



TOWN OF  
**VICTORIA PARK**

# Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan

July 2020 – June 2023

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VIC PARK

## Acknowledgement of Country

**The Town of Victoria Park acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, the Whadjuk Noongar people from the Noongar nation. The Town pays its respect to past, present and emerging Leaders, their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land which still continues today.**

The Town thanks the traditional custodians for the contribution they have and continue to make to life in the Town of Victoria Park and to the region.

## Thank you

**The Town of Victoria Park would like to extend its gratitude to the organisations within the Supporting People with Basic Needs group for their advice, guidance and the integral role they played in instigating the review of the Homelessness Policy.**

The Town would also like to thank the community for their active participation in shaping the Town's work around homelessness. In particular, the Town thanks the community workshop participants and all those who undertook the community survey.

Our deepest gratitude is also extended to those with lived experience of homelessness who willingly shared their experiences with the Town during the review of the Homelessness Policy. The Town thanks you for your expertise and insights.



# Introduction

**The Town of Victoria Park recognises that it has a social responsibility to minimise the impact of and end homelessness in the community.**

The Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan details the actions which will be taken by the Town to operationalise Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town's Role from July 2020 to June 2023.

## Homelessness in the community

**Homelessness is experienced when someone loses access to a safe and secure home.**

**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
- ♥ does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012.

**Homelessness includes people living in:**

- ♥ improvised dwellings, e.g. tents or sleeping rough
- ♥ supported accommodation, e.g. homeless refuges
- ♥ a household temporarily, e.g. couch surfing
- ♥ boarding houses
- ♥ severely crowded dwellings, whereby a home would require four or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the people who live there.



In the 2016 Census it was estimated that 132 people in the Town were homeless across these different categories.



## Impact of homelessness

### Homelessness affects everyone in our community.

People who are homeless experience a poorer quality of life than those who live in safe and secure homes. People who are homeless have reduced physical and mental health outcomes, reduced education and employment opportunities, hampered family and social relationships, and increased interactions with the justice system. These outcomes can be as a result of or are intensified during periods of homelessness.

Homelessness impacts community perceptions of safety. In 2019, the Town received approximately 25 requests to respond to people sleeping rough or leaving belongings in public areas or abandoned buildings. The community indicated during the review of the Homelessness Policy that they are sympathetic to the difficulties facing people who are homeless, however they wish to be able to access and feel safe using public spaces and amenities.

Homelessness also comes at an economic cost to the community. For local community organisations, an increase in any type of homelessness results in a greater demand for services to support people's basic needs. For the Town, an increase in rough sleepers results in an increase in maintenance, cleaning and waste removal in public spaces. For businesses in the Town there is a very real sense that an increase in street-present people may discourage community members and visitors from patronising local businesses.

## Causes of homelessness

### Homelessness can sometimes be faced suddenly and without warning.

#### Risk factors

High housing costs

Unemployment or underemployment

Family and domestic violence

Family and relationship breakdown

Poor mental or physical health

Substance abuse

Leaving the care system

Leaving the justice system

#### Vulnerable groups

Young people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

People with a disability

Older people, particularly older women

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds



# The role of local government

## Ending homelessness is everyone's responsibility.

The WA State Government's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030 recognises that ending homelessness requires a whole-of-community response. Different levels of government, the community services sector, businesses and communities all have different but important roles to play.

Local governments are well-positioned to be a central point of information for the community and other levels of government. During the review of the Homelessness Policy, the community expressed support for the Town to play the following roles:

### Facilitate:

- ♥ Connect and encourage collaboration between community organisations, businesses and the community.

### Advocate:

- ♥ Advocate to local, State and Federal governments to secure investment and support into achieving the needs, wants and aspirations of the community.

### Deliver:

- ♥ Develop and deliver information, resources and activities for the immediate benefit of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

### Partner:

- ♥ Work in partnership with community organisations, businesses and/or other groups to meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.





