



Census Working Paper 97/1

**1996 CENSUS:
HOMELESS ENUMERATION STRATEGY
(EVALUATION OF THE FIELD OBJECTIVE)**

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1. INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday August 6, 1996, Australia held its 13th national Census of Population and Housing. The 1996 Census was the first to target Australia's homeless population in a special enumeration strategy.

The Homeless Enumeration Strategy (the Strategy) had two major objectives. The first was the Field Objective; maximising the coverage of the population including counting the homeless in the Australian census. This paper focuses on the Field Objective. It outlines the reasons why a strategy was necessary, how the Strategy was formulated, how it was implemented, and how, using the lessons learned from the 1996 Census, the Strategy can be improved for the 2001 Census.

The second objective of the Strategy was the Data Objective; providing information from the census to policy makers and service deliverers on the number and characteristics of homeless people. At the time of writing, data from the census is being processed and is scheduled for release later this year. Analysis of this data should allow further evaluation of the Strategy, in particular the extent to which the Data Objective was achieved. Such evaluation is left to future working papers.

Crucial to both these objectives was the selection of a definition of which people census operations would target under the Strategy. The definition adopted grouped homeless people into four categories; three of 'relative homelessness' and one of 'absolute homelessness' (people living without a roof over their heads). Mainstream census field operations were used to target the relatively homeless, and, as a result, many of the special operations discussed in this paper primarily deal with enumerating absolutely homeless people.

Indications are that the 1996 Census was the most effective yet in enumerating Australia's homeless population. However, as it was the first time that a national homeless enumeration strategy had been attempted, there will be room to improve the Strategy for the 2001 Census. The recommendations made with regard to the Field Objective for 2001 fall into two categories.

The first category deals with providing more detailed instructions to collection staff. These instructions include suggestions for organising special 'field offices' on census night, standard procedures for raising dummy forms and suggestions for an extended time limit for obtaining responses.

The second category of recommendations deals with more clearly defining the roles of all census staff involved in the Strategy. These recommendations establish clear goals and responsibilities for all levels of the census staff structure. This should ensure a more consistent approach to the Strategy in all areas.

2. HOMELESS DATA IN AUSTRALIA : BACKGROUND

2.1 The Enumeration of Homeless people in past Censuses

The aim of every Australian census is to count all people who are in Australia at a given point in time. Therefore, standard procedures, used prior to the introduction of the Strategy in 1996, would have counted some homeless people. These measures are outlined below.

2.1.1 Questions on the Form to Identify the Homeless

In censuses prior to 1996, no questions were included on the form to specifically try to identify respondents who were homeless. The closest that any questions have come to this goal was in the 1933 and 1947 Censuses, when a question asked for the 'number of persons (if any) who slept out throughout the year on verandahs (not enclosed sleep-outs)'.

The usual residence question has the potential to provide an indication of homelessness. However, from 1976 to 1991, the question included the instruction that if a respondent had no usual residence they should tick the 'this address' box. This meant that such people were coded as having a usual residence at their place of enumeration.

In 1986 a Dwelling Structure category 'Improvised Home' was provided on the form for the collector to mark. There were no other categories on the form which related to homeless people in any way. This category was changed to 'Improvised home, campers out' in 1991, however, there was no distinction made between homeless people with no where to go and those who were camping out.

2.1.2 Collector Procedures

From 1976 to 1991, collectors were instructed to seek out all people camping or sleeping out by visiting 'any places in your Collection District (CD) on census night where it is likely that persons may be sleeping out, e.g. camping areas, park benches, derelict buildings etc.' If collectors found such a person, they were instructed to issue a household form and, if necessary, help them to fill out the form on the spot. The collector was instructed to write 'camper out' on the completed form. The form was then assigned a non-private dwelling type of 'Campers Out'.

Several factors contributed to a decision by some collectors not to follow this instruction. These included a belief that there were no homeless people or campers out in their area, or fears that their own safety was at risk. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) would not condone the practise of sending a collector into an area where they feared for their safety, so if a collector did not feel comfortable walking around their CD at night they would not be forced to do so. Special efforts to locate and enumerate homeless people, such as those outlined below, did sometimes succeed in bridging the gap in coverage caused by this problem.

2.1.3 *Special Enumeration Operations*

In 1986, at least one Divisional Manager (DM, the position equivalent to the 1996 Field Manager) is documented as having formulated additional measures to enumerate the homeless. In the division of St Kilda in Melbourne, the DM hired a caravan and 'set up shop' on census night providing refreshments and handing out forms.

In 1991, the number of additional strategies employed by DMs to enumerate homeless people increased. Specific examples of these strategies were:

Collingwood Census Division, Melbourne : **The homeless people in the division were predominantly homeless males. The DM made contact with organisations that provided services for the homeless within the division. The DM and Group Leader (GL) were present at these locations when meals were provided. They issued forms and provided assistance to complete the form when required.**

Melbourne Census Division : **In this division the strategy for enumeration of 'street kids' involved the Open Family Foundation, who owned a bus which was donated specifically for use by the street kids. On census night the bus moved to various city locations equipped with items to give away to the homeless kids that filled out a form. Street teams also scouted around the city on foot to locate homeless kids to include in the census.**

St Kilda Census Division, Melbourne : **Street kids also formed a large part of the homeless population in this division. Following the 1986 census approach, the DM set up and attended a caravan on census night. Refreshments were provided by local businesses, and four street kids were employed as Assistant Collectors (ACs).**

Sydney Census Division : **After consulting with various interest groups, it was decided to target those homeless people who would not have access to accommodation with friends, in squats or alternative forms of crisis housing. This meant focusing on people sleeping out in a park, garden, parking station, railway station or street. Various aid organisations helped to identify places where there would be concentrations of such people on census night, and a special form was designed. The form was front and back only, had large black and white print and did not look 'too official'. Six teams of three collectors searched the designated areas, and a base was set up at the Sydney City Mission. Three volunteer welfare workers were employed as ACs and helped in the search. Safety precautions undertaken included alerting local police to what the collectors would be doing. The DM hired a mobile phone, and collectors were given a phonecard and change and instructed to call in every hour. Collectors were also told not to approach any large groups in the parks.**

The procedures in use in the censuses before 1996 were consistent with the main census objective to count everybody in Australia. These procedures would have meant that whenever they could be located, homeless people would have been included in the count. In addition, the strategies above would have been particularly successful in locating homeless people in some regions.

However, there were no instructions for collection staff regarding special homeless enumeration arrangements, so the coverage of the homeless population was not consistent. The other major problem for users of data relating to the homeless, was that the only way to identify homeless people in the data would have been to look for people camping out in particular areas with little income, as no specific questions identified people as homeless.

2.1.4 Difficulties With the Enumeration of Homeless People in a Household Based Collection.

It may be apparent from the accounts above that there are several difficulties confronting any agency, such as the ABS, which attempts to enumerate the homeless population in a household based survey or census.

The first, and most obvious, of these is that homeless people living on the streets do not have access to a home. For this reason, the standard enumeration procedures of delivering forms to homes for completion on census night, or interviewing household members, will not reach homeless people.

The alternative is to locate such people on the streets. However, identification of homeless people is not always straight forward. This type of operation is also costly, as the best time to find and identify homeless people is often late at night, and collectors or interviewers can not be sent into potentially dangerous situations unaccompanied.

Further problems arise from a lack of background data upon which to base such operations. And finally, even if all of these difficulties are overcome, homeless people are not always willing to answer questions put to them by people who do not have their trust.

For all these reasons, the bulk of data available on Australia's homeless population has come from surveys conducted by services providers. However, some ABS data, from both the census and other surveys, has been used by researchers to attempt to estimate the homeless population.

2.2 Homeless data collected by other agencies

A number of agencies other than the ABS have been involved in conducting research into homelessness in Australia. Most of the studies conducted have focussed on a homeless population with a particular set of characteristics in a particular region. This makes estimation of the total number of homeless people in Australia very difficult.

An example of the type of survey that has been undertaken is the New South Wales Youth Accommodation Association Census in 1990. This concentrated on requests for accommodation made by young people to youth accommodation services.

National collections relating to homelessness have also been undertaken, generally by the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The SAAP National Client One Night Census was first held in November 1989, and then biannually from November 1990. This collection aimed to 'provide a profile of all clients accommodated by service providers funded under the SAAP.' (Merlo et al.) Service providers at each accommodation outlet were instructed to fill in a form for every adult and unaccompanied child. The number, ages and sex of accompanied children were also recorded.

A two week census was also conducted biannually via SAAP service providers. This survey aimed to obtain information about the utilisation of, and demand for, SAAP funded accommodation outlets over two week period. Service providers were asked to record the number of arrivals, departures, total numbers accommodated, and the number of people unable to be accommodated. (Merlo et al.)

Special supplementary surveys were also conducted during the period in which the one night and two week censuses were held. However, the data quality of all these collections was questioned by an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare review as a result of 'questionable survey designs and methodologies, data definitions and collection procedures that are not standardised, and shortcomings in database maintenance'. (Merlo et al.) These collections have now been replaced by new collection activities.

The SAAP National Data Collection began on 1 July 1996. Once again it is proposed that several different types of collection strategies will be used including;

- a an ongoing client collection which will replace the one night collection. This collection will use an alpha code to link service information to an individual without identifying that individual. This should lead to improved estimates of the number of people using SAAP services.
- b a casual client collection; an annual collection to calculate resources used on casual client services
- c an annual turn away collection

(from the SAAP Data and Research Resource Folder)

Once again, these collections focus on people who use SAAP services. This data will provide useful indicators of the numbers and characteristics of homeless people, but not a complete estimate of Australia's homeless population.

In addition to formal studies and surveys, a number of service organisations collect their own data for administrative purposes. For example, the Homeless Persons Information Centre in Sydney provided collection staff with figures on the number of calls for assistance they received in the previous year. This information also incorporated age range and geographic data which could potentially be very useful in targeting census collection activities.

There is obviously no one complete source of data on homelessness in Australia. However, data collected from all the sources listed above, and the many other sources that have not been mentioned here, could be used to give census collection staff a better understanding of the size and characteristics of the homeless population in their area with which to plan their homeless enumeration activities.

3. THE 1996 HOMELESS ENUMERATION STRATEGY

3.1 *The Development Process*

The ABS was anxious to ensure that the enumeration of the population in the 1996 Census was as complete as possible. The initial homeless strategy document arose from a need to provide a basis for discussion, with interested parties, of strategies for developing relevant procedures for the enumeration of homeless people.

It was noted at the outset of development of the Strategy that it was 'not proposed that the ABS publish, as census output, estimates of the number of homeless people'. What was intended was to enumerate all Australians, and to do this 'in such a way that data from the census will be of greater utility to analysts with capacity to interpret the data and produce authoritative estimates.'

From the outset, it was also clear that for the Strategy to succeed, a definition was required of exactly which people would be regarded as homeless. The definition of homelessness which was adopted was proposed by Chamberlain and McKenzie. It defines four levels of homelessness, as outlined in the table below.

Table 1: Definitions of categories of homelessness proposed by Chamberlain & McKenzie

Attribute	Classification
Housed but without conditions of 'home' e.g. security, safety or in conditions of adequate standard	Third degree relative homelessness/inadequate housing /incipient homelessness
People constrained to live permanently in single rooms in private boarding houses	Second degree relative homelessness
People moving between various forms of temporary or medium term shelter such as refuges, hostels, boarding houses or friends	First degree relative homelessness
People without an acceptable roof over their heads, living on the streets, under bridges, deserted buildings	Absolute homelessness

People in the three categories of relative homelessness were to be included in the Strategy, but would be enumerated by mainstream operations. The fourth category comprises absolutely homeless people (i.e. those without a roof over their heads) and it is these people who would only be reached by special field procedures.

Discussions were held with a number of organisations that deal with the homeless. These commenced in Melbourne in August 1994, with a meeting held to discuss the draft strategy document. This meeting was attended by ABS staff members and representatives of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, Hanover Housing Services, the Australian Institute of Family Studies, the Open Family Foundation and Melbourne City Mission. The next meeting was held in Perth in September 1994, and this time ABS staff were joined by representatives of the Perth City Mission, the West Australian Council on Social Services and the Department for Community Development.

At both of these meetings the participants shared their views on the proposed Strategy, and indicated what type of data they would hope to see come out of such an exercise. Problems that would be likely to occur in reaching the homeless, and the types of output which would be obtained from the Strategy, were also discussed.

