

Policy number	Policy 113
Policy title	Homelessness – The Town’s role – Tracked changes accepted for consideration by Council
Strategic outcomes supported	S1 – Helping people feel safe S2 - Collaborating to ensure everyone has a place to call home

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.

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 (1992) 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
- Unemployment, underemployment and insecure employment
- People living with 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 in private rentals

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.

By-Name List

The By-Name List collects inflow and outflow data to show month-by-month how many people are actively homeless in a community, whether this is reducing or not, and how many people are moving out of homelessness (outflow) each month. In metropolitan Perth, an improvement team formed from participating organisations worked together to promote and establish the list.

Social Housing

Social housing refers to rental housing for very low- and low-income households so they pay no more than 25% of income on rent and managed by either the Housing Authority or a Community Housing provider.

Affordable Housing (rental)

Refers to rental housing for low-to-moderate income households¹ so they pay no more than 30% of household income on rent and is usually managed by a Community Housing provider or other non-profit organisation.

Affordable Housing (owner-occupier)

Refers to owner-occupier housing for low-to-moderate households who are eligible under a subsidised loan or shared equity scheme which imposes a legal affordability requirement.

Crisis Accommodation

¹ The Department of Communities *Affordable Housing Action Plan 2017-18 to 2019-20* defines income and rent prices:

1. low income households earning 50-80% of the median income ie. \$43,550 to \$69,680 with ability to pay between \$250 and \$400 per week rent;
2. moderate income households earning 80-120% of the median income ie. \$69,680 to \$104,520 with ability to pay more than \$400 per week rent.

Refers to short-to-medium term accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness at their point of crisis.

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.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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
6. **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:

7. The Town will play an active role in homelessness prevention through providing information on services, resources and facilities to assist people who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness.
8. 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 program, access to or use of Council land or buildings, subsidised rent, and/or rate relief, and by facilitating partnerships and coordinating local action.
9. The Town will proactively ensure public spaces and amenities are safe and inclusive for people experiencing homelessness.
10. 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,

11. The Town will collect and share accurate data on social and affordable housing trends and utilise mechanisms, including town planning policies, and will investigate affordable housing options as outlined in the Local Planning Strategy.
12. The Town will facilitate training for staff on how to respond with compassion, care and respect to people experiencing homelessness.
13. The Town will seek to remove the capacity for any negative impacts on people experiencing homelessness through the scheduled review of local laws.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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:

17. The Homelessness Policy Implementation Plan details the actions which will be taken by the Town to operationalise this policy.
18. 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
3	Repealed and Replaced	2020	Council	436/2020	15.1
3	Reviewed	16/06/2021	Council	123/2022	12.3