

## 1981-82 SURVEY OF SPECIAL CASH ASSISTANCE

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## 1. SUMMARY

The New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services assists people in financial crisis through its Special Cash Assistance (S.C.A.) Programme. Emergency assistance is in the form of a discretionary cash grant. For the last five years a survey has been conducted of all cash grants issued in the Department's eighty-one District Offices. This data has been collected each year in the three month period between November and January. The results of this survey for the first four years, 1977-78-1980-81 were presented in a previous paper.<sup>1</sup>

This year's survey of expenditure and volume of work associated with special cash grants was conducted at an inopportune time, due to the unforeseen incidence of a dispute in the Commonwealth Department of Social Security (D.S.S.) which had the effect of disrupting payments to potential and existing social security pensioners and beneficiaries. This led to the Department of Youth and Community Services undertaking to make cash assistance available to clients or potential clients of the D.S.S. in financial crisis due to the non-receipt of pensions or benefits, and resulted in the Department outlaying an additional \$817,123.75 out of its S.C.A. budget. In order to substantially remove the effect of these unusual circumstances, the amount of financial assistance provided as a direct result of the industrial dispute was subtracted from total S.C.A. expenditure. The balance was taken to represent cash assistance provided in "normal" circumstances, and was compared to assistance provided in previous years.

The major points to emerge were—

Expenditure on cash assistance in the three month survey period has again escalated dramatically. Expenditure of \$1,186,098 represents a 45 per cent increase over the amount spent during the 1980-81 survey period. This has been due to the number of grants issued increasing at a greater rate, rather than to an increase in the average amount of grant, which has, in fact, decreased.

25 758 cash grants were issued in the three month period. This represents a 52 per cent increase since last year's survey and a 145 per cent increase on the 10 527 grants issued in 1979-80.

Projecting the 1981-82 survey over the full financial year, a total of 103 032 grants representing an expenditure of \$4,744,393 could be expected to be issued.

65.3 per cent of grants were issued in the four Sydney metropolitan regions, including 31.3 per cent in the Central/South East Metropolitan Region. The South West Metropolitan Region experienced an 81 per cent increase over last year in the number of grants issued, surpassing the North West Metropolitan Region as the second-highest provider of assistance.

34.7 per cent of grants were issued in the six country regions. The country regions issuing the most grants was North Coast which now issues 8.6 per cent of all grants and is the fourth largest provider of cash assistance.

The number of grants issued increased by less than 20 per cent in Illawarra/South Coast, North West Metropolitan and Western Regions. Total expenditure actually decreased in the Illawarra/South Coast and Western Regions due to marked reductions in the average amount of grant issued.

The average amount of grant was \$46.05. This compares with \$48.77 in 1980-81. Discounting for inflation, the real 1977-78 monetary value of this year's average grant is \$32.06, a 29 per cent decrease in real terms, compared to the average grant of \$44.94 in that year.

The average grant issued in the four Sydney regions was \$47.90 as compared to \$47.65 in 1980-81 to \$42.56 this financial year. There is considerable variation both within and between regions in the average amount of grants issued. Regional averages varied between \$55 in the North East Metropolitan Region to less than \$36 in the Hunter and Western Regions.

A cursory analysis of the client population receiving Special Cash Assistance reveals significant variation between the proportion of S.C.A. expenditure in each region and the population of potential clients in each region. The comparison indicated that all the non-metropolitan regions, except New England, were spending below what could be expected on the basis of their share of the population in potential need of assistance, and on Sydney patterns of expenditure.

Provision of cash assistance has been increasing at a far greater rate than the increase in the number of recipients of Commonwealth pensions or benefits (who represent the main target group for the S.C.A. programmes), suggesting that the increase in assistance provision is not due to an absolute increase in the number of people dependent on Commonwealth income support, but to an increasing proportion of these requiring assistance, and requiring this assistance more frequently. This presumption is supported by evidence from a survey of S.C.A. clients which indicated that over 75 per cent were receiving either Supporting Parent or Unemployment Benefit. These two groups accounted for the major growth in the number of people receiving all Commonwealth pensions and benefits in the past year.

The results of this survey, when coupled with an examination of the rates of payment of the various forms of Commonwealth income maintenance suggest that the increased provision of cash assistance could be attributed to an increasing proportion of Social Security recipients (mostly dependent upon Support-in Parent or Unemployment Benefits), forced into increasing financial hardship by the reduced purchasing power of key pensions, benefits and allowances and being forced to apply for emergency assistance on a more frequent basis. This may have the result of transforming the S.C.A. Programme into a means of income supplementation rather than a source of one-off assistance, by necessity, for some clients.

The explicit goal of the S.C.A. Programme is "to ensure that all people in New South Wales have access to urgent financial assistance and support in times of need."<sup>1</sup> The extent to which this goal is being achieved is brought into question by some of the findings of this survey, e.g., the variation, mentioned above, between the proportion of S.C.A. expenditure provided in each region and the proportion of the population, potentially in need of emergency assistance, in each region. While, at a time when the rates of Commonwealth pensions and benefits have fallen

<sup>1</sup> Dent, K. Special Cash Assistance: *A Regional Analysis of Trends over the Four Years 1977-78-1980-81*. New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services Planning and Research Paper No. 2, May, 1981.

<sup>1</sup> New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services. *Goals and Objectives of the Department of Youth and Community Services*, November, 1980, p. 20.

further below the poverty line, there has been a documented increase in the demand for emergency assistance and a concurrent reduction in the value of the average cash grant.

The proposed format for a future survey of cash assistance recipients would allow a comprehensive client profile to be developed. The type of information sought will include: main source of income; if dependent on Social Security, the pension or benefit received; number of children; housing costs; and the frequency and purpose of assistance received. This information will enable a deeper and more conclusive analysis of some of the questions and hypotheses raised in this paper.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the results of a survey of all special cash grants issued by the Department of Youth and Community Services over the three month period 2nd November, 1981, to 29th January, 1982 and is an update on a previous report which presented similar data collected over the same three month period for the preceding four years.<sup>2</sup>

Special Cash Assistance to low income individuals and families in financial crisis is provided by the Department as part of the social welfare component of the Emergency Assistance Programme. Emergency financial assistance is means tested and is provided to people with no financial reserves, generally dependent on the regular receipt of Social Security payments, unable to meet essential living commitments such as food, accommodation, gas and/or electricity. The special cash grant is a discretionary payment. In the district offices, after an assessment of the clients circumstances, it rests with the district officer who is to exercise the delegation to decide the need and a reasonable amount to meet it. Assistance must be approved by an Officer with the delegated authority (usually the Senior District Officer). Most special cash grants are outlaid under the 'general' category (vote 303). Fewer, but larger, grants are outlaid for housing resettlement (vote 304). In addition to special cash grants, clothing, food orders and transport for necessitous persons are also provided through the Social Welfare Programme.

Administrative Instruction D45 clearly identifies the target group as being persons in receipt of (or awaiting) the full rate of a Commonwealth pension or benefit, or an income which does not exceed this amount.<sup>3</sup> The 1980-81 survey of cash grants revealed that 92.8 per cent of all grants were made to Social Security recipients.<sup>4</sup> The survey also found that the average amount of each grant had risen by \$3.83 in the four years to 1980-81, a rise of 8.5 per cent. Concurrently total expenditure on Special Cash Assistance had increased dramatically due to the significantly large increase in the number of grants issued each year. Some 17 000 grants were issued in the three-month period in 1980-81 as compared to 5 296 in 1977-78.

The survey format consisted of the recording of the number of grants issued as S.C.A. (votes 303 and 304), and the total expenditure involved, on an office by office basis over the three month period. The occurrence of a dispute which disrupted Social Security payments brought into question the effectiveness of this survey as a data collection against which previous trends in the provision of S.C.A. could be compared, as will be explained in section 4.

## 3. THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

The November, 1981, to January, 1982, survey of Special Cash Assistance expenditure experienced an unforeseen circumstance which affected its reliability as an indicator of current trends against which the previous surveys could be related. This was an industrial dispute within the Commonwealth Department of Social Security which disrupted pension and

benefit payments between 11th November and 24th December, 1981, and resulted in unprecedented demand for emergency financial assistance from this Department.

An Administrative and Clerical Officers Association (A.C.O.A.) campaign of work bans, limitations and rolling stoppages in support of improved staffing levels in the D.S.S. resulted in stand-downs in the department. Initially these stand-downs, which were first notified on 28th October, disrupted the issue of counter cheques—usually unemployment payments made in emergency situations—and the processing of pension and benefit applications. The stand-downs spread to include members of the D.S.S. computer centre where all forms of Social Security payments are produced—at one stage the dispute was holding up the processing of at least 15 000 benefit payments in New South Wales.<sup>5</sup> The dispute affected D.S.S. offices selectively—some were forced to close, immediately disrupting Unemployment Benefit payments, while other offices continued to operate with minimal disruption to normal services.