A meeting was also held with the Department of Housing and Regional Development in December 1994, to discuss the involvement of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) in the Strategy. All the contacts made in this initial stage formed the basis for a networking approach which was central to both the development of the Strategy and its implementation.

Other papers on homelessness, and the types of strategies employed to count homeless people in the Censuses of other countries, were also considered. In particular, the experience of the United States Bureau of the Census (USBC) was seen to be relevant to development of the Australian Strategy. The USBC had made a particularly large effort to enumerate the homeless as part of their 1990 Census. This was largely a result of legal action taken over the number of people who were missed in the previous census.

A copy of the 1996 Census Strategy for Enumeration of Homeless people is included as an appendix to this document.

3.2 Strategy Objectives and Options Towards Achieving Them

The objectives of the Strategy were given in the strategy document as follows:

The Field Objective : maximising the coverage of the population including counting the homeless in the next census of Australia.

The Data Objective : providing information from that census to policy makers and service deliverers on the number and characteristics of homeless people.

A list of options towards achieving the Field Objective was provided in the strategy document. Most of these options (outlined in detail below) became part of the Field Manager (FM) and Census Management Unit (CMU) manuals. Options towards the Data Strategy were also given in the strategy document, and these primarily involved the use of existing techniques to cross-tabulate data, thereby identifying people in the four categories of homelessness. Such work will be undertaken and evaluated at a later date, and is outside the scope of this paper.

However, it should be noted that there were two changes to form design suggested as part of the Data Objective, both of which were implemented in the 1996 form. The first was to include an instruction to respondents who had no usual address to write 'no usual address' as their response to the usual residence question. This was a very significant change. In previous censuses, respondents who had no usual address were instructed to answer the question as if the address at which they were counted was their usual address. Interestingly, in 1991, 2189 people overrode these instructions, and said they had no usual address and were coded as such. Preliminary figures for 1996 based on the new question are already showing that the number of people who regard themselves as having no usual address is much larger than the 1991 figure.

The second change was to amend the name of one of the dwelling structure categories to 'improvised home, tent, sleepers out'. The motivation for this change was to adopt a terminology which was more appropriate to homeless people than the 1991 category of 'improvised home, campers out'.

The following paragraphs are taken from the Homeless Enumeration Strategy document. They formed the 'Options Towards the Field Objective'.

- (i) Establish contact with State and/or Local Government Agencies responsible for licensing accommodation likely to cater for the relative homeless. This contact should be undertaken well before census date to ensure that all such abodes are included in the list of Non Private Dwellings (NDPs) provided to FMs. It would be helpful to also contact the non-government sector, especially SAAP funded non government organisations, to assess whether there are a significant number of establishments not covered by registration requirements.
- (ii) Investigate ways of specifically identifying the types of NDPs used in defining the relatively homeless which can be practically implemented by collectors, special collectors and supervisory collection staff.
- (iii) Make contact with groups providing other services for the homeless (e.g. provision of meals; mailbox services) to gain their support in contacting the people who use their services on census night. Specifically seek the assistance of these groups to identify hang-outs/skid rows/drinking trees etc. which may require additional staff to be engaged.
- (iv) Engage members of the homeless community to enumerate 'difficult' areas on census night.
- (v) Consider establishing field offices on census night in areas where homeless people are likely to be encountered.
- (vi) Give attention to the Homeless Enumeration Strategy in all other strategies: in particular recognise the inter-relationship between the hard-to-enumerate visitor section of the population and relative homelessness.
- (vii) Use all opportunities with communications media, and contact with the homeless community to "spread the word" about the importance of participation in the census.

In addition to these options the strategy document noted that :

'In all of the above it must be recognised that not all of the situations in which homeless people are encountered will be pleasant (or safe). It would be unprofessional not to recognise that a high proportion (up to 40% has been quoted) of the 'traditional' homeless have a history of psychiatric problems and/or substance abuse. The safety of collection staff will be of paramount importance to ABS and where a situation looks dangerous collectors will be advised to back off. It is hoped that the indirect methods, soup kitchens, mail boxes etc. will provide back-up to overcome these potential losses.'

3.3 *Preparations to Implement the Strategy in the Field*

Central to the Strategy was the idea that neither the census team in Central Office, nor the Census Management Units (CMUs) in each state, would be prescriptive about the 'best' way to reach homeless people. However, a focused approach was clearly required to reach homeless people, and it was decided that this should be the responsibility of Field Managers.

The Strategy was mentioned in the training material of all collection staff. More specifically, the strategy document was given as an appendix to the CMU manual, and some of the options towards the Field Objective were included in the CMU and FM manuals.

As in previous Censuses collectors were also instructed to visit places in their CD on census night where they would be likely to find persons sleeping out.

4. THE HOMELESS STRATEGY IN THE FIELD

In the weeks following the 1996 Census, contact was made with a sample of Field Managers (FMs) and Group Leaders (GLs) to determine what the experience with the Homeless Enumeration had been in their Field Management Areas (FMAs). This information has been amalgamated with FM, Census Management Unit (CMU) and debriefing reports to form a picture of the homeless enumeration across Australia. It is not possible to include all the experiences of collection staff in this report, however, the following sections provide examples of what occurred in each state and territory. Examples of field activities are listed under the names of the census FMAs in which they took place.

The accounts below primarily deal with efforts to enumerate the absolutely homeless, as this was the group that most special procedures focussed on. In general, feedback suggests that standard NPD procedures worked well to enumerate people in refuges, boarding houses and so on. It is hoped that relatively homeless people in these types of accommodation will have taken the opportunity to identify themselves as having no usual address, and early indications are that this has indeed occurred.

4.1 *New South Wales*

4.1.1 *Census Management Unit Involvement in the Strategy*

Staff of the CMU made contact with The Homeless Persons Information Centre (HPIC) of the Sydney City Council well before the census. The HPIC were keen to be involved in efforts to improve the count. One of the functions of the HPIC is to take phone calls from homeless people, and match them up with the type of assistance they require, via liaison with the various welfare agencies that operate in New South Wales. The bulk of these calls deal with people in the inner city or metropolitan regions. The HPIC was therefore able to provide a list of organisations that provide free or cheap meals in the inner city region of Sydney.

Attempts were made to locate similar food services in the rest of NSW. It was felt that trying to count people when they were obtaining food would be the most efficient way of locating people in the target population. A summary of these attempts is given below :

The Smith Family (Head office) : A representative said they did not operate any soup kitchens or mobile food services, as this is not the kind of assistance they provide.

Lifeline (Head Office) : Also said they did not provide any food related services. However another source suggested that a free food bus was run by Lifeline in the Newcastle area, and so the Newcastle Lifeline office was contacted. Unfortunately the bus had ceased operation, but a staff member at the Lifeline Newcastle offered to supply a list of other Lifeline offices in NSW. Every office in NSW was contacted, however none of these knew of any soup kitchens, mobile food services or mobile needle exchanges being run in their area by any organisation.

The Salvation Army (Head Office) : Several attempts were made to get in touch with the one person who knew what food services were being run by the Salvation Army in NSW.

This did not prove to be possible. Fortunately the major services provided by the Salvation Army in the Sydney region were listed on the HPIC listing.

St Vincent de Paul Society (Head Office) : The services this organisation operates which provided free or cheap meals were already included on the list provided by the HPIC.

In the course of investigating these services, two more mobile food buses were identified, one in Bankstown and one in Coffs Harbour. Both these possibilities were followed up. The person who had been running the Coffs Harbour bus explained that the service had closed down, but he was hoping to start it up again in a few months time. The Bankstown service had also ceased operation.

It was envisaged that collection staff would follow the Mission Beat bus which operates out of the Sydney City Mission. However, after discussion with the operators of the service it was decided not to pursue this option, as standard procedures would reach the clients of the service. The bus picks up people on the streets and takes them to emergency accommodation, where they would have been given a form to fill out in line with standard procedures. Attempting to obtain responses from them while they were on the bus would, therefore, be likely to have resulted in double-counting.

The people running the "St Vinnies for Youth" Food Van were happy for collection staff to follow their bus to The Wall and Central Station, but wanted them to keep enumeration activities separate to theirs. It was agreed that collection staff would meet in Marrickville, just before the bus started its run, and follow it from there. With the help of the FM for Sydney, a group of staff was organised to enumerate the people using the service on census night.

It was decided that a short form would be produced to aid in obtaining responses from the homeless people that were located. The reasons for this were that people who use a mobile food service or soup kitchen do not stop for long, they are generally suspicious of 'the Government', and a standard census form can be intimidating from this perspective. The 1991 report on the homeless enumeration had indicated that a short form had been used in Sydney in 1991, and that one reason for its success was that it 'did not look too official'.

The short form was designed to be filled out by the collection/interviewing staff. It included only nine questions. In line with concerns about double counting the first question to be asked by interviewers was 'Has this person already filled out a 1996 Census form or are they likely to be filling out a census form later tonight?' Other questions such as age and sex were included. The full form is included as an appendix to this document. A question on income was included on the form, to try to establish the extent to which the absolutely homeless located had access to pensions or any other form of income. In all cases the questions themselves were kept as close as possible to the standard questions on the household form.

4.1.2.1 Sydney CBD

Collection staff followed the bus to its first location, 'the Wall' near Green Park on Victoria Rd, arriving shortly after 9.00 pm. They had been told that one of the social workers would be willing to help point out the people who were known to be absolutely homeless. The area was known for the young male prostitutes that work there, and the social worker took one member of the collection team to try to get responses from these people. Most of the people located were not willing to answer any questions.

Quite a large number of other people had turned up as soon as the bus arrived. On several occasions, people declined to answer the questions saying that they had already filled out a census form somewhere else, but gave no indication where this might have been. In some cases, however, after they heard what questions were being asked, and that their mates were happy to answer, the same people would come up and say that they had lied earlier, and that they hadn't really filled out a form at all.

Gaining the trust of these people seemed to be the most important part of the whole operation. Some people seemed to find a female interviewer less threatening. The census windcheater was also a big help, as it clearly identified staff as being from the census (and not the police). The most common concern expressed was that collection staff would pass the information collected on to the police or the Department of Social Security (DSS). The bus staff also turned out to be very helpful, calling out as people got their food 'Has everybody been Censured?'

In total about 17 completed forms were obtained from this stop, and 20 were gathered from the next stop at Central Station. A couple of people were also located near the Devonshire St Tunnel, and staff also found quite a large group of older men at the bus station on the other side of Central Station. Unfortunately these men were not approachable, and one of them was quite hostile. Once again, if someone seemed happy to answer the questions others would follow, but the opposite was also true.

In cases like these where staff couldn't approach people, and it was obvious that they would not be completing a form anywhere else that night, they were counted, their sex noted, and their age was approximated where possible. Staff also checked other likely areas, but no other people were located.

Measures were also put in place to try to count homeless people the day after census. Once again the HPIC was involved. The five staff who take calls for assistance were signed up as assistant collectors and were given shortened forms to take responses on. Three forms were completed in this way.

Most of the places on the list of organisations that provide free or cheap meals provided breakfast and lunch as well as dinner. All of these organisations were contacted, and all were receptive to the idea of someone coming around at meal times the day after census, to ask people if they had already filled in a form, and ask them some questions if they had not. Unfortunately, it was only possible to organise a few staff to go to the soup kitchens that had been contacted, so not all of them were covered. The success of this approach varied widely from one establishment to another. At 'The Station', 35 people said they had not filled out forms, although many of these didn't wish to respond.

Owing to the limited area which was able to be covered on census night, it was felt that some effort should also be made to cover the Kings Cross area. Once again a team of four interviewers was organised, and they met on Wednesday night (7/8/96) at 9.00 pm.

They started by walking to the police station to let them know they would be in the area, and see if the police had any local knowledge of where homeless people might be found. After some discussion with superiors, the officer at the desk advised that staff would be more likely to find people at Matthew Talbot Hostel rather than actually sleeping rough. Owing to the fact that this establishment had already been covered by NPD procedures, the team continued their search, and, after some perseverance, several people were found sleeping rough.

When homeless people were located they reacted in much the same way as people had the night before. Once they established that the collectors were not connected to the police they were quite helpful. The rest of the evening was spent checking parks and other likely spots around the area for anyone spending the night outside. There were some places that staff couldn't approach, such as an abandoned building which was clearly being used as a squat. In total, responses were obtained from 17 people in the Kings Cross area, and several others were counted.

