

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.

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 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 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 operationalise this policy.
12. The CEO will establish management practices to guide Town staff in their interactions with people experiencing homelessness.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

Nil.

Policy manager	Manager – Community
Approval authority	Council
Next Evaluation Date	<i>This will be set by Governance</i>

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Approved, Amended, Rescinded	Date	Authority	Resolution Number	Key Changes/Notes
1	Approved	13/12/2016	Council		Item 15.5

2	Reviewed and Amended	20/08/2019	Council	148/2019	Item 10.1

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