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**Anglicare Australia
Emergency Relief and
Financial Counselling
Client Survey**

Executive Summary

www.anglicare.asn.au

About Anglicare Australia

Anglicare Australia is a network of independent local, state, national and international organisations that are linked to the Anglican Church and are joined by values of service, innovation, leadership and the Christian faith that every individual has intrinsic value. With a combined expenditure of \$1.82 billion, and a workforce of 20,500 staff and 9,000 volunteers, the Anglicare Australia Network contributes to more than 50 service areas in the Australian community. Our services are delivered to 450,000 people each year, reaching over 1.33 million Australians in total. Our services are delivered in partnership with people, the communities in which they live, and other like-minded organisations in those areas.

As part of its mission, Anglicare Australia “partners with people, families and communities to build resilience, inclusion and justice.” Our first strategic goal charges us with reaching this by influencing “social and economic policy across Australia with a strong prophetic voice; informed by research and the practical experience of the Network.”

About this project

The Anglicare Australia Emergency Relief and Financial Counselling Client Survey was originally developed by Anglicare Sydney to identify the profile of people using its Food and Financial Assistance services and to evaluate their service experience, well-being and outcomes. Overall coordination of the project was provided by Anglicare Australia and Anglicare Sydney’s Social Policy and Research Unit. The authors of this report are Jeanette Mollenhauer, Sue King, Liping Yan, and John Bellamy of Anglicare Sydney.

Member agencies of Anglicare Australia were invited to take part in this national version of the survey; participating agencies included:

- ac.care, SA
- Anglicare Central Qld
- Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT
- Anglicare North Coast
- Anglicare NT
- Anglicare SA
- Anglicare Sydney
- Samaritans Foundation.



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Executive Summary

The inaugural Anglicare Australia Emergency Relief and Financial Counselling Client Survey ('Anglicare Client Survey') was conducted in late 2019 among clients of Anglicare services located in five states and territories. Over 2000 (2078 total) clients completed survey forms, providing demographic data about the general characteristics of Anglicare's client cohort. The data includes baseline information about clients' primary reasons for presenting at Anglicare services, client wellbeing, satisfaction with service provided by Anglicare, and client outcomes.

Client profile

Gender: 60% of clients across Australia were female and 40% male.

Age: Nationally, the majority of clients (42%) were aged between 35-49 years, with 28% aged 18-34, 24% aged 50-64 and 5% aged 65-79. Only 1% were over 80, and none were under 18.

Cultural Diversity: Overall, 84% of clients were born in Australia, with 9% having been born in non-English-speaking countries and 7% in other English-speaking countries.

Indigenous Status: Across all agencies, about 20% of clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, a percentage which is far higher than the population average (3.3%).

Employment: Overall, 58% of respondents were unemployed, which was far higher than the official unemployment rate at the end of 2019 (5.1%). Some 14% undertake home duties and 9% had some level of employment.

Household type: Across all agencies, 37% of clients live alone, followed by 30% who are single parents, 9% couples with children and 7% couples without children. Some 17% were found in 'Other' households, which may include arrangements such as shared accommodation.

Length of service usage

Overall, the majority of respondents had only been attending Anglicare agencies for less than one month (33%), with the next largest groupings being those who have attended for two years or more (29%) and for 1-2 years (15%).

Reasons for presentation

Across the nation, the top three reasons for presentation were: material wellbeing such as needing help to get food (46% of respondents), money management such as needing help to deal with a sudden large bill (33%) and housing such as struggling to pay rent (11%).

Self-perceived improvement

Eighty-one percent (81%) of clients overall said they were in crisis/struggling with respect to money management when they initially accessed a service, but this had dropped to 54% for their current situation. In terms of material wellbeing, the percentage in crisis/struggling dropped from 86% to 73%, while in relation to housing, the percentage dropped from 81% to 58%, a reduction of 23%.

Personal wellbeing

Using the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) it was found that, across Australia, clients' PWI scores were significantly lower than the Australian norm.