In total, 97 short forms were filled out in these operations in the Sydney CBD area, and another sixty people were counted who could not be approached. This shows that there is definitely a homeless population that would not have been counted in the census by standard procedures. Given the small geographic area that was covered by the activities outlined above, the number of people in the Sydney region sleeping rough could well be much larger.

One final point that came to light during these operations, was that an arrangement has been made in the Sydney City area which precludes shelters from providing food to more people than they are able to provide beds for. This arrangement came into existence when residents complained about the number of people who were coming into their area to be fed at a particular shelter. What this means is that in 1996 the number of homeless people counted at shelters may not have been as high as it was in 1991.

4.1.2.2 Maitland

Contact was made with local organisations to establish areas of priority and suitable strategies.

Group leaders rang shelters to check on how many occupants they had, and ascertained that the clientele had moved on. Other local homeless hang-outs were identified and these were checked with little result. A group of 'street kids' said to be living in the local marina could not be found. Areas underneath the TAFE and schools were also checked and no one was found in these locations.

Cars on the riverfront at Port Stephens were also checked with no positive result, although this may partly have been due to checks being completed too early in the evening, at around 9 pm. The showground was also checked to no avail. There were reports of a group of six youths living in old cars in the state forest. This site was checked but again no one was found. It was well known in the region that there was a family living in a tepee, however, upon checking they too had moved.

Overall it appeared that there were not many absolutely homeless in the region, with only about 5 or 6 homeless people located in Port Stephens.

One theory put forward to explain the absence of greater numbers of homeless people was that they had moved north, or into accommodation of some sort, to avoid the winter. People may, for example, have moved into derelict houses, but examples of such places could not be found. It could also have been possible that people avoided being found.

Also, several new refuges have been opened in this area since 1991, including a youth refuge. There is also a men's and family refuge in Maitland where up to six families are housed. This lead the FM to believe that there may have been a shift from absolute to relative homelessness in the area.

4.1.2.3 *South Coast*

The biggest problem was finding out how many homeless people were in the area. Some reports placed the number of homeless people around Nowra at 1,600. The FM spoke to the police, DSS and St Vincent de Paul to try to establish the correct estimate. The estimates provided varied, with the police saying there was nothing like 1,600 homeless people in the area.

It was thought that some homeless people would be located near the river in caves. Others were thought to live around Bomaderry in Parklands and at the train station. Forms were left at the St Vincent de Paul drop in centre. Attempts were made to spread the word about census, particularly that information wasn't given to the DSS or the police, and posters were also made and left with St Vincent de Paul.

On census day, and later that night, a team of collectors went out to try to find homeless people. In Bomaderry many kids were found who said that they had filled a form in at home on census night. Collection staff checked these addresses after census and found that these people weren't actually on forms. Where possible, dummy forms were raised, with 25 people added to the count in this way.

The police were approached to accompany census staff to more secluded areas to look for homeless people but the police declined to help. This may have been a good thing however, as, in another area, four collectors located a group of street kids who had acknowledged that they were sleeping rough. When the group leader appeared, dressed casually, but 6'3" and 'looking' like a policeman, all the street kids took off, and they had not yet completed forms. Even the census identification tag was reported to look too much like police identification. What the tags actually represented was irrelevant to the kids who couldn't, or wouldn't, read them.

St Vincent's gave out 20 forms but none were returned. Another shelter was also approached before census night. This seemed to frighten many kids away, and on census night the shelter was quite empty.

No one really knows the true homeless figures for this region, but the FM guessed that around 300-500 people may be homeless around Bomaderry and Nowra. St Vincent de Paul agreed that this figure was reasonable. The police thought the number was actually around 10, however, census staff saw more than this number of people in Bomaderry alone.

4.1.2.4 *Blue Mountains*

As the Salvation Army have the confidence of the local homeless population, it was felt that they were in the best position to obtain the cooperation of these people in completing forms. Staff of the Salvation Army were asked to be special collectors. Before the census they broadcast the message to homeless people that it was to their benefit to be counted. The Salvation Army also set up a soup kitchen near a local park in Katoomba, and distributed forms. They jokingly said to their customers 'no form, no meal'. Around two dozen forms were obtained from this exercise.

Hostels in the region were also co-operative, as were the police. The work of welfare organisations in the area was found to be very decentralised, and there were many volunteers involved in these services. Notwithstanding these factors, most of the people involved in the enumeration managed to get responses to at least the first few questions from people they approached.

In contrast to this level of cooperation, one of the local councils was unhelpful to the point of being uncooperative. They thought there were no homeless in the area. Although it is very cold in the region, people can be found sleeping in boxes. About six people were also found in the Richmond area at a riverbank. This is an important lesson from the 1996 enumeration, as people in a wide range of organisations are all too willing to believe there is no homeless problem in their area.

4.1.2.5 *Campbelltown*

The FM spoke to the police before the census to try to establish the size of the local homeless problem, but they could not say what that might be.

Two organisations were identified in the area. The first was the Missionbeat bus. About two nights before the census the clients of the service disappeared, and census workers could obtain no explanation of where the people may have gone.

The second was a Barnardo's outreach complex in Campbelltown, called the Drum Cafe. At the cafe, homeless people can leave their belongings in a locker, and play pool, write letters or be involved in other activities. A special collector was not appointed to the centre, as it was felt that this would be too intimidating. Instead, notices about the census were left around the building and in the locker room, with a collector scheduled to visit the centre the morning after census to pick up the forms.

On 4 August 1996, two days before census, many of the homeless people moved on. The offer was made that if people came in to complete a census form they would get free pizza. Only six forms were recovered from this exercise.

Usually about 60-70 people pass through the centre every day, although occasionally they disappear en mass. Campbelltown is at the end of the railway line, and it seems homeless people often take the train as far as Campbelltown and stop there. The reason for their 'disappearance' may have been that they moved on to Gosford, or somewhere else that they could get to on the train system.

Some collectors did find homeless people in private dwellings, for example living in tents in the back yard of the home of family or friends. These people were included on the household form as visitors with no usual address.

As was usually the case in the 1996 Census, the local crisis centre, which fell under standard NPD procedures, was well enumerated.

4.2 Victoria

4.2.1 Census Management Unit Involvement in the Strategy

A number of strategies eventuated with regard to enumerating homeless people in Victoria. The following two sections have been adapted from the Victorian CMU report.

The size of the homeless problem is widely debated between those with administrative and bureaucratic responsibilities for the issue, but relevant research suggests that the population of absolutely homeless persons in Melbourne (i.e. those sleeping rough) is only about 50. In contrast to this figure, front line service providers suggested the dimension of homelessness was more in the range of thousands, but it was recognised that those categorised as the 'absolutely homeless' are only a small segment of the homeless population.

It was generally agreed that the most significant area that required attention was the inner suburbs of Melbourne, which have traditionally been the location for servicing the homeless with food and accommodation. It was also felt that the problem, over the last decade, may have spread to embrace a number of the more middle class suburbs, but there was no substantiating evidence to back up this view.

The initial strategy in addressing the homeless issue was to set up and co-ordinate these activities through a contact in the Department of Human Services who held managerial responsibility for the department's Special Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The SAAP unit's role involved overseeing and funding services for people who are homeless, destitute and perhaps requiring emergency accommodation. The unit is also directly involved in co-ordinating organisations such as the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul, which provide front line support to homeless people.

However, the SAAP unit was unable to assist with the co-ordination of census field operations, and as a result, a number of quite different strategies were developed in consultation between the CMU, specific service delivery organisations and the relevant FM. A letter of support for the census (drafted by the CMU) was sent by SAAP to their chain of women's refuges.

4.2.2 Enumeration Experiences in Victorian Field Management Areas

4.2.2.1 Inner Melbourne

The problem of homelessness was concentrated in Inner Melbourne which is changing rapidly.

The eclectic mix of inner city populations with language and culture differences, large numbers of students and transients, residents who are rarely at home to enumerate, concentrated pockets of population separated by areas of commercial or parklands that need to be checked, unusual living conditions with examples such as dwellings above shops, warehouses, women's refuges, squats and quasi boarding houses all common.

The enumeration of the Homeless was not managed well at the outset because no real delineation of responsibilities existed. In the end CMU staff took it over.

Fifty to eighty people were counted in this FMA. Collectors located a number of squats and obtained forms from the occupants. The rest of the collection was done through normal NPD procedures.

The FM felt that the 'street kids' in the area generally had homes to go to at night. Problems were greater in the NPDs. Welfare agencies were duplicating each other's work and there was scope for double counting. However, the FM generally felt that most people were counted correctly.

In the Melbourne CBD and surrounds, the FM responsible for the area, in conjunction with the CMU, made contact with a senior representative of the Salvation Army. This representative had current experience with the homeless population, and was familiar with other local welfare and charitable groups that provided support services to the homeless and severely disadvantaged within and around Melbourne. From this meeting the CMU was able to gain a list of contacts from which the Melbourne city region homeless strategy was developed.

The major service organisations that were fundamental to the homeless enumeration of Melbourne were the Ozanam Community, Open Family, Hanover Homes and the Salvation Army. The Ozanam Community, through negotiation with the CMU, arranged for CMU staff to attend their soup kitchen located on the city fringe of North Melbourne on census night. The arrangement was that experienced welfare staff would identify the absolutely homeless (those living under bridges, in derelict vehicles etc.) and direct them to CMU staff who would assist them in completing a census form. The result of this exercise was the completion of 12 forms.

With regard to Open Family and Hanover Homes the strategy was to fund their mobile soup kitchens, and for the staff of these organisation to enumerate known absolutely homeless people. The results from Open Family were 7 forms and from Hanover Homes 6 forms. Hanover Homes ran their soup kitchen on census night, but Open Family went out on the Wednesday. To have these organisations fit collection arrangements (e.g. census night) it is essential that very early contact is made so that they are able to advertise a change of arrangements. Overall, the numbers appear to be low, but it must be noted that only the 'absolutely homeless' were being counted.

Coverage by the Salvation Army was co-ordinated through the FM for Melbourne and by his GL who was a Salvation Army Officer. The number of forms obtained is not known.

4.2.2.2 *Nepean*

The following section has been adapted from the FM report for Nepean.

FMA's VIC21 and 22 comprise the geographical area known as the Mornington Peninsula, or the municipalities of Frankston City and the Mornington Peninsula. Frankston City is often referred to as the gateway to the Peninsula and so nearly all of the Head Offices of welfare groups are based there as a focal point for the co-ordination of activities. As a consequence census activities needed to be tailored to permit these agencies to operate as normal, which meant that arrangements made would need to service the two FMA's concurrently.

Early discussions disclosed that the Salvation Army was recognised by many as the 'senior' welfare organisation with a spread of activity throughout the Peninsula. It was decided that homeless enumeration would be under their umbrella with the appointment of three Special Collectors (SCs).

A conference was convened with management officials, and agreement was reached that Salvation Army personnel whose field of operations was closely allied to the homeless and the disadvantaged would be appointed as SCs.

These FMAs are different to some of the inner suburbs of Melbourne where the homeless hang-outs are well known and the homeless are sometimes easily identified. Particularly at this time of year, the places frequented by the homeless are privy only to those close to them, with no common meeting places, except late night billiard saloons, hotels, etc., where most people are not homeless and where the homeless are difficult to recognise anyway. During the summer the beach attracts people to sleep there, although once again all of these are not homeless.

There is an unemployment problem in this area affecting younger people and those aged over forty. A scenario was put that there was a homeless problem, affecting an estimated 250 persons, most of whom were accommodated in emergency accommodation on a nightly basis. Absolute homelessness for lengthy periods is thought to be rare, although it could be expected that some twelve or so persons may not find shelter one night, but would be in emergency accommodation the next.

The Salvation Army operates a network of emergency accommodation dwellings throughout the two FMAs from offices at Frankston, Hastings and Rosebud. These offices allocate accommodation and other services to the disadvantaged. It was concluded that staff ought to be able to identify those persons who may not be picked up by the mainstream census umbrella. These people would be issued a personal form, with arrangements in place to recover the forms, or to obtain completed forms from the disadvantaged post census, provided that they had not previously been included in the count.

All clients were housed in emergency accommodation on census night and all were picked up by the census umbrella. One form was issued from the Frankston Office. This seems to provide some testament to the ability of the census to reach these people by mainstream procedures.

The bottom line was that the 250 persons purported to be homeless in the Frankston area all appeared to have been accommodated on census night, and would have been covered by standard procedures.

