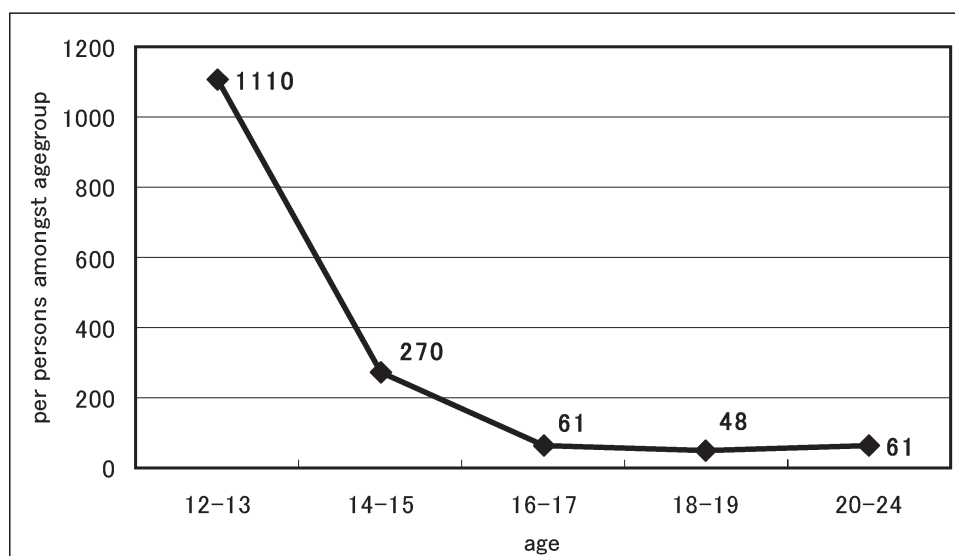|	Accompanying children	Unaccompanied children
Age	Under 12 years (88%)	14-17 years (92%)
Gender ratio	No difference	More females (62%)
Family relationship	Live in a two-parent family	Living with parents decreases with age
Accommodation	Private/public rental accommodation	N.A.
Legal process	N.A.	Protection/guardianship order

Fig. 1 Ratio of every one client to age group population (AIHW, 2006; the graph created by the auther)

There is remarkable increase in ratio of SAAP clients amongst teenagers ranging from 12 to 19 years (Fig.1). There is one client per 48 people in the age group of 18-19 years and the ratio is the highest. In addition, high rate in the age group 20-24 suggests the high transition from youth to adult homelessness, in other words, chronic homelessness. In general, young people in Australia tend to live longer with their family "often up to their mid-twenties when they are either working or completing study." (St. Luke's Youth Services, 2002, p6) There seems to be a same problematic reason of expensive housing market, but most of them are able to return to their home whenever they hope to after voluntary leaving home, unlike vulnerable and disadvantaged young people who are experiencing homelessness. To be noted, more young women used homeless services over the 12-month period compared with young men; one in every 62 in women to one in every 104 in men, respectively. For the reasons for seeking assistance, there are mainly three reasons; relationship or family breakdown, eviction or previous accommodation ended, and domestic violence.

6. Youth homelessness

Youth homelessness is defined as "the absence of secure, adequate and satisfactory shelter as perceived by the young person." At least one of the following conditions or any combinations of conditions should be operative (Zaman and Degagu, 2002, p7):

1. The absence of shelter
2. The threat of loss of shelter
3. High mobility in places of abode
4. Existing accommodation considered inadequate by the resident for such reasons as overcrowding, the physical state of the residence, lack of security of occupancy, or lack

of emotional support and stability in the place of residence

5. Unreasonable restrictions in terms of access to alternative forms of accommodation

Homelessness suggests lack of access to safe and secure housing as emphasized before. There is only inadequate access to housing which damages, or is likely to, the person's health; threatens the person's safety; marginalizes the person through failing to provide access to adequate personal amenities; (does not have) the economic and social support that a home normally affords; places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing. (Zaman and Degagu, 2002, p7)

There are various assistance or supports needed. For young people, it is at high risk of homelessness before establishing their own social support network (Table 2).