## The role of other levels of government

### **The State and Federal governments are key stakeholders in ending homelessness.**

The Town acknowledges the role State and Federal governments play in ending homelessness through providing:

- ♥ social housing
- ♥ affordable or subsidised housing programs
- ♥ crisis, short and medium term accommodation
- ♥ funding of homelessness specialist services
- ♥ welfare support, including income support
- ♥ employment and training assistance
- ♥ health and mental health services
- ♥ services through the justice system, including the police, courts and corrective services.

# Development of the Implementation Plan

<p><b>Service provider engagement</b></p>	<p><b>Six community organisations</b></p>	<p>Representatives from the Supporting People with Basic Needs network and Town staff commenced the Homelessness Policy review.</p>
<p><b>Internal engagement</b></p>	<p><b>21 Town service areas</b></p>	<p>Town service areas provided feedback and contributed potential actions to operationalise a broader policy focus.</p>
<p><b>Broad community engagement</b></p>	<p><b>302 community members and representatives from local businesses and community organisations</b></p>	<p>The community provided feedback on potential policy principles and actions which the Town could undertake.</p> <p>The Homelessness Policy was redrafted, and the Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan June 2020 – June 2023 developed.</p>
<p><b>Council adoption</b></p>	<p><b>Town of Victoria Park Council</b></p>	<p>Council adopted the re-drafted Homelessness Policy.</p>



## Underpinning principles

**The Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan July 2020 – June 2023 is underpinned by Policy 113 Homelessness – The Town's Role policy principles.**

### 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.

### Access to public spaces:

The Town encourages and promotes inclusive access to public spaces and amenities, while 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

## Evaluating the Implementation Plan

**A review will be undertaken annually to evaluate the number and success of actions delivered within the Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan July 2020 – June 2023.**

A formal evaluation of the plan will take place in 2023. Local statistics will be monitored to inform and improve actions within the plan on an ongoing basis.



# Additional Town services

**Engagement with internal Town service areas highlighted a number of services that may directly or indirectly be contributing to ending homelessness in the Town.**

As these services are captured in existing Town policies, plans or agreements, they are not included in the Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan July 2020 – June 2023.

These services include:

Service	Service area	Policy commitment
Computer and internet access	Digital Hub	Play an active role in prevention
Online job seeking and other digital literacy workshops	Digital Hub	Play an active role in prevention
Mental health awareness workshops	Healthy Community	Play an active role in prevention
Low cost, healthy eating cooking classes	Healthy Community	Play an active role in prevention
English literacy programs for people who speak languages other than English	Library	Play an active role in prevention
Partnership with Kensington PCYC to support young people in the Town centre	Library	Build community capacity
Civic awareness workshops for new migrants	Community Development	Play an active role in prevention
Payment plans for customers with outstanding debts to the Town	Financial Services	Play an active role in prevention
Advocacy around a coordinated approach to homelessness in the Inner City Local Government forum	Community Development	Understand, monitor and advocate
Actions within the Reconciliation Action Plan	Community Development	Raise community awareness
Community funding through donations, grants and operational subsidies	Community Development	Build community capacity
Volunteering and work placement opportunities	People & Culture	Play an active role in prevention



## 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 people 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 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 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 per cent of incomes are paying more than 30 per cent of their gross household income on housing costs, either mortgage or rental costs.

## Affordable housing

Affordable housing is housing specially provided subject to eligibility and affordability requirements, including:

- ♥ subsidised rental housing at below market rates for low and moderate income households to avoid housing stress and usually managed by not-for-profit organisations
- ♥ owner-occupied housing for eligible households provided under a subsidised loan or shared equity scheme which imposes a legal affordability requirement.

Affordable housing includes all forms of subsidised housing where access is restricted to eligible households, and is distinguished from low-cost housing produced by the private market.

