

## Homelessness Policy Review – Internal Engagement

### 1. Background

The Town of Victoria Park currently operates under *Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town’s Role*. Under this policy, the Town aims to partner with local homelessness service providers to connect people in need to services, resources and facilities that enhance their physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

In 2019 the Town formed a group with the Supporting People with Basic Needs network to review *Policy 113 Homelessness*. It was determined a broader policy focus was required, with each of the Town’s internal service areas to consider their role in reducing the impact of or ending homelessness in the community.

This report summarises the feedback received during the internal engagement period of the Homelessness Policy Review conducted from December 2019 to January 2020.

### 2. Summary of feedback

Homelessness intersects the Town on a number of levels. Almost all service areas are directly or indirectly impacted by homelessness by:

- Taking calls and responding to complaints from the community of rough sleepers and anti-social behaviour in public areas
- Delivering programs, services and events to people at risk of homelessness, incl. in digital literacy, social inclusion and health promotion
- Working with developers constructing or modifying short-term accommodation sites or facilities to run homeless services
- Developing community education materials and delivering awareness raising events in partnership with local services
- Removing and disposing of waste and belongings left by rough sleepers in public spaces
- Working with property owners of abandoned or pre-demolition buildings to discourage squatting

A consistent approach to responding to community requests and complaints regarding rough sleepers, left belongings, squatters and anti-social behaviour is needed. Visible homelessness is a concern to the community, and multiple service areas are impacted when requests are received. A clear process outlining roles and responsibilities, and resources allocated specifically to impacted service areas is necessary to respect the rights of everyone in the community.

Staff across all service areas express a general willingness to provide information and support to people who are experiencing homelessness or appear at risk of homelessness, but report a lack of confidence. Staff interactions with people who appear homeless, particularly front line staff, can be varied. Training to respond to individuals who may be going through a crisis or just simply asking for assistance is recommended.

The Town can continue to build on and play an active role in facilitating change in the community. The Town can leverage its communication channels and expertise to increase understanding, promote messages of compassion and educate the community on appropriate courses of action. Additionally, the Town can take a strategic approach to championing the realignment of the sector and local community responses from 'managing' homelessness to ending homelessness.

Facilitating affordable housing is outside of the scope of a policy on homelessness. There is willingness in the planning frameworks which allows for the creation of affordable housing in the Town. However, a consistent, coordinated approach across the Inner City is required if a significant increase in the rate of affordable housing development is determined a priority of the region.

### 3. Engagement methods

The following questions were presented to service areas:

Feedback sought	Key questions
Impact of homelessness	How is your service area affected by homelessness? Why types of homelessness intersect with your work? What are your experiences?
Barriers or restrictions to action	Are there any local laws, policies or current procedures affecting your service area's work around homelessness?
Current and potential actions	What role could your service area play in reducing homelessness? What are you currently doing? What are some other, potential actions?
Requirements for action	What resources, support, etc. would your service area require to deliver these actions?
Review of Draft Policy	Please provide your feedback and suggestions on <i>Draft Policy 113 Homelessness</i> .

The following engagement methods took place:

Method	Service Area participation
Team meeting presentations/discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Development</li> <li>- Customer Service</li> <li>- Governance</li> <li>- Library Services</li> <li>- Project Management Office</li> <li>- Street Operations</li> </ul>
1:1 meetings with team supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aqualife and LeisureLife</li> <li>- Assets</li> <li>- Building Services</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communications and Engagement</li> <li>- Digital Hub</li> <li>- Environment</li> <li>- Environmental Health</li> <li>- Healthy Community</li> <li>- Planning</li> <li>- Rangers</li> <li>- Safety and Emergency Management</li> </ul>
Brainstorm walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer Service</li> <li>- Library Services</li> <li>- Parking and Rangers (Lodge)</li> <li>- Parks and Street Operations (Depot)</li> </ul>
Online Your Thoughts	<p>6 responses</p> <p>5 service areas represented</p>



