

Review of the Town of Victoria Park Homelessness Policy

Report

July 2022

Acknowledgement

Shelter WA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country and their ongoing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to the Elders past and present and emerging. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and our recognition and acceptance of your invitation to walk with you towards a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

About Shelter WA

Shelter WA is the independent peak body in Western Australia for social and affordable housing and ending homelessness. Shelter WA takes a strategic leadership role, championing the development of an effective housing system and bringing all parts of the system together to achieve this. Shelter WA brings together a strong coalition committed to diverse and affordable housing choice for all, with a focus on housing for people on low to moderate incomes and groups that experience housing insecurity.

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The project team would like to acknowledge the support of staff from the Town of Victoria Park in developing this report.

Disclaimer

Shelter WA performed this service with care, competence and due diligence. The information being provided herein is provided in good faith based on information we believe to be complete and accurate. We are not responsible for errors or omissions which may occur.

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Executive Summary

The Town of Victoria Park (the Town) recognises that it has a social responsibility to play an active role in minimising the impact of and ending homelessness in the community. Shelter WA was invited by the Town to review their current Homelessness Policy, *Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town’s Role*. The review was timely given the adoption by Town of Victoria Park of a new Strategic Community Plan in July 2022.

A set of five overarching principles guided all stages of this review, including:

1. The goal is to end homelessness, not manage it.
2. A human right not a needs-based approach.
3. Evidence based approach founded in the drivers of homelessness and solutions.
4. Centered in the role of local government, noting the general competency powers.
5. Harnessing opportunities across all functional areas of local government.

The review process included understanding the evidence base for the drivers and solutions to ending homelessness, a review against the role for local government, including in All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia’s 10-year Strategy on Homelessness (2020-2030), alignment with the Town’s new Community Strategic Plan 2022-2032, a desktop review of other local government approaches, previous engagement undertaken by the Town, and was informed by two external workshops with targeted stakeholders and an internal workshop discussion with Council staff.

Based on the findings a number of recommendations are made from this policy review to make the policy more contemporary, internally consistent and aligned with the Town’s new Strategic Community Plan. This includes a greater emphasis on all functional areas of the Town and strengthening the Town’s role in facilitating housing options. Section Four of this Report contains the revised policy for consideration by Council. Appendix Six contains the recommendations tracked on the current policy.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

The Town of Victoria Park (the Town) recognises that it has a social responsibility to play an active role in minimising the impact of and ending homelessness in the community. Shelter WA was invited by the Town to review their Homelessness Policy, *Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town’s Role*.

1.2 Current Policy

The Town of Victoria Park Homelessness Policy, *Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town’s Role*, was adopted by Council on 16 June 2020. It contains a policy objective, scope, definitions of homelessness, five policy principles, five policy commitments and two policy implementation notes. The current policy is included in Appendix One.

1.3 Review Process

Five overarching principles guided all stages of this review:

1. The goal is to end homelessness, not manage it.
2. A human right not a needs-based approach.
3. Evidence based approach founded in the drivers of homelessness and solutions.
4. Centered in the role of local government, noting the general competency powers.
5. Harnessing opportunities across all functional areas of local government.

The review process involved:

1. Understanding the drivers of homelessness and the evidence-based response.
2. Understanding the role outlined for local government in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement and All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia’s 10-year Strategy on Homelessness (2020-2030) and local governments general competency powers.
3. Alignment with the Town of Victoria Park’s vision and mission, and Community Plan 2022-2032, effective from 1 July 2022.
4. Desktop review of four Western Australian local government policies and action plans related to homelessness.
5. Input from prior engagement undertaken by the Town of Victoria Park during the development of the current policy.

6. Targeted input from local service providers and Council staff on the strengths and gaps in the current policy.

Details of the policy review process is outlined in section 2, and the key findings in section 3.

2. Policy Review

2.1 Homelessness – the Evidence Base

2.1.1 Definitions of Homelessness

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition of homelessness is:

When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations¹.

The Mackenzie and Chamberlain cultural definition of homelessness, which is used widely across the community sector, is:

- Primary homelessness – is when people don't have conventional accommodation. For example, sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings like sleeping in their car.
- Secondary homelessness – is when people are forced to move from one temporary shelter to another. For example, moving between emergency accommodation and refuges. This includes 'couch surfing' which is when someone 'crashes' at the home of a friend or relative.
- Tertiary homelessness – is when people live in accommodation that falls below minimum standards. This can be a boarding house or caravan park, or a household that is severely overcrowded².

2.1.2 Context – Housing and Homelessness in WA

The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics Census on Population and Housing, 2016, estimates over 9,000 people experience homelessness every day in Western Australia. Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicated that over 4,300 people access

specialist homelessness services every day in Western Australia, and two-thirds of requests for housing support are not able to be met³.

Western Australia has a chronic shortfall of social and affordable housing, which contributes to homelessness. In July 2022 there were approximately 17,000 households, (34,000 people) on social housing wait list and a shortfall of 39,200 social and 19,300 affordable homes to meet current need⁴.

Contributing to the lack of affordable housing is the very low rental vacancy rate. In Perth the vacancy rate was 1.1% in May 2022. According to the Real Estate Institute of WA (REIWA) a balanced market would be reflected in vacancy rates between 2.5 and 3.5%⁵. The lack of rental homes has led to significant rent increases across WA. Booming housing prices has seen many rentals sold requiring tenants to vacate the properties, further exacerbating rental availability. The impact of this is that there are no affordable rentals for people on low incomes across WA⁶.

The chronic lack of social housing, lack of affordable rentals coupled with rent increases and increasing evictions has increased demand for homelessness services. The lack of housing means often requests for assistance can't be met. Community services are reporting an increase homelessness as well as increased poverty, stress and mental health issues with people who contact them for support. This was reflected in the workshop discussions.

2.1.3 Causes of homelessness

Many people are quick to blame homelessness on the individual experiencing it rather than the reasons that put many people at risk. Homelessness can happen as the result of an unexpected life event, tragedy, illness and through no fault of the person or family. Homelessness is a symptom of many and varied underlying factors and drivers.

Research undertaken by the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia has outlined that both individual and structural determinants, combined with a range of risk factors, that lead to social exclusion and in turn increased likelihood of homelessness. While individual risk factors such as trauma, family and domestic violence, chronic health conditions, alcohol and drug dependence and disability, are often the focus of attention it is important not to overlook the structural drivers of homelessness. These include housing availability and affordability, employment, economic inequality, discrimination and loss of cultural identity, power and control⁷.

Patterns of homelessness in a homelessness population consistently show around 80 percent of homelessness is transitional only and for this group of people the swift provision of a home with light touch support as required, so that they can stabilise and get on with their lives with minimal disruption. This approach will address the needs of the majority of people experiencing homelessness⁸. Around 20 percent of a population of people experiencing homelessness will require housing and more intensive service support.

To meet the needs of people as their life stage and personal circumstances change, an effective housing system needs to be responsive, and not linear in design, so that people have a home that meets their needs regardless of their personal circumstances⁹. The Housing Continuum is a concept to define the various types of housing and housing support required for people relative to their income. To meet community needs housing options are required from crisis accommodation, through to social housing, private rental housing and affordable home ownership options¹⁰. An example of the housing continuum is outlined in Figure One. For an effective housing system there needs to be availability to both housing and services across the continuum. All spheres of government through their policy, program and investment setting can facilitate or hinder housing options across the continuum.

Figure One – The Housing Continuum



2.1.4 The evidence of what is needed to end homelessness

The WA Alliance to End Homelessness Strategy, *Let's end homelessness, not just manage it*¹¹, outlines how a coordinated and collaborative approach will end homelessness in Western Australia. The Alliance recommends action in five Core Strategic Areas. These are outlined in Table One. This evidence-based approach provides an important basis to inform government and community responses and action to end homelessness.

Table One – Action Areas to End Homelessness

Action area	
1. Housing Ensure adequate and affordable housing.	This means having a supply of housing that meets the needs of those who need it. It also means having multiple pathways into permanent housing and multiple housing options including housing with support services that are all effective.
2. Prevention	A focus on prevention and early intervention. Develop system, service and social responses that ensure people at risk of homelessness have the supports they need to prevent them entering homelessness. This will involve an improving recognition of the health value of a home.
3. A strong and coordinated response	A 24/7 ‘no wrong door’ system that delivers responsive action across different community and health support systems that are well coordinated and act quickly.
4. Data, research and targets	Improve data, the evidence base on what works, systems knowledge, and the accountability of the health and social support system to achieve the goals of the Strategy. Building the evidence base around the health value of a home. Set clear targets and ensure delivery.
5. Building community capacity	Solutions are sourced from those who have experienced homelessness. All sectors that support those experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage deepen their capacity to end homelessness in WA. Developing a broad public movement, inclusive of all members of the community who have the desire to end homelessness brings more people and resources to ensure success.

2.2 The role of local government

2.2.1 National Housing and Homelessness Agreement

The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), a Special Purpose Agreement between the Commonwealth, States and Territories, came into effect 1 July 2018, following expiry of the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. The Agreement demonstrates the provision of social and affordable housing, and homelessness services, is a shared responsibility of State and Federal government.

Through NHHA the Commonwealth, States and Territories are committed to: (a) providing direction for a range of measures including: social housing; assistance to people in the private rental market; support and accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; and home purchase assistance; (b) working towards improving coordination across housing related programs to make better use of existing stock and under-utilised Government assets and achieve better integration between housing and human services, including health and disability services; and (c) reducing the rate of homelessness¹².

Commonwealth funding via NHHA for housing and homelessness services is on the proviso that state and territory governments have publicly available housing and homelessness strategies.

Through bilateral agreements, NHHA provides funding each year to states and territories to improve Australians' access to secure and affordable housing across the housing continuum, including funds set aside for homelessness services which is required to be matched by states and territories. It must be noted that the bilateral Agreements under the NHHA expire at the end of 2022-23. The Productivity Commission is undertaking a statutory review of NHHA. Findings of the review will inform the 2023 NHHA.

The NHHA defines the following role for local government:

1. Local governments operate under State regulation and are not Parties to this Agreement. Local governments, and the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory Governments, are responsible for:
 - (a) building approval processes;

- (b) local urban planning and development approval processes; and rates and charges that influence housing affordability.¹³

The NHHA reinforces the important role that local government urban planning plays in facilitating affordable housing options.

The Federal Minister for Housing and Homelessness signalled in July 2022, at the first Ministerial meeting convened by the Commonwealth in five years of State and Territory Housing Ministers, the government’s plan to develop a national housing and homelessness strategy. This new national plan may outline a role for local government.