Within communities, there appears to be the lack of information and resources to support young homeless people while they are often attached to their communities. Community leaders, including religious ones, in minorities are aware of the problem of increasing homelessness, but they do not have "clear understanding of the complex dynamics that lead to homelessness and impact on a young person's life." (Zaman and Degagu, 2002, p29)

7. Pathway to homelessness

There found to be a high correlation between state care and later homelessness, and the concern has grown about the relation between care background and homelessness. If they have their own 'roof', care leavers frequently experience 'period of semi-homelessness', because of habitual moves between "shoddy bedsits, shared flats, squatting, saying with friends and relatives" (Owen, 2000, p46) This uncertainty leads to their anxiety, and to make matters worse, in turn the anxiety is more likely to be a reason of their thought about suicide, the high rate of attempted harm among young people in care, use or abuse of drug and alcohol. (Owen, 2000, p47)

The notion of a 'homeless career' shows that "the process of becoming homeless as people pass through various phases before they develop a self-identity as a homeless person." (MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 2003, p1)

There is the phase where young people become homeless but remain at school (Fig.2). Actions for early intervention should be taken in appropriate timing before the phase of 'homeless students.' To prevent the chronic homelessness, there need to be "opportunities for cross-Government collaboration to improve prevention, early intervention and homelessness responses for young people so that they are supported in their transition to adulthood". (Office of Housing, 2005, p3) As to be noted, transition to 'Chronic homelessness' means that child/youth homelessness goes adult homelessness.

There is not equivalent for the 'in and out' stage where children or young people stay in and away from their home for any family problems in the case of adult homelessness (Table 3). That is because "the loss of accommodation is similar to the permanent (family) break" in the

Table 2. Priority needs after becoming homeless (Zaman and Degagu, 2002, p24)

Material assistance	Advice/counselling support	Skills/know-how
■ Accommodation	■ doctor	■ getting back to school/further education
■ money	■ friends	■ understanding the system
■ food	■ help for mental stress	■ independent living skills
■ clothing	■ church	
■ transport fares	■ support services	

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      PHASES                          TRANSITIONS                  │
│   At Risk                                                         │
│                                                                   │
│                              ◄─────── Tentative break             │
│   In and out                                                      │
│                                                                   │
│   ─────────────────         ◄──────   Permanent break            │
│                                                                   │
│   Homeless student                                                │
│                              ◄──────   Dropping out of school     │
│                                                                   │
│   Homeless, unemployed                                            │
│                              ◄──────   Transition to chronicity   │
│   Chronic homelessness                                            │
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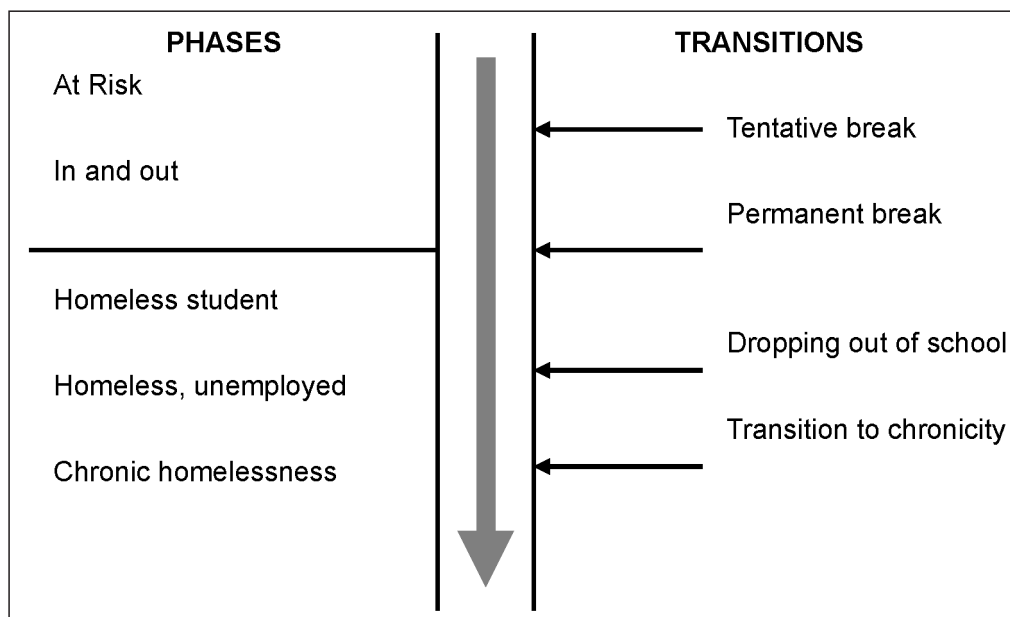
Fig. 2 Homeless Youth career (MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 2003, p16)