The Department of Youth and Community Services indicated that, as of 10th November, when the effects of the dispute became apparent, it would extend its cash relief programme to recipients, and potential recipients, of Commonwealth pensions and benefits disadvantaged by delays in payment of their cheques following the commencement of the dispute there occurred a significant escalation in the number of persons in urgent need being referred to Y.A.C.S. with a consequent increase in the amount of assistance issued.

Records were kept in the Department's District Offices of cash payments made to persons who were identified as seeking assistance because of hardship experienced as a result of the dispute, in addition to the records kept in normal circumstances of S.C.A. provided to people in financial crisis. These payments made to clients and potential clients of the D.S.S. were recorded separately due to the erosion of funds, allocated in the budget under the Social Welfare Programme, and the need therefore to recoup from the Commonwealth this additional expenditure in order to prevent the S.C.A. programme suffering for the remainder of the financial year.

Assistance provided averaged \$30 per grant and was mainly for food and not for rent, gas and electricity bills. The grants were made to people with no financial reserves, and normally dependent on the regular receipt of Social Security payments or new applicants for Social Security, and included many families and individuals that had never previously required assistance from Y.A.C.S. A situation developed whereby some District Offices were providing cash assistance for many times the usual number of people,<sup>6</sup> exacerbating the existing pressure on these offices and making it necessary for field officers, clerical staff and senior officers to be taken off their normal duties and be diverted to the processing of claims for cash relief. Throughout New South Wales the Department was catering for up to 2 500 extra clients per day and up to \$75,000 per day in extra S.C.A.

A.C.O.A. staff of the D.S.S. returned to their normal work on 18th December. However, due to the backlog of work it was necessary for Y.A.C.S. to continue assisting persons whose cheques had been delayed by the dispute, until 24th December. The Department was subsequently reimbursed in full by the Commonwealth Government for the total amount of this assistance.

One consequence of the dispute, for this Department, was the increase in the number of persons seeking assistance following the end of the dispute. This has been attributed to greater public awareness of the availability of emergency assistance from Y.A.C.S. as a result of the publicity afforded the Department's S.C.A. programme during the dispute.<sup>7</sup> However, this has been negated to an indeterminate extent since the survey of S.C.A. by a greater amount of media attention publicising attempts by the Department to contain the ever-increasing S.C.A. budget.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Dent, K., *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services. *Administrative Instruction D45*, 1979, section 3, 3.4.

<sup>4</sup> Dent, K., *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* 14th December, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> For example, in four of the busiest offices, over the period of the dispute: Sydney office was supplying cash assistance to thirteen times the usual number of people (199 a day, on average); Bondi Junction, eight times the number (124 a day); Newcastle, seven times the number (98 a day); and Stanmore, four times the usual number (143 a day).

<sup>7</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14th-16th December, 1981.

<sup>8</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27th February, 1982.

#### 4. THE 1981-82 SURVEY OF SPECIAL CASH ASSISTANCE

In terms of the annual three-month survey of expenditure and volume of work associated with Special Cash Assistance, the incidence of additional grants provided as a result of the D.S.S. dispute hindered the identification of the "normal" level of assistance provided, i.e., the amount which would have been provided had there not been an industrial dispute disrupting Social Security payments.

Recorded at each of the Department's District Offices were the total number of cash grants issued and the number of grants designated, by the Senior District Officer, as payments made as a direct result of Social Security recipients not receiving their cheques—the latter being inclusive in the former. Ostensibly the logical method of determining this "normal" level of assistance would be to subtract the latter payments (which were recouped from the Commonwealth and thus no longer inclusive in this financial year's S.C.A. vote) from the total cash assistance allocated over the three months. This method was adopted here. However, as indicated earlier, over 90 per cent of cash grants provided in normal circumstances are issued to persons receiving Commonwealth pensions and benefits. It is logical to surmise that a number of clients would have been in financial difficulty, and approached the Department for assistance, during the dispute even if they had received their pension or benefit cheque. It can readily be appreciated that the demarcation between grants which would have been made according to the clients normal necessitous circumstances, and grants made to clients whose necessitous circumstances were precipitated by the non-receipt of Social Security payments, is not a precise one, and, when decided upon by a number of Senior District Officers with varying perceptions, becomes somewhat blurred.

Thus any anomalies encountered in the following tables can most probably be explained in terms of variations between District Offices in methods for adjudicating whether assistance provided was necessitated by the effects of the D.S.S. dispute or normal circumstances.

The higher public profile of the Department's emergency assistance programme during the dispute which may have attracted increased demand for this crisis aid following the end of the dispute, must also be taken into account when analysing the November to January volume of cash grants for 1981-82.

#### 5. 1981-82 SURVEY RESULTS

##### 5.1 Total Special Cash Assistance

Over the three month period from 21st November, 1981, to 29th January, 1982, a total of 52 870 cash grants were issued under the Special Cash Assistance Programme, representing an expenditure of \$2,003,222.14 (refer Table 1). This included assistance to Social Security clients disadvantaged during the industrial dispute. A sum of \$821,860 was recouped from the Commonwealth to cover the amount of this assistance. This included casual wages for staff employed for part of this period in various District Offices to aid in the processing of claims for cash assistance. The total amount of cash grants issued in each District Office is indicated in Tables 6 to 15.

##### 5.2 Cash Assistance Provided as a Result of the D.S.S. Dispute

Some 27 112 of these cash grants were designated as payments made to clients who were in financial hardship as a result of their social security pensions or benefits being delayed (refer Table 1). These grants were made during the thirty-two working days between 10th November, 1981, and 24th December, 1981, and totalled \$817,123.75, at an average of \$30.14 per grant. An average of 847 additional grants were made each day during the dispute, compared to 422 per day, issued to "normal" clients over the three-month survey period. The majority of this assistance was provided in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, particularly the Central/South East Metropolitan Region which issued 61 per cent of the grants. The amount of cash assistance provided as a result of the dispute, in each District Office is included in Tables 6 to 15.

##### 5.3 Cash Assistance Provided in "Normal" Circumstances

The remainder of this paper concerns itself with the balance of cash grants which were not designated as being provided as a result of the Social Security dispute, that is, assistance which would have been provided regardless, in normal circumstances. It is these figures which are used for purposes of extrapolation to assess this financial year's expenditure under the S.C.A. programme, and for the purpose of comparison with previous surveys of S.C.A.

During the survey period 25 758 "normal" cash grants were issued, representing an expenditure of \$1,186,098.39 at an average of \$46.05 per grant (refer Table 1). Table 2 provides a breakdown of the number of grants issued, the total expenditure involved and the average amount of grant by Y.A.C.S. region. Tables 3 to 5 provide similar information over a three-year period.

Table 1—Regional breakdown of grants issued, 2nd November, to 29th January, 1982

	Total special cash assistance			Cash assistance provided as a result of the D.S.S. dispute			Cash assistance provided in normal circumstances		
	Number of grants	Total expenditure	Average amount	Number of grants	Total expenditure	Average amount	Number of grants	Total expenditure	Average amount
		\$	\$		\$	\$		\$	\$
Central/South East Metropolitan .. ..	24 605	868,921.45	35.31	16 531	485,761.45	29.38	8 074	383,160.00	47.46
North East Metropolitan ..	2 164	99,009.90	45.75	724	19,783.50	27.33	1 440	79,226.40	55.02
North West Metropolitan	4 113	184,545.99	44.87	1 171	39,551.00	33.78	1 942	144,994.99	49.28
South West Metropolitan	6 337	271,807.93	42.62	2 019	73,715.00	36.51	4 358	198,092.93	45.46
Hunter .. ..	5 932	177,629.28	29.94	4 657	132,132.00	28.37	1 275	45,497.28	35.68
Illawarra/South Coast ..	2 558	101,556.62	39.70	936	29,266.80	31.27	1 622	72,289.82	44.57
North Coast .. ..	2 487	110,797.52	44.55	282	9,254.00	32.82	2 205	101,543.52	46.05
New England .. ..	1 619	76,423.28	47.20	223	8,854.00	39.70	1 396	67,569.28	48.40
Western .. ..	1 883	65,357.74	34.69	408	12,435.00	30.48	1 475	52,922.74	35.88
Riverina .. ..	1 132	47,172.43	41.67	161	6,371.00	39.57	971	40,801.43	42.02
Total .. ..	52 870	\$2,003,222.14	\$37.89	27 112	\$817,123.75	30.14	25 758	\$1,186,098.39	\$46.05

Table 2—Regional comparison—2nd November, 1981 to 29th January, 1982—Cash assistance provided in 'normal' circumstances