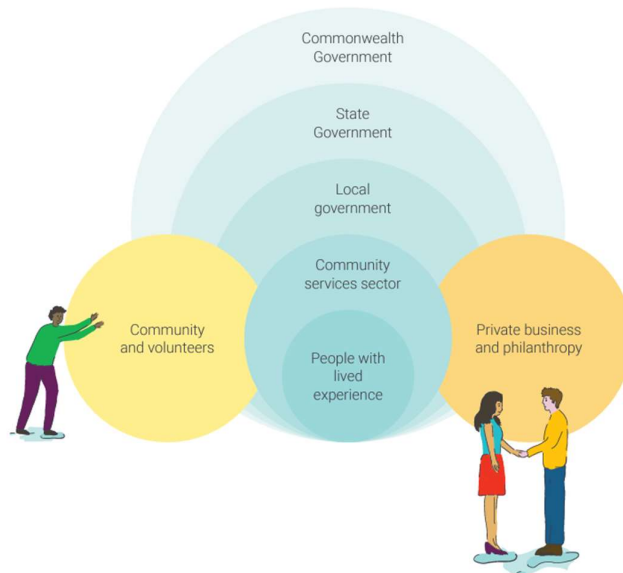
2.2.2 All Paths Lead to a Home – WA Homelessness Strategy

All Paths Lead to a Home is Western Australia’s 10-year Strategy on Homelessness (2020-2030). The Strategy sets out a ten-year vision for how all levels of government, the community sector and the wider community can work together in Western Australia towards ending homelessness. The strategy was the result of an ongoing and genuine partnership between government agencies, the community services sector, local government authorities and the wider community. The WA Local Government Association was a member of the working group overseeing the development of the strategy, representing the voice of WA local governments.

The Strategy outlines a role for local government to contribute to the vision, at a minimum, through:

- Making information on local services and supports available and accessible.
- Ensuring Rangers and front-line staff are informed and supported to interact with people experiencing homelessness and, where appropriate, refer them to local services.

Figure 1: All Paths Lead to a Home



- Working with Police to support and refer people experiencing homelessness to local services and supports.
- Coordinating volunteer and charity groups through a place-based approach that better meets the needs of people experiencing homelessness.
- Utilising land and assets to create places that are inclusive and can support vulnerable people¹⁴.

The Strategy provides the framework for Western Australian local governments to consider what can be done across all functional areas in their response to homelessness.

2.2.3 Local Government general competencies powers

The general competencies powers afforded to Local Government through the *Local Government Act 1995* empower local government to focus on what is important to their local community¹⁵. WA local governments are increasingly being called on by residents, business, and communities to respond to homelessness. In response, many local governments have developed policies, strategies, and plans that align with their broader strategic priorities, often partnering with other Councils or community organisations in their homelessness response.

In 2021 Shelter WA was awarded a grant from Lotterywest to develop an Online Local Government Homelessness Hub. The Hub will be launched in August 2022 during National Homelessness Week. For the past eight months Shelter WA in partnership with the WA Local Government Association and Local Government Professionals has been collecting information from WA Councils on the work they are doing in relation to homelessness. Information collected illustrates that local governments are undertaking diverse responses across all functional areas of Council operations to address homelessness in their local area. This includes:

- the adoption of homelessness policies;
- developing local or regional homelessness strategies;
- advocacy for services in their area;
- undertaking counts of the local population of street present people;
- providing rate exemptions for housing or homelessness service providers;
- reviewing local laws;

- training staff and developing staff protocols on how to engage and support people who they come across who are sleeping rough;
- providing Council buildings for local service providers;
- utilising Council land to facilitate social or affordable homes;
- building affordable rental homes for key workers on Council land;
- producing service brochures and providing referrals to service providers;
- developing partnerships and funding local services such as for outreach services;
- implementing planning incentives to encourage developers to include social or affordable rental homes in developments; and
- developing local Housing Strategies to facilitate diverse housing products.

What has become clear from this project is that whilst each local government response needs to align with the strategic vision and plan of Council, and needs of their local community, there is great scope across Council to respond to homelessness. The development of a Council policy and a strategy or implementation plan to bring the policy to life was seen as the best practice.

2.3 Alignment with Town of Victoria Park Strategic Community Plan 2022-2032

The Strategic Community Plan is the main strategy and planning document that links a community's aspiration with the local government's vision and long-term strategy. A Strategic Community Plan is a statutory requirement for local governments in Western Australia, as part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework¹⁶.

On 1 July 2022, during this review period, a new Community Strategic Plan was endorsed by the Town of Victoria Park. The Plan was the result of a robust community engagement process with over 900 contributions from a range of methods such as in person workshops, self-facilitated workshops, surveys, pop-ups, online brainstormers, forums and via public submission.

Homelessness was one of top twenty community priorities identified by participants and the resulting Plan strengthened the Town's commitments in this area. Areas relevant to this review are:

- Vision - The Town of Victoria Park: A dynamic place for everyone.
- Values - Proactive, Inclusive, Integrity, Caring, Courage.
- Mission – to champion the four pillars of sustainability, including:

- Social - to promote sustainable, connected, safe and diverse places for everyone.
- Economic – to promote sustainable, diverse, resilient and prosperous places for everyone.
- Environment – to promote sustainable, liveable, healthy and green places for everyone.
- Civic leadership – to show leadership by communicating with, empowering and supporting people in the community.
- Community priorities – are built around the mission.
 - Social priority two (S2) is ‘Collaborating to ensure everyone has a place to call home’. The goals, measures and services associated with S2 are outlined in the graphic below.

The excerpt from the Plan, outlined in Figure Three illustrates, the Council’s goals, strategies, measures and services, within a collaborative approach, to ensure everyone has a place to call home. The inclusion of housing and homelessness in the Community Strategic Plan provides a new architecture for the Town’s Homelessness Policy, enabling housing not only to be a policy principle but also a policy commitment within the homelessness policy.

Figure Three – Town of Victoria Park Community Plan – Social Priority Two

COLLABORATING TO ENSURE EVERYONE HAS A PLACE TO CALL HOME

GOALS

- Create an evidence base of local housing needs and trends to support planning, action and advocacy efforts.
- Facilitate dwelling growth and encourage a diversity of housing types.
- Improve the capacity of community organisations to manage and reduce homelessness.
- Work collaboratively with governments, support services and community organisations to coordinate an effective response to ending local homelessness.
- Facilitate the increase of the availability of accommodation to address acute housing needs.

MEASURES


- Funds expended through the community funding program.
- Number of partnerships.
- Number of people within the Town listed on the By Name register.

RELATED STRATEGIES

- Homelessness Policy and Implementation Plan
- Local Planning Strategy

SERVICES

- Social planning
- Strategic urban planning
- Community education
- Community partnerships



2.4 Review of other local government policies

A desktop review was undertaken of four other Western Australian local government policies and action plans related to homelessness:

- City of Armadale
- City of Fremantle
- City of Kwinana
- Shire of Augusta-Margaret River

Links to these policies are included in Appendix Two. The key focus areas of each policy / action plan are summarized below.

City of Armadale Policy – Homelessness (adopted 2021)

The policy is focused on primary homelessness only. It outlines that the City of Armadale will take a compassionate approach and will work around the following areas:

- Direct services – access to external organisations and referrals.
- City employees and contractors – to provide options to people experiencing primary homelessness (information, referrals etc).

- Advocacy – align with the WA Government Strategy on Homelessness where possible.
- Support to sector organisations – financial support through grants and contracts to organisations providing services, location and promotion of services, coordinate South East Emergency Relief Forum.

City of Fremantle Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2024 (adopted 2021)

The purpose of the action plan (rather than policy) is to outline the City of Fremantle’s ongoing commitment to create and sustain a socially inclusive city. The scope of actions includes:

- Direct evidence-based advocacy to increase investment in local services and resources to meet the needs of people in Fremantle.
- Support and coordinate the delivery of initiatives that provide opportunity for active participation community connection and resilience.
- Build a greater understanding in the broader community of the roles, responsibilities, and priorities in responding to homelessness and its impacts.

The City has a commitment to work with key stakeholders in improving the capacity of the community and reducing homelessness to functional zero. Actions are set around three focus areas:

- Accessible information
- Support and assist
- Advocacy

City of Kwinana Policy: Homelessness (adopted 2016)

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the City of Kwinana’s approach to addressing homelessness. The policy is based around:

- Provision of information and referral
- Commitment to working in partnership
- Commitment to addressing the underlying causes of homelessness

Shire of Augusta-Margaret River CCSP 20 Homelessness Policy (adopted 2016)

The objective of this Policy is to identify the role of the Shire of Augusta Margaret River in addressing homelessness and outline its commitments as follows:

- Commitment to preventing, reducing and managing homelessness.

- Supporting and building capacity within the community to address homelessness.
- Encouraging collaboration, community partnerships and evidence-based practices.

The principles are based around:

- Understanding the role of local government
- The right to housing
- Advocacy
- Building the capacity of our community
- Partnerships and service coordination
- Use of public spaces
- Right to participate

2.5 Prior Community Engagement

This review sought to build on previous engagement by the Town of Victoria Park.

After extensive community engagement undertaken by the Town in 2019 and 2020 to review the homelessness policy, the Ordinary Council Meeting on the 16 June 2020 was presented the findings of the review of *Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town’s role*. The Council item, which outlines the extent of this engagement is contained in Appendix Three.

The recommendation from the Policy Committee was that Council:

1. Repeals the current Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town’s role
2. Adopts a new Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town’s role.

This review led to the adoption of the current *Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town’s role*. Key changes in the amended policy include:

- (i) a widened policy objective to articulate the broad role and responsibility of the Town to respond to homelessness
- (ii) a list of definitions, including homelessness, rough sleepers, severely crowded dwellings, at risk of homelessness and housing stress to capture the many and diverse types of homelessness that exist in the Town

(iii) clear policy statement, divided into three sections: (0) Policy principles which reflect the feedback and preferences of the broader community (1) Policy commitments that clarify the strategic 'roles' the Town undertakes as expressed across engagement periods (2) A policy implementation section which details how the policy is delivered.

During this review period the Supporting People with Basic Needs Network submitted a proposed draft policy for the Town's review. This draft policy is contained in Appendix Four. It has been included as it is an example of community-based thinking at this time. The recommendations in the policy are similar to those suggested which have been suggested during the community workshops during this current engagement period.

2.6 Targeted Engagement

Workshops were held so key local stakeholders could provide direct input into the policy review. Participants were asked for their views on the current policy and opportunities for improvements or changes in line with the principles guiding the review process. Two external workshops were held:

- Monday 13 June 2022, 6.00pm to 7.30pm, online.
- Wednesday 6 July 2022, 2.00 pm to 4.30 pm, at the Town of Victoria Park Administration Centre.