**4. Feedback provided**

Service Area	Impact	Capacity for action	Requirements	Feedback on policy
AquaLife and LeisureLife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of facilities by street present people</li> <li>- Camping outside of building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Venue for local services to deliver programs or awareness raising events</li> <li>- Provide information on services through public access to posters or brochures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication materials</li> <li>- Staff protocol</li> <li>- Staff training on how to assist and de-escalate</li> <li>- System to log incidents for further action or referral to services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No modifications proposed</li> </ul>
Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Infrastructure and facilities use by rough sleepers</li> <li>- Anti-social behaviour resulting in damage to infrastructure and facilities</li> </ul>	-	-	-
Building Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issue building permits for class 3 or 9b buildings developed for homeless housing or services</li> <li>- Issue 6-Month Demolition Licences. Pre-demolition buildings have attracted squatters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide advice from a National Construction Code (NCC) point of view to assist developers considering class 3 or 9b buildings for the purpose of a homeless facility</li> <li>- Staff to assist as individuals through donating items to local organisations</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Buildings for homeless services only address the symptoms. The Town to consider providing a proactive approach, directing action towards the causes of homelessness</li> <li>- The Town to consider providing resources to assist/prevent people becoming homeless</li> </ul>

<p>Communications and Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote ad-hock local organisations and initiatives</li> <li>- Provide advice on communication tools and channels to target specific groups</li> <li>- Formulate messaging to champion Council positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assist in community awareness and education campaigns</li> <li>- Develop a website hub for people in need</li> <li>- Provide out-centres with communication materials</li> <li>- Develop an internal campaign to promote understanding of Town's policy e.g. video/animation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial resources, as required in developing any communications campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>
<p>Community Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide programs to new migrants, who are at greater risk</li> <li>- Provision of free community events, some attendees may be at risk</li> <li>- Grant programs to organisations providing homeless support services</li> <li>- Support the Healthy Relationships Strategy Group, FDV key risk factor</li> <li>- Print brochures and maintain information online on local support services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain printed and online information on local support services</li> <li>- Continued support of Belmont-Vic Park ER network</li> <li>- Provide capacity building support to local organisations to respond collectively to emerging needs</li> <li>- Build on partnerships with other LGAs</li> <li>- Assist in development of internal processes/system to streamline responses to complaints in alignment with new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Internal buy-in – responsibility of actioning policy needs to be Town-wide</li> <li>- Internal champions that demonstrate commitment to the principles of the new policy</li> <li>- Funding for external provider to provide outreach support to rough sleepers</li> <li>- Recurrent funding for community awareness and education campaigns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy Principles to include community education</li> <li>- Remove action-orientated elements to the Implementation Plan, and replace with overarching strategic themes</li> <li>- Implementation Plan needs clear roles and responsibilities with a level of flexibility to respond to emerging needs</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attend Belmont-Vic Park ER network</li> <li>- Deliver partnership awareness raising events</li> <li>- Intervene/coordinate Town response to – complaints of rough sleepers, stashed belongings, squatting, anti-social behaviour incl. begging, aggressive behaviour, street drinking/drug use, indecent exposure</li> </ul>	<p>policy, and gain accurate data on community impact of homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate/advocate for staff training on homelessness and how to comply with new policy</li> <li>- Explore opportunity for external provider to provide outreach support to rough sleepers</li> <li>- Actively champion the work of the sector and its peak bodies, e.g. WAAEH, WACOSS, YACWA, WANADA</li> </ul>		
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receive calls from customers who are either (a) concerned or (b) angry about homelessness – majority the latter</li> <li>- Receive calls from customers wondering why Town has not moved along people – lack of community knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assign actions to relevant service areas or offices</li> <li>- Educate the caller on who to contact if anti-social behaviour, violence, health risks, etc.</li> <li>- Gather information from the caller in regards to the person and/or situation for follow up action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Process map on who in the Town is responsible for different actions – e.g. rough sleepers versus squatters</li> <li>- Scripting to educate callers, or provide information on the Town’s role</li> <li>- Printed list of local services</li> <li>- Updated Knowledge Base articles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Occasionally people in need will come to admin for assistance</li> <li>- Receive calls from customers regarding Indigenous families/groups using parks</li> </ul>			
Digital Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some clients at-risk of homelessness – due to risk factors, e.g. disabilities, employment issues, low income, and low level digital literacy to engage with services online, e.g. Centrelink</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct assistance to clients – accessing online government services, accessing online employment services, etc.</li> <li>- Provide information on services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Printed list of local services</li> <li>- Staff training on respectfully suggesting assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Align with goals and contemporary approaches of the sector – e.g. Housing First</li> </ul>
Environmental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issue Health Notices to owners of vacant or pre-demolition properties to board up or demolish their property if anti-social behaviour and/or squatting is taking place</li> <li>- Receive calls about over-crowded properties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be part of a cross-functional team to appropriately and efficiently respond to incidents of squatting – incl. Building Services, Planning, Compliance, Community Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cross-functional support to develop a response team</li> <li>- Greater financial capacity to prosecute property owners of unsafe housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work closely with property owners to ensure derelict and abandoned houses are reduced, so not to attract anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Temporary shelters for drug-related anti-social behaviour are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consider vulnerable people in the development of the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Move practice-based elements in the policy to the implementation</li> </ul>