	Number of grants	Percentage of total grants	Ranking	Total expenditure	Percentage of total expenditure	Ranking	Average amount	Ranking
		per cent		\$	per cent		\$	
Central/South East Metropolitan .. ..	8 074	31.3	1	383,160.00	32.3	1	47.46	4
North East Metropolitan .. ..	1 440	5.6	7	79,226.40	6.7	5	55.02	1
North West Metropolitan .. ..	2 942	11.4	3	144,994.99	12.2	3	49.28	2
South West Metropolitan .. ..	4 358	16.9	2	198,092.93	16.7	2	45.46	6
Hunter .. ..	1 257	5.0	9	45,497.28	3.8	9	35.68	10
Illawarra/South Coast .. ..	1 622	6.3	5	72,289.82	6.1	6	44.57	7
North Coast .. ..	2 205	8.6	4	101,543.52	8.6	4	46.05	5
New England .. ..	1 396	5.4	8	67,569.28	5.7	7	48.40	3
Western .. ..	1 475	5.7	6	52,922.74	4.5	8	35.88	9
Riverina .. ..	971	3.8	10	40,801.43	3.4	10	42.02	8
Total	25,758	100%		\$1,186,098.39	100%		\$46.05	

#### Number of Grants

The 25 758 cash grants issued in the 1981-82 three month survey period represents a 52 per cent increase on the 17 000 issued during the same period last year, and a 386 per cent increase on the 5 296 grants issued in the initial survey period in 1977-78. Indicating a continuation of the exponential growth in demand for Y.A.C.S. crisis assistance (refer Table 3, Figure 1). Multiplying the 25 758 grants by four gives a projection for the financial year of 103 032 grants.

16 814 grants (or 65.3 per cent of all grants) were issued in the four metropolitan regions. The regions issuing the most grants were, in order: Central-South East Metropolitan (8 074 grants, or 31.3 per cent); South West Metropolitan (4 358 or 16.9 per cent); and North West Metropolitan (2 942 or 11.4 per cent). Table 3 indicates that the growth in cash provision has not been spread uniformly across regions. Central-South East Metropolitan has maintained its position as the largest provider of cash assistance, while the South West Metropolitan Region has experienced a considerable increase in demand for cash assistance in the past two years (the number of grants issued has increased by 237 per cent) such that it has by far surpassed the North West Metropolitan Region as the second largest provider of cash assistance.

The number of cash grants issued has also grown dramatically in the North Coast Region. The Region issued 2 205 grants in the survey period, a 268 per cent increase over the past two years, and now ranks as the fourth-largest provider of cash assistance. The growth in provision of cash assistance in the latter two regions can partially be explained by the role of increase and the socio-economic composition of recent population growth in those areas. The two fastest growing regions in N.S.W. between 1976 and 1981 were the North Coast Region where the population increased by 27.7 per cent and the South West Metropolitan Region which increased by 13.9 per cent (compared to the New South Wales average of 6.2 per cent). Population growth in these areas has been characterized by disproportionately large numbers of families and individuals dependent on Commonwealth income support.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Department of Social Security, *Recipient of Pensions, Benefits and Family Allowances in Postcode Districts and Electoral Divisions, N.S.W.* June, 1980, 1981. Statistics Section, Research and Statistics Branch, Development Division, Canberra.

The Hunter Region has also experienced a marked increase (211 per cent in the past two years) in the number of grants issued, although this is more a reflection of the relatively low provision of assistance in that region previously.

The number of grants issued has increased at a slower rate over the past two years in the North-East Metropolitan, North West Metropolitan, Illawarra-South Coast and Western Regions. Cash grants issued increased by only 3 per cent since last year in the Illawarra-South Coast Region, by 14 per cent in the North West Metropolitan Region, and by 18 per cent in the Western Region.

Figure 1—Number of Cash Grants Issued

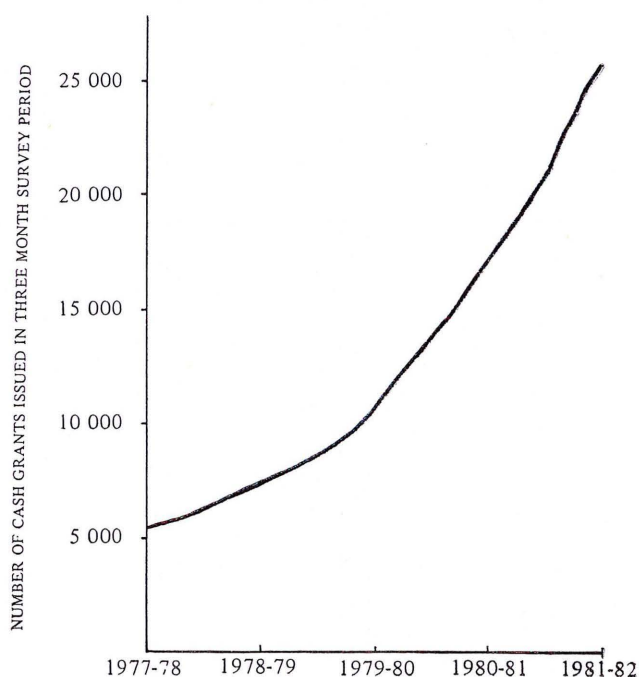


Table 3—1979-80—1981-82—Analysis of Grants Issued

	1979-80			1980-81			1981-82			Percentage Increase of Number of Grants	
	Number of Grants	Percentage of Total Grants	Ranking	Number of Grants	Percentage of Total Grants	Ranking	Number of Grants	Percentage of Total Grants	Ranking	Since 1979-80	Since 1980-81
										per cent	per cent
Central/South East Metropolitan ..	2 844	27.0	1	5 011	29.5	1	8 074	31.3	1	184	61
North East Metropolitan ..	883	8.4	6	897	5.3	6	1 440	5.6	7	63	61
North West Metropolitan ..	1 620	15.4	2	2 578	15.2	2	2 942	11.4	3	82	14
South West Metropolitan ..	1 294	12.3	3	2 412	14.2	3	4 358	16.9	2	237	81
Hunter ..	410	3.9	10	517	3.0	10	1 275	5.0	9	211	147
Illawarra/South Coast ..	1 005	9.6	4	1 576	9.3	4	1 622	6.3	5	61	3
North Coast ..	600	5.7	7	1 318	7.8	5	2 205	8.6	4	268	67
New England ..	507	4.8	8	923	5.4	7	1 396	5.4	8	175	51
Western ..	913	8.7	5	1 246	7.3	6	1 475	5.7	6	62	18
Riverina ..	451	4.3	9	522	3.1	9	971	3.8	10	115	86
Total ..	10 527	100%		17 000	100%		25 758	100%		145%	52%

#### Expenditure on Cash Assistance

Expenditure on Special Cash Assistance has increased by 43 per cent over last year's survey period, and by 141 per cent since 1979-80 (refer Table 4). The rate of increase has not been as great as the rate of increase in the number of grants issued due the stagnation and decline in the average amount of grant issued over this period (refer Table 5). Projecting the 1981-82 survey over the full financial year, a total expenditure on S.C.A. of \$4,744,393 could be anticipated. This would exceed the budget appropriation of \$4,526,811 by \$217,583, although the reservations about this year's survey expressed in section 4 of this report, as well as more recent attempts to restrain S.C.A. expenditure, should be taken into account when interpreting this projection.

A regional breakdown of total expenditure on crisis assistance is similar to that for the number of grants issued, although some differences occur due to variations in the average amount of grant issued. The North East Metropolitan Region which ranks seventh in terms of the number of grants issued (providing 5.6 per cent of the total), ranks fifth in terms of total expenditure (spending 6.7 per cent of the total) by virtue of the high average amount of grant (\$55) issued in the region. In the Western Region a reduction in the average amount of grant from \$49.31 to \$35.88 resulted in a 14 per cent reduction in expenditure despite an 18 per cent increase in the number of grants issued, while in the Illawarra-South Coast Region a similar diminution in the average grant (from \$48.31 to \$44.57) contributed to a 5 per cent decrease in

S.C.A. expenditure. The issue of reducing the average amount of cash grants is raised below, and in the following section.

#### Average Amount of Grants

While the total number of cash grants has increased dramatically since last year's survey (and since 1977-78), the average amount of these grants has not. The average amount of grants issued in the 1981-82 survey period was \$46.05. This compares with \$48.77 in 1980-81 and \$47.71 in 1979-80 (refer Table 5). In 1977-78 the average grant was \$44.94. Discounting for inflation since 1977-78 the real (1977-78) monetary value of this year's average grant of \$46.05 is \$32.06 (refer figure 2), a 29 per cent decrease in real terms.