The opportunity to participate was promoted via targeted email to key stakeholders identified by the Town of Victoria Park and internal invitations to relevant Council staff and Councillors. All workshops had participation by Elected Members and Council staff.

Figure Four – In Person Workshop Town of Victoria Park.



The workshops were designed to provide context for informed participation and included:

- Framework for the policy review – aligning with the Town’s strategic planning, centred in local government, ending homelessness the goal.
- Homelessness overview – current statistics and the impact, ABS definition of homelessness, determinants and risk factors.
- Housing overview – housing continuum and affordable housing levers.
- WA Homelessness Strategy 2020-2030 – focus areas and principles.
- A role for local government – within the Strategy, other local government responses.

Council staff shared how the policy, and its implementation plan, had guided the way that they undertake their work. This inclusion in the workshop agenda was important as it demonstrated the link between Council policy and operations.

In addition, a facilitated discussion was held with Town staff on 8 July 2022. Staff were from a cross section of Council including the Community Safety, Urban Planning, Communications, Recreation and Community Development teams. The purpose of this discussion was to brief them on the key findings of the review and to obtain their input into the review process from an operational perspective.

3 Key Findings

The key findings from each part of the review are summarised below.

1. Analysis of the policy against the role outlined for local government
2. Alignment with the Town of Victoria Park’s vision and mission, and draft Community Plan 2022-32.
3. Desktop review of four Western Australian local government policies and action plans related to homelessness.
4. Input from prior engagement undertaken by the Town of Victoria Park during the development of this policy.
5. Targeted input from community members (including local service providers) and Council staff on the strengths and gaps in the current policy.

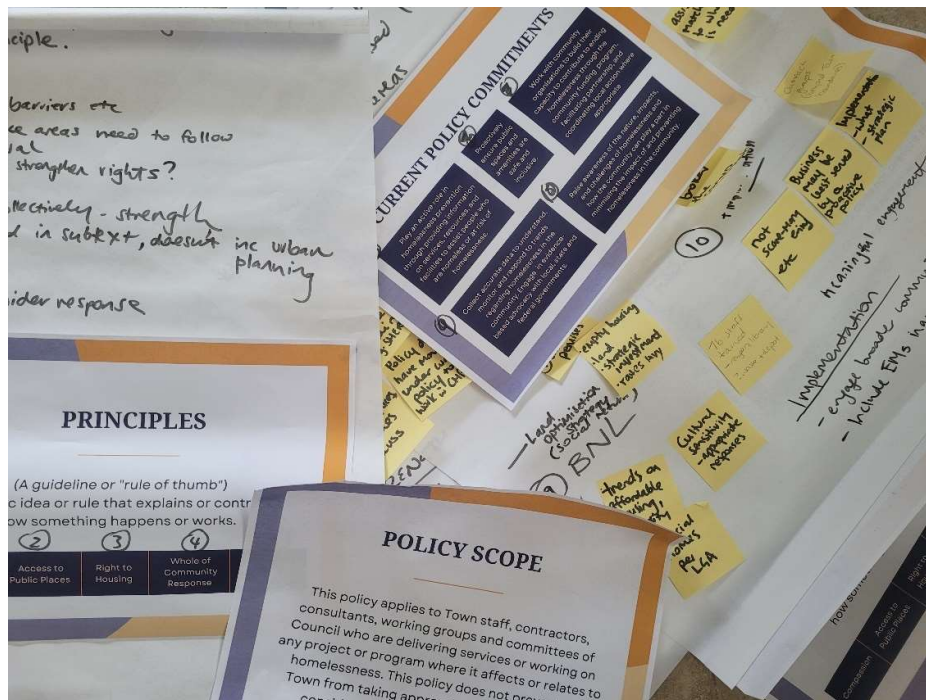
3.1 Analysis of the policy against the role outlined for local government

Consistent with the role of local government outlined in the state strategy All Paths Lead to a Home¹⁷, the current policy is capable of delivering on the areas of information, referral and, to some extent, place-based coordination. The following areas will need to be addressed to ensure consistency with the strategy:

- Specify training for rangers and front-line staff. While the Town is already doing this to a large extent is it not a commitment in the policy.
- The place-based approach could be strengthened to take on more of a coordination role.

The policy has no mention of utilising land and assets other than access to public spaces; this could be strengthened as a commitment given the important role that housing plays in preventing, responding and ending homelessness.

Figure Five – Photo of workshop notes



3.2 Alignment with Town of Victoria Park Strategic Community Plan 2022-2032

The Town's new Strategic Community Plan (SCP) has a strengthened focus and commitment to homelessness. As a result, the policy in its current form is not aligned to support the aspirations in the SCP. To align with the new SCP the homelessness policy will need to be amended to include:

- Commitments to dwelling growth (affordable) and dwelling diversity.
- Commitments to acute housing needs.
- Commitments to an evidence base that includes local housing needs and trends.
- As partnerships are a key measure of the effectiveness of S2, this may need more focus in the homelessness policy commitments or within policy principle 4 (whole-of-community).
- Recognition that the policy should be implemented in conjunction with the Town's Local Planning Strategy.

3.3 Desktop Review – Other Local Governments

A snapshot of three policies one action plan from four other WA local governments was undertaken and an assessment of these against the overarching principles of this review is supplied below. Whilst it is noted that policies need to respond to the needs of each local community, the comparison provides an insight into other local government policy responses to homelessness in their local area. In terms of scope, one of the policies covered the Council, CEO and staff while the others only applied to staff and contractors or did not specify. Other key findings were:

- Provision of information and advocacy to state government were common inclusions.
- Only one stated that the local governments approach contributed to the goal to end homelessness.
- Only one took a human rights approach to housing.
- Almost all referenced some evidence of drivers and risk factors of homelessness, to varying degrees.
- All referenced or provided context on the role of local government.
- While two didn't harness opportunities across functional areas, one allocated action to the areas of Community Development, Communications, Community Safety, Strategic Planning, Lifelong Learning, Legal Centre and one did not specify functional areas but discussed the role of housing, advocacy, events and engagement.

Table Two – Summary comparison of local government policies

	City of Armadale	City of Fremantle	City of Kwinana	Shire of Augusta-Margaret River
Type / Applies to	Policy / Staff and contractors	Specific business units (staff) / Action Plan	Policy / Unspecified	Policy / Council, CEO and staff
Has a goal to end homelessness, not manage it	N	Y	N	Partly (reduce)
Uses a human right not a needs-based approach	N	N	N	Y
Evidence based approach founded in the drivers of homelessness	N	Y	Partly	Partly
Centered in the role of LG, aligns with All Paths Lead to a Home	Mentions State strategy	Y	Y	Y
Harnessing opportunities across all functional areas of LG	N	Y	N	Partly

3.4 Prior Engagement

As outlined in Appendix Three, engagement undertaken by the Town in 2019 and 2020 to inform the current policy was extensive and enabled input into the policy through a number of forums. AS outlined in Section Two, the Supporting People with Basic Needs Network Group (SPBNN) put forward a draft policy for Council consideration which they believed would strengthen the Council’s homelessness response across all functional areas of Councils,

in particular in the urban planning area. This draft policy includes a number of similar suggested during this review process.

3.5 Engagement

Across both external workshops there were attendees from community service providers including the Supporting People with Basic Needs Network Group, the Sussex St Law Centre, Victoria Park Youth Centre, Connect Victoria Park, Mission Australia, and the Belmont / Victoria Park Emergency Relief Network along with staff and the Mayor and Councillors from the Town of Victoria Park. Direct contact was made with agencies who were interested to provide feedback but unable to attend the workshops. This included Ruah community services and the WA Alliance to End Homelessness. The engagement outcomes of the combined workshops are summarised below and can be found in more detail in Appendix Five.

Policy objective

The key strengths identified in the current policy is that it explicitly mentions ending homelessness, recognises a social responsibility and identifies an active role for the Town.

Key considerations identified:

- “Recognising” may not give enough direction / strength to the role the Town can take. Consider strengthening this.
- Does not mention prevention but the Town can play a role here.

Policy scope

In comparison to two of the local governments, a strength of this policy’s scope was considered its broad reach, however a key gap identified was that it does not include elected members.

There were concerns raised, in both workshops, that its applicability is narrowed by saying it applies only to projects or programs affecting or relating to homelessness.

Key considerations identified:

- Inclusion of elected members in the policy scope.
- Inclusion of all functional areas of Council, not just areas where it affects or relates specifically to homeless programs.

- Widening its applicability to be an embedded approach that includes prevention, it is currently quite open to interpretation.
- The scope doesn't incorporate housing in any real way.
- Including services that receive funding from Council.
- Carry through the goal of ending homelessness from the objective.

Definitions

Definitions were not specifically focused on at the workshop. There was broad endorsement of the recommendation put forward by Shelter WA that the cultural definition of homelessness be included in the policy as a context for the other definitions. Three additional risk factors have been included - People with disabilities, young people and older people who rent have been included in response to the profile of people who experience homelessness in metropolitan Perth.

Principles

Overall, there was a level of satisfaction with keeping these principles, with only minor alterations suggested. Leading with compassion was viewed as a strength of this policy in the online workshop, while concerns were raised in the in-person workshop about this term being potentially patronizing and the need for respect to be included too. The rights-based approach was well supported; however, the subtext did not bring in the role of urban planning.

Moving between scope and principles, participants in both workshops queried how the policy could apply a 'whole of community' approach when it only applies to Town staff and contractors.

The application across the Town was also queried, for example the extent of training beyond staff such as rangers (e.g. library staff, waste removal staff) and how effectively the policy is applied across functional areas (e.g. the removals of benches from local parks shouldn't happen if this policy is applied).

Key considerations:

- Review the compassion principle and subtext with view to bringing respect into the principle.

- Review the purpose and wording of access to public spaces, to clarify the principle sought and whether this is related to inclusivity and safety.
- Right to housing subtext to include the role of urban planning in delivering this.
- Training beyond rangers to other frontline staff such as library and waste, incorporated here or in the commitments
- Partnerships and collaboration as a principles – this may help clarify whole of community response in relation to policy scope.

Policy commitments

Participants felt this was the weakest element of the policy. A key strength mentioned in the Community Plan was the commitment to the By Name List¹⁸, which is a contemporary approach to understanding by name who is homeless in a defined geographic area is. The By-Name List records an individual's status including whether they are rough sleeping or in accommodation and it tracks their movements into and out of homelessness by using a combination of quality real-time data and service coordination. This enables collaborative effort to be informed by a strong evidence base.

Although the approach taken with commitments differed in the two workshops, the gaps and suggestions were consistent.