	infrequently constructed in bushland areas	<p>Climate Emergency Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For community events, e.g. tree plantings, consider the inclusivity of the event, and the safety of the space</li> </ul>		plan or management practice/s to keep vision clear
Financial Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outstanding debt and increase in debt write off</li> <li>- The above, affects cash flows and increased costs of debt collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are currently no barriers – other than the Debt Collection policy and procedure</li> <li>- Rates staff take extra steps to ensure a seizure and sale of a property is not conducted unless all possible avenues are reviewed and considered</li> <li>- The Finance/Rates team provides payment plans to be able to pay outstanding debt to the Town</li> </ul>	- None	-
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involved in Homelessness Policy development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assist in development of policy</li> <li>- Assist in development of an overarching strategy</li> <li>- Communicate to Council opportunities for education, etc.</li> </ul>	-	-



		around homelessness as they arise		
Healthy Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Healthy Vic Park Plan guided by social determinants of health – housing, income, social connectedness, etc. considered basic requirements for health</li> <li>- Provide workshops which address risk factors – e.g. mental health, cooking/life skills for low income families and young people</li> <li>- Have awarded Healthy Community grants to homeless organisations, e.g. St Mary’s Outreach Service meal service</li> <li>- Some participants have attended courses just for a meal</li> <li>- Some clients visiting LeisureLife have requested assistance with food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional in-reach workshops to risk groups</li> <li>- Use e-News to promote local organisations and initiatives</li> <li>- Continue to support homeless services with health focus through Healthy Community grants</li> <li>- Consider vulnerable groups, incl. homeless and at-risk of homelessness, in review of the Healthy Vic Park action plan (2021-22)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear stance on Town responsibility</li> <li>- Staff training on compassionate interactions and information provision to people at-risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compassion and empathy to be a consistent theme</li> <li>- Community awareness raising important</li> <li>- Public open space has positive mental and physical health effects. Do not want the community to avoid public open space due to safety concerns. Everyone should have access, and feel safe and comfortable</li> <li>- How information on numbers/ evidence is collected needs to be considered and consistent with other LGA approaches</li> </ul>
Library Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Street present people sometimes spend</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local services to give a community talk at the Library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Printed list of local services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No modifications proposed</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extended periods of time in the building</li> <li>- Camping outside of building</li> <li>- Street present people ask to use the phone or for money</li> <li>- People at-risk ask staff to help fill in or print documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide printed information on services</li> <li>- Provide transport cards to get people to City-based shelters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local services to speak to/ educate staff on their services</li> <li>- Social worker and youth worker stationed at the Library to support staff</li> </ul>	
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff come across street present homeless people</li> <li>- Staff feel scared, intimidated, concerned, embarrassed – don't know what to say</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unsure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness training – how we can help, what not to say</li> </ul>	-
Parks Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cleaning park areas</li> <li>- Sometimes attend parks and remove litter and syringes daily</li> <li>- Park infrastructure being vandalised/damaged</li> <li>- Staff work days and maintenance schedules required to be altered</li> <li>- Staff don't feel safe</li> <li>- Staff approached by the public to complain and/or ask what is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain park areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional resources to respond to increased maintenance requirements</li> </ul>	-