4.2.2.3 Port Phillip

In the St Kilda area, there are a number of different service organisations looking after homeless people. The FM's strategy had two parts, the first of which was to hire a caravan from the local council and locate it in Fitzroy St, a prime hang-out for homeless people at night time.

The van was stocked with hot drinks and light food, and was locally promoted as a place for homeless people to gather. This worked fairly well with over a hundred forms being collected. The major problem with this approach was that, while the caravan did become a 'gathering place for destitute people', it was doubtful as to whether all the people completing forms were absolutely homeless. Some respondents may have been residents of one of the squalid special accommodation homes that are spread throughout this area, which means that a degree of double counting may have occurred.

The second strategy undertaken in the St Kilda area involved the recruitment of a small number of street kids to act as special collectors. These people were personally trained by the FM and their job was to scour the many known squats, which normal collectors would not, and could not, have covered, and obtain as many forms as possible. It is difficult to know the veracity of this process. However the FM who had expertise in this field, and area, felt confident about the information obtained. Interestingly, the FM also felt that the size of the homeless population in this area had decreased since 1991. To a degree, this was probably partly caused by the gentrification of the area, and efforts to get homeless people placed in some form of emergency accommodation, even if it is still very squalid. One more general aspect of dealing with these people and organisations was that the assistants expected to be paid in cash, and at the time of the activity, even though they didn't expect a lot of money.

4.2.2.4 *Moonee Valley*

The following section has been adapted from the FM report for Moonee Valley.

The FM gained the immediate cooperation of the Salvation Army "Open Door" organisation, which provides accommodation and drop-in facilities. The Salvation Army officers seemed to know all the local homeless people, and were therefore able to cross-reference people for whom forms were not obtained with their city centre records. Cooperation was also obtained from Hanover Welfare and Health & Community Services.

A large number of old men/alcoholic drifters were enumerated in Boundary Rd. The FM also located a self-styled 'Open Door' flat in a local high rise complex. Close to midnight a GL and the FM personally interviewed figures lying on floor wrapped in grubby blankets. Up to 15 people (generally with alcohol problems) can be using this apartment at one time. It was a very dirty environment. In the midst of this the FM identified a recent Bosnian immigrant, and offered him some advice re more suitable accommodation.

It appeared to be likely that other apartments in the complex were used in a similar way, however this could not be confirmed. The FM also suspected that a large number of squatters were using parts of the complex.

Collection staff also identified dwellings in Ascot Vale behind a power station that were unoccupied at census time, but had been positively identified as a location of homeless people, probably in warmer weather. The GL tried to obtain further information on these dwellings from local residents, the dwellings themselves too dangerous to check other than by day. No details of the people who used the dwellings could be obtained.

In the week following the census the FM located two methadone program Halfway House occupants. They gave their names as Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. One of these two did provide details on his form, along with a plea for help to find a free detox centre in Victoria, as he would soon be out on the street due to inability to keep up daily payments for a cup of methadone and 'welfare' rental requirements.

There were some difficulties in this FMA due to organisations being unwilling, with good reason, to disclose to the FM the whereabouts of half-way houses they were running. In one case in Essendon eight people were living in one such house and intimidated the GL. The FM was able to discover through the local council that the Uniting Church was the owner of the dwelling, and subsequently, through the church, who would be the best person to deal with in the house.

A local collector also located two homeless bag people wandering the streets on the outskirts of Melbourne, and one at Flinders Street Station. The FM didn't know why the collector was carrying forms in that area, suggesting that perhaps he was on a personal homeless pilgrimage, but congratulated him on his initiative.

Notwithstanding all this effort the FM felt that only a small percentage of the homeless people in the area were successfully enumerated.

4.3 *Queensland*

4.3.1 *Census Management Unit Involvement in the Strategy*

In Queensland the Strategy was largely FM driven. However, some points relevant to all areas in the state were expressed at debriefings.

Overall there was very good cooperation from welfare organisations.

There were some concerns with the overlap of the Strategy and the Indigenous Enumeration Strategy (IES). Due to the existence of specialised IES staff, indigenous homeless people were not covered by FMs. Some FMs felt they would have preferred to enumerate these people with their own staff. FMs generally considered that they had not been included in this part of the enumeration, and were left unsure of whether indigenous homeless people were counted or not.

This was particularly important in urban areas, where homeless indigenous people are more easily identified, and are living side by side with non-indigenous homeless people. To automatically have to leave the indigenous people to the IES seemed nonsensical. Apparently this is a situation for which the solution in 2001 will vary across different regions.

4.3.2 *Enumeration Experiences in Queensland Field Management Areas*

4.3.2.1 *Cairns*

The following section has been adapted from the FM report for Cairns.

The FM had extreme difficulty in encouraging any collector to walk the streets of Cairns at night in those areas where homeless/displaced persons congregate. There were security risks involved which the FM was reluctant to have anyone take.

As a result, talks were held with a number of organisations in Cairns which operate welfare services and "soup kitchens" for homeless people. These organisations included those operated by the Catholic Church, the Salvation Army and indigenous welfare organisations, all of whom serve breakfast to homeless people. The Salvation Army also has beds for the night and serves dinner.

These organisations were very helpful. They assured collection staff that the large percentage of homeless people would visit their establishments. As a consequence, special collectors were appointed to three of these establishments. Two people were needed in the Salvation Army centre, and welfare workers took on the role in the other locations. Each was asked to use the period of one week to approach all clients and have forms completed. Generally only the first seven or eight questions on the form were answered. This approach seemed to work well with around 100 forms filled out at the Salvation Army hostel, and about 70-80 at each of the other establishments. In total about 300 forms were collected in the FMA.

The special collectors checked at all times to ensure that a form had not been filled out by a client previously. It appears that many homeless people develop a fixed routine and will visit the same establishments each day. Therefore staff of the establishments become fairly familiar with faces, which also helped to avoid double counting.

Indigenous people were found camping in the area, but these people were not actually homeless, they were visiting from Cape York. These people were enumerated under the IES.

This FM was very much in favour of a short form for the 2001 Census, and would recommend welfare workers as collectors.

4.3.2.2 *Townsville*

There was a large overlap between the Strategy and the IES in this FMA, and consequently the CFO handled the forms for the indigenous homeless people in shelters, hostels and the like.

GLs were very familiar with their areas, and two GLs identified areas where homeless people were expected to be found. Subsequently, police confirmed these reports, and also indicated that they were happy to accompany collection staff to these locations. Safety of collectors was a real concern. In other areas collectors went in groups to places where homeless people were likely to be found. However, some Collection Districts (CDs) were far apart, and in these places it was difficult to organise collectors to go in groups.

In total about 30-40 forms for homeless people were obtained, including forms for 4-5 children. This count may not have included all homeless people in the region. A group of hermits was thought to be living in boats on estuaries off the river, however these reports could not be followed up because details of the location were discovered too late to be incorporated into field operations. There was thought to be about ten people living in the boats.

This FM was one of several who felt that the training video made collection look too simple, and that the manuals didn't highlight the homeless collection. These problems will need to be addressed for 2001.

4.3.2.3 *Mackay*

It was reported that in this area there are many 'itinerant' homeless along the coast. Most of these people are thought to be hermits by choice rather than homeless by circumstance. The count of such people was thought to be good.

In the Whitsundays, some teenagers were found camping in cars. The collector found them on census night and got them to complete forms.

In Mackay, the FM spoke to the manager of a shelter for homeless people, and asked for locations where homeless people might be found. Following this information, one group was located in a park. The GL and the collector approached the group together. Six to ten people were enumerated at this time.

Overall, the FM was confident that the majority of genuinely homeless people would drop in at the NPD for a meal and would therefore have been counted. The total homeless population of this FMA was thought to be variable, as people come to the FMA for temporary work as fruit pickers or to work on sugar cane farms. However, the FM felt that at most times there would be around 50 homeless people in the area.

4.2.3.4 *Albert*

The FM in this area was also the FM in 1991. When she first investigated the extent of the homeless problem in 1996 it sounded like there were thousands of homeless people in her area. Collection staff therefore made a big effort to find these people, but only six forms were completed. This included three local characters living near a waterway who claimed to be Jesus and two of his disciples.

The FM phoned local organisations and was told that there wasn't much of a problem any more. Even a van which previously serviced street kids stopped running a year ago.

Generally it seemed the area had been 'cleaned up' for tourism. There were many hostels in the area, and therefore the main collection effort focussed around these NPDs. The FM did not feel the 'hype' about the homeless problem in her area was justified. The 1991 experience also backed this theory up, as collection staff had spent days asking everyone at the soup kitchens if they had already filled out forms, and everyone said they had done so.

4.2.3.5 *Coolangatta*

GLs and collectors were chosen who knew the type of people in the area including the 'surfies' and the squatters, and as a result collection staff knew what areas to cover, and when the best times to visit these areas would be. Most of the homeless population can be found at the beach. The homeless people in the area are usually younger unemployed people. Some of these people live in squats and then move on. Squats were generally not covered by census staff, although some GLs identified such places and took it upon themselves to investigate them.

The worst area for homelessness was around Tweed (NSW FMA07), although few of the people from that area crossed into this FMA. In this area the GL was in contact with the police on census night, and, where possible, the police advised people to ring the FM, GL or Census Hotline to let census staff know where they could be found. Other measures included making posters, and alerting security staff in high rise towers that census staff were on the lookout for homeless people. As a result of all these measures, a small number of calls were received from homeless people who said they wanted to fill in a form. The GL reimbursed some of the callers for the cost of their phone call. Some people decided to ask a friend to call the collector on their behalf. The FM felt that more homeless people would have come forward if they had known who to contact about forms, other than the police. The outcome of these activities was that about 10 forms were recovered for homeless people.

Large numbers of holiday homes are unoccupied in this area for long periods of time. It seems that many homeless people will find their way into indoor areas or underneath houses which are on stilts. This presents unique problems for the enumeration of homeless people in the area. It seemed to the FM that the local homeless population may also be more transient, and have better networks, than their counterparts in other areas. Once the people were actually located however, they did seem happy to fill out a form.

The police were contacted about the enumeration, although in the end police and charity organisations were not really incorporated to their full potential. With the benefit of hindsight, the FM felt that perhaps the enumeration would have been better handled through the service providers, appointing their staff as assistant collectors. One problem is that most of these services are based in Tweed. There were also some communication difficulties, as some of the organisations wanted to deal with local census staff, while others would not deal with anyone below FM level.

Early planning was clearly a key factor in achieving the objectives of the Strategy. This early planning is very time consuming for FMs, and the FM suggested it would be better handled by the CMU. It is also easier for organisations to fit in census operations if they have early warning. The FM recommended for next census that the homeless strategy contact roles of the FM and CMU be defined more clearly.

4.4 South Australia

4.4.1 Census Management Unit Involvement in the Strategy

The following section has been adapted from the South Australian CMU report.

Staff of the CMU met to 'workshop' the local strategy for the enumeration the homeless population of South Australia. It was recommended that CMU staff arrange a meeting of interested bodies (related to assistance, management or involvement with the homeless) to discuss effective and practical approaches to homeless enumeration.

After the first meeting with Family and Community Services, an action plan was produced. The CMU believed that as a minimum effort, the census should be promoted to bodies associated with the homeless, and key people were to be identified for later follow up.

Activities for the homeless enumeration fell into two categories, awareness raising and direct involvement. Several meetings were held with a number of key organisations to discuss the Strategy. It was not possible to directly contact a number of organisations, however they were sent a range of material promoting the census and the special enumeration strategies, and they were encouraged to contact the CMU if they required further information.

The South Australian Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), who provide funding to shelters and refuges were contacted. They categorise shelters into women's, youth and general (men's). There is considerable sensitivity about the addresses of the shelters, however the Department agreed to conduct a mail out on behalf of the census to about 20 shelters and refuges that were directly funded. The mail out contained promotional material, explained the importance of the census, how it is conducted, and provided several phone contacts, male and female, in the CMU. About 5 shelters responded giving the name of the administrator to contact or asking for a female person to call (at a women's refuge).

Contact was also made with Mission South Australia who administer programs for homeless youth. They administer several shelters that were picked up in the normal NPD enumeration. They also manage several 'drop in' centres in the city. Supplies of household forms were provided at these locations and management were asked to hand them out to any people passing through. Mission South Australia were very supportive of census aims to count homeless youth, however their resources did not allow them to assist in this task.