Table 3. Features of homelessness

	Phases	Episodes and Transitions	Vulnerability
Child homelessness	At risk in and out student homelessness long-term homelessness chronic homelessness	Family conflict or breakdown Tentative break Permanent break Dropping out of school Transition to chronicity	Quite high
Youth homelessness	At risk in and out student homelessness long-term homelessness chronic homelessness	Family conflict or breakdown Tentative break Permanent break Dropping out of school Transition to chronicity	Quite high
Adult homelessness	At risk long-term homelessness chronic homelessness	Family conflict or breakdown Tentative break Permanent break Transition to chronicity	High

adult homelessness.(Chamberlain and Johnson, 2002, p36) There seems to be a vicious succeeding chain of homelessness between generations which has an aspect of chronic poverty. In the sense, homelessness is the problem of family even though it seems to be an individual problem. To realise the comprehensive solution, these transiotions should be taken into account, from the past to the future in the family.

8. Affordable housing

For all people in hardship of homelessness, needless to mention, it is crucial for them to find housings they afford. However, it is more difficult to do so once they lose their housing partly because of the discrimination to homelessness and those who are homeless (CHP, 2002, p4-5).

Majority of those escaping from domestic violence or family conflict would seek independent housing in either the private rental market or

social housing for exit from homelessness services. According to the research by Hanover's Transitional Housing Management Service, however, three-quarters of single adults and single parent families faced an affordability problem that they paid more than 40% of their income on rent (Horn, 2002, p29), that is, they were under what is called 'housing stress' (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2004, p29), and the stress is now extending to moderate-income households that are not eligible for assistance under existing housing programs. (The Allen Consulting Group, 2004, p5) "The notion that every Australian has right to adequate, affordable accommodation is no longer viewed as sacrosanct" whilst there is the continuous great economic growth over 13 years (Morris, Judd and Kavanagh, 2005, p247) Current housing policy settings are failing to maintain housing affordable or secure for disadvantaged Australian households on low income. (Horn, 2002, pp30-31) Housing is the main item of the family budget, and without the appropriate assistance many low-income families could not access decent and affordable housing. Housing, now, could be "a key factor contributing to social inequality." (Arthurson and Jacobs, 2004, p31) This situation leads to social exclusion of those who require assistance of affordable housing but who, for one reason or another, are not in contact with the services. (Morris, Judd and Kavanagh, 2005, p248) Researchers increasingly argue that lack of affordable housing leads to 'social exclusion', and homelessness as social exclusion means that "solutions need to be much more comprehensive than if homelessness was seen solely as an issue to be tackled on its own" (Greenhalgh, 2004, p10) Policy solutions for homelessness in this context need to consider accommodation from the social circumstances and welfare of homeless people.

9. The lack of social housing

"Social housing played a key role in maintaining affordability and energy costs and providing security of tenure." (Arthurson and Jacobs, 2004, p31) In Australia, accessibility of social housing has been getting more difficult because of "the virtual freeze on the building of public housing". (Morris, Judd and Kavanagh, 2005, p246)

The indicator of social housing stock stated the drop by 1 per cent "from 6.1 per cent of all housing in 1996 to 5.1 per cent in 2003", and the government funding for the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) in 2004 drastically fell by 54 per cent in making it difficult to even maintain the existing stock adequately. (Morris, Judd and Kavanagh, 2005, p246)

In addition to the above, there is considerable evidence to suggest that young people, especially for those aged 16-20 years old, have particularly disadvantages in obtaining secure, adequate and affordable housing (CHP, 2002, p4). Some young people with low incomes have no choice but to share housing to afford the rent. This is due to tenancy legislation which restricts the tenancy rights of young people as well as the low supply of affordable housing in the private rental market, the short supply of social housing for young people, discrimination from real estate agents and landlords. (CHP, 2002, p4)

Actually, young people account only a small proportion in using social housing. For example, in Victoria, about 4 per cent of public housing tenants and 3 per cent of waiting for use are young people, respectively. Long waiting lists discourage many young people from applying. The need for a fixed address for correspondence also means many young people withdraw form the list even after they have applied because they are often highly mobile or homeless. Moreover, limited awareness of public housing also leads to the low numbers in public housing and on the waiting list. (CHP, 2002, p5)

The preference to accommodation of young people mainly depends on "where the accommodation was located" and "with whom they would live." This shows that the financial cost was not included in the criteria of preference because

they do not have to pay rent under assistance, but affordability is crucial in their future life. Needed is comparison between the preference during the supported period and that in independent living after leaving care, including the cases of housing arrangements breakdown. (St. Luke's Youth Services, 2002, p22)

10. Leaving care

The care for young people to prevent homelessness seems to have an aspect of child protection at the beginning of their support period. In the sense, it must be paid attention to that young people leaving the child protection be well-coordinated in planning to prevent them from having hardship of homelessness and to assist them to develop their independent living skill as like budgeting, shopping, cooking and so on. They seem to be very fundamental skills for living, but they are actually in lack of experiences of living not only due to their immatureness for age, but due to their previous disadvantaged life. To make the services effective, the massive and practical after-care is needed particularly for young people to live independently.