In the in-person workshop participants reviewed the existing commitments. These were then themed, and key gaps identified were:

- **Housing / urban planning** – Where is the role of planning, underutilised land, incentives etc? Housing is needed but what is the Town's role? e.g. in projects such as the Macmillan precinct require a proportion of affordable housing. Consider the housing continuum and does Vic Park have it covered? There is empty housing and underutilised land, there could be an audit and strategic investment, rates levies on empty properties. Does the Land Optimisation Strategy need to be reviewed with a social return on investment lense? Gentrification in the ToVP has implications for keeping community members in place, it is in the Town's interest to want to keep residents.
- **Direct support** – There is a potential gap in partnerships and practical assistance. Make sure the assistance is matched to what is needed. Need cultural sensitivity and culturally appropriate responses. Services are also being pushed out due to costs and lease ends, can there be assistance to find suitable premises to offer services? Services are delivering the type of thing ToVP wants (does this need to be split into two?). The Town could take

a stronger role in strengthening understanding (e.g. business community) and brokering conversations.

- **Capability** - Training is not specifically mentioned so it could be overlooked in future. The current commitments do not cover all functional areas of Council.
- **Data** – The By Name List homelessness data is good. Could include trends on affordable housing, housing diversity, number of social homes per LGA.

In the online workshop, participants were asked to nominate their top commitments. These have been themed into the following areas in order of frequency:

- **Urban planning** - Set percentage of affordable housing in approvals, use planning laws to create social and affordable housing, approvals for large scale developments only given if social and affordable housing included incentives in large developments for social and affordable housing,
- **Collaboration and advocacy** - Working with other local governments for coordinated outcomes e.g. South East Corridor Councils, discussions with City of Perth about how they are handling homelessness as this directly impacts Town of Victoria Park, advocacy with state government about funding for social housing and with federal government about income support payments.
- **Direct support** - Commitment to support services, sponsorships and partnerships with NGO/NFP in the homelessness sector when we host community events, commitment to youth homelessness.
- **Awareness and capability** – break down stereotypes and educate the community on types of homelessness, training a wide range of staff on causes of homelessness and local community resources to assist people
- **Data** – gathering data on homelessness but also risk factors, commitment to act on data gathered.

Based on this, considerations are:

- Strong inclusion of housing and the urban planning function (consistent with the principle of right to housing) as a policy commitment.
- Coordinated and collaborative advocacy beyond the Town.
- Incorporate the business community into the education, awareness and implementation.
- Direct support that is proactive and in-keeping with need.

- Inclusion of housing data in collection and a clear statement around what the data will be used for.

4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the engagement process and desktop review, changes are recommended to the policy. Appendix Six contains the recommended changes tracked on the current policy.

It is recommended that the term people experiencing homelessness is used instead of homelessness people. People-first language is defined as language that puts a person before a diagnosis. The word “homeless” comes with a whole armful of negative stereotypes, assumptions, and accusations. When the term “homeless,” is used to describe a person, they are being defined by their homelessness and it may imply that there is no hope for change. But when we say someone is “experiencing homelessness,” we’re implying that it’s something they won’t experience forever, and the person is not described just by this experience. By describing someone as “experiencing homelessness” rather than simply “homeless,” we are describing something a person is going through rather than defining them by it. This humanizes homelessness a little more and gives those experiencing it the dignity they deserve.

Key changes to the policy summarised below.

It is recommended that the policy specifically mentions Elected Members within the scope, as per the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River policy. Whilst as a policy of Council this may be seen as inclusive of Elected Members it is recommended to avoid doubt, they are mentioned in the policy.

It is recommended that the policy scope is broadened to all functional areas of Council.

It is recommended that the definition of homelessness in the policy is broadened to include the Cultural Definition. This definition is widely used by homelessness services. It is generally used in conjunction with the ABS definition. The inclusion of this definition provides a stronger context for the definitions in the policy of rough sleepers, severely crowded dwellings, and at risk of homelessness.

It is recommended that a new policy principle of respect is included.

It is recommended that evidence-based is a policy principle, not just a policy commitment, to ensure that strategies and plans that will sit under the policy are informed by the evidence base of what is needed to prevent, minimise the impact of and end homelessness

It is recommended that the policy commitments enable a range of activities that could be considered by Council to partner with and build the capacity of local services. This has been expanded to illustrate a number of ways that this could be progressed.

To align with the strengthened commitment of the Strategic Community Plan, it is recommended that the policy commitments include reference to the By Name List. The By Name List is undertaken by community services through a partnership arrangement.

It is recommended that there is a policy commitment for data collection to be expanded to include housing growth and diversity and local housing needs and trends, given the role of housing in homelessness. Implementation should be linked to the Town's Local Planning Strategy. This will enable the policy to align with local government's role in the WA Strategy, to utilise land and assets to deliver on the policy objective of ending homelessness.

In the area of capability, it is recommended that the policy outlines a new commitment to training for frontline staff as this will strengthen the policy and be consistent with delivering on the policy goal.

It is recommended that a new commitment is given to reviewing local laws to reflect the policy principles of compassion, respect and inclusivity.

Partnerships are a key measure in the new Community Strategic Plan. It is recommended that the commitment in this area is strengthened through a new commitment and that the advocacy commitment reflects this approach.

It is recommended that reference to the local business community is specifically mentioned as a commitment in the policy. Homelessness can impact on local business and by mentioning them in the policy they can see their needs reflected.

4.1 Revised Policy for Council Consideration

Policy number	Policy 113
Policy title	Homelessness – The Town's role – For consideration by Council

Policy Objective:

The Town of Victoria Park acknowledges and recognises that it has a social responsibility to play an active role in preventing, minimising the impact of and ending homelessness in the community.

Policy Scope:

This policy applies to Elected Members, Town staff, contractors, consultants, working groups, services that receive funding or grants from Council and committees of Council who are delivering services or working on any project across all areas of the Town of Victoria Park.

This policy does not prevent the Town from taking appropriate action where it is considered there is a health or safety risk.

Definitions:

Homelessness

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition states 'that when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.'

Australian researchers Chamberlain and Mackenzie in their Understanding Contemporary Homelessness issues of definition and meaning, have defined homelessness as

- a) Primary Homelessness: People who live in improvised dwellings. This includes people who sleep on the street, in parks, derelict buildings or cars;
- b) Secondary homelessness: People who live in temporary accommodation. This includes people in emergency or short-term homeless services and people residing temporarily with friends or family;
- c) Tertiary Homelessness: People who live in accommodation without a lease or the private use of bathroom or kitchen facilities. This includes people in medium to long term boarding houses or caravan parks.

Rough sleepers

Rough sleepers is the term used to describe people experiencing primary homelessness. For example, people who are sleeping without shelter, in locations that are not designed for habitation, in parks or other public areas, or in sheds, in their cars or other areas surrounding private buildings.

Severely crowded dwellings

'Severely' crowded dwellings are defined by the ABS as dwellings 'which require four or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the people who usually live there'.

At risk of homelessness

A person is considered at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation. A range of risk factors or triggers can lead to homelessness. In the Town of Victoria Park key risk factors include:

- High rates of housing stress in comparison to the Greater Perth area
- Unemployment, underemployment and insecure employment
- Disability
- Family and domestic violence
- Cultural and linguistic diversity, as these community members are at a greater risk of becoming homeless than other population groups
- Young people
- Older people on income support who rent

Additional risk factors which may contribute to someone becoming homeless include poor mental or physical health, substance abuse, leaving the care or justice system and/or previous experiences of homelessness.

Housing stress

Housing stress occurs when households in the lowest 40% of incomes are paying more than 30% of their gross household income on housing costs, either mortgage or rental costs

Policy Statement:

Policy principles:

1. **Compassion:** The Town recognises that people who are homeless are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our community, and that homelessness may have been caused by extended periods of disadvantage or as a result of a single, life event. The Town will show compassion and care when interacting and working with people experiencing homelessness in the community.
2. **Respect:** The Town will have due regard for the feelings, needs and rights of people who experience homelessness.

Inclusiveness: The Town encourages and promotes inclusive access to public spaces and amenities, acknowledging the rights of people experiencing homelessness, whilst also acknowledging the responsibility of all community members to respect the rights of others to live in a safe and peaceful environment.

3. **Right to housing:** The Town recognises that access to housing that is affordable, secure and appropriate is a basic human right, essential to individuals' mental and physical wellbeing and necessary for community members to meaningfully participate in society. The Town has a responsibility to understand acute housing needs, including homelessness, and to work collaboratively among all stakeholders to address local housing needs.
4. **Partnerships and Collaboration:** The Town acknowledges that ending homelessness requires a committed, whole-of-community response. The Town will work in partnership and collaboratively with all levels of government, homeless support services, business, community organisations and neighbouring local governments towards a coordinated, effective and evidence-based approach to ending homelessness in the local community and the greater inner-City region
5. **No wrong door:** The Town acknowledges that people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness often connect with the Town. The Town is committed to implementing a 'no wrong door' approach to ensuring people in need are not turned away, and are provided with the information and support to access services to meet their needs.

Policy Commitments:

6. The Town will play an active role in homelessness prevention through providing information on services, resources and facilities to assist people who are experiencing homeless or who are at risk of homelessness.
7. The Town will work with community organisations to build their capability and capacity to contribute to preventing and to ending homelessness through funding and support mechanisms such as a community funding or grant programme, access to or use of Council land or buildings, subsidized rent, and/or rate relief, and by facilitating partnerships and coordinating local action.
8. The Town will proactively ensure public spaces and amenities are safe and inclusive for people experiencing homelessness.
9. The Town will collect and share accurate data, including utilising the By Name List, to understand, monitor and respond to trends regarding homelessness in the community,
10. The Town will collect and share accurate data on social and affordable housing trends and utilise mechanisms, including town planning policies, to increase social and affordable housing options in the Town.

11. The Town will facilitate training for staff on how to respond with compassion, care and respect to people experiencing homelessness.
12. The Town will review local laws to remove the capacity for negative impacts on people experiencing homelessness.
13. The Town will actively partner and collaborate with neighboring local governments, community services, local business, and the broader community to prevent and to end homelessness.
14. The Town will engage in evidenced based advocacy with local, state and federal governments for a collaborative, coordinated approach to prevent and to end homelessness.
10. The Town will raise awareness of the nature, impacts and challenges of homelessness and how the community, including local businesses, can play a part in minimising the impact of and prevent homelessness in the community.

Policy implementation:

11. The Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan details the actions which will be taken by the Town to operationalize this policy.
12. The CEO will establish management practices to guide Town staff and Elected Members in their interactions with people experiencing homelessness.