Organisations such as the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul that operate large hostels were contacted by GLs as part of the NPD enumeration. In the city area, shelters run by these agencies were contacted and encouraged to enumerate all people who passed through the door on census night, even though they may not be sleeping there overnight. Again a supply of forms was provided. These organisations were supportive of this approach and it is considered that many people who may have been sleeping in parks, but who otherwise frequented the shelters during the day, were counted in this way.

In cases where people collected a mail back form and returned it, they were attributed to the CD of the shelter or drop in centre from where they obtained the form.

While it is considered that some people sleeping rough were counted, others were missed. No effort was made by the CMU to contact the street characters of Adelaide or to contact young people squatting in derelict inner city buildings, although some effort was made by collection staff as part of their duties. Similarly, people who inhabit some of the parks of Adelaide were not approached for reasons of safety.

The CMU also noted that Homeless week and the 'sleep-out' weren't utilised. There was even an article in the paper in census week about a twenty-three year old person living on the streets in Adelaide. More could have been done to capitalise on these opportunities to spread the word about the Homeless Strategy, however resources did not allow such activities to be undertaken.

4.4.2 Enumeration Experiences in South Australian Field Management Areas

4.4.2.1 Eyre

The FM would estimate the number of homeless in this area to be about ten. Most of these would be unemployed people living in Whyalla. There could well have been squats around the area that were not located, as about 20 houses were left empty at census time.

Youth shelters and Aboriginal organisations were contacted. However, the indigenous people in the area appear to have excellent family networks and were generally not likely to be homeless. Each GL was asked to assess their own area, however they found very few homeless people.

4.4.2.2 Burnside

Particular efforts were made to enumerate homeless people in this FMA (which incorporates sections of Adelaide). For example, a collector was present with a senior social worker at the Hutt Street Meal and Day Centre from 7 am to assist homeless people in completing census forms. There were about 15 people enumerated in this way, including some indigenous people. It was thought likely that not all homeless people in the area were enumerated, although some who were stated that they had not completed a form for many years.

A GL and collector walked through areas of the City of Adelaide Parklands on the evening of the census, endeavouring to locate homeless people in known hang-outs. No one was located, but evidence of where people stayed was visible. The inclement weather might have been partly responsible for this result.

Arrangements were made for Special Collectors (SCs) in NPDs in the Whitmore Square area, and Hindley Street, to enumerate homeless people who called in for a meal on the evening of the census.

4.5 *Western Australia*

4.5.1 *Census Management Unit Involvement in the Strategy*

The Homeless enumeration in Western Australia was mainly handled at FM level. The CMU felt that, in rural areas, the local knowledge of collection staff was sufficient to locate any homeless people in the area. Few people were counted on beaches, areas which were popular for homeless people in other parts of Australia. Some squats were located near inner city areas, and some intrepid collectors got the police to help them enumerate these places.

CMU staff felt that the main area where they may have missed homeless people, children in particular, was in the suburbs. There is apparently growing evidence that children are living in peoples' backyards without the owners' knowledge. Local information would seem to indicate that the number of people involved would be less than 50 across the whole of the metropolitan region.

4.5.2 *Enumeration Experiences in Western Australian Field Management Areas*

4.5.2.1 *Perth*

A youth homeless bus, with staff acting as Assistant Collectors (ACs), took census forms on their run. The forms were only given to those not staying in hostels etc.. This was undertaken for the week around census, with respondents asked to provide answers consistent with their situation on census night. About 16 forms were obtained from this activity.

Soup kitchens were also used in the city area. Forms were offered to all people using the service on Wednesday (the day after census) and Thursday mornings. Once again, answers were sought which related to census night. Four to five forms were obtained from this process.

The Salvation Army bus also took forms out on its run, but there was no time to try to get a good response rate. The staff had AC status, but also had their regular duties to perform which had to take priority. About 10 forms were completed. Some of the people given forms said they wanted to mail the forms back. It is not expected that they would have done so. Unfortunately, all people located by the bus were registered in the migratory/shipping CD. A summary form was used with associated personal forms, and no usual address was noted at the usual residence question.

Recording on the forms obtained was not perfect. Illiteracy was a also big problem. Subsequently, the FM thought the count would have been much lower than the actual homeless population, and he expressed the view that more effort should be put into the strategy at the ABS or CMU level.

4.5.2.2 *Northern*

Identification of homeless indigenous people was an issue in this area. Local indigenous people live in open plan houses with cooking facilities outside. Reports from collection staff indicate that if an indigenous family is given access to a house, and it doesn't conform with what they want or need, they may prefer to live outdoors. This means that such people appear to be homeless, but this is due to a different set of circumstances than those that apply to homeless people in other areas.

Another example of this issue was found in Port Hedland. About 50 people were found sleeping in cars at a supermarket. They come into town on payday for supplies, and stay for one or two days. They are certainly not homeless - they just sleep in their cars when they are in town. This is reported to happen in many towns in north west Australia.

4.5.2.3 *Fremantle*

There was not perceived to be the same kind of homeless problem in Fremantle as there was in Perth. Several organisations were approached including the city council, local social workers and a church group. These people suggested that census staff should not attempt to enumerate the homeless themselves, as they would scare them off.

Fortunately, street kids frequently drop into the local facilities and knew the local social workers. Therefore, social workers were used as ACs and worked in pairs, as safety was an issue for the social workers, and they would not approach the street kids alone.

These groups looked for people on the street for about seven hours on census night. This meant the enumeration was costly, but it was felt to be the only way to conduct an effective count. Overall the result was quite low with about 6-8 forms obtained. More people may have been located in areas into which collectors could not be sent.

When found, homeless people generally gave helpful responses for the key questions, but details overall were scant. People were coded to the CD in which they were found.

4.6 Tasmania

4.6.1 Census Management Unit Involvement in the Strategy

The following section has been adapted from the Tasmanian CMU report.

Prior to the census efforts were made to determine the extent of the homeless population. Contact was made with a number of organisations such as Red Cross, The Link, Bethlehem House, Salvation Army, Glenorchy City Council, Hobart City Council, and St Vincent De Paul.

It was determined that the number of people actually sleeping out i.e. not under a roof, was very small in Tasmania in August. Even though many of the support organisations claim relatively high numbers of regular clients, it is generally considered that the vast majority spend the night with friends, in communal households etc., and then utilise the services of the support groups during the day.

4.6.2 Enumeration Experiences in Tasmanian Field Management Areas

4.6.2.1 Hobart

The strategy used by the CMU in Hobart was that The Link and the Red Cross Roadhouse were supplied with personal forms, and these were issued, the morning after census, to those clients that had not been included on a form the night before. Posters were left at soup kitchens and drop-in centres. Organisations with mail-box services were also given forms.

4.6.2.2 West

GLs and collectors made a concerted effort to try to enumerate homeless people. Collection staff obtained lists of known places, particularly in coastal areas, where such people lived or slept. These locations were checked but with very little success. Several factors may have contributed to this result.

One source indicated to collection staff that they wouldn't start finding homeless people until 11 pm or later in most cases. This was found to be true, and not all areas could be covered that late at night.

Five inches of rain came down in this FMA during census week. This would probably have been enough to lower the number of people located on the streets in any case. However, the FM felt that there were simply not many absolutely homeless people in this FMA. Likely places in coastal areas were identified, checked and found to be empty.

Homeless people were located in the two NPDs servicing the homeless in the area, and about six people were counted in each of these establishments.

4.6.2.3 *North*

The general consensus was that the majority of local homeless people were to be found in shelters, or, in the case of young people, staying with friends or relatives.

A local community group operates a van every Thursday and Friday night, taking people off the streets to the community centre. Staff of this organisation gave their assistance to census staff without payment. The van went out from 8-12 pm on census night, however no-one was found in the local squats. Only three or four people were expected in any case, but all of these were in shelters.

Overall the FM was confident that most homeless people were found in this area.

4.7 Northern Territory

4.7.1 Census Management Unit Involvement in the Strategy

The following section has been adapted from the Northern Territory CMU report.

The CMU made contact with the St Vincent De Paul Society, Salvation Army and A.N.S.T.I. Inc, to discuss the best way of enumerating Darwin's homeless. It was agreed that arrangements be put in place to enumerate those staying at the night shelters of St Vincent De Paul and the Salvation Army. The balance were to be enumerated by the coffee bus operated by A.N.S.T.I. Inc. A team of ABS volunteers did this work.

In the other centres and the balance of Darwin, the homeless were found to be predominantly indigenous people, or non-indigenous people camping with indigenous people, so that such people were covered by arrangements made by staff working on the Indigenous Enumeration Strategy (IES).

4.7.2 Enumeration Experiences in The Northern Territory

In Alice Springs, people can be found living in a local riverbed. Sometimes these people may also go to the local town camps. Separate town camps relate to particular language groups.

The issue of identification of indigenous homeless people was relevant in this area. Staff working on the IES reported that some of the people who sleep outside have homes and communities to return to, but camp out if they are visiting for football matches or cultural business.

In Darwin, camps are also well established, and once again, the issue of identification of indigenous homeless people was relevant. Some people who have homes on the islands are reported to come to the mainland and camp on the beach, for example if they are waiting for relatives to receive hospital treatment. These people were not regarded as homeless by collection staff.

Non-indigenous people in Darwin can also be found camping on beaches. There is also a group of 'long grass people', who camp near an established indigenous camp.

Special teams of IES staff counted the indigenous groups found on the beaches, in the riverbed and so on. This seemed to work well. Overall, feedback from collection staff indicates that the absolutely homeless people located were more likely to be non-indigenous than indigenous. It was suggested that there could be some indigenous people who come north from southern Australia, and if they do not 'fit in' these people could become absolutely homeless.

In Darwin, there is also a homeless population that passes through the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul centres. These people are reported to be mainly non-indigenous.

There are two FMAs situated in the ACT. The ACT CMU also has responsibility for a nearby NSW FMA, Monaro (NSW FMA17). As it involved a relatively small area, the ACT Strategy was largely handled by the CMU. St Vincent de Paul, the Smith Family and the Salvation Army were all approached, but said that, because of the cold, collection staff would be unlikely to find people sleeping outdoors.

The GL for the Canberra CBD region spoke to the Salvation Army and they offered to try to get people to fill in forms at their regular soup night. All NPDs catering for the homeless were given forms in line with standard procedures. No mobile food services were located in the region.

There were rumours of one person living in a box in the city, but this person was not located. The experience in Canberra was that, when people were located by a collector, they did not want to be counted and avoided contact with the collector.

Collectors had some success in locating a few people in the Cooma region (NSW FMA 17), but were also not able to get many responses from them. Some makeshift dwellings were found in some areas, which may have implied the existence of other homeless people who were not located.

5. OUTCOMES OF THE 1996 STRATEGY AND DIRECTIONS FOR 2001

The 1996 homeless enumeration was by far the most comprehensive attempted by an Australian census to date. The enumeration worked well in many areas. However, as would be expected of any national strategy implemented for the first time, there is room for improvement.

With the benefit of the feedback that was obtained it is clear that the strategy document had sound objectives and sound suggestions for achieving them. The problems that were experienced seem to have come from the translation of these objectives into field activities. To a certain extent, this is due to the fact that there was no precedent for the strategy, and not much in the way of background data.

The census evaluation process commenced with the Collection Evaluation Conference in December 1996, and will continue for some time to come. The recommendations made in the evaluation cycle will be incorporated into development plans for the 2001 census, and the recommendations below have already become part of this process. Further recommendations, or refinements to the strategy, will be made as development progresses for 2001.

5.1 *Performance of the Options Towards the Strategy*

5.1.1 *Establishing Contact with Agencies*

'Establish contact with State and/or Local Government Agencies responsible for licensing accommodation likely to cater for the relative homeless. This contact should be undertaken well before census date to ensure that all such abodes are included in the list of non-private dwellings provided to Field Managers. It would be helpful to also contact the non-government sector -especially SAAP funded non-government organisations - to assess whether there are a significant number of establishments not covered by registration requirements.'

This option was included in both the FM and CMU manuals. Some discussions were held with the type of organisations suggested. In many cases where abodes were not included in the list of NPDs it was because they were women's refuges or detox centres or the like. The organisations involved provided contacts for some of these dwellings, but in many cases were not willing to divulge information due to concerns for the safety of the residents.

All organisations such as the Salvation Army, Lifeline and the like should be contacted at a high level, well before the census, to establish what services they are running for the homeless. Although there are some problems with this approach, in that even the organisations themselves don't always seem to know if some services are running or not, this contact should be used as an opportunity to establish links further down the chain which could be of use in determining how best to reach the target population in particular areas.