## No Wrong Door

No Wrong Door is an approach to ensure people who are experiencing homelessness, or are at risk of homelessness, are provided immediate assistance to secure housing and support – no matter which service they connect with first. The approach requires a consistent, coordinated response across the homelessness sector and is a key priority of the WA State Government's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness.

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# Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan

## Town's role:

### Facilitate:

- ♥ encourage collaboration between community organisations, businesses and the community

### Advocate:

- ♥ advocate to local, State and Federal governments

## Action timeframe:

- Y1** FY20–21
- Y2** FY21–22
- Y3** FY22–23

### Deliver:

- ♥ develop and deliver information, resources and activities

### Partner:

- ♥ work in partnership with community organisations, businesses and/or other groups

## Strategic Community Plan outcomes:

- S2** An informed and knowledgeable community
- S3** An empowered community with a sense of pride, safety and belonging

## Policy commitment: Play an active role in prevention

	Action		Responsible	Town's role				Timeframe		
				F	A	D	P	Y1	Y2	Y3
1	Review and reprint 'Support for You and Your Family' service provider brochures		Community Development			X	X	X	X	X
2	Develop a 'Homelessness' landing page for the Town's website	Monitor no. of engagements	Community Development, Stakeholder Relations			X		X		
3	Provide training to Town staff on assisting people in need	Survey % improvement in knowledge and skills	People and Culture			X		X	X	X



## July 2020 – June 2023

### Policy commitment: Build community capacity

	Action		Responsible	Town's role				Timeframe		
				F	A	D	P	Y1	Y2	Y3
4	Provide administrative support to the Healthy Relationships Strategy Group	Monitor no. of meetings, members and collaborative projects	Community Development	X				X	X	X
5	Attend and encourage local membership uptake in the Belmont-Vic Park Emergency Relief Network Attend and encourage local membership uptake in the Belmont-Vic Park Emergency Relief Network	Monitor no. of meetings, members and collaborative projects	Community Development				X	X	X	X
6	Develop and deliver a communications plan to increase awareness of community organisations contributing to ending homelessness	Monitor no. of engagements	Stakeholder Relations Community Development		X	X	X	X	X	X



## Policy commitment: Safe and inclusive public spaces

	Action		Responsible	Town's role				Timeframe		
				F	A	D	P	Y1	Y2	Y3
7	Develop a Homelessness Policy Management Practice to guide Town responses to rough sleepers, items left in public spaces and squatters		Community Development Community-facing service areas			X		X		
8	Conduct a feasibility study of funding an external outreach service provider		Community Development			X	X	X		

## Policy commitment: Understand, monitor and advocate

	Action		Responsible	Town's role				Timeframe		
				F	A	D	P	Y1	Y2	Y3
9	Establish an internal reporting system to capture and monitor ongoing occurrences of rough sleeping, items left in public spaces and squatting	Monitor no. of reports	Community Development Customer Service Community-facing service areas		X			X		
10	Participate in the City of Perth's point-in-time synchronised rough sleeper count	Monitor no. of rough sleepers	Community Development Ranger Services		X	X	X	X	X	X
11	Analyse and monitor extent of service delivery in the Town	Monitor no. of services	Community Development		X		X	X	X	X

12	Analyse and monitor housing diversity through the five year review of the Local Planning Strategy	Monitor no. of housing diversity	Place Planning		X					X
13	Establish an internal working group to monitor and review the implementation of the Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan		Community Development Customer Service Community-facing service areas			X		X	X	X
14	Advocate to local, State and Federal governments to inform resourcing decisions as required		Community Development		X		X	X	X	X

### Policy commitment: Raise community awareness

	Action	Responsible	Town's role				Timeframe			
			F	A	D	P	Y1	Y2	Y3	
15	Deliver a community awareness raising activity to promote understanding and support community-led action	Survey % satisfaction of attendees Survey % improvement in knowledge and skills	Community Development			X	X	X	X	X





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