Figure four – Attendees at the In Person Workshop



5 Appendices

Appendix One - Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town’s Role



Policy number	Policy 113
Policy title	Homelessness – The Town’s role
Strategic outcomes supported	S2 – An informed and knowledgeable community S3 – An empowered community with a sense of pride, safety and belonging

Policy objective:

The Town of Victoria Park recognises that it has a social responsibility to play an active role in minimising the impact of and ending homelessness in the community.

Policy scope:

This policy applies to Town staff, contractors, consultants, working groups and committees of Council who are delivering services or working on any project or program where it affects or relates to homelessness.

This policy does not prevent the Town from taking appropriate action where it is considered there is a health or safety risk.

Policy definitions:

Homelessness

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition states 'that when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.'

Rough sleepers

Rough sleepers is the term used to describe homeless people who are sleeping without shelter, in locations that are not designed for habitation. People sleeping in parks or other public areas, or in sheds, car parks or other areas surrounding private buildings are considered rough sleepers.

Severely crowded dwellings

'Severely' crowded dwellings are defined by the ABS as dwellings 'which require four or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the people who usually live there'.

At risk of homelessness

A person is considered at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation. A range of risk factors or triggers can lead to homelessness. In the Town of Victoria Park key risk factors include:

- High rates of housing stress in comparison to the Greater Perth area
- Unemployment, underemployment and insecure employment
- Family and domestic violence
- Cultural and linguistic diversity, as these community members are at a greater risk of becoming homeless than other population groups

Additional risk factors which may contribute to someone becoming homeless include poor mental or physical health, substance abuse, leaving the care or justice system and/or previous experiences of homelessness.

Housing stress

Housing stress occurs when households in the lowest 40% of incomes are paying more than 30% of their gross household income on housing costs, either mortgage or rental costs

Policy statement:

Policy principles:

1. **Compassion:** The Town recognises that people who are homeless are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our community, and that homelessness may have been caused by extended periods of disadvantage or as a result of a single, life event. The Town will show respect, compassion and care when interacting and working with homeless people in the community.
2. **Access to public spaces:** The Town encourages and promotes inclusive access to public spaces and amenities, whilst also acknowledging the responsibility of all community members to respect the rights of others to live in a safe and peaceful environment. The Town is committed to balancing the needs of all members of the community to use public space
3. **Right to housing:** The Town recognises that access to housing that is affordable, secure and appropriate is a basic human right, essential to individuals' mental and physical wellbeing and necessary for community members to meaningfully participate in society. The Town has a responsibility to understand acute housing needs, including homelessness, and work collectively among all stakeholders to contributing to addressing these needs.
4. **Whole-of-community response:** The Town acknowledges that ending homelessness requires a committed, whole-of-community response. The Town will work collaboratively with all levels of government, homeless support services, community organisations and neighbouring local governments towards a coordinated and effective approach to ending homelessness in the local community and the greater inner City region
5. **No wrong door:** The Town acknowledges that people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness often connect with the Town. The Town is committed to implementing a 'no wrong door' approach to ensuring people in need are not turned away, and are provided information and support to access services to meet their needs.

Policy commitments:

6. The Town will play an active role in homelessness prevention through providing information on services, resources and facilities to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
7. The Town will work with community organisations to build their capacity to contribute to ending homelessness through the community funding program, facilitating partnerships and coordinating local action where appropriate.
8. The Town will proactively ensure public spaces and amenities are safe and inclusive.
9. The Town will collect accurate data to understand, monitor and respond to trends regarding homelessness in the community, and engage in evidenced based advocacy with local, state and federal governments.
10. The Town will raise awareness of the nature, impacts and challenges of homelessness and how the community can play a part in minimising the impact of and preventing homelessness in the community.

Policy implementation:

11. The Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan details the actions which will be taken by the Town to operationalize this policy.
12. The CEO will establish management practices to guide Town staff in their interactions with people experiencing homelessness.

Related documents

Nil.

Responsible officers	-
Policy manager	Manager Community
Approval authority	Council
Next evaluation date	

Revision history

Version	Action	Date	Authority	Resolution number	Report number
1	Approved	13/12/2016	Council	-	Item 15.5
2	Reviewed and amended	20/08/2019	Council	148/2019	Item 10.1
3	Amended	16/06/2020	Council	436/2020	Item 15.1

Appendix Two – Sample WA Local Government Homelessness Policies

City of Armadale Policy – Homelessness (adopted 2021)

Accessed from:

https://www.armadale.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/assets/documents/docs/Community_Development/Policy_Homelessness.pdf

City of Fremantle Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2024 (adopted 2021)

Accessed from:

<https://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/homelessness%20plan%202021-2024.pdf>

City of Kwinana Policy: Homelessness (adopted 2016)

Accessed from: [https://www.kwinana.wa.gov.au/council/documents,-publications-and-forms/publications-and-forms-\(all\)/policies/2016/policy-homelessness](https://www.kwinana.wa.gov.au/council/documents,-publications-and-forms/publications-and-forms-(all)/policies/2016/policy-homelessness)

Shire of Augusta-Margaret River CCSP 20 Homelessness Policy (adopted 2016)

Accessed from:

<https://www.amrshire.wa.gov.au/library/file/0Publications/Policy%20CCS/CCSP%2020%20Homelessness%20Policy.pdf>

Appendix Three – Council Item, June 2020

15 Committee Reports

15.1 Review of Policy 113 Homelessness - The Town's Role

Location	Town-wide
Reporting officer	Anastasia Brooks
Responsible officer	Alison Braun
Voting requirement	Simple majority
Attachments	{attachment-list-do-not-remove}

Recommendation from the Policy Committee

That Council:

1. Repeals the current Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town's role
2. Adopts a new Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town's role, as included in attachment 7.1.7, inclusive of the following change that Clause 9 be amended to read: "The Town will collect accurate data to understand, monitor and respond to trends regarding homelessness in the community, and engage in evidenced based advocacy with local state and federal governments"

Purpose

To present the findings of the review of Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town's role conducted between May 2019 and May 2020, for Policy Committee's recommendation to Council.

In brief

- In 2018 the Town was approached by the Supporting People with Basic Needs group requesting a collaborative review of Policy 113 Homelessness. The Supporting People with Basic Needs group and Town staff formed a collaborative group in May 2019 to commence the Homelessness – The Town's role review.
- At the Ordinary Council Meeting 20 August 2019, Council resolved to review 23 policies in the 2019-2020 financial year. Council further resolved to request that a report be presented to the 17 September 2019 Ordinary Council Meeting. At the 17 September OCM Council endorsed Policy 113 Homelessness to be presented to Council June 2020.
- Amendments proposed to Policy 113 Homelessness incorporate feedback received over three engagement periods and a public submission period. Feedback was received from the local service provider network – the Supporting People with Basic Needs group, internal Town service areas and the broader community.

Background

1. In 2018 the Town was approached by the Supporting People with Basic Needs group requesting a collaborative review of Policy 113 Homelessness. Representatives from the Supporting People with Basic Needs group and Town staff formed a collaborative group in May 2019 to commence this review.
2. The Supporting People with Basic Needs Network is a group comprised of service providers operating in Victoria Park and local community members who are working together to address the issue of homelessness by raising awareness about homelessness, sharing information about services provided and working collaboratively with the Town to review the Town's Homelessness Policy.

3. At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 20 August 2019 Council endorsed the review of Policy 113 Homelessness by June 2020.
4. At the Ordinary Council Meeting 20 August 2019, Council resolved to review 23 policies in the 2019-2020 financial year. Council further resolved to request that a report be presented to the 17 September 2019 Ordinary Council Meeting. At the 17 September OCM Council endorsed Policy 113 Homelessness to be presented to Council June 2020.
5. On 4 December 2019 the Supporting People with Basic Needs group held a final workshop on content to include in the policy for the community to make comment. Following the workshop, on 15 December 2019 Supporting People with Basic Needs group submitted a proposed draft policy for the Town's further community engagement and final review.
6. The review of Policy 113 Homelessness incorporated a total of three engagement periods and a public submission period:
 - i. Engagement with the Supporting People with Basic Needs group from May 2019 to November 2019
 - ii. Engagement with internal Town service areas between December 2019 and January 2020
 - iii. Engagement with the broader community during February 2020
 - iv. Public submission period between 14 April 2020 and 4 May 2020.

Strategic alignment

Social	
Strategic outcome	Intended public value outcome or impact
S02 - An informed and knowledgeable community.	Commitment from the Town to provide information and support to vulnerable community members, community organisations and the community more broadly.
S03 - An empowered community with a sense of pride, safety and belonging.	Acknowledgement from the Town that vulnerable community members have the right to access public services and amenities and be treated with compassion.

Engagement

Internal engagement	
Stakeholder	Comments
Service areas: Aqualife and Leisurelife, Assets, Building Services, Communications and Engagement, Community Development, Customer Service, Digital Hub, Environmental Health,	Discussions held on the impact of homelessness on service areas and opportunities for further action. Feedback sought on amendments proposed by service providers in first engagement period.

Environment, Financial Services, Governance, Healthy Community, Library Services, Parking, Parks Operations, Place Planning, Planning (Urban), Project Management Office, People and Culture (Safety and Emergency Management), Street Operations	
C-Suite	Feedback sought on amendments proposed by service providers in first engagement period.
Elected Members	Feedback sought on amendments proposed across engagement periods through Elected Member Portal (April 2020).

External engagement	
Stakeholders	<p>Service providers - Six services from the Supporting People with Basic Needs group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sussex Street Community Legal Service • Victoria Park Youth Accommodation • Connect Victoria Park • Victoria Park Community Centre • Kensington PCYC • Communicare WA <p>Broad community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 302 community members during the broad community engagement period, representing people who live or work in the Town, businesses, community organisations and who have lived experience of homelessness <p>Public submission period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven community members during the public submission period
Period of engagement	<p>Service providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2019 to November 2019 <p>Broad community</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2020 <p>Public submission period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 April to 4 May 2020
Level of engagement	4. Collaborate
Methods of engagement	<p>Service providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly meetings <p>Broad community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey via Your Thoughts Hard copy survey Community workshop <p>Public submission period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey via Your Thoughts Hard copy survey Feedback also accepted via email
Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV sliders at Town buildings Printed flyers distributed to community meeting hubs and businesses eNewsletters, including eVIBE, Biz News and Your Thoughts Newspaper advertisements Town social media channels Targeted emails to community organisations
Submission summary	<p>Broad community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 282 completed online surveys One completed hard copy survey 19 community workshop participants <p>Public submission period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six completed online surveys One email feedback
Key findings	<p>Service providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed changes to the structure and content of Policy 113 Homelessness, including a list of policy principles and commitment statements. <p>Broad community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided feedback on proposed policy principles and case study examples to inform expectations around the Town's role. <p>Public submission period - Seven submissions received</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One submission supporting the draft • Three submissions supporting the draft but with some concerns • Two submissions opposing the draft • One submission not stated
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Other engagement	
Stakeholder	Comments
Lived experience advisor	<p>Feedback sought on amendments proposed across engagement periods.</p> <p>Feedback captured during public submission period and recorded within report contained in Attachment 4.</p>

Legal compliance

[Section 2.7 of the Local Government Act 1995](#)

Risk management consideration

Risk and consequence	Consequence rating	Likelihood rating	Overall risk analysis	Mitigation and actions
Reputational Lack of clarity on the Town's role in relation to homelessness resulting in dissatisfaction from the community.	Moderate	Possible	Moderate	Adoption of the amended policy informed through community engagement.