5.1.2 Identifying NPDs

'Investigate ways of specifically identifying the types of NPDs used in defining the relatively homeless which can be practically implemented by collectors, special collectors and supervisory field staff.'

This option was not included in the manuals, and identification of the different types of NPDs was carried out by collection staff as part of standard procedures.

5.1.3 Use of Other Homeless Services

'Make contact with groups providing other services for the homeless (e.g. provision of meals; mailbox services) to gain their support in contacting the people who use their services on census night. Specifically seek the assistance of these groups to identify hang-outs/skid rows/drinking trees etc. which may require additional staff to be engaged.'

The first half of this option was included in the FM and CMU manuals. The extent to which this contact was undertaken varied, and it often came too late to be very effective. A week or two before census is too late to start organising special homeless enumeration procedures, because by that time mainstream collection issues are stretching resources to the limit. This initial contact is essential to obtain a good coverage of organisations, the only way to get a good coverage of individuals. Contact with 'umbrella' organisations such as the Homeless Persons Information Centre is the most effective way to start this process. It is essential that this is done in all areas across the country. It is recommended that the CMU manual section on homeless be expanded along these lines.

When dealing with people who provide a particular service, they should be asked if they are aware of any other services in their area which may be of use in reaching the target population. Often, the people who work in the field have the best knowledge of what other services are available. Any contacts made should be followed up as census approaches, as due to the highly voluntary nature of this type of work some services may not be operating at all times.

Organisations providing free or cheap meals could also be contacted to see if they are willing to let someone come in the day after census to try to get forms filled out.

The second half of this option (seeking assistance to identify hang-outs etc.) was not included in any of the manuals, yet this sort of instruction may have been useful to FMs as an indication of how they could try to identify the places in which homeless people could be found. There are also other types of organisations which can be of assistance with this task. From the experience in Sydney, it is suggested that FMs should contact rangers, ordinance inspectors and any other relevant people for any information they can give about the location of homeless people in their area. Due to the variable accuracy of the information provided by various organisations, more than one organisation should be contacted where this is possible. Again this contact should be made well in advance of the census.

5.1.4 Members of the Homeless Community as Collectors

'Engage members of the homeless community to enumerate 'difficult' areas on census night.'

This instruction was not included in any of the manuals. For the second time, the Melbourne district was the only area in which this approach was tried. The comments from the CMU suggest that in this case the FM was pleased with the result.

However, there are difficulties with this approach in that the people selected for the job don't generally have a focus on data quality. On the other hand, this approach may be the only way to count people in squats where it would not be safe for mainstream collection staff to enter, even as part of a collection team.

Perhaps the only guideline that can be given on the use of this approach would be that collection staff should continue to ensure all people who are involved in the collection are signed up as ACs (for confidentiality and security reasons). Further, although these arrangements can be made very late in the operation, staff should take the time to ensure that the people selected understand the aims of the census, in particular the importance of only counting people once.

5.1.5 Field Offices on Census Night

'Consider establishing "field offices" on census night in areas where homeless people are likely to be encountered.'

This option was not included in the manuals. However, this type of approach was the basis for the majority of special operations undertaken to reach the homeless. For example, mobile food services were followed to enumerate the people who used them, and other food services (for example a doughnut van in Melbourne) were used to attract people living on the streets to fill in forms. Also, teams of collectors (or more accurately interviewers) walked around the CBD area of Sydney on census night and the following night. These types of operations are among the most effective ways to reach the absolutely homeless, and will always be an important part of the homeless enumeration strategy.

5.1.6 Attention to the Homeless Strategy

'Give attention to the homeless enumeration strategy in all other strategies: in particular recognise the interrelationship between the hard-to-enumerate visitor section of the population and relative homelessness.'

This option was included as part of both the FM and CMU manuals. There were some problems with the overlap of homeless operations with the IES. In one situation a group of indigenous people were living in a park in a city area, and were known to be homeless. The FM had been told by the CFO that all indigenous people were to be handled by her, and when the FM discussed the homeless people with the CFO, the CFO undertook to count them. In the end this did not occur. This is one of several problems in the 1996 Census which has pointed to the need for better integration of the IES with the mainstream collection. In this case the FM would probably have been in a better position to count the homeless people involved.

5.1.7 Spreading the Word About the Census

'Use all opportunities with communications media, and contact with the homeless community to "spread the word" about the importance of participation in the census.'

This option was included in the CMU manual. Information and regular media releases were provided to the Smith Family, Australian Red Cross, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society and the Salvation Army. However, in most cases it appears that this option was not followed through to its full potential. In some places where organisations that deal with the homeless were used to distribute forms, or where collectors were scheduled to visit establishments on census night, the people who regularly use the services mysteriously disappeared just before the collector arrived. In addition, the census was held during Homeless Persons' Week, however there is no indication that any part of the census operation tried to make use of this fact.

It is suggested that instructions need to be more specific about what needs to be done to spread the word about the census to homeless people. There should be some form of publicity material given to shelters and soup kitchens leading up to the census. It would need to explain that census staff are making an effort to count homeless people, and why it is of benefit to them to be counted. It should also explain that people can fill out a form if they are at the shelter on census night, or give their details to collectors who will be out looking for people on the streets. This material should emphasise that the information obtained won't be given to the DSS or the police.

One other point is that, if it is intended to use the Strategy in the overall publicity campaign, willing participants should be organised well before the census, or actors should be employed to pose as respondents in photographs. As was discovered in one case in 1996, homeless people may not be willing to be photographed filling in forms.

5.1.8 Collector Safety

The Strategy also noted that 'In all of the above [the options] it must be recognised that not all of the situations in which homeless people are encountered will be pleasant (or safe). It would be unprofessional not to recognise that a high proportion (up to 40% has been quoted) of the "traditional" homeless have a history of psychiatric problems and/or substance abuse. The safety of collection staff will be of paramount importance to ABS and where a situation looks dangerous collectors will be advised to back off. It is hoped that the indirect methods- soup kitchens, mail boxes etc. will provide back-up to overcome these potential losses.'

No feedback has emerged from the field to indicate that homeless people themselves caused any real safety problems for collection staff. Teams were used in some CBD regions to find people living on the streets, and in general the people located were co-operative. However, the greatest threat may come from not from homeless people but from other factors of the environment they are found in. The best time to locate people on the street (and be able to more easily identify them) is often late at night. It would be very unwise for collectors to try to search for these people on their own. In reality it seems the majority of collectors, for reasons including their own safety, do not follow the instruction to check their CD on census night for people sleeping rough. It is recommended that this part of collector duties be replaced by other activities undertaken by the FM or GL (see section 5.3).

5.2 Other Outcomes From 1996 Field Operations

Several other points which need to be considered for the further development of the Strategy have arisen from field operations in 1996. The following sections deal with these issues.

5.2.1 A Special Form

Many problems were encountered with trying to get responses from homeless people on standard forms.

- a There is reported to be a high rate of illiteracy among homeless people. In addition some, or even most, of the questions on the standard form can be seen as a joke by homeless people because the questions are clearly not relevant to their situation. Traditionally, responses are only obtained to the first few questions from absolutely homeless people (and even some of those in shelters).**
- b It is evident that the homeless people located are often intimidated by authority, and therefore the relatively long, and detailed, standard forms can be intimidating.**
- c Interviewers working in conjunction with food services have a limited time to ask questions, often in a dark environment. This type of operation also involves a disruption to respondents' meal times which must be kept to a minimum.**

A short plain form was used for interviewing homeless people in Sydney and this proved to be a very successful technique for getting responses. It seemed to make a significant difference to respondents that they could easily see what was being recorded on the form as they were being asked the questions. No machine readable fields were included, and the simple design of the form made it easier to reassure people that other details weren't being subtly recorded by interviewers to pass on to other authorities.

It is recommended that a short, plain form be made available to CMUs and FMs who feel the forms would be a useful part of their homeless enumeration operations. It would not be suggested that this form replace the standard form in shelters and the like where staff are able to help fill in details. Details from the short forms would be treated in the same way as they were in 1996. The forms would be transcribed at the Data Processing Centre, and the originals destroyed under supervision along with standard forms.

5.2.2 Instructions for FMs

The FM manual listed some of the field options from the Strategy as outlined in the sections above. However, FMs had little idea about what types of strategies they could use to locate or enumerate the homeless, and what was done in some FMAs depended on how far the FM felt they were allowed to deviate from standard collection procedures. It is recommended that one way to resolve this difficulty will be to expand the Homeless section of the FM manual to include examples of strategies which have been used successfully in 1996, and include indications of which strategies worked well for which types of homeless people or areas.

One point to make FMs aware of is that it does not seem to be the case that all organisations contacted will have the full picture on the homeless population in their area. Usually the welfare organisations contacted were extremely helpful and knew their area well. In contrast, other organisations sometimes gave gross misrepresentations of the homeless problem in the area. Collection staff need to be diligent if a serious effort is to be made to locate absolutely homeless people. Talking to people who live or work in the area, and following up anecdotal reports of where homeless people are likely to be found are valuable approaches .

5.2.3 Time Limit for Forms Left in the Field

Some FMs ran the homeless collection through soup kitchens, drop in centres, etc., over several nights or even a week. This approach generally reached a larger proportion of the homeless population than a one night collection could. Other FMs stuck to collecting on census night only, but with hindsight, thought they would have obtained better results if they had left the forms out in the field longer. The organisations involved were generally very helpful and took care not to enumerate people more than once. It is recommended for the 2001 Census that the time limit for forms to be left out in the field for the homeless enumeration should be extended. The evaluation conference recommended that this time limit not be strictly defined. Four days to a week may be a suitable time frame, and this will be included in the instructions for FMs.

5.2.4 CD Coding of Homeless People

Some of the practices used in 1996, such as coding people to shipping and migratory CDs rather than the CD in which they were found, will cause problems in analysing the data. This problem did not become apparent until late in the enumeration. It is fortunate that only a very few areas were affected. This problem will be addressed for 2001, with instructions in all relevant manuals to code homeless people to the CD in which they are found.

5.2.5 Standard Procedure for Raising Dummy Forms

A standard procedure for raising dummy forms for homeless people who are located, but can not be approached, should be put in place. It is recommended that the procedure should be to raise a dummy in the field for homeless people who are unlikely to be counted elsewhere, as is usually done for non-contacts in dwellings. The collector should include sex, estimate age, write 'no usual address' for the usual residence question, and attempt to answer the indigenous origin question.

5.2.6 Using Available Data to Target the Strategy

All available information should be used to try to get a rough idea of the homeless population in various areas, prior to commencing the enumeration. Demographic information provided by organisations such as the HPIC could also be followed up for 2001 to target metropolitan areas outside the CBD. It appears that most of their calls for assistance emanate from these areas, and while the exceptional efforts of individual FMs and GLs in some places have had good results, more preparatory work would facilitate a better coverage of the homeless population.

5.2.7 Budget Allocation for Special Enumeration Activities

Naturally the best returns for the amount of effort put into locating absolutely homeless people are to be found in connection with food services. In some places in NSW and Victoria food services were set up which distributed forms as well as food. This avenue should be explored further, and the budget for any such operations should be fixed at an early stage.

5.3 *Collection Staff Responsibilities for the 2001 Strategy*

The 1996 Strategy document will provide the basis for the 2001 Strategy, while the experiences of 1996 will help to provide greater direction to collection staff. The final task is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of collection staff at all levels.

5.3.1 Strategy Responsibilities at the Central Office level.

In 2001, a central office staff member should deal with the groundwork for the homeless strategy well before the census commences, with the bulk of their duties concluding as the CMUs are activated. This person should be responsible for early liaison with the top levels of the agencies whose help is required to achieve an effective homeless enumeration.

The central office contact should be responsible for ongoing communication with other research agencies during the development of the 2001 strategy. At the time of writing this paper, the SAAP data collection is under way, with the possibility of other collections commencing in the next four years. The data collected by other research agencies will be an integral part of correctly targeting the strategy for 2001.

The central office contact should analyse, using the most up to date data available, the major concentrations of homeless people around the country. This information would be passed on to CMUs who, in association with the relevant FMs, would organise special groups to cover these areas.

This information could also feed into the budget process, as sending teams of collectors out on census night is a costly exercise, and one for which there can be no substitute in many areas. The cost of making donations to the charities that organise food runs and the like should also be factored into the budget for the homeless enumeration.