	being done about the issue			
Place Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receive and re-direct queries from community and business re. visible homeless</li> <li>- Anecdotal evidence received from community of temporary overcrowding in social housing</li> <li>- Visible presence of belongings and litter left in vacant blocks, laneways, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Within the Local Planning Strategy (a) Analyse and monitor housing need and supply (generally), (b) Explore potential strategies and Town's role as a member of the immediate region re. affordable housing</li> <li>- Provide information and referral when receiving community queries or complaints</li> <li>- Embody the Town's intention to show empathy and respect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audit of current and planned accommodation facilities for ongoing monitoring of supply</li> <li>- A coordinated, inner city approach to services, accommodation facilities and affordable housing</li> <li>- Education and awareness raising</li> <li>- Materials to distribute to community and business on how to make a positive contribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the Town support the right to live on the streets?</li> <li>- The policy to potentially articulate the accommodation spectrum and the Town's position/role in all areas</li> <li>- The difference between strategy, coordination, advocacy and operational service be defined – may be for implementation plan</li> <li>- Empathy and tolerance foremost a principle</li> <li>- 'Facilitation' around planning may need to be specifically defined, as the Town cannot develop housing</li> </ul>
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assess acceptability of short term accommodation incl. lodging house, as guided by the Town Planning Scheme and relevant planning policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could reference Homelessness Policy in reports to Council, if policy allows for this</li> <li>- Some local governments do not require consultation in approving lodging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear Town position in relation to planning's position re. to short term accommodation applications</li> <li>- Need for a regional, consistent approach to LGA role in ensuring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Town can advocate to State government and encourage private investment in affordable housing, however, is not able to 'facilitate' the</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage community in consultation on lodging house applications</li> <li>- Respond to compliance complaints regarding operating lodging houses without approval</li> <li>- Affordable housing provisions in LPP 22 Causeway Precinct and incentives in WA PPP 7.3 Apartments – both referred to by the Town</li> </ul>	houses. However, this is unlikely to be a favourable change	affordable housing is realised	development of housing
Project Management Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encounter rough sleepers and their belongings</li> <li>- May inadvertently displace rough sleepers during construction projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manage the Community Benefits Strategy – two projects incl. Healthy Relationships Awareness and Youth Engagement Program may assist people at risk</li> <li>- Work with not for profits when they desire to lease Town properties – they may be homeless services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff training and clear procedure on how to respond and provide assistance to rough sleepers</li> <li>- If a procedure is developed for staff, application to contractors to be considered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affordable housing to be considered more strategically, separate to the Homelessness Policy</li> </ul>
Rangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respond to complaints of rough sleepers, shopping trolleys with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prefer to be part of a team response, where a third party provides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outreach workers, or access to an outreach service</li> </ul>	-

	<p>and without belongings, people sleeping in cars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will give a warning to people illegally camping, and provide information on local and Perth-based services</li> <li>- General expectation from community that Rangers can immediately respond and 'do something'</li> </ul>	<p>first contact, e.g. service provider, Rangers to attend at a later stage so not to unintentionally escalate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No camping facilities in the Town to direct rough sleepers or transient people to – potential to undertake a feasibility study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- System to log incidents/information for further action or referral to services, particularly if engaging a third party service</li> </ul>	
Safety and Emergency Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff contact Safety Officer about street present people if feeling threatened/unsafe</li> <li>- Responsible in providing an evacuation centre in emergencies to all incl. vulnerable and homeless</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effects of heat wave pose greatest health and safety risk to community, specifically vulnerable groups – develop a proactive communication campaign and response process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support of regional Emergency Management Committee</li> <li>- Support of Dep. Health</li> <li>- Cross-functional support of Healthy Community and Communications teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some wording may be misinterpreted around the Town's suitability and capacity versus the role of other levels of government</li> </ul>
Street Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cleaning public areas</li> <li>- At the coal face of balancing sentiment of current policy, and demands from public to immediately remove items/clean</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cleaning of public areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support of management</li> <li>- Additional funding to respond to increasing cleaning costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receive complaints from public that the Town is not doing anything</li> <li>- Witness/experience anti-social behaviour in the early mornings</li> </ul>			
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