Financial implications

Current budget impact	Nil.
Future budget impact	<p>It is anticipated there will be costs associated with implementing the policy and draft Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan in addition to what is proposed within the Families, Youth and Homelessness portfolio 2020/21 budget.</p> <p>Implementation costs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated feasibility study and trial of an external outreach service provider, \$50,000 • Participation in the City of Perth's synchronised rough sleeper count, \$3000

\$25,000 will be presented to Council in the People and Culture 2020/21 budget for consideration. This amount is to provide training to staff on assisting vulnerable community members, a further action within the draft implementation plan.

The draft Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan 2020-2023 is contained in Attachment 6.

Analysis

7. Amendments proposed to Policy 113 Homelessness incorporate feedback received over the three engagement periods and the public submission period, from the Supporting People with Basic Needs group, internal Town service areas and the broader community.

Service provider engagement

8. The Supporting People with Basic Needs group expressed concern with the content and delivery of Policy 113 Homelessness in its current form. Issues highlighted by the group included:
 - i. A narrow policy focus which does not adequately recognise the multiple touch points the Town's service areas have with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
 - ii. The absence of a management practice to operationalise Policy 113 Homelessness, resulting in a lack of clarity on the Town's role in relation to supporting people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or the community organisations who service vulnerable community members
9. A number of activities were undertaken by representatives from the Supporting People with Basic Needs group and the Town between May 2019 and November 2019. Two key activities were the mapping of local services and demand, and an audit of Western Australian and some Eastern States' local government policies on homelessness. On review of these documents, the following amendments to the policy were suggested by the group:
 - (i) A policy objective that recognises the broad role and responsibility of the Town to contribute to minimising the impact of and ending homelessness in the community
 - (ii) A list of policy principles to demonstrate a commitment from the Town to housing as a human right, supporting vulnerable groups and collaboration with the sector
 - (iii) A list of policy commitments rather than policy aims, in order to specifically articulate the intent of the policy
 - (iv) Reference to a management practice and implementation plan, which is absent in the current policy

Internal engagement

10. Discussions with internal Town service areas took place from December 2019 to January 2020. As a broader policy focus had been determined in the engagement period with service providers, Town Teams across the organisation were asked to provide input into how homelessness intersects with or impacts the work of their service area, and whether there are opportunities for further action.
11. Homelessness intersects the Town on many levels. Almost all service areas are directly or indirectly impacted by homelessness, including but not limited to
 - (i) taking calls and responding to complaints from the community of rough sleepers and anti-social behavior in public areas

- (i) delivering programs, services and events to people at risk of homelessness, including in digital literacy, social inclusion and health promotion
 - (ii) working with developers constructing or modifying short-term accommodation sites or facilities to run homeless services
 - (iii) developing community education materials and delivering awareness raising events in partnership with local service providers
 - (iv) removing and disposing of waste and belongings left by rough sleepers in public spaces
 - (v) working with property owners of abandoned or pre-demolition buildings to discourage squatting
12. Staff across service areas expressed a willingness to provide information and support, within their roles, to people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or community organisations who service vulnerable community members. A list of potential actions and requirements was compiled for future consideration and are contacted in the report in Attachment 2.
13. Feedback was also sought from service areas on the amendments proposed by service providers in the first engagement period. Key areas of feedback included:
- (i) the operational elements proposed in the policy would sit more appropriately within an implementation plan or management practice, leaving a more strategic policy vision
 - (a) facilitating affordable housing is outside of the scope of a policy on homelessness. 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.

Broad community engagement

14. The review of the policy was opened to the broader community in February 2020. Engagement with the broader community included an online and hardcopy survey and community workshop. Survey respondents and workshop participants were requested to provide feedback on a set of draft policy principles and several activities which had been undertaken by Western Australian and Eastern States' local governments around homelessness.
15. As the Western Australian State Government's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness was released in December 2019, the community was asked to provide feedback on policy principles which were suggested by the Supporting People with Basic Needs group as well as others which were included in the State strategy. The principles ranked highest during the broad community engagement period included:
- (i) compassionate approach – the Town will show respect, compassion and care
 - (i) access to public spaces – the Town will ensure access to spaces is safe and inclusive, and everyone's needs are respected
 - (ii) right to housing – housing is a basic human right, essential to individuals' health and participation in society
 - (iii) whole of community response – the Town will work collaboratively with all stakeholders to contribute to ending homelessness
 - (iv) no wrong door – people are provided information and support no matter which stakeholder or service they connect with

16. The feedback provided on activities that have been undertaken by local governments provided insight into the roles the survey respondents and workshop participants considered most appropriate for the Town. A high level of support was demonstrated around activities whereby local governments played the following roles:
- (i) advocacy to other levels of government
 - (ii) sharing or distributing information to the community
 - (iii) facilitating community organisations coming together
 - (iv) partnering with community organisations
 - (v) employing an informed and respectful approach to working people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who connect with the Town
17. Further to these roles, directly delivering services which are traditionally held by State Government or community organisations was mentioned in the survey responses. Approximately 11% of survey responses indicated that delivering services which are traditionally held by State Government or community organisations was also a role the respondent supported the Town undertaking.
18. Further research will need to be undertaken to ascertain whether current service delivery is meeting demand, or if greater promotion of existing services is required.

Policy review

19. The collaboration with Supporting People with Basic Needs group draft policy and the extensive engagement across Town service areas and the broader community was used collectively to define Policy 113 Homelessness.
- Key changes proposed in the amended policy include:
- (i) a widened policy objective to articulate the broad role and responsibility of the Town to respond to homelessness
 - (ii) a list of definitions, including homelessness, rough sleepers, severely crowded dwellings, at risk of homelessness and housing stress to capture the many and diverse types of homelessness that exist in the Town
 - (iii) clear policy statement, divided into three sections:
 - (0) Policy principles which reflect the feedback and preferences of the broader community
 - (1) Policy commitments that clarify the strategic 'roles' the Town undertakes as expressed across engagement periods
 - (2) A policy implementation section which details how the policy is delivered
20. Additionally, as actions were proposed across the three engagement periods, a draft Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan was developed to accompany the reviewed policy.
21. The draft implementation plan will be finalised after Council decision-making on the review of Policy 113 Homelessness. The draft implementation plan is contained in Attachment 6.

Public comment

22. The redrafted policy and implementation plan were released for a public comment period between 14 April 2020 and 4 May 2020. 7 submissions were received, with the report contained in Attachment 4. Following the public comment period, the following change to the redrafted policy was made:
- o including 'previous experiences of homelessness' as a factor which can contribute to someone becoming homeless within the 'at risk of homelessness' definition.
23. The final draft Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town's role is contained in Attachment 5 for Policy Committee consideration for recommendation to Council.

[All Paths Lead to a Home – Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030](#)

Further consideration

Following the meeting of the Policy Committee on 20 May 2020 the following additional information is provided:

24. The Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan attached provides Council context for how the policy will be implemented. As the implementation plan is an operational document, it is not recommended for adoption.
25. The version of the policy attached for adoption includes a tracked change reflecting the amendments recommended by the Policy Committee.

Appendix Four - Supporting People with Basic Needs Network draft policy.

Supporting People with Basic Needs Network Draft Town of Victoria Park Policy Addressing Homelessness, December 2019

Background only – not for inclusion in proposed policy

The Supporting People with Basic Needs Network is a group comprised of service providers operating in Victoria Park and local community members who are working together to address the issue of homelessness by raising awareness about the issue (such as the Couch Conversations event in August 2019), sharing information about the services provided (which resulted in the production of an updated directory of services) and the development of a proposed new policy for the Town to replace its inactive Homelessness Policy (2016).

Drafting of the policy has been a collaboration between SPBNN and Town staff. This final draft is the result of a community workshop convened by the Supporting People with Basic Needs Network on 4 December 2019.

POLICY OBJECTIVE:

The Town of Victoria Park recognises that it has a responsibility as the custodian of the community in which people experiencing homelessness live and the effects of homelessness are felt, to play an active role in minimising the impact of and ending homelessness in the community.

POLICY SCOPE:

This policy applies to all Elected Members, working groups and committees of Council, Town staff and contractors, and is to be applied to all relevant policy frameworks and across all service areas/functions of the Town of Victoria Park.

This policy does not prevent any business or other agency from taking appropriate action where they consider there is a health or safety risk.

DEFINITIONS:

Homelessness

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition states ‘that when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.’

The ABS definition acknowledges that homelessness is not just a state of being without a ‘roof’ and includes living arrangements where housing may be insecure, inadequate and/or lacks the privacy to engage in social relations.

At risk of homelessness

A person is considered at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation. A range of risk factors or triggers can lead to homelessness. In the Town of Victoria Park key risk factors in the community include:

- High rates of housing stress due to increasing housing costs
- Unemployment, underemployment and insecure employment
- Family and domestic violence
- Cultural and linguistic diversity, as these community members are at a greater risk of becoming homelessness than other population groups

Housing stress

Housing stress refers to households in the lowest 40% of national equivalised incomes, who are paying more than 30% of their gross income on mortgage or rental payments.

Affordable housing

Affordable housing refers to housing for very low income households, low income households or moderate income households. Affordable housing may be produced in the market or through the not for profit sector, and is usually subsidised in some way.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Policy principles

The Town’s policy and implementation plan is underpinned by the following principles:

Right to housing: The Town recognises that access to affordable, secure and appropriate housing is a basic human right, essential to individuals' mental and physical wellbeing and necessary for community members to meaningfully participate in education, employment, cultural and social activities. The Town has a responsibility to formulate policy to address homelessness, housing needs and the provision of diverse housing options.

Support for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups: The Town recognises that people who are homeless are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our community, and experience higher rates of trauma, mental and physical illnesses and substance dependence. The Town further acknowledges that homelessness is not an individual issue, rather a reflection of systemic failures affecting the whole of community. The Town has a moral obligation to address and advocate for the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged people to facilitate structural change within our community.

