



Source: St Kilda Community Housing & Shaw Architecture

Greater supports for people experiencing homelessness

Council believes that everyone needs a home.

Council has an enduring commitment to social justice and recognises homelessness, which is primarily a housing problem, as a priority.

What is the ask?

Council requests the Australian Government invest in initiatives to address the increasing level of homelessness in Australia, including funding an ongoing supply of social housing to reduce housing stress and homelessness, and establishing a Housing First approach to solving rough sleeping.

What is the issue that this initiative will address?

Causes of homelessness are many and varied. Family violence, a critical shortage of affordable housing, unemployment, mental illness, family breakdown and drug and alcohol abuse all contribute to the level of

homelessness in Australia. Homelessness is not a choice and it can happen to anyone.

The Australian Homelessness Monitor reports that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that homelessness has increased the most in capital cities and that generally rates of increases have been highest in the inner-city area.

Port Phillip has the fourth highest number of homeless citizens in the state. The 2016 Census reported that the five LGAs with the highest levels of overall homelessness were Dandenong (2,103), Melbourne (1,721), Brimbank (1,467), Port Phillip (1,127) and Tullamarine (849).

The prevalence of rough sleeping is highest in inner-city areas. Currently there are 97 persons who are rough

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sleeping in Port Phillip, of which 21 are rough sleeping, with most of the remainder in temporary or emergency housing.

Greater Australian supports are required to assist those experiencing homelessness in the City of Port Phillip.

What is Council proposing?

Council is advocating for the Australian Government to invest in the following:

Affordable and Social Housing

1. Australian and State Governments consider directing stimulus measures post COVID towards building social housing, supporting both social and economic recovery.
2. Develop a National Plan with a holistic approach, across different sectors and all levels of Government, to address the scale of the affordable housing challenge, incorporating policy, funding and financing, innovative delivery models such as Common Ground model, and supporting governance arrangements.
3. A dedicated funding stream, established by both Australian and State Governments, to ensure a sustained program of new social housing stock, upgrades and renewal of existing social housing stock.

The level of investment required in social housing needs to be sufficient to maintain social housing levels in Victoria at 3.5% of total dwellings, estimated to require delivery of 30,800 new social housing dwellings by 2031 and 60,200 new social housing by 2051, an average of 3,000 new dwellings per year until 2031, and over 1,800 dwellings per year between 2031 and 2051 (Burke, T, Swinburne University of Technology, 2016).

Housing First and rough sleeping

4. The National Housing & Homelessness Agreement reviews its policies and programs for rough sleeping to ensure that a Housing First approach to solving rough sleeping is properly implemented, reflecting the fundamentals of placing people directly into housing with wrap around support. This will necessitate sourcing an adequate supply of housing to match the investment that the State has already made in assertive outreach programs. This would significantly reduce the number of people rough sleeping in Victoria over time.
5. As part of this, more Common Ground social housing (rapid, permanent housing with on-site, wrap around support services) be developed inner city municipalities beyond the current CBD facilities. This would include sufficient ongoing, operational funding to enable 24-hour support at each site.

6. Explore with relevant providers and stakeholders the introduction of a 'By-Name List', providing the number and circumstances of every person who is sleeping rough at any time, across all inner metropolitan areas, with dedicated coordination of services to match people with housing and support.
7. Fund the provision of 500 units of social housing stock in the first instance to the funded assertive outreach programs, so that a Housing First approach can genuinely be implemented.

How does initiative align with the Council Plan and Victorian/Australian Government priorities?

Council:

The [Council Plan 2021-31](#) Inclusive Port Phillip – includes a four-year strategy to supporting people to find pathways out of homelessness.

- Council will partner with Launch Housing and other homelessness, health and housing agencies through the Port Phillip Zero initiative, to deliver assertive outreach and a Housing First approach to creating pathways out of homelessness, particularly for those sleeping rough.
- Council will facilitate and advocate for the Victorian Government, community housing organisations, and the philanthropic and private development sectors to facilitate new affordable and social housing within the municipality, including the renewal of existing social housing sites to achieve the outcomes identified in our In Our Backyard Strategy.

The request also aligns with:

- Current implementation focus of Council's [In Our Backyard - Growing Affordable Housing in Port Phillip 2015 - 2025](#) strategy to deliver housing that addresses homelessness.
- City of Port Phillip Submission to the Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia, June 2020. This highlights
 - The importance of having a Housing First approach, which places people experiencing homelessness directly into permanent and safe housing with wrap around support services to address complex needs such as mental health and alcohol and drug support.
 - That the biggest barrier to implementing Housing First in Victoria is a lack of social and affordable housing.
- Council's 2019 housing needs analysis, which highlights the priority needs of persons who are experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough,

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including single men and older single women. With the addition of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander persons, this aligns with one of the four priority housing needs groups in the *In Our Backyard* strategy: singles at greatest risk of homelessness.

Australian Government:

Council's focus is consistent with the aims and objectives of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) housing priority policy areas, in particular:

- an adequate supply of affordable and social housing
- encouraging growth and supporting the viability of the community housing sector
- other homelessness priorities and initiatives that reduce the incidence of homelessness

How does the initiative assist the community to recover from COVID-19?

A Housing First approach to rough sleeping, and increasing the levels of social housing will help the community recover from COVID-19 in the following manner:

- Reduces the cost to government in providing health, justice and welfare services.
- Creates short term jobs in the construction industry, and long-term jobs in the service sector, such as housing management and property maintenance services.
- Fosters a more sustainable and resilient community, by assisting those at greatest risk of homelessness.
- Assists people who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 – persons who are experiencing homelessness, and those at greater risk of homelessness, including casual and low income wage earners and persons who have been unable to work during COVID-19.
- Supports local traders and businesses – creates a captive market for local businesses due to low levels of car ownership for persons who are experiencing homelessness or in social housing.

Cost and current status?

Cost

To allocate 500 new units of social housing stock in the first instance to the funded assertive outreach programs based on a Housing First approach, this will cost an estimate of \$17.5 million, based on a cost of \$350,000 per unit (source: Prowse Quantity Surveyors, Dec. 2021).

Status

Council has committed a contribution of \$4 million in cash and an adjoining surplus lane (\$400,000 value 2020) to the delivery of supported social housing (based on the Common Ground model) at 28 Wellington St, St Kilda by St Kilda Community Housing. This will house 26 persons who are rough sleeping in Port Phillip and be completed in mid-2023.

More information:

- <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/people-and-community/health-and-wellbeing/homelessness>
- City of Port Phillip Submission to the Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia, June 2020.
- Quantifying the Shortfall of Social and Affordable Housing, T. Burke, Swinburne University of Technology, 2016 Paper to Inner Melbourne Action Plan Forum 31 August 2018.