The average grant in the metropolitan regions was \$47.90 as compared to \$47.65 last year. There were substantial reductions in each of the country regions such that the average size of grant issued in the country declined from \$50.77 in 1980-81 to \$42.56 this financial year. In some country regions the development of more stringent internal guidelines, implemented before the survey period, undoubtedly contributed to a reduction in total expenditure in those regions.

In terms of equity the substantial variation in the average amount of grant, both within (refer section 7) and between regions is a matter of concern. Regional averages varied between \$55 in the North East Metropolitan Region and below \$36 in the Hunter and Western Regions. It is unlikely that these variations relate to variations in the needs of families and individuals.

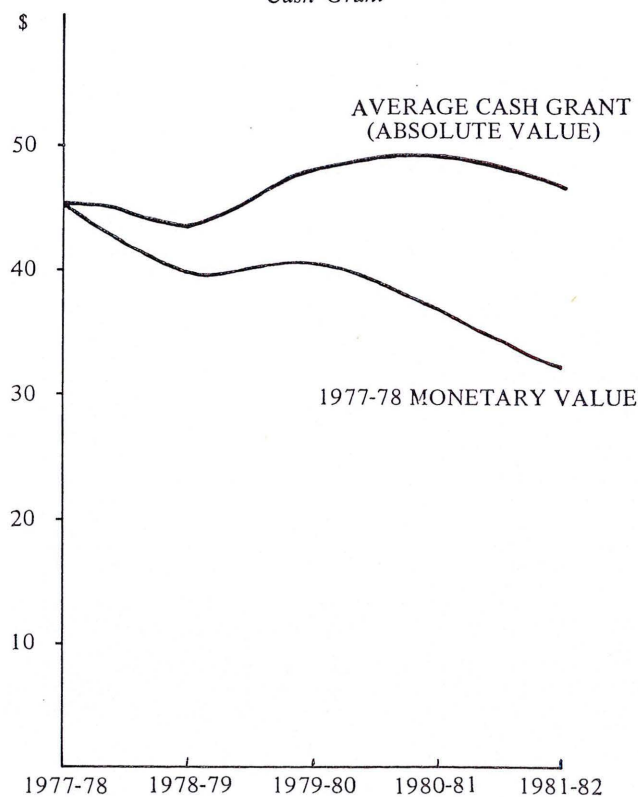
Table 4—1979-80—1981-82 analysis of expenditure

	1979-80			1980-81			1981-82			Percentage Change in Total Expenditure	
	Cost of Grants	Percentage of Total Expenditure	Ranking	Cost of Grants	Percentage of Total Expenditure	Ranking	Cost of Grants	Percentage of Total Expenditure	Ranking	Since 1979-80	Since 1980-81
										per cent	per cent
Central/South East Metropolitan ..	142,783.66	29.0	1	240,199.90	29.0	1	383,160.00	32.3	1	168	60
North East Metropolitan ..	46,186.64	9.4	4	49,557.40	6.0	8	79,226.40	6.7	5	72	60
North West Metropolitan ..	70,555.21	14.3	2	128,428.10	15.5	2	144,994.99	12.2	3	106	13
South West Metropolitan ..	59,427.69	12.1	3	101,145.02	12.2	3	198,092.93	16.7	2	233	96
Hunter ..	17,740.08	3.6	10	28,729.76	3.5	9	45,497.28	3.8	9	156	58
Illawarra/South Coast ..	41,338.89	8.4	5	76,129.69	9.2	4	72,289.82	6.1	6	75	-5
North Coast ..	30,658.05	6.2	7	66,949.96	8.1	5	101,543.52	8.6	4	231	52
New England ..	27,409.00	5.6	8	51,048.24	6.2	7	67,569.28	5.7	7	147	32
Western ..	37,592.58	7.6	6	61,446.28	7.4	6	52,922.74	4.5	8	41	-14
Riverina ..	19,444.99	3.9	9	25,516.90	3.1	10	40,801.43	3.4	10	110	60
Total ..	\$493,136.79	100%		\$829,151.25	100%		\$1,186,098.39	100%		141%	43%

Table 5—1979-80—1981-82—Analysis of Average Grant Levels

	1979-80		1980-81		1981-82	
	Average Amount of Grant	Ranking	Average Amount of Grant	Ranking	Average Amount of Grant	Ranking
	\$		\$		\$	
Central/South East Metropolitan .. .. .	50.21	4	47.93	9	47.46	4
North East Metropolitan .. .. .	52.31	2	55.25	3	55.02	1
North West Metropolitan .. .. .	43.55	6	49.82	5	49.28	2
South West Metropolitan .. .. .	45.93	5	41.93	10	45.46	6
Hunter .. .. .	43.27	7	55.57	1	35.68	10
Illawarra/South Coast .. .. .	41.18	9	48.31	8	44.57	7
North Coast .. .. .	51.10	3	50.80	4	46.05	5
New England .. .. .	54.06	1	55.31	2	48.40	3
Western .. .. .	41.17	10	49.31	6	35.88	9
Riverina .. .. .	43.12	8	48.88	7	42.02	8
Total .. .. .	47.71		48.77		46.05	

Figure 2—1977-78—1981-82 Purchasing Power of Average Cash Grant



It can be seen that in the face of a growing demand for Y.A.C.S. assistance by people in financial hardship, District Officers in general are being prudent in exercising their delegations, in terms of the average amount of assistance provided. However, the reduction in the average amount of grants issued overall, in a time when the number of families and individuals (supporting parents and unemployed, particularly) financially dependent on Commonwealth income security are increasing in number (refer Table 18), prompts the question of whether field staff, in administering the S.C.A. Programme, are following priorities aimed towards containing the escalating Social Welfare budget rather than working towards achieving the goal of the Programme, identified in the goals and objectives of the Department. That being "to ensure that all people in New South Wales have access to urgent financial assistance and support in times of crisis".<sup>10</sup> The question of the extent to which Special Cash Assistance is being directed to those

<sup>10</sup> New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Service, *Goals and Objectives of the Department of Youth and Community Services*, November, 1980, p. 20.

in need prompts a comparison between levels of expenditure in each region and the size of the potential client population in each region. This comparison is presented in Section 6.

The incidence of provision of special cash grants for housing—generally for housing resettlement—must be taken into account in any analysis of average grant (and total expenditure) figures. Special cash grants for housing generally amount to between \$100 and \$300 and represented around 12 per cent of the total S.C.A. budget in 1980-81. Data was not collected from all offices on the breakdown of cash grants into general and housing. However, it was evident that many metropolitan offices and selected country offices were providing a significant amount of assistance for housing resettlement.

#### 6. INTER-REGIONAL COMPARISON BETWEEN SPECIAL CASH ASSISTANCE EXPENDITURE AND POTENTIAL CLIENT POPULATION

This section presents an attempt to compare the expenditure on Special Cash Assistance in each region to an indicator of the potential client population in each region. Last year's survey indicated that 93 per cent of cash grants were issued to Commonwealth Social Security recipients. However, a direct comparison of S.C.A. expenditure by region to the number of all pensioners and beneficiaries in each region (refer column A, Table 6) would be inappropriate due to the fact that clients who apply for and receive Y.A.C.S. cash grants are not representative of the overall population of Social Security recipients.

A small, random survey of 367 cash grants in nine District Offices in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan locations was carried out in March and June of this year. The survey confirmed that the vast majority of clients (94 per cent) were receiving a Commonwealth pension or benefit, and that over three-quarters of all clients were receiving either Supporting Parent or Unemployment Benefits (refer Table 7). Therefore a more accurate indication of the population in potential need of financial assistance could be gained by counting the number of recipients of these two benefits in each region (refer Column B, Table 6). This method would still be only partially accurate as it would not take into account the relative propensity of supporting parents and unemployed to receive assistance, nor does it include the smaller but significant number of recipients of Invalid and Widows Pensions and Sickness Benefit who are provided with assistance.

Assuming that the statistics collected on the source of income of clients are representative of the overall population receiving cash grants, it is possible to calculate the number of recipients of these five pensions and benefits in each Y.A.C.S. region and weigh them according to the relative frequency with which they receive Special Cash Assistance. This indicator of potential need for Y.A.C.S. assistance does not take into account families and individuals that either do not apply for, or apply and do not receive, assistance. It indicates the proportion of expenditure in each region that would be expected on the basis of the number of potential clients (defined in terms of existing clients) in each region and enables a comparison

between regions on relative rather than absolute terms. This information is presented in Column C and may be compared to the proportion of total Special Cash Assistance expended by each region, in Column D.

The most obvious anomaly is the proportion of expenditure in the Central/South East Metropolitan Region over that which would be expected given the proportion of potential clients in the region. This can partially be explained by the higher costs (such as housing) experienced by low income families and individuals in this region, and the number of people with little or no money from the country who apply for assistance when first arriving in Sydney or when temporarily visiting.