Control over decision-making

Sense of control over decision-making was calculated using a score from 0 ('No control at all') to a score of '10' ('Complete control'). The average score for all clients nationally was 6.6.

Social connectedness

Social connectedness was calculated using a score from 0 ('I am completely isolated socially and often feel lonely') to a score of '10' ('I have completely fulfilling relationships and never feel lonely'). Results show an across-the-board average score of 5.3.

Service experience

Very high levels of satisfaction among clients for each of the aspects of their service experience were recorded nationally. Agreement (sum of 'Agree' and 'Tend to Agree') with each statement was highest in relation to clients feeling they had been listened to and understood (96%), being satisfied overall with the service they had received (94%), staff responding in a timely manner (95%), and confidence in information/advice from staff (93%). The lowest levels of agreement, although still very high, were strong trust relationships (87%).

Net promoter score (nps)

Calculation of the NPS is based on the question: "How likely would you be to recommend Anglicare to a friend or family member"? Individuals answer on a 0 to 10 scale, with 10 being the highest rating. NPS scores range from -100 to 100. The average NPS for all agencies was 74.

Client outcomes nationally

On average, clients were more likely to report improvements in outcomes than deterioration. The greatest improvements in self-assessed outcomes as being 'excellent' or 'good' were in relation to knowing where to get help (change from 37% prior to coming to Anglicare to 65% now among all clients, or a 28% improvement), a result that is not surprising given that clients have come into contact with a suite of services available at Anglicare agencies. The outcome that registered the smallest improvement was that of being able to deal with an unexpected expense (18% to 26%, or an 8% improvement).

Service impact

Overall, Anglicare services have been most beneficial in clients knowing where to get help (overall 87% felt that Anglicare had made a positive difference).

Client feedback

Clients could provide comments or suggestions about service improvements. Of the 2078 clients who filled out survey forms, 754 people (36.3% of all respondents) provided comments or suggestions. Using thematic analysis, these responses were categorised as follows:

1. Responses of Gratitude (n=556 or 74% of all responses) – where clients basically expressed their gratitude for the service and/or that it was highly effective and had provided excellent outcomes. These were then sub-divided into:
 - a) General expressions of thanks (n= 247)
 - b) Expressions of thanks with specific details included (n=309).
2. Suggestions for Improvement (n=81 or 11% of all responses).
3. Unusable (n=117 or 15% of all responses) – where clients made comments about their personal circumstances or did not feel they had been in the service long enough to comment.

Conclusions

The 2019 Anglicare Client Survey has provided comparable statistical profiles of clients and their situations across a range of Anglicare member agencies, and overall identifies high levels of positive client experience of Anglicare services. These results are useful for service evaluation and provide the opportunity for service comparison between agencies and for identification of key areas for improvement.

The survey paints a compelling picture of some of the key facets of the experience of disadvantage and provides data that can be used for advocacy purposes at a regional or national level. Of particular note is the high proportion of people who are unemployed and single parents seeking assistance, and that the main reason for needing help are to seek help in meeting material needs. This adds to the significant body of evidence that government income payments, including those for people who are unemployed and parenting payments, are too low to ensure that people can consistently cover the costs of their basic needs, such as food and housing.

Recommendations

1. The Anglicare Australia Network uses the results of this inaugural client outcomes survey to **inform advocacy regarding government income payments** and other measures to address persistent poverty and disadvantage.
2. Each Agency encourage Program Managers and their staff teams to use **2019 agency service centre dashboards**, for evaluation and service improvement purposes, and utilise posters of the results to help inform clients of the survey findings.
3. Staff at agency and service centre level take note of their own particular results and use these to **inform decision-making processes** about future service directions and improvements, to better meet the specific needs of clients.
4. Agencies consider **participation in a repeat of the Client Survey**, to generate further data on the clients of emergency relief and financial counselling services, that can inform internal and external policies and services.