However, there is no provision within the Children and Young Persons Act (1989) that ensure ongoing support for young people when they leave care. The act never mentions that provisions after leaving care due to cease of the protection order while it describes the circumstances under which a child needs protection and the different orders that may apply. For many young people leaving care, this means transference into "unstable accommodation arrangements." (St Luke's, 2002, p14) In contrast, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2001 contains:

1. to delay the young people's discharge from care until they are prepared and ready to leave

2. to improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care

3. to improve the financial arrangements for care leavers

In addition, the Act states clearly the duties of local authorities in relation to young people leaving care, which includes the provision of after care accommodation and support up to the age of 21. It seems to have more effective and comprehensive commission for supportive practices. (St Luke's, 2002, p16) In leaving care, "young people face the challenge of how to make the transition from the role of the young person in care to that of adult out of care". (Owen et al, 2000, p34) They are required to be mature enough to live their life.

11. Early intervention

Preventive approaches should be explored for practical or effective earlier intervention. Prevention is most effective if it occurs early in the child's life and prior to the emergence of problem behaviour; at later stage prevention aims to stop the escalation of problems. (Withers and Russell, 2001, p28). As for young people, early intervention with families where a young person is at risk of homelessness also means prevention of episodes of homelessness. (Office of Housing, 2004, p11) In addition, early intervention has an aspect of most cost-effective approach to prevent homelessness, and therefore it has the appropriate timing to be implemented lest it goes in vain. (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2002, p36) And in general the strategies can be effective if people receive assistance before their housing crisis becomes acute. (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2002, p38) Ikuta (2005, p222) suggested that one people experience "tumble downstairs leading to homelessness," losing their jobs, homes and other resources. It is quite difficult for them to "crawl up stairs to their previous life" because each of the steps becomes higher in market economy. Therefore, early intervention is the key to prevent homelessness and deterioration of the problem.

There are two inter-connected roles that relate

to the character of early intervention and the complex issues that are involved in 'Reconnect early intervention services.' One is to provide young homeless people and their family with services of early intervention, and the other is to enhance the community to be capable of better early intervention. (Crane and Richardson, 2000, p15) It seems to be rational and practical method because there found to be the limited resource of young homeless people and local community where they belong is important to improve their situations. When young people newly experiencing homelessness could still have a relationship with their family, school or community, the early intervention programs concerning reconciliation and mediation can assist in re-establishing relationships that may allow young person to return home. On the other hand, it is more difficult to help young people who are out of home for longer periods re-establish family connections compared with those who have just left home. To realise the reconciliation of young people experiencing homelessness, the programs for prevention should be provided not only in youth refuges but also in appropriate agencies, and the program guidelines should pursue the effective and practical collaboration with each other, not independently nor separately of each other although voluntary sector organisations have traditionally had little reason to communicate each other and co-ordinate their activities because of competing for funding (Rugg, 1999, p123).

Chamberlain and Johnson (2002,p36-37) state that there are characteristics of successful early intervention. They are as follows:

1. to provide assistance to households when they are first at risk

2. to develop a high level of interpersonal skills with well-trained housing assistance workers

3. to provide a detailed knowledge of how the public and private housing systems work in their local community

4. to sufficient funding for agencies which provide early intervention services

These require a comprehensive and well-organised program for early intervention and its operators, including social workers, across service providers. There is the premise that all workers are trained and skilled for practices. At the same time, there are also two dilemmas of early intervention (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2002, p37):

1. resource allocation between households at risk and those that are homeless

2. resource allocation amongst households at risk

First dilemma is not the problem of dichotomy but of how to tailor the level of assistance to the level of demand. So, criteria of eligibility are important in decision-making. Second one is the problem of balance of allocated resource. Decision is processed considering the composition of the household and each household's ability to maintain the tenancy.

Moreover, there are some models and examples of good practice.