The next, and perhaps the most important, group that must be contacted well before census is the major service providers. The contact person should be able to let these organisations know what plans are in place to enumerate homeless people, and discuss the possibility of each organisation being involved with the enumeration. State level contacts should also be obtained and passed on to the appropriate CMU staff member.

The police should also be contacted at this initial stage. Across Australia in 1996 there was great variation in the willingness of police to help collection staff locate homeless people, even to the basic extent of acknowledging that they exist. The assistance of the police is crucial if there is to be an effective and economical enumeration. The most helpful role they can perform is to advise local Group Leaders of the locations of homeless people in the area.

By the time CMUs are activated, they should have at their disposal a list of the initial contact points for the major organisations, an undertaking from the police to provide census staff with whatever information they can as to the location of homeless people in their area, and analysis of current data to highlight the major concentrations of homeless people in their State or Territory. The remaining duty of the central office contact would be to impress upon CMU staff the importance of the Strategy, and the need for adequate feedback from each CMU on how the Strategy was implemented in their region.

5.3.2 Strategy Responsibilities at the Census Management Unit level.

At this point the responsibility would shift to a nominated CMU staff member in each State and Territory. The first priority of this position would be to contact all service providers for the state (both large and small). While doing this, the homeless coordinator should take every opportunity to ask agencies if they know of any similar services operating in their region which may have been overlooked. The aim would be to prepare a list of contact people for all organisations who cater for the homeless and pass this list to FMs.

This sounds like an enormous task. However, the reality is that there are not that many services that cater for the homeless. This approach also means more intervention in the strategy at a higher level. This should help to reduce the number of cases where some services, for example food vans, were not located until it was too late to incorporate them into the enumeration.

The homeless coordinator in the CMU would also be responsible for, with the help of the relevant FMs, the organisation of special collection groups for the CBD area and any other major problem areas in the state.

5.3.3 Strategy Responsibilities at the Field Manager level

The bulk of the responsibility for the homeless enumeration will still rest with Field Managers.

Once contact details for local organisations have been provided to the FM by the CMU, it would be the responsibility of the FM to follow these through and establish enumeration initiatives. It is at this point that once again neither Central office or the CMUs would be prescriptive about the best way to conduct the enumeration. There will be two main tasks involved.

The first is to use the help of service agencies to reach as many homeless people as possible. Examples will be provided in manuals and training material to ensure that FMs know what strategies have worked in the past and give them some ideas as to how they might complete the enumeration. There will also be clear guides as to how to code the people they locate (to the CD in which they are found), and how long they are permitted to leave forms with welfare agencies (longer than one night).

The second major function of the FM will be to obtain information from any local source (including anecdotal sources) on the regular location of homeless people in the area. Where necessary, special teams of about three collection staff should be organised around three weeks before census. On or around Census night the teams would go to the locations identified and check for homeless people. The difficulties in organising these teams should not be underestimated. Many people are nervous about undertaking such activities. It is essential that appropriate people are chosen for this role and this will be highlighted in the FM manual.

The teams may include collectors (who are assured of finishing their workload before census night), GLs, local rangers or ordinance inspectors who may know the homeless people in the area, and other people all of whom would be signed up as special collectors if they are not already census staff. All staff would be paid for a certain number of hours work which could be allocated an upper limit before the team set out.

Clearly these two FM tasks have some overlap, as people sleeping out may also make use of meal services (where they exist). While this does allow the possibility of some overcount, one measure which is usually an effective way to avoid double-counting is simply to ask the people located if they have completed a form already. In the cases encountered in 1996, most people were quick to point out whether or not they had already filled in a form.

5.3.4 Strategy Responsibilities at the Group Leader level.

The role of the GLs would be to assist the FM in organising homeless activities. GLs could also advise the FM of any known areas where homeless people can be found, using their local knowledge, and any information they obtain from collectors during in the delivery phase. Ideally, these locations would already have been discovered by the activities of the FM, however it is likely that the FM will not hear of all homeless people in the area. The GL may also help the FM to organise collection teams, particularly by nominating appropriate collectors or other people (including themselves).

5.3.5 Strategy Responsibilities at the Collector level.

The role of collectors in the enumeration of homeless people should be minimal. Collectors will be advised that there is a special strategy to target the homeless population, and what will be happening in their CD. Collectors would also have the opportunity to pass on any information they may have on the whereabouts of local homeless people to the GL. Collectors may also be involved in special collection teams.

5.4 Evaluation of the 2001 Strategy

As was the case in 1996, an essential part of the 2001 Strategy will be evaluation, with a view to further improvements to the Strategy for future censuses. With ever increasing demands being placed on all collection staff, it is planned to once again undertake in depth follow up interviews with a sample of FMs after the census to obtain feedback on the homeless strategy.

A final note.

A special thank you must go to all the staff involved in the Strategy. Some very significant individual contributions were made to ensure that homeless people would not be missed in the 1996 Census.

6. REFERENCES

This paper has been compiled with reference to all available field evaluation material, including CMU and FM reports, debriefing minutes, and records of homeless strategy debriefing interviews with FMs.

Several documents were used extensively in this paper, with particular sections heavily reliant on the work of the authors of these reports. These reports are included in the list below.

Butterfield M., 1996 *Census Strategy for the Enumeration of Homeless People*, 1994

Census Topic Reports

Census Field Manager Final Reports

Census Management Unit Final Reports

The 1996 Census Collector Manual

Merlo R., Anderton N., Foard G., Cresswick G., *Services for the Homeless 1990-1992 : A Statistical Profile*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994

Chamberlain C. and Mackenzie D., *Understanding Contemporary Homelessness: Issues of Definition and Meaning*, Australian Journal of Social Issues, vol 27 No 4

Publications and Design, Public Affairs and International Branch, Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, *The SAAP Data and Research Resource Folder*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1996

7. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Assistant Collector (AC) : On occasions when the Census Management Unit deems it necessary to provide assistance to a collector, an assistant collector will be employed. An assistant collector can be used to assist with the indigenous, ethnic or other specialised forms of enumeration.

Census Field Officer (CFO) : Appointed by the CMU to carry out census awareness activities related to the indigenous enumeration, and to manage enumeration activities in nominated discrete communities.

Census Hotline : An ABS telephone service which answers queries from the public concerning the census.

Census Management Unit (CMU) : A unit located in each State or Territory ABS office which oversees the enumeration activities of that State or Territory.

Collector : A person who delivers census forms to, and collects the completed census forms from, every dwelling and household in their Collection District and performs other associated tasks of enumeration. This person reports to the Group Leader.

Collection District (CD) : A geographical area within which a collector enumerates every dwelling.

Divisional Manager (DM) : The title of the person who managed a Census Division in 1991. This was the 1991 equivalent of the 1996 Field Manager position.

Field Group Area (FGA): An administrative unit of about 12 - 15 collector workloads under the control of a Group Leader.

Field Management Area (FMA) : A collection area roughly equivalent to a Federal Electoral Division and which is comprised of one or more Local Government Areas.

Field Manager (FM) : A person who manages a Field Management Area (FMA). Duties include the training and supervision of Group Leaders, appointment and payment of staff and management and organisation of the census procedures for an FMA. This person reports to the CMU.

Group Leader (GL) : A person who is responsible for the enumeration of every dwelling within a Field Group Area. Duties include training collectors and special collectors, receipt, distribution and return of census materials and checking collectors' work. This person reports to the Field Manager.

Indigenous Enumeration Strategy (IES) : A special enumeration strategy developed to cope with the remoteness of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and the special characteristics of indigenous people. Special staff are recruited to inform indigenous communities about the census, and to carry out the enumeration of remote communities.

Non Private Dwelling (NPD) : Dwellings which provide a communal type of accommodation, such as hotels, motels and hospitals. (Owners, managers or caretakers residences are treated as separate households.)

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) : A national program which provides community organisations and local governments with funds to support people who are homeless or in crisis.

Special Collector (SC) : A person recruited to enumerate large Non-Private Dwellings or Other Dwellings; usually a person from within that establishment.

1996 CENSUS STRATEGY FOR THE ENUMERATION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

Objectives of strategy

There are two objectives for this strategy:

- . The Field Objective: maximising coverage of the population including counting the homeless in the next census of Australia; and
- . The Data Objective: providing information from that census to policy makers and service deliverers on the number and characteristics of homeless people.

The Field objective is seen as the top priority: to provide information on the homeless we must first include them in the census. Also, it should be noted that the primary objective of the census is to count everyone in Australia on census night. Compiling statistics on their key characteristics is a second objective (albeit an extremely important one).

It should be noted at the commencement of this paper that it is not proposed that the ABS publish, as census output, estimates of the number of homeless people. The reasons for this are explained below. What is intended is to meet the Field objective in such a way that data from the census will be of greater utility to analysts with capacity to interpret the data and produce authoritative estimates.

Background

Definitions

An essential element of discussion of the homeless is definition of the population covered by this term.

The traditional stereotype of the homeless is the inhabitant of skid row:

" ... the listless aimless haunt of old men void of ambition or bonds, for whom the empty ritual of a shared bottle provided the only semblance of sociability." (Hopper (1))

This is manifestly inadequate in a modern society and for planning purposes this paper will take as a broad base the definitions quoted by Burke (2) based on Chamberlain and McKenzie (3) (which are also understood to be the basis of the definitions used by the Commonwealth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)).

	Classification
Housed but without conditions of 'home' e.g. security, safety or in conditions of adequate standard	Third degree relative homelessness/inadequate housing/incipient homelessness
People constrained to live permanently in single rooms in private boarding houses	Second degree relative homelessness
People moving between various forms of temporary or medium term shelter such as refuges, hostels, boarding houses or	First degree relative homelessness
People without an acceptable roof over their heads, living on the streets, under bridges, deserted	Absolute homelessness

It will be noted that, not surprisingly, the definitions are in terms of quality of accommodation. A grey area exists in respect to people living in caravans, since some people retire to "the caravan lifestyle" while others live in vans because nothing else is available. It was suggested at the AHURI discussions that one solution to this could be to distinguish between those people living permanently in rented 'vans and those in 'vans they own.

Following the discussion at an Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute seminar (6A) correspondence from Hanover Housing (a major non-Government Organisation active in the Welfare Housing Field in Victoria) expressed some reservations about this concept. While accepting that it may be difficult to achieve absolute precision in some of the distinctions inherent in this definition, it appears the general acceptance of this definition by the key players cited above offers the best starting point for the census.

Past Experience

A paper describing experiences in enumeration of the homeless from a Field perspective was considered by the Field Evaluation Conference in 1991(4) and has been reasonably widely circulated. This will form the basis of development under the field objective.

A wide and voluminous range of papers have been produced in the USA following their efforts towards the **Field** objective with S-night ('S' for Street and Shelter) in 1990. These are available in various learned journals and Appendix 1 is a list of the more prominent papers consulted by Population Census staff. Of particular interest is the range of papers presented at the 1991 Fannie Mae Annual Housing Conference (5). Particular papers from this volume, which have generated specific insights are referenced individually below.

The experience of the United States Bureau of the Census (USBC) in counting the homeless is also relevant to this exercise. This is despite the apparently greater relative number of homeless people in that country. It is worth noting some of the major points from the US experience:

- it is impossible to make meaningful decisions about whom to count as homeless ... without a firm grasp of the concept one intends to measure (Cordray and Pion (5A))
- early estimates of the number of homeless ranged from nearly 3 million (a largely discounted estimate by an advocacy group) to about 300,000 estimated by the US Government Agency with prime coverage of Housing issues (Housing and Urban Development). (Kondratas (6));
- A fair proportion of the debate (and lawsuits) about people missed in the 1980 US Census related to the propensity to miss people who were homeless (of particular importance due to the demographics of that community). This led to S-night in the 1990 Census;
- The count from S-night was about 230,000- although at the low end of the range, methodological issues suggest this is far from out of consideration. (Kondratas);
- the US Government is (at least in 1991) using an estimate of 567,000 to 600,000 - apparently accepting that to do so is to err on the side of overestimation rather than underestimation. (Kondratas).

A recent publication of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (6AA) reports on some statistics reporting on the use of services funded through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. This received considerable media publicity at the time of release. While the text of the report contains some interesting and useful detail regarding this section of the homeless community it also indicates that the relatively low response rate to the Surveys on which it is based may limit such usefulness.

Specific sub-Groups of homeless people

Within the broad strategies developed in 1991 it is considered that we can locate homeless people (unless they are actively hiding from the enumerators, perhaps as part of a more general desire/need to conceal their whereabouts). This includes the inhabitants of skid rows because many of them have developed established personal routines as survival skills.