The comparison indicates that all non-metropolitan regions, except New England, are spending below what could be expected on the basis of their share of the population in potential need of assistance. To some extent this may be due to people in financial difficulty in non-metropolitan areas:

having less access to a Y.A.C.S. District Office;

having less knowledge of the availability of cash assistance from Y.A.C.S.;

and being less likely to be referred from another agency.

However, the lower level of provision of cash assistance compared to the number of potential clients in country areas may also be attributed to more stringent S.C.A. guidelines operating in some of the country regions, and to the reduction in the average amount of grants issued.

Overall, this analysis, which is not meant to be definitive due to its exploratory nature, and the fact that it compares regions in relative rather than absolute terms, does not provide evidence to suggest that special cash grants are being allocated primarily on the basis of the needs of all clients as per the goal of the Programme.

Table 6—Regional Comparison Between S.C.A. Expenditure and Potential Client Population

	(A)		(B)		(C)	(D)	
	All Pension/Benefit Recipients—N.S.W., June, 1981		Recipients of Supporting Parent and Unemployment Benefits—N.S.W., June, 1981		Percentage of Potential Client Population	Expenditure on S.C.A.	
	Number	per cent	Number	per cent	per cent	\$	per cent
Central/South East Metropolitan ..	184 383	22.5	27 244	19.0	19.2	383,160	32.3
North East Metropolitan ..	125 250	15.3	11 408	8.0	9.2	79,226	6.7
North West Metropolitan ..	90 682	11.1	17 339	12.1	13.6	144,995	12.2
South West Metropolitan ..	83 312	10.2	18 480	12.9	13.7	198,093	16.7
Hunter ..	91 337	11.1	14 109	9.9	9.8	45,497	3.8
Illawarra/South Coast ..	67 856	8.3	14 896	10.4	9.5	72,290	6.1
New England ..	28 857	3.5	6 978	4.9	4.3	67,569	5.7
North Coast ..	61 300	7.5	15 096	10.5	8.9	101,544	8.6
Western ..	52 294	6.4	10 994	7.7	7.4	52,923	4.5
Riverina ..	34 036	4.2	6 609	4.6	4.4	40,801	3.4
Total ..	819 307	100%	143 153	100%	100%	\$1,186,098	100%

Source: Department of Social Security, Recipients of Pensions, Benefits and Family Allowances in Postcode Districts and Electoral Divisions, N.S.W., June, 1981, Statistics Section, Research and Statistics Branch, Development Division, Canberra.

Table 7—Source of Income of S.C.A. Clients

Source of Income	Sydney		Non Metropolitan		Total	
	Number	per cent	Number	per cent	Number	per cent
Supporting Parent Benefit ..	61	39	97	46	158	43
Unemployment Benefit ..	51	33	72	34	123	34
Invalid Pension ..	10	6	12	6	22	6
Widows Pension (Class A) ..	8	5	13	6	21	6
Sickness Benefit ..	13	8	3	1	16	4
Other pension or benefit ..	4	3	1	1	5	1
Other (includes nil income, worker's compensation and employment) ..	8	5	14	7	22	6
Total ..	155	100%	212	100%	367	100%

## 7. INTRA-REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

The following tables (6 to 15) indicate for each region the number of cash grants issued (total grants, grants issued as a result of the Social Security dispute and grants issued in "normal" circumstances), the total expenditure on this pro-

vision of financial assistance and the average amount of these grants, for each Y.A.C.S. District Office. For a time-series analysis the figures in these tables on cash provision in normal circumstances may be compared with similar information for the previous four years in section 4 of Keven Dent's earlier paper.

Table 8—Central/South East Metropolitan Region—2nd November, 1981—29th January, 1982—Survey

Office	Total Special Cash Assistance			Cash Assistance Provided as a result of the D.S.S. dispute		Cash Assistance Provided in Normal Circumstances			Percentage of Total Grants in Region
	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	
		\$	\$		\$		\$	\$	per cent
Bondi Junction .. ..	4 419	110,481.33	25.00	3 462	84,441	957	26,040.33	27.21	11.9
Burwood .. ..	1 553	65,161.96	41.96	579	21,324	974	43,837.96	45.01	12.1
Hurstville .. ..	1 006	51,416.86	51.11	107	3,720	899	47,696.86	53.06	11.1
Leichhardt .. ..	3 594	173,157.77	48.18	1 852	74,467.45	1 742	98,690.32	56.65	21.6
Maroubra Junction .. ..	1 436	56,796.00	39.55	1 031	34,625	405	22,171.00	54.74	5.0
Montrose C.L.P.U. .. ..	29	764.00	26.34	..	..	29	764.00	26.34	0.4
Stanmore .. ..	5 525	220,674.34	39.94	3 568	125,523	1 957	95,151.34	48.62	24.2
Sutherland .. ..	215	12,373.49	57.55	29	1,249	186	11,124.49	59.81	2.3
Sydney .. ..	6 828	178,095.70	26.08	5 903	140,412	925	37,683.70	40.74	11.5
Total .. ..	24 605	868,921.45	35.31	15 531	485,761.45	8 074	383,160.00	47.46	100%

Table 9—North East Metropolitan Region—2nd November, 1981—29th January, 1982 Survey

Office	Total—Special Cash Assistance			Cash Assistance Provided as a result of the D.S.S. Dispute		Cash Assistance Provided in Normal Circumstances			Percentage of Total Grants in Region
	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	
		\$	\$		\$		\$	\$	per cent
Chatswood .. ..	463	17,902.51	38.67	209	5,730	254	12,172.51	47.92	17.6
Dee Why .. ..	892	44,498.00	49.89	147	3,890	745	40,608.00	54.51	51.7
Ryde .. ..	199	8,897.50	44.71	89	2,353	110	6,544.50	59.49	7.6
Gosford .. ..	186	6,096.65	32.77	103	2,645	83	3,451.65	41.58	5.8
Wyong .. ..	270	15,585.50	57.72	99	3,702.50	171	11,883.00	69.49	11.9
Umina .. ..	154	6,029.74	39.15	77	1,463	77	4,566.74	59.31	5.3
Total .. ..	2 164	99,009.90	45.75	724	19,783.50	1 440	79,226.40	55.02	100%

Table 10—North West Metropolitan Region—2nd November, 1981—29th January, 1982—Survey

Office	Total Special Cash Assistance			Cash Assistance Provided as a Result of the D.S.S. Dispute		Cash Assistance Provided in Normal Circumstances			Percentage of Total Grants in Region
	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	
		\$	\$		\$		\$	\$	per cent
Blacktown .. ..	714	27,536.95	38.57	278	9,082	436	18,454.95	42.33	14.8
Mount Druitt .. ..	1 273	54,664.78	42.94	254	10,122	1 019	44,532.78	43.71	34.6
Parramatta .. ..	924	42,019.30	45.48	327	9,214	597	32,805.30	54.95	20.3
Penrith .. ..	1 080	55,413.66	51.06	286	10,713	794	44,700.66	56.30	27.0
Katoomba .. ..	122	4,911.30	40.26	26	420	96	4,491.30	46.78	3.3
Total .. ..	4 113	184,545.99	44.87	1 171	39,551	2 942	144,994.99	49.28	100%



Table 11—South West Metropolitan Region—2nd November, 1981—29th January, 1982—Survey

Office	Total—Special Cash Assistance			Cash Assistance Provided as a result of the D.S.S. Dispute		Cash Assistance Provided in Normal Circumstances			Percentage of Total Grants in Region
	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	
		\$	\$		\$		\$	\$	per cent
Bankstown .. ..	1 931	77,789.97	40.28	1 228	44,632	703	33,157.97	47.17	16.1
Camden .. ..	142	6,928.16	48.79	32	1,440	110	5,488.16	49.89	2.5
Campbelltown .. ..	1 648	81,734.09	49.60	247	10,284	1 401	71,450.09	51.00	32.1
Fairfield .. ..	1 703	66,778.37	39.21	367	12,154	1 336	54,624.37	40.89	30.7
Liverpool .. ..	953	38,577.34	40.48	145	5,205	808	33,372.34	41.30	18.5
Total .. ..	6 377	271,807.93	42.62	1 019	73,715	4 358	198,092.93	45.46	100%
Sydney Metropolitan ..	37 259	\$1,424,285.27	\$38.23	20 445	\$168 810.95	16 814	\$805 474.32	\$47.90	