1. Housing First models
2. Concurrent approaches
3. Mental illness and homelessness
4. Special needs groups
5. Employment focus
6. Community strengthening and principles for responding to homelessness

As for "Housing First models", the model is based on the premise that vulnerable and at-risk people are more responsive to interventions after they are in their own housing, rather than whilst in temporary housing program. The approach emphasised the immediate return of people to independent living. The model briefly includes four stages; crisis intervention and short-term stabilisation, screening, intake and needs assessment, provision of housing resources, and provision of case management. (Kunnen et al, 2004, p18)

12. What young people think of and expect the service

There seem to be many constraints to achieve the aim of comprehensive support for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. However, to get the fruitful success and fulfilment, it is important to see the light of the needs of them. According to the research of Office of Housing (2004, p5-6), there are roughly five aspects of expectations of young people who are homeless:

1. Access to the services: it seems to be difficult for young people to ask for help
2. Service quality: young people tend to expect a high quality service and to be treated with dignity (p5). "They know their right and how they should be treated", then they need more information of available services. One of young clients suggested that some service agencies were quite negative to be accountable for the services like they never responded to any of 28 time callings for services from the client in two weeks.
3. Service workers: young people expect that workers involved in services "to be appropriately skilled, to follow up on their commitments to provide assistance, to act consistently with other workers within an agency, and to behave professionally and ethically".
4. Agency practices: young people are often frustrated at repeating their personal history to different workers. This could be solved by documenting their contact with the agency.
5. Service model: young people do not like moving and want to access long-term housing as early as possible in their contact with the service system. They do not like shared housing unless they have a choice. Young people worry about being left with bills for utilities or damage caused by other tenants, and do not like being housed with tenants who make them feel unsafe.

13. The role of school - its preventive care

What is the role of school where children and young people often have connections for long time over their childhood? Well-articulated debates on function or role of school seem to be limited, but schools can be places for effective early intervention and prevention and school based intervention is cost-effective although it is on the long-term basis. (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1998, p128; p148) Schoolteachers have their main task of education and their involvement in social problems of their students is limited. Therefore, schools and social work agencies must work closely together to provide a safety net for vulnerable students. Given such cooperative activities, schools could act as 'triggers' in strategies for early intervention in problematic behaviours at school such as bad performance at exams, quarrels with other students and so on, which are often early signs of children having serious difficulties at home. (Fitzpatrick, 2000, p144-145) Moreover, schools should partly function as worthy 'homes' to build self-esteem, communication and social skills, and their learning will contribute to prevention as outcomes of activities at school. The expected outcomes are as follows (Withers and Russell, 2001, p25):

1. prevention of the emergence of problem behaviour
2. prevention of the escalation (increasing severity and increasing diversity) of problem behaviours
3. reduction in severity and diversity of problem behaviours already established
4. enhancement of productive factors and resilience

As noted above, the role of school should be paid more attention to. Some features of detailed programs are explored below. (Withers and Russell, 2001, p32-35)

(1) Participation

Students and parents/carers participate in decision-making about the main aspects of entry

to, engagement in and leaving from the program. Important is that they positively decide their own or their family's behaviours rather than passively receive services.

(2) Learning experiences of high-risk youth

Transition learning centre should be funded. All components designed as essential learning experiences for high-risk youth are incorporated in the program of the centre; developing literacy levels, personal and social knowledge and skills; social cognitive capacities; vocational skills.

(3) Monitoring learning progress

Satisfactory learning progress in schools is regarded as one of the strongest factors involved in the development of bonding to school and increasing resilience. Poor academic performance and continual experiences of failure are linked to low self-esteem, truancy, homelessness, early school-leaving, poor employment opportunities and many other indicators of risk. Successful experiences in learning and its continuity are very important for young people who have experienced chronic powerlessness.

(4) Continuity of programs

Follow-up prevention programs needed be multiple during young people's development and schooling unlike the use of 'one-shot approach'. Comprehensive strategy should include building social skills to enable young people to be assertive and make informed decisions.

(5) Resourcing

The type of resources needed certainly include not only physical resources and funding but also human resources; skilled professionals, enthusiastic volunteers, and much knowledge of effective prevention and intervention strategies.