Right to participate: The Town acknowledges that a thriving community is one where all community members are encouraged and able to participate in community activities and events. The Town also acknowledges that some vulnerable and socially excluded people within its population may need special assistance to enable them to participate and experience greater social inclusion.

Access to public spaces: The Town recognises the right of all community members to access public spaces and utilise public amenities, whilst also acknowledging their responsibility towards other community members who have the right to live in a safe and peaceful environment. The Town is committed to balancing the needs of all members of the community to use public space.

Respectful collaboration with relevant community organisations: The Town acknowledges that local community organisations working to address homelessness, provide housing, and support people with other basic needs, are key partners in ending homelessness and that their connection to people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness is an asset on which to build essential advocacy, assistance and support.

Furthering Town prosperity: The Town acknowledges that the visibility of homelessness can impact current and prospective resident, business and visitor perceptions of the Town. The Town is committed to affecting change to improve the lives of homeless people themselves, and to also ensure the ongoing economic, environmental, cultural and social prosperity of the Town and its various communities. The Town further acknowledges that 'managing or servicing' homelessness is very costly to the community, and that planning to solve people's homelessness, through permanent supportive housing, is a significantly more cost effective strategy long term.

Policy commitments

- a) The Town will both facilitate and advocate for diversity in housing stock and the attraction and provision of affordable housing.
- b) The Town will identify and facilitate the contribution each service area/ function and staff member can make to minimise the impact of homelessness in our local community.
- c) The Town will, in carrying out its various functions, act with compassion, empathy, care and respect when connecting with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in our local community.
- d) The Town will work collaboratively with all levels of government, homeless support services, community organisations and neighbouring local governments towards a coordinated and effective approach to ending homelessness in our local community and the greater inner-city region.
- e) The Town acknowledges that local businesses and commercial enterprises are key partners in ending homelessness and will engage with them to ensure their contributions are part of a long term homelessness strategy.
- f) The Town will build capacity within the community to end homelessness by providing financial and practical assistance to community organisations and social enterprises through, but not limited to, community grants, operating subsidies, subsidised rent and other funding streams.
- g) The Town will collect, collate and share accurate data to understand and respond to trends and issues regarding homelessness in our local community.
- h) The Town will advocate for the provision of State and Federal government funded services and evidence based policies to both minimise the impact of homelessness and address the underlying causes which result in homelessness.
- i) The Town will engage in activities to raise awareness of the nature, impacts and challenges of homelessness and the ways in which all of our community can play a part in minimising the impact of and preventing homelessness in our local community.

Policy implementation

- The Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan details the actions which will be taken by the Town to operationalise this policy.
- The CEO will establish management practices to guide Elected Members, Town Officers and Town contractors in implementing this policy across all service areas and functions of the Town.

Appendix Five – Engagement Input

Policy objective

Current objective - The Town of Victoria Park recognises that it has a social responsibility to play an active role in minimising the impact of and ending homelessness in the community.

In person workshop

Overarching comments:	
Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “active role” • Accepts a social responsibility • Mentions ending homelessness – the end goal 	Gaps: Nil -

Online workshop

POLICY OBJECTIVE

The Town of Victoria Park recognises that it has a social responsibility to play an active role in minimising the impact of and ending homelessness in the community.

STRENGTHS

i like ending homelessness is great

Recognises social responsibility

Active role is a good descriptor of how the Town sees its role

aims to end homelessness

As you pointed out Michelle no one policy can fit all local governments, I think it's great that the policy is addressing the issues within the town of victoria park that are relevant to what you are seeing in your area.

GAPS

Is it proactive enough to say as an objective 'recognises that it has a social responsibility'?

perhaps adding 'preventing' as well

recognise may not be strong enough

is committed to its social responsibility

'Recognises' may need to be changed to a more direct statement

Does this aim to minimise impact for residents or for those effected by homelessness

does minimising the impact include 'reducing stigma'?

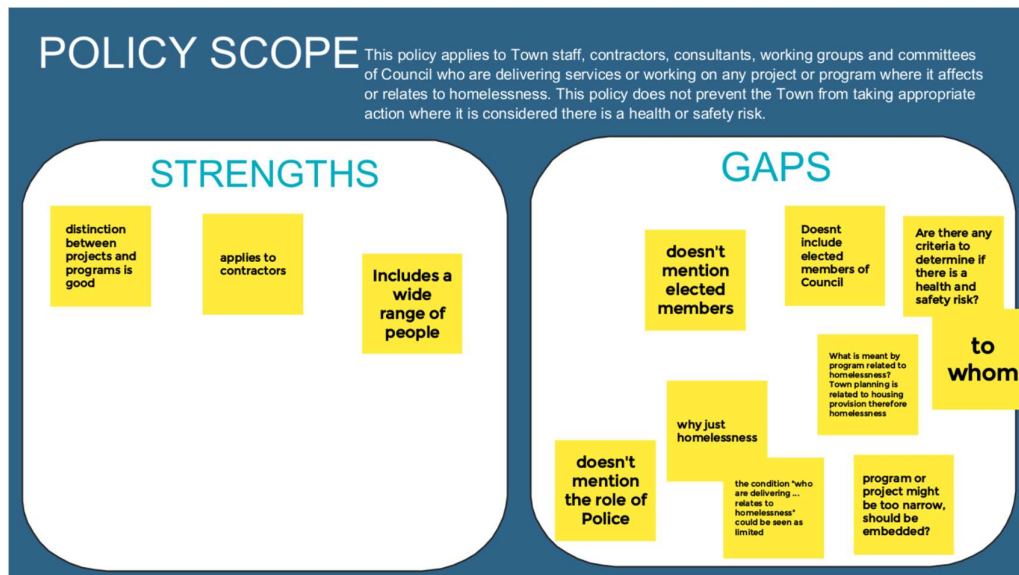
Policy scope

Current scope - This policy applies to Town staff, contractors, consultants, working groups and committees of Council who are delivering services or working on any project or program where it affects or relates to homelessness. This policy does not prevent the Town from taking appropriate action where it is considered there is a health or safety risk.

In person workshop

<p>Overarching comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing is the key but the scope doesn't incorporate this. • Need to clarify the relationship or approach taken by the broader community and services located within the Town, vs the Town itself as well as State Govt. If not in this policy where does this fit?* • Be more explicit as per objective that we want to <u>end</u> homelessness. • May be too open to interpretation 	
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes contractors 	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it too narrow by saying specific areas and staff (those delivering services)? • What about services funded by the Town? To be in keeping with the same approach. • Elected members not included.

Online workshop



Policy Definitions

Current definitions – *ABS definition, rough sleepers, severely crowded dwellings, at risk of homelessness, Housing stress*

Overarching comments:	
Strengths:	Gaps: Is there a way to capture the 80% and / or the people on low fixed incomes (e.g. employment won't fix this), does it need to incorporate the cultural definition of homelessness?

Current Policy Principles

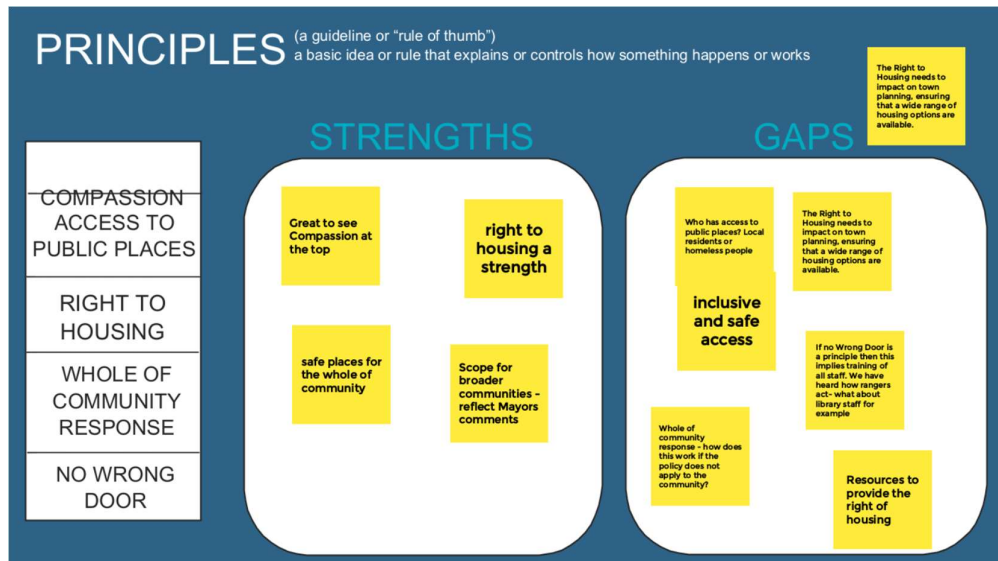
1. **Compassion:** *The Town recognises that people who are homeless are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our community, and that homelessness may have been caused by extended periods of disadvantage or as a result of a single, life event. The Town will show respect, compassion and care when interacting and working with homeless people in the community.*
2. **Access to public spaces:** *The Town encourages and promotes inclusive access to public spaces and amenities, whilst also acknowledging the responsibility of all community members to respect the rights of others to live in a safe and peaceful environment. The Town is committed to balancing the needs of all members of the community to use public space*
3. **Right to housing:** *The Town recognises that access to housing that is affordable, secure and appropriate is a basic human right, essential to individuals' mental and physical wellbeing and necessary for community members to meaningfully participate in society. The Town has a responsibility to understand acute housing needs, including homelessness, and work collectively among all stakeholders to contributing to addressing these needs.*
4. **Whole-of-community response:** *The Town acknowledges that ending homelessness requires a committed, whole-of-community response. The Town will work collaboratively with all levels of government, homeless support services, community organisations and neighbouring local governments towards a coordinated and effective approach to ending homelessness in the local community and the greater inner City region*
5. **No wrong door:** *The Town acknowledges that people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness often connect with the Town. The Town is committed to implementing a 'no wrong door' approach to ensuring people in need are not turned away, and are provided information and support to access services to meet their needs.*

In person workshop

<p>Overarching comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally happy with the principles. • How do we ensure this is applied across all areas at the Town – e.g. removing benches shouldn't happen if this policy is being followed. 	
<p>Strengths:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generally happy with this 2. – 3. Right is a strong principle. Subtext mentions understand and work collectively. 4. This principle potentially addresses the broader response as mentioned in scope. ** 5. 	<p>Gaps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potential for this to be seen as patronising, respect is mentioned in the subtext maybe this could be included in the principle itself 2. This principle should prevent barriers. We need a balance but can we strengthen the rights of those who have nowhere else? The public place is their only place vs a nice spot to visit. 3. How it is framed in the subtext does not incorporate urban planning. 4. – 5. Can we make this Plain English (sector speak)