Table 12—Hunter Region—2nd November, 1981—29th January, 1982—Survey

Office	Total Special Cash Assistance			Cash Assistance Provided as a result of the D.S.S. Dispute		Cash Assistance Provided in Normal Circumstances			Percentage of Total Grants in Region
	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	
		\$	\$		\$		\$	\$	per cent
Newcastle .. ..	3 514	79,655.38	22.67	2 725	65,719	789	13,936.38	17.66	61.9
Cardiff .. ..	1 237	47,362.92	38.29	1 130	39,946	107	7,416.92	69.31	8.4
Cessnock .. ..	369	15,030.71	40.73	288	8,861	81	6,169.71	76.17	6.4
Maitland .. ..	298	13,092.14	43.93	214	7,508	84	5,584.14	66.48	6.6
Muswellbrook .. ..	52	2,504.00	39.50	33	1,507	19	547.00	28.79	1.5
Raymond Terrace .. ..	323	12,873.64	39.86	240	7,191	83	5,582.64	68.46	6.5
Singleton .. ..	24	1,440.00	60.00	21	1,200	3	240.00	80.00	0.2
Taree .. ..	115	6,120.49	53.22	6	200	109	5,920.49	54.31	8.5
Total .. ..	5 932	177,629.28	29.94	4 657	132,132	1 275	45,497.28	35.68	100%

Table 13—Illawarra/South Coast Region—2nd November, 1981—29th January, 1982—Survey

Office	Total—Special Cash Assistance			Cash Assistance Provided as a result of the D.S.S. Dispute		Cash Assistance Provided in Normal Circumstances			Percentage of Total Grants in Region
	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	
		\$	\$		\$		\$	\$	per cent
Batemans Bay .. ..	170	3,787.02	22.28	50	1,069	120	2,718.02	22.65	7.4
Bega .. ..	112	5,279.03	47.13	36	929.30	76	4,349.73	57.23	4.7
Bowral .. ..	54	1,969.99	36.48	..	..	54	1,969.99	36.48	3.3
Cooma .. ..	42	1,284.00	30.57	..	..	42	1,284.00	30.57	2.6
Goulburn .. ..	108	5,028.37	46.56	..	..	108	5,028.37	46.56	6.7
Nowra .. ..	185	6,697.42	36.20	8	210	177	6,487.42	36.65	10.9
Queanbeyan .. ..	482	20,688.57	42.92	2	30	480	20,658.57	43.04	29.6
Warilla .. ..	973	36,403.00	37.41	701	21,272.50	272	15,130.50	55.63	16.8
Wollongong .. ..	432	20,419	47.27	139	5,756	293	14,663.22	50.04	18.1
Total .. ..	2 558	\$101,556.62	\$39.70	936	\$29,266.80	1 622	\$72,289.82	\$44.57	100%

Table 14—North Coast Region—2nd November, 1981—29th January, 1982—Survey

Office	Total Special Cash Assistance			Cash Assistance Provided as a result of the D.S.S. Dispute		Cash Assistance Provided in Normal Circumstances			Percentage of Total Grants in Region
	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	
		\$	\$		\$		\$	\$	per cent
Casino .. .. .	429	23,351.51	54.43	40	2,160	389	21,191.51	54.48	17.6
Coffs Harbour .. .. .	170	7,487.78	44.05	24	780	146	6,707.78	45.94	6.6
Grafton .. .. .	165	6,205.76	37.61	2	25	163	6,180.76	37.92	7.4
Kempsey .. .. .	137	4,815.78	35.15	18	450	119	4,365.78	36.68	5.4
Lismore .. .. .	1 124	47,616.65	42.36	73	1,610	1 051	46,006.65	43.77	47.7
Murwillumbah .. .. .	267	10,458.26	39.17	79	2,535	188	7,923.26	42.14	8.5
Port Macquarie .. .. .	195	10,861.78	55.70	46	1,694	149	9,167.78	61.52	6.8
Total .. .. .	2 487	\$110,797.52	\$44.55	282	\$9,254	2 205	\$101,543.52	\$46.05	100%

Table 15—New England Region—2nd November, 1981—29th January, 1982—Survey

Office	Total Special Cash Assistance			Cash Assistance Provided as a result of the D.S.S. Dispute		Cash Assistance Provided in Normal Circumstances			Percentage of Total Grants in Region
	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	
		\$	\$		\$		\$	\$	per cent
Armidale .. .. .	365	16,046.70	43.96	38	2,310	327	13,736.70	42.01	23.4
Glen Innes .. .. .	62	2,303.33	37.15	11	325	51	1,978.33	38.78	3.7
Gunnedah .. .. .	114	5,649.94	49.56	33	1,305	81	4,344.94	53.64	5.8
Inverell .. .. .	249	9,528.20	38.27	77	2,510	172	7,018.20	40.80	12.3
Moree .. .. .	332	11,821.03	35.60	20	935	312	10,886.03	34.89	22.3
Narrabri .. .. .	109	6,346.57	58.23	36	1,119	73	5,277.57	71.60	5.2
Tamworth .. .. .	388	24,727.51	63.73	8	350	380	24,377.51	64.15	27.2
Total .. .. .	1 619	\$76,423.28	\$47.20	223	\$8,854	1 396	\$67,569.28	\$48.40	100%

Table 16—Western Region—2nd November, 1981—29th January, 1982—Survey

Office	Total Special Cash Assistance			Cash Assistance Provided as a result of the D.S.S. Dispute		Cash Assistance Provided in Normal Circumstances			Percentage of Total Grants in Region
	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	
		\$	\$		\$		\$	\$	per cent
Bathurst .. .. .	56	2,800.14	50.00	2	45.00	54	2,755.14	51.02	3.7
Bourke .. .. .	234	6,356.46	27.16	63	1,190.00	171	5,166.46	30.21	11.6
Brewarrina .. .. .	125	3,740.60	29.92	30	850.00	95	2,890.60	30.42	6.4
Broken Hill .. .. .	107	4,024.99	37.62	3	45.00	104	3,979.99	38.26	7.1
Cobar .. .. .	71	2,310.00	32.54	16	485.00	55	1,825.00	33.18	3.7
Condoblin .. .. .	73	2,691.97	36.87	17	610.00	56	2,081.97	37.16	3.8
Coonabarabran .. .. .	40	2,735.93	68.40	9	605.00	31	2,130.93	68.71	2.1
Coonamble .. .. .	100	4,048.62	40.49	19	750.00	81	3,298.62	40.72	5.5
Cowra .. .. .	77	1,791.77	23.26	19	475.00	58	1,316.77	22.69	3.9
Dubbo .. .. .	368	10,527.66	28.61	63	1,815.00	305	8,712.66	28.57	20.7
Lithgow .. .. .	69	2,922.12	42.35	4	80.00	65	2,842.12	43.72	4.4
Mudgee .. .. .	95	3,768.57	39.67	16	295.00	79	3,473.57	43.96	5.4
Nyngan .. .. .	17	731.00	43.00	..	..	17	731.00	43.00	1.2
Orange .. .. .	179	6,529.91	36.48	68	2,260.00	111	4,269.91	38.47	7.5
Parkes .. .. .	132	4,791.74	36.30	47	1,845.00	85	2,946.74	34.66	5.8
Walgett .. .. .	73	2,679.11	36.70	18	635.00	55	2,044.11	37.16	3.7
Wellington .. .. .	67	2,907.15	43.39	14	450.00	53	2,457.15	46.36	3.6
Total .. .. .	1 883	\$65,357.74	\$34.69	408	\$12,435.00	1 475	\$52,922.74	\$35.88	100%

Table 17—Riverina Region—2nd November, 1981—29th January, 1982—Survey

Office	Total Special Cash Assistance			Cash Assistance Provided as a result of the D.S.S. Dispute		Cash Assistance Provided in Normal Circumstances			Percentage of Total Grants in Region
	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Number of Grants	Total Cost	Average Amount	
		\$	\$		\$		\$	\$	per cent
Albury .. .. .	191	7,879.68	41.25	3	118	188	7,761.66	41.28	19.4
Cootamundra .. .. .	53	2,313.09	45.53	14	880	39	1,433.09	36.74	4.0
Dareton .. .. .	28	733.83	26.21	4	70	24	663.83	27.63	2.5
Deniliquin .. .. .	38	1,216.00	32.00	8	185	30	1,031.00	34.37	3.1
Griffith .. .. .	139	5,109.27	36.76	..	..	139	5,109.27	36.76	14.3
Leeton .. .. .	89	3,080.00	34.61	2	45	87	3,035.16	34.89	9.0
Wagga Wagga .. .. .	428	20,924.61	48.89	101	4,094	327	16,830.61	51.47	33.7
Young .. .. .	124	3,737.75	30.14	28	969	96	2,768.75	28.83	9.9
Tumut .. .. .	42	2,178.06	51.86	1	10	41	2,168.06	52.88	4.2
Total .. .. .	1 132	\$47,172.43	\$41.67	161	\$6,371	971	\$40,801.43	\$42.02	100%
Non-Metropolitan Regions .. .. .	15 611	\$578,936.87	\$37.07	6 667	\$198,312.80	8 944	\$380,624.07	\$42.56	
New South Wales .. .. .	52 870	\$2,002,982.14	\$37.89	27 112	\$816,883.75	25 758	\$1,186,098.39	\$46.05	

## 8. DISCUSSION

The major issue to emerge from this survey is the ever-increasing number of cash grants provided to people in financial hardship by this Department, and the associated escalation in the Special Cash Assistance bill each year. The 25 758 grants issued in the three month survey period in 1981-82 represent a 52 per cent increase on the 17 000 issued in 1980-81, and a 386 per cent increase on the 5 296 grants issued in the initial survey period in 1977-78. It is not attempted here to provide a definitive, all-encompassing explanation of the reasons underlying this trend, but to suggest some of the contributory factors and the general context in which to situate an appraisal of the Department's emergency assistance programme.