14. Effects of programs

From the viewpoint of coordination of programs, SAAP needs to develop much stronger connections with income security, employment and educational agencies, while improving relationships and collaborative arrangements with mental health, drug and alcohol, housing and child protection services. (CHP, 2004, p13) During the implementation of SAAP IV, there has been some disagreement about the locus of responsibility for research. Governance arrangements will also impact on the management and processes of the research program. To avoid duplication of contents of programs, SAAP should makes links across programs and systems, and then a fundamental review of research strategy would be required. (CHP, 2004, p21) For high-risk young people, two other aspects of 'connectedness' need to be emphasised: establishment of a continuous and constructive relationship with mature adults is to be encouraged; there is the need for follow-up contact, links and support after completion of a program or release from care. (CHP, 2004, p29) In general, the relationship of connectedness generates the social support in broad range of resources.

For change in multiple contexts, the programs should be designed to enhance the strength of children or young people, showing evidence of problematic behaviours in some cases. It is important to enhance cooperative relationships between the child and parent (family), and school, family and community relationships. (CHP, 2004, p29)

15. Conclusion

As mentioned above, the risk of homelessness for child/young people is getting higher in the rapidly changing society. They are more vulnerable than adults because their resources or experience is too limited to solve the problems in their living. For those who left care, it is sometimes viewed as positive forward step largely due to the sense of independence they gained when leaving care. In addition, there is an ironical and paradoxical construction that "street kids are resourceful in meeting their basic needs" because they can employ various methods in both legal and illegal activities. (Finkelstein, 2005, p65) However, there are misgivings about certainty, autonomy and morality of their life,

for the longer they stay homelessness, the worse their situation gets as they pass their 'young generation' (transition to chronicity).

To prevent the problems of child/young people at risk, resilience is important. Increasing resilience through the strengthening of protective factors, such as family and school connectedness, reduces the individual's vulnerability to risk factors. (Withers and Russell, 2001, p27) "The development of resilience is none other than the process of healthy human development - a dynamic process in which personality and environmental influences interact in a reciprocal, transactional relationship." (Withers and Russell, 2001, p9)

Early intervention is, cost-effective to almost every preventive strategy under shortage of funding, definitely important to such vulnerable persons with limited solutions. SAAP has played an important role in support for people experiencing homelessness. However, more practical and substantial methods should be developed referring to the past experience, and the role and scope of SAAP need to be clarified "on a continuum of prevention to crisis intervention". (CHP, 2004, p6) Families and schools should be corporative and pursue the synergy effects to enhance respective functions. The components could include individual parent/child units learning to work together; structured exercises with parents to strengthen family bonds; practice in communication between parents; self-help groups for parents; parents empowerment through involvement in meetings; parent / school / community collaborative teamwork.

SAAP services report that, despite their best efforts to create targeted service responses, the lack of affordable housing prevents many people who are homeless to make the transition to independent and stable living. Return rates within six or twelve months are on the increase in all states or territories. According to Strategic Framework for Community Housing in Australia 2004 - 2007, there are 5 primitive goals that address key importance to support the healthy development of community housing around Australia (Policy Advisory Committee, 2004, p11) One of them emphasises the promotion of investment and productive partnerships which leads to advancement of community housing across Australia. This approach is rational because housing policy and program debates have remained episodic and fragmented, and "homelessness policy focuses mainly on service development" other than development of public housing for low-income households. (McClelland and Smyth, 2006, p193) To achieve the goal, it is needed to develop "opportunities for productive dialogue with homelessness and crisis support services". (Policy Advisory Committee, 2004, p12) It is not clear in what 'productive dialogue' means, but it will be expected that affordable housing be secured for people experiencing homelessness. As for young people, housing as 'home' plays great part of prevention of homelessness and deterioration of problems. All problems are not always solved if they can have their own housing, but problems never decrease or are ameliorated if they do not.

To make the profile or features of homelessness clearer, the research and analysis methods should be considered. 'Counting homeless project' by Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has analysed the target population producing just simple tables to show the response from participants, but it has been possible to make cross-tables with various factors and demographic data such as age, gender, academic background and so forth, to grasp the characteristics of the population by using descriptive epidemiology method. This kind of quantitative research certainly contributes to more practical and effective assistance because it produces hypotheses that which people are vulnerable to homelessness.

Agencies targeting young people (36% of agencies) received the largest proportion of SAAP recurrent allocations, with 35% of the funds

allocated to agencies (111.4 million AUD) (AIHW, 2006, p4), and the Victorian government has allocated $10.81 million over four years from 2006-07 in capital and ongoing funds to enhance the innovative Youth Futures Program and allied program for improvement for housing for young people. There are seemingly ample funds to better the youth homelessness, but the government should consider the homeless students or students at risk of homelessness to prevent, and continuance and continuation of appropriate assistance between agencies and schools, too. That will bring desirable result to child/youth homelessness.

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