Note: State Government online portal of services to assist with referrals and no wrong door

Online workshop



Current policy commitments

6. *The Town will play an active role in homelessness prevention through providing information on services, resources and facilities to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.*
7. *The Town will work with community organisations to build their capacity to contribute to ending homelessness through the community funding program, facilitating partnerships and coordinating local action where appropriate.*
8. *The Town will proactively ensure public spaces and amenities are safe and inclusive.*
9. *The Town will collect accurate data to understand, monitor and respond to trends regarding homelessness in the community, and engage in evidenced based advocacy with local, state and federal governments.*
10. *The Town will raise awareness of the nature, impacts and challenges of homelessness and how the community can play a part in minimising the impact of and preventing homelessness in the community.*

In person workshop

<p>Overarching comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is currently the weakest part of the policy, it reduces it to giving out brochures. • Is this utilising all functional areas of the Town? • Where is the role of planning, underutilised land, incentives etc? • Housing is a big gap – housing is needed but what is the Town’s role? E.g. in projects such as the Macmillan precinct require a proportion of affordable housing. • The Town has missed opportunities presented to it to support in this area as it didn’t have the mandate through this policy, for example to work with local Community Housing Providers or through applying for external funding such as SHERP. • Gentrification has happened in the ToVP and this has implications for keeping community members in place, it is in the Town’s interest to want to keep residents, affordable housing needed. • Consider the housing continuum and does Vic Park have it covered. There is empty housing and underutilised land, there could be an audit and strategic investment, rates levies on empty properties. • Does the Land Optimisation Strategy need to be reviewed with a social returns lens? • Culturally sensitivity and culturally appropriate responses. • Strengthen the understanding to include business community, they would be best served by a proactive approach. 	
Strengths:	Gaps:

<p>9. By Name List</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing – see notes above. • Training not specifically mentioned – noting 76 staff were trained in last update. <p>7. Services are also being pushed out due to costs and lease ends. Can there be assistance to find suitable premises to offer services. Services are delivering the type of thing ToVP wants (does this need to be split into two?). Potential gap in partnerships and practical assistance. Make sure the assistance is matched to what is needed. Broker conversations and implementation. Outreach beyond Town boundaries. Not scaremongering.</p> <p>8. Commitment could be more specific. What is accessible.</p> <p>9. Could include trends on affordable housing, housing diversity, number of social homes per LGA.</p>
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Online workshop



Implementation

In person workshop

Engage the broader community. Undertake meaningful engagement. Include elected members in the approach and investigate training and whether policies apply to them (governance query).

Appendix Six – Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town’s Role with recommended changes tracked

Policy number	Policy 113
Policy title	Homelessness – The Town’s role – <u>Tracked changes for consideration by Council</u>
Strategic outcomes supported	S2 – An informed and knowledgeable community S3 – An empowered community with a sense of pride, safety and belonging

Policy objective:

The Town of Victoria Park acknowledges and recognises that it has a social responsibility to play an active role in preventing minimising the impact of and ending homelessness in the community.

Policy scope:

This policy applies to Elected Members, Town staff, contractors, consultants, working groups, services that receive funding or grants from Council and committees of Council who are delivering services or working on any project across all areas of the Town of Victoria Park. ~~or program where it affects or relates to homelessness.~~

This policy does not prevent the Town from taking appropriate action where it is considered there is a health or safety risk.

Policy definitions:

Homelessness

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition states ‘that when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.’

~~-Australian researchers Chamberlain and Mackenzie in their Understanding Contemporary Homelessness issues of definition and meaning, have defined homelessness as~~

~~a) Primary Homelessness: People who live in improvised dwellings. This includes people who sleep on the street, in parks, derelict buildings or cars;~~

~~b) Secondary homelessness: People who live in temporary accommodation. This includes people in emergency or short-term homeless services and people residing temporarily with friends or family;~~

~~c) Tertiary Homelessness: People who live in accommodation without a lease or the private use of bathroom or kitchen facilities. This includes people in medium to long term boarding houses or caravan parks.~~

Rough sleepers

Rough sleepers is the term used to describe ~~homeless~~ people experiencing primary homelessness. For example, people who are sleeping without shelter, in locations that are not designed for habitation, People sleeping in parks or other public areas, or in sheds, in their cars ~~car parks~~ or other areas surrounding private buildings, are considered rough sleepers.

Severely crowded dwellings

'Severely' crowded dwellings are defined by the ABS as dwellings 'which require four or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the people who usually live there'.

At risk of homelessness

A person is considered at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation. A range of risk factors or triggers can lead to homelessness. In the Town of Victoria Park key risk factors include:

- High rates of housing stress in comparison to the Greater Perth area
- Unemployment, underemployment and insecure employment
- Disability
- Family and domestic violence
- Cultural and linguistic diversity, as these community members are at a greater risk of becoming homeless than other population groups
- Young people
- Older people on income support who rent

Additional risk factors which may contribute to someone becoming homelessness include poor mental or physical health, substance abuse, leaving the care or justice system and/or previous experiences of homelessness.

Housing stress

Housing stress occurs when households in the lowest 40% of incomes are paying more than 30% of their gross household income on housing costs, either mortgage or rental costs

Policy statement:

Policy principles:

1. **Compassion:** The Town recognises that people who are homeless are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our community, and that homelessness may have been caused by extended periods of disadvantage or as a result of a single, life event. The Town will show ~~respect,~~ compassion and care when interacting and working with ~~homeless~~ people experiencing homelessness in the community.
2. **Respect:** The Town will have due regard for the feelings, needs and rights of people who experience homelessness.
2. ~~**Inclusiveness Access to public spaces:** The Town encourages and promotes inclusive access to public spaces and amenities, acknowledging the rights of people experiencing homelessness, whilst also acknowledging the responsibility of all community members to respect the rights of others to live in a safe and peaceful environment. ~~The Town is committed to balancing the needs of all members of the community to use public space-~~~~
3. **Right to housing:** The Town recognises that access to housing that is affordable, secure and appropriate is a basic human right, essential to individuals' mental and physical wellbeing and necessary for community members to meaningfully participate in society. The Town has a responsibility to understand acute housing needs, including homelessness, and to work collaboratively ~~collectively~~ among all stakeholders ~~to contributing~~ to address ing these local housing needs.
4. **Partnerships and Collaboration: Whole-of-community response:** The Town acknowledges that ending homelessness requires a committed, whole-of-community response. The Town will work in partnership and collaboratively with all levels of government, homeless support services, business,

community organisations and neighbouring local governments towards a coordinated, ~~and~~ effective and evidence-based approach to ending homelessness in the local community and the greater inner City region

5. **No wrong door:** The Town acknowledges that people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness often connect with the Town. The Town is committed to implementing a 'no wrong door' approach to ensuring people in need are not turned away, and are provided with the information and support to access services to meet their needs.

Policy commitments:

6. The Town will play an active role in homelessness prevention through providing information on services, resources and facilities to assist people who are experiencing homeless or who are at risk of homelessness.
7. The Town will work with community organisations to build their capability and capacity to contribute to preventing and to ending homelessness through ~~the community funding program, funding and support mechanisms such as a community funding or grant programme, access to or use of Council land or buildings, subsidized rent, and/or rate relief, and by~~ facilitating partnerships and coordinating local action, where appropriate.
8. The Town will proactively ensure public spaces and amenities are safe and inclusive for people experiencing homelessness.
9. The Town will collect and share accurate data, including utilising the By Name List, to understand, monitor and respond to trends regarding homelessness in the community,
10. The Town will collect and share accurate data on social and affordable housing trends and utilise mechanisms, including town planning policies, to increase social and affordable housing options in the Town.
11. The Town will facilitate training for staff on how to respond with compassion, care and respect to people experiencing homelessness.
12. The Town will review local laws to remove the capacity for negative impacts on people experiencing homelessness.
13. The Town will actively partner and collaborate with neighboring local governments, community services, local business, and the broader community to prevent and to end homelessness.
- ~~9-14.~~ The Town and will engage in evidenced based advocacy with local, state and federal governments for a collaborative, coordinated approach to prevent and to end homelessness.
10. The Town will raise awareness of the nature, impacts and challenges of homelessness and how the community, including local businesses, can play a part in minimising the impact of and prevent ~~ing~~ homelessness in the community.

Policy implementation:

11. The Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan details the actions which will be taken by the Town to operationalize this policy.
12. The CEO will establish management practices to guide Town staff and Elected Members in their interactions with people experiencing homelessness.



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- ⁷ Flatau, P., Lester, L., Seivwright, A., Teal, R., Dobrovic, J., Vallesi, R., Hartley, C and Zoe Callis (2021) Ending Homelessness in Australia: An Evidence Policy Deep Dive. Perth: The University of Western Australia, November 2021. Retrieved from: https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/homelessness_deep_dive_full_report_.pdf
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- ¹⁰ Western Australian Government (2017). Affordable Housing Action Plan 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- ¹¹ <https://www.endhomelessnesswa.com/strategy>.
- ¹² <https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/sites/federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/files/2021-07/national-housing-agreement.pdf>. Page 3
- ¹³ <https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/sites/federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/files/2021-07/national-housing-agreement.pdf>. Page 8.
- ¹⁴ Government of Western Australia (2021) All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia’s 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030. Retrieved from: <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-06/homelessness-strategy-final.pdf>
- ¹⁵ Clause 1.3 (2) of the Local Government Act 1995 outlines the intended result of the Act; *This Act is intended to result in —*
- (a) *better decision-making by local governments; and*
 - (b) *greater community participation in the decisions and affairs of local governments; and*
 - (c) *greater accountability of local governments to their communities; and*
 - (d) *more efficient and effective local government.*
- https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/main_mrtitle_551_homepage.html.
- ¹⁶ <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/strengthening-local-government/integrated-planning-and-reporting>.
- ¹⁷ Government of Western Australia (2021) All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia’s 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030. Retrieved from: <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-06/homelessness-strategy-final.pdf>
- ¹⁸ The By Name List is a tool used in Advance to Zero, an approach to achieving ‘functional zero’ for those experiencing homelessness in a city or town area by using a combination of quality real-time data and service coordination. The By-Name List collects inflow and outflow data to show month-by-month data about how

many people are actively homeless in a community, whether this is reducing or not (Inflow), and how many people are moving out of homelessness (Outflow) each month. The By-Name List records an individual's status including whether they are rough sleeping or in accommodation. It tracks their movements into and out of homelessness. It also includes basic information, such as whether someone has a lead worker.



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