The guidelines for the Special Cash Assistance Programme clearly identify the major target group as being persons in receipt of Commonwealth pensions and benefits (as indicated previously, p. 3). In last year's survey 92.8 per cent of all grants issued were to this group. The number of people in this population group, potentially eligible for emergency assistance has increased by 1.6 per cent since last year, from 853 131 in February, 1981, to 866 880 in February, 1982 (Refer Table 16.) It must be indicated that not all of these individuals are eligible for emergency assistance since some pensioners and beneficiaries receive only a part pension due to other income they may receive. In December, 1981, 72 per cent of all pensioners received the full rate of pension. As well, pensions for persons over 70 years of age are paid free of means test.

A survey of 1 888 applications over a two year period between 1978 and 1980 at Mt Druitt District Office indicated that families applying for assistance received on average, two cash grants in a twelve month period.<sup>11</sup> On this basis Dent postulated in his report on last year's survey that the 68 000 grants expected to be made in that financial year would actually reach only 34 000 individuals and families.<sup>12</sup> 92.8 per cent or approximately 31 550 of those assisted could be

expected to be on Social Security pension or benefit. 31 500 persons represent 3.7 per cent of the total number of Social Security recipients in February, 1981 (bearing in mind that not all of these are eligible for emergency assistance).

This year's survey indicated that 103 032 cash grants were expected to be issued in the financial year. If it is assumed that clients still receive two cash grants a year on average, and that the proportion of S.C.A. recipients on Social Security has remained the same, then it can be estimated that approximately 47 800 Social Security recipients will be provided with emergency assistance in the current financial year.

These represent a higher proportion 5.5 per cent of the total number of pensioners and beneficiaries (as at February, 1982) assisted by the Department than in the previous year.

The preceding analysis indicated that, while the increasing number of cash grants issued (8 758 more than in 1980-81, a 52 per cent increase) can not be directly attributed to an increase in the number of Social Security recipients (13 749 greater than in 1981 a 1.6 per cent increase) it is probable that a greater proportion of Social Security recipients are receiving Special Cash Assistance, and/or are receiving, on average, more than two grants per year.<sup>13</sup> The hypothesis that there exists a sub-group of pensioners and beneficiaries in increasing need of financial assistance is supported by an analysis of the number of recipients of the various pensions and benefits and the rates of these payments.

Disaggregating by type of pension or benefit the groups which have increased the most over the past year, as indicated in Table 16, are Unemployment Benefit recipients which have increased by 8.8 per cent from 116 733 to 127 056 and recipients of Supporting Parent Benefits which have increased by 23 per cent from 34 457 to 42 373. Although the total number of persons on a Commonwealth pension or benefit increased by 13 749, or 1.6 per cent between February, 1981, and February, 1982, the number of Supporting Parent and Unemployment Beneficiaries increased by 28 239 or 20, per cent.

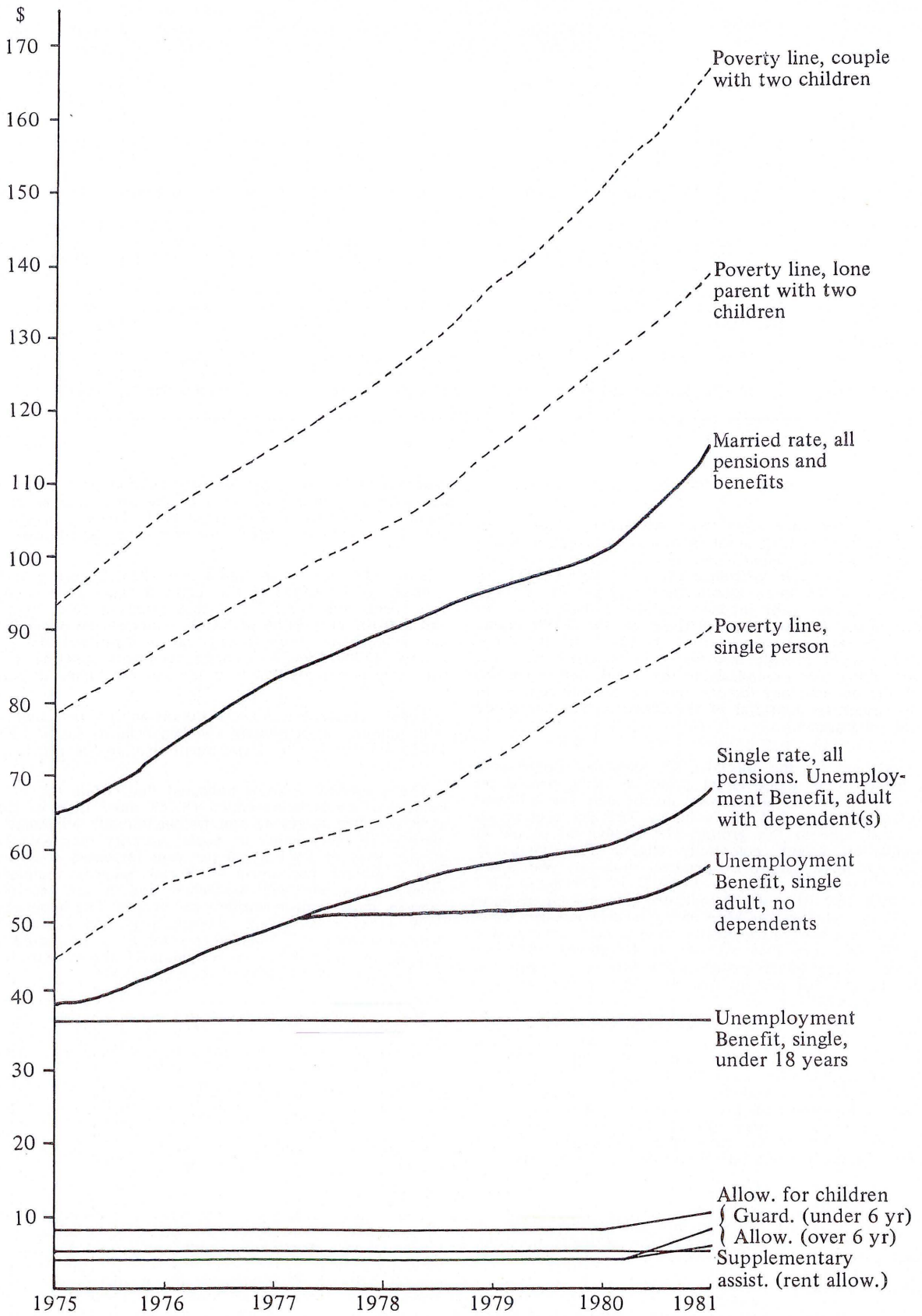
The survey of Special Cash Assistance clients (refer Table 7) found that 77 per cent of clients were in receipt of either Unemployment Benefit or Supporting Parent Benefit. On the basis of these statistics, almost 80 000 of the 103 000 cash grants expected to be issued this financial year, would be provided to recipients of those two benefits. Although in terms of discrete individuals, not all of these persons will be in receipt of these pensions for the full year, and some will receive assistance from Y.A.C.S. on more than one occasion, this represents a provision, on average, to almost half of the 169 429 recipients of Supporting Parent and Unemployment Benefits. It can be seen that the increasing size of the supporting parent and unemployed population, a

<sup>11</sup> Department of Youth and Community Services. *A Review of Some Aspects of the Social Welfare Programme*, June, 1980, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Dent, K., *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> The format of future surveys of cash assistance will enable a breakdown of recipients by main source of income, type of pension or benefit received, number of children, housing costs and the frequency and purpose of assistance, which should shed light on the demand for emergency assistance by various disadvantaged groups (refer section 8).