The following identifies some other sub-groups of the population which may be more difficult to ensure are included on questionnaires once their location is identified.

In discussion with the Homeless Persons Information Centre of Sydney City Council it was suggested that the most difficult group to count may be **women and families** who have left home to escape domestic violence: they could be found in any location, often in the suburbs rather than the (usual) CBD location of skid row. Discussion at AHURI (6A) indicated that the location of refuges may be regarded as highly classified information, to further protect such people from detection. This did not seem to be such a problem in WA: a solution will be negotiated with the relevant bodies in the run-up to the census.

James (7) notes that **youths on their own** frequently avoid services such as hostels and soup kitchens. He also quotes an example of **rural homeless** being difficult to identify due to the limited services available. Both of these cases coincide with subgroups of the population which have been found to have above average "underenumeration rates" in the Australian census. An approach to counting the rural homeless in Ohio is given by Stasny, Toomey and First (8). While the practical strategies they suggest are similar to those used in Australia in 1991 they are somewhat different to the techniques used in the US cities during S-night.

Overall Strategy

In view of the many disparate situations applicable to homeless people it is not considered feasible for a central group, such as the Canberra Office of the ABS (or indeed any group restricted largely to the Central Business Districts of the State capital cities) to be prescriptive about the 'best' way of counting homeless people in the census. It could be hoped that the 'general' Communications campaign will reach some of the homeless and encourage them to seek out and complete a form. However a more focussed approach will also be needed and this will ultimately be a responsibility of the Field Managers (FMs) responsible for management of the Field Operation in each of the 145 Field Management Areas (FMAs) across Australia.

The outcome sought from this exercise is, in essence, a set of guidelines for the operators of the field collection.

The overall approach which has been followed is to seek the advice and practical/operational experience of other groups, both in the government and non-government sectors, in regard to the identification and collection of data from homeless people.

The first steps in this process were to contact the Australian Council on Social Services (ACOSS) as a top-down approach to contact the non-government sector. Contact has also been made with the Commonwealth government agencies (Department of Social Security, Housing and Regional Development, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) who investigate or administer policies most relevant to this group of society. Following the network generated by these approaches will constitute one thread of work. We will also establish contacts with State Government Agencies and bodies affiliated with ACOSS to ensure that the views of as many as possible are obtained in development of operational procedures.

The suggestions made by people and organisations contacted through this networking approach will be used to build up the list of suggested options. A list of options are set out below separately for the Field and Data Objectives.

Options towards the Field Objective

In essence this approach follows the strategies developed and successfully used in the 1991 Census.

- (i) Establish contact with State and/or Local Government Agencies responsible for licensing accommodation likely to cater for the relative homeless. This contact should be undertaken well before census date to ensure that all such abodes are included in the list of non-private dwellings provided to Field Managers. It would be helpful to also contact the non-government sector -especially SAAP funded NGOs - to assess whether there are a significant number of establishments not covered by registration requirements.
- (ii) Investigate ways of specifically identifying the types of NPDs used in defining the relatively homeless which can be practically implemented by collectors, special collectors and supervisory field staff.
- (iii) Make contact with groups providing other services for the homeless (e.g. provision of meals; mailbox services) to gain their support in contacting the people who use their services on census night. Specifically seek the assistance of these groups to identify hang-outs/skid rows/drinking trees etc which may require additional staff to be engaged.
- (iv) Engage members of the homeless community to enumerate 'difficult' areas on census night.
- (v) Consider establishing "field offices" on census night in areas where homeless people are likely to be encountered.
- (vi) Give attention to the homeless enumeration strategy in all other strategies: in particular recognise the inter-relationship between the

hard-to-enumerate visitor section of the population and relative homelessness.

- (vii) Use all opportunities with communications media, and contact with the homeless community to "spread the word" about the importance of participation in the census.

In all of the above it must be recognised that not all of the situations in which homeless people are encountered will be pleasant (or safe). It would be unprofessional not to recognise that a high proportion (up to 40% has been quoted) of the 'traditional' homeless have a history of psychiatric problems and/or substance abuse. The safety of collection staff will be of paramount importance to ABS and where a situation looks dangerous collectors will be advised to back off. It is hoped that the indirect methods- soup kitchens, mail boxes- etc will provide back-up to overcome these potential losses.

Options towards the Data strategy

Our existing methods have potential to produce output identifying many of the people who fit into the classification of people who are homeless. Key documents in this regard are the 1991 Census Directory of Classifications (ABS Bulletin reference number 2904.0) and the 1991 Census Dictionary (ABS Bulletin reference number 2901.0). However, the cautionary tone of a comment in the Burdekin Report clearly indicates that there are major difficulties to be faced:

'Many homeless people are "hidden" and evidence from people in contact with them is likely to be a more reliable guide than census or other official survey efforts to count individuals.' (HREOC (9) p 65)

This comment is seen both as a challenge and to suggest the answer: we are attempting to incorporate the anecdotal evidence in our efforts to improve the official counts of individuals.

One general problem relates to the current treatment of people who "do not have a usual address". In the last census they were instructed to give the address at which they are enumerated as their usual address. We are currently testing an approach in which we instruct such people who consider they have no usual address to write "no usual address". Our objectives in testing will be to assess the extent to which asking people to report in this way:

- . assists in identifying a segment of the homeless population (a positive outcome); and
- . leads to confusion in those who have a usual address (a negative outcome).

Given that people will make their own assessment of whether they have a usual address it is likely that some complexity will be introduced by the temporal dimensions of homelessness. One Australian perspective on an aspect of this problem is discussed by Chamberlain and Mackenzie (10) which

shows *inter alia* that many of the homeless so regard themselves after a period far shorter than the 6 months used in the ABS definition of a person's usual address.

Assuming the overall outcome is positive, a number of attributes of those with no usual address (similar to those listed above regarding campers out, etc) will still require analysis in considering data collected by such an instruction in the census proper. It is likely that there will be a number of people who consider that they have no usual address but would not normally be regarded as homeless (for example seasonal workers who are constantly travelling).

An associated issue which must be covered by the ABS' analysis of this test is the treatment of homeless people in estimating the population of Statistical Local Areas. At present we believe we can conceptually accommodate people with no usual address within our existing concepts, but this will require consultation with users beyond those interested in homelessness.

The following discussion comments on specific issues relating to each of the four categories within the definition used for this strategy.

Absolute Homelessness: People without an acceptable roof over their heads, living on the streets, under bridges, deserted buildings

In the 1991 Census the absolute homeless are included in the same category as people camping out. In a US context *Doonesbury* has commented on this nomenclature (see Trudeau (11)).

An important step for the 1996 Census should be to come up with a **more appropriate terminology**. We will investigate what difficulties arise from attempting to dissect people into those living in improvised/minimal shelters and those who may more correctly be described as campers. A practical problem (with a philosophical counterpart) is the ability of the collection staff to



accurately and consistently make such distinctions.

Given that it seems probable the same term will have to cover two widely different groups perhaps the term 'sleeping out' can be adopted. It avoids the connotations of fun attributable to 'campers out' and not appropriate to the homeless and the air of desperation covered by 'sleeping rough' used in the UK which would be inappropriate to (e.g.) holiday makers or surfers sleeping on the beach.

It is suggested that by considering a number of the attributes of people classified as "campers out" it would be possible to dissect this group into homeless people and holiday makers.

Specification of the analysis required is not within the scope of this paper: advice from those involved in homeless research would be useful. It could be that the following attributes are among the more important:

- . usual address (if the person gives a usual address other than their place of enumeration the chances are they are a "camper")
- . income;
- . Labour force status;
- . type of household; and
- . geographic area involved (e.g. a person recorded as camping out in the centre of Melbourne is probably homeless; in Wilpena Pound they are more likely to be on vacation)

First degree relative homelessness: People moving between various temporary or medium term shelters such as refuges, hostels, boarding houses or friends

The classification of non-private dwellings (NPDD) includes a category "Hostels for the Homeless, Night Shelters, Refuges". Clearly the people classified to this category should be considered as belonging to the category "First degree relative homelessness". It would appear that the correspondence between this category in NPDD and First category homeless is one-for one.

There appears to be a particularly significant gap in regard to identifying those who move between friends/relatives houses (the doubling-up situation) which cannot be filled in our current strategies. Hopefully the test project outlined above will plug this gap.

Second degree relative homelessness: People constrained to live permanently in single rooms in private boarding houses

While the NPDD classification includes an entry for "Boarding Houses and private hotels" it is thought that the establishments included in this category would include a far wider range of accommodation than those contemplated by the definition of homelessness. Further, the questions addressed to the residents of such establishments would not include the elements of occupancy of a single room nor permanency. Discussions at AHURI (6A) and other comments have stressed both the importance of boarding houses as a form of accommodation for the homeless and the difficulties likely to be encountered in attempting to list them.

It is believed, again that multivariate analysis similar to that envisaged for campers-out would assist in identifying the subset of occupants of these establishments who are second degree relatively homeless.

As a result of the self-identification approach used in the field to classify non-private dwellings there would seem to be no scope for improving the data to more directly meet the definition, at least from the 1996 Census.

Third degree relative homelessness: Housed but without conditions of 'home' e.g. security, safety or in conditions of adequate standard

There is very little probability of identifying many people who could be classified to third degree homelessness through our current procedures.

Overcrowding can be assessed through the ratio of people to bedrooms but other qualitative aspects of accommodation cannot be collected through a self enumeration approach.

Other elements of the broad definition such as 'security' are well beyond the scope of the Census of Population and Housing.

Evaluation

An important element of any strategy is an evaluation of that strategy. A focus for evaluating this strategy will be covered by the Field Evaluation Conference (probably to be held in late 1996). We will be requesting Field Managers to report specifically on the success of this strategy (and, importantly their tactical and operational initiatives) in their reports and debriefings.

The timing of the Field evaluation will prohibit any evaluation of the Data objective until some time after the collection has been completed: however some effort should be made to build this into the development of plans for the 2001 Census.

Given that evaluations generally benefit from an external content it is planned to seek advice on both Field and Data outcomes from external bodies. It is expected that the nature and source of the type of advice to be sought will develop through the program of discussions being pursued in the development of this strategy.

Summary of Plans

- (1) By consultation, ensure that an appropriate definition of 'homeless' is available.
- (2) Develop, and consult with, a network of interested parties to ensure appropriate procedures are in place for enumeration of the homeless.
- (3) Test revised procedures for reporting by people with no usual address.
- (4) Investigate practical possibilities for, and implications of, revising collector's procedures to distinguish between homeless people and campers.
- (5) Develop an understanding of data requirements to permit analysts to prepare estimates of the homeless population.
- (6) Resolve conceptual issues arising from the need to include homeless people within the concept of Estimated Resident Population for Statistical Local Areas.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Hopper K *Homelessness Old and New: The matter of definition* Housing Policy Debate v2 Issue 3
- (2) Burke T *The future of Homelessness* Ecumenical Housing Inc 1993
- (3) Chamberlain C and Mackenzie D *Understanding Contemporary Homelessness: Issues of Definition and Meaning*; Australian Journal of Social Issues vol 27 No 4
- (4) 1991 Census Field Evaluation Conference paper; *Enumeration of the Homeless*; ABS (unpublished) 1991
- (5) Housing Policy Debate vol 2 Issue 3 *Papers presented at the Fannie Mae Annual Housing Conference* , Washington DC May 14 1991
- (5A) Cordray D S and Pion G M *Definitional Issues in Counting the Homeless* Housing Policy Debate v2 Issue 3
- (6) Kondratas A *Estimates and Public Policy: The Politics of Numbers* Housing Policy Debate v2 Issue 3
- (6AA) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Services for the Homeless 1990-92 A statistical Profile* 1994
- (6A) Discussion at seminar discussion of an early draft of this document, arranged by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), Melbourne 12 August 1994.
- (7) James F J *Counting with Surveys of Users of Services* Housing Policy Debate v2 Issue 3
- (8) Stasny E, Toomey B, and First R *Estimating the Rate of Rural Homelessness* Survey Methodology v20 No1, Statistics Canada 1994
- (9) Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission *Our Homeless Children Report of the National Enquiry into Homeless Children* AGPS 1989 (the Burdekin Report)
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**APPENDIX 2 : SHORT FORM USED IN SYDNEY CBD STREET ENUMERATION ACTIVITIES
(REDUCED SIZE)**