Figure 3---1975-1981, rates of Social Security pensions, benefits and allowances, compared to movements in poverty line



Source: Department of Social Security Annual Report, 1979-80, Australian Council of Social Security.

Table 18—Pensioners and Beneficiaries in N.S.W.

Pension or benefit	Number of recipients	
	February 1981	February 1982
<b>Pension—</b>		
Age .. .. .	490 898	496 806
Invalid .. .. .	84 943	79 776
Wives pension (age and invalid) ..	31 259	28 532
Widows (Class A) .. .. .	35 397	32 577
Widows (Class B) .. .. .	27 713	28 326
Widows (Class C) .. .. .	47	55
Supporting Parent Benefit (females)	32 918	40 485
(males) .. .. .	1 539	1 888
Sheltered Employment Allowance ..	3 341	3 413
SEA (wives pension) .. .. .	90	82
<b>Total pensions .. .. .</b>	<b>708 145</b>	<b>711 940</b>
<b>Benefit—</b>		
Unemployment .. .. .	116 733	127 056
Sickness .. .. .	20 481	20 500
Special .. .. .	7 772	7 384
<b>Total benefits .. .. .</b>	<b>144 986</b>	<b>154 940</b>
<b>Total pensions and benefits ..</b>	<b>853 131</b>	<b>866 880</b>

Source: Department of Social Security.

population with a traditional need for emergency assistance, is an important factor explaining the significant increase in the number of cash grants issued.

Figure 3 compares the increase in the rate of the various Commonwealth pensions, benefits and allowances, to movements in the Poverty Line (calculated as a percentage of average weekly earnings by A.C.O.S.S.), an indicator of poverty, so austere that it should be unchallengeable.<sup>14</sup>

It can be seen that the most disadvantaged groups are: The single unemployed, who represents 75 per cent of persons on Unemployment Benefit (benefits for single, under 18 year-olds have remained on \$36, while benefits to single adults have also not been indexed for long periods, and have been allowed to drop further below the poverty line—there is also, concurrently a trend for people to suffer lengthening and repeated bouts of unemployment;<sup>15</sup> families and single parents with children (allowance for children has increased only once since 1975—from \$7.50 to \$10 per week); and those renting in the private market (rent allowance—which has now been increased to \$8 per week has by no means kept pace with the inflationary spiral of rents in the private rental sector particularly in Sydney,<sup>16</sup> for low income households which outlay a high proportion of their budget on housing costs).

The reduced purchasing power of key Social Security payments has undoubtedly increased financial hardship for certain groups of people, thus increasing their need for emergency financial assistance. The hypothesis presented in this paper, that a major factor underlying the continuing increase in the provision of cash assistance, is the increasing number of individuals and families, predominantly supporting parents or unemployed, for whom the current rates of Social Security payments are not sufficient to meet their essential living require-

ments, is supported by the findings of the Victorian Emergency Relief project. This report indicated that the role of organizations in the provision of emergency relief was changing from the traditional role of providers of one-off assistance to people in financial crisis, to providers of both one-off assistance, "and with increasing frequency, on-going assistance to people experiencing continual and recurring crises".<sup>17</sup> They found that 56 per cent of people seeking assistance had already received aid from the same agency in the previous 12 months and an estimated 15 to 20 per cent of people applied for assistance to the same agency more than once a month, and that "one of the major influences on the increase in the demand for emergency relief over the last few years has been the increasing number of people who are unemployed and remaining unemployed for longer periods of time".<sup>18</sup> The report identified that inadequate income security payments were causing some families to live in a continual and chronic state of poverty and to constantly require a topping up of this income from welfare organizations. As a result these organizations were not able to provide the same level of relief and counselling for clients in unexpected crisis situations. These findings, which suggest close parallels with the preliminary examination of trends in emergency assistance provision in New South Wales outlined in this paper, have important implications, particularly the trend towards emergency relief developing into a form of regular income supplementation. Concerning the issue of income supplementation, this Department has set itself the long term objective of promoting "acceptance by the Commonwealth of its acknowledged responsibility for full income security".<sup>19</sup> In the light of some of the trends described in this paper, pressure on the Commonwealth may be of more immediate necessity.

The increased demand for cash assistance documented in this survey has been reflected in increased numbers of grants issued rather than in an increased average amount of assistance (a similar pattern of emergency assistance expenditure was reported in the Victorian study), indicating that field staff are exercising their delegations with prudence. However, the issue of supra-inflationary increases in expenditure for Special Cash Assistance is problematic for the Department in a time of review of State Government expenditure. In every one of the past five years when the Department has overspent the budget allocation for this programme, there has been automatic supplementation of the excess by Treasury. However, in November, 1981, the Treasury advised that automatic supplementation for any excess expenditure in the Department's Social Welfare Programme could no longer be assured, intensifying the existing concern in the Department over the growing outflow of funds for crisis assistance.

The reason behind the previous policy of automatic supplementation, and the reason why it would be difficult for the Department to reduce S.C.A. expenditure on a basis which would not increase the hardship of families and individuals or create greater demands upon non-statutory welfare organizations who are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with requests for their services, lie in the basic nature of the emergency assistance programme. Special Cash Assistance is a programme for which, in terms of the actual amount of expenditure, the Department has limited control. The emergency cash grant is a grant which is made on the discretionary judgment of field staff, based on the genuine need of applicants. This need is precipitated by circumstances such as the level of Commonwealth pensions and benefits, housing costs and interest rates, beyond the Department's control. In some ways Special Cash Assistance can be seen as a reflection of the current social and economic climate. It is the discretionary nature of the grant, viz., varying ideology of field and administrative officers) as well as regional variations in need, which lead to varying numbers and average amounts of grants issued within and between regions despite broad Departmental policies and guidelines which may be consistent across regions. Evidence of the variations between regions, in S.C.A. expenditure, when allowing (to a certain extent) for the variation in need, is provided in section 6.

It is imperative that any reassessment of the Special Cash Assistance Programme not be performed in isolation, but take into consideration the relationships between the provision of emergency financial assistance and the Department's other programmes, and how these accord with the broad goals and objectives of the Department. For a large number of families and individuals whose basic problem is poverty, lack of money may have broad-ranging effects such as an increased incidence of problems such as family conflict, household breakdown and eviction. The net result may be abuse and/or neglect of children, juvenile offending and homelessness. The occurrence of such social problems generally invoke costly responses on behalf of this Department such as State guardianship, taking children into residential care or arranging substitute care for

<sup>14</sup> A.C.O.S.S. *Facts on welfare—Priorities and Issues*, March, 1980, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, P., *Work . . . or the want of it*. A.C.O.S.S., March, 1981, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8th May, 1982.

<sup>17</sup> McClelland, A., and Gow, H., *Emergency Relief in Victoria*, V.C.O.S.S., 1982, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

them. Bearing in mind the high cost of these responses (the average annual cost per child, in all Y.A.C.S. establishments maintaining children in residential care is \$17,108).<sup>20</sup> the provision of financial assistance to individuals and families in times of crisis may be seen as cost-effective in the long-term due to its preventive effects and its relatively low cost.

A major implication of the escalating demand for emergency cash assistance concerns district office workloads. This increase in demand has necessitated a concurrent increase in staff time allocated to the assessment, report writing, consultations, referrals and issuing of cheques associated with the Special Cash Assistance Programme. It has been estimated that thirty minutes represents a conservative average of staff time involved in the issue of each cash grant. Thus the 103 032 projected cash grants for the current financial year would take up 51 516 hours of staff time this year, as compared to the 34 000 hours estimated for last year.<sup>21</sup> Due to the present imposition of a freeze on recruitment of State Government staff, this has

resulted in staff being diverted from other programme areas in order to deal with applications for emergency assistance.

## 9. FUTURE SURVEYS OF SPECIAL CASH ASSISTANCE

This 1981-82 survey of all Special Cash Assistance payments between 1st November, 1981 and 31st February, 1982, is to be the last collection of its type. The research format for emergency assistance data will be altered as from 1982-83 in order to obtain information in clients, their circumstances and need for assistance. This will be collected on coded questionnaires, completed in each District Office for a sample of between 50 and 100 cases during a set period of time, and processed by computer.

The survey should yield information on family structure and other demographic characteristics, area of residence, main income source, type of pension or benefit received, housing costs, and frequency and purpose of assistance. Information on the number of cheques issued and the total expenditure involved will be collected manually in each office, and supplied on a quarterly basis to Regional administration. This would enable an analysis of seasonal variations in expenditure or volume, impossible under the present method of surveying emergency assistance.

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<sup>20</sup> Bell, N. *Lost in Care, Planning and Review in Out-of-Home Care*, New South Wales Association of Child Caring Agencies, 1981, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Dent, K., *op. cit.*, p. 5.