



9.1 SUBMISSION FOR ENDORSEMENT - PARLIAMENTARY
INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS IN VICTORIA

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: TONY KEENAN, GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider endorsement of a written submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Legislative Council has established an inquiry into homelessness in Victoria and called for written submissions to assist it to:

- Understand the scale and nature of homelessness.
- Investigate the social, economic and policy factors that impact on homelessness.
- Identify policies and practices from all levels of government that relate to the delivery of services to the homeless.

- 2.2 A submission has been prepared for Council's consideration and endorsement that:

- Highlights the City of Port Phillip's on-going commitment to social justice and recognition of homelessness as a priority issue.
- Establishes key background information i.e:
 - What we know about homelessness
 - What causes or contributes to homelessness
 - That Housing First approaches reduce homelessness
 - The benefit of early intervention and prevention programs.
- Provides an overview of the high levels of homelessness in the City of Port Phillip, and Council's policies and programs that respond to homelessness, including Port Phillip Zero - a 'collective impact' response to rough sleeping.
- Makes specific recommendations in respect of both:
 - The need for more affordable housing.
 - The need for a Housing First approach and response to rough sleeping.



3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Endorses the interim submission (as provided at Attachment 1) to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria and advises the Legal and Social Issues Committee of the updated status of the City of Port Phillip submission.
- 3.2 Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer to make amendments to the document to correct any minor drafting errors that do not alter the intent.
- 3.3 Provides a copy of the endorsed submission to the Minister for Planning and Local Member for Albert Park, to further advocate to the Victorian State Government for a response to homelessness as called for in the submission.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 In June 2019, the Legislative Council established an inquiry into the state of homelessness in Victoria to be overseen by its Legal and Social Issues Committee.
- 4.2 The Terms of Reference for the Committee require it to:
 - 4.2.1 *‘Provide an independent analysis of the changing scale and nature of homelessness across Victoria;*
 - 4.2.2 *Investigate the many social, economic and policy factors that impact on homelessness; and*
 - 4.2.3 *Identify policies and practices from all levels of government that have a bearing on delivering services to the homeless’.*
- 4.3 Submissions were to be lodged with the Committee by January 31, 2020.
- 4.4 The Inquiry provides the opportunity for Council to share its experience and approach to responding to homelessness in the city, and to advocate for State Government programs and funding streams that target the most effective ways to reduce homelessness in Port Phillip, in particular rough sleeping.
- 4.5 Due to short timeframes, an interim submission has been prepared by officers and was submitted by the closing date of 31 January 2020. The submission (included as Attachment 1) is aligned with and references established Council policy and programs:
 - 4.5.1 Think and Act - Homelessness Action Strategy (2015-20).
 - 4.5.2 In Our Backyard – Growing Affordable Housing in Port Phillip (2015-25).
 - 4.5.3 Port Phillip Zero.
 - 4.5.4 Protocol for Assisting People Who Sleep Rough.
- 4.6 The submission sets out the context of homelessness generally, and in Port Phillip specific, and provides a set of recommendations that seek to address the increasing incidence of homelessness through:



- 4.6.1 Increasing the supply of social and affordable housing.
- 4.6.2 Emphasising a 'Housing First' approach and targeting rough sleepers.
- 4.7 The submission describes Council's role, approach and commitment to addressing homelessness highlighting that:
 - 4.7.1 Council has an enduring commitment to social justice and recognises homelessness as a priority.
 - 4.7.2 Homelessness is primarily a housing problem and, consequently, the provision of affordable housing is an important element of the Council's strategy to help those experiencing housing stress and who have no home.
 - 4.7.3 Human rights principles inform Council's approach to rough sleepers and managing public space, working in a targeted way to ensure the rights and interests of vulnerable people who are sleeping rough are also met.
- 4.8 In setting the context of homelessness in the city, the submission outlines:
 - 4.8.1 *What we know about Homelessness:*
 - Homelessness is increasing, and the increase is greatest in the inner-city areas of big cities.
 - Rough sleeping is increasing at faster rates than other forms of homelessness and in the City of Port Phillip it has increased by over 50% since the 2016 Census.
 - Older people are the fastest growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness.
 - People rough sleeping are older than other cohorts of people experiencing homelessness.
 - 4.8.2 *What Causes or contributes to homelessness*, with evidence suggesting that the main drivers of homelessness are;
 - Lack of affordable housing
 - Family Violence
 - Poverty and a lack of adequate income.
 - 4.8.3 *Housing First approaches reduce homelessness:*
 - There is an established and credible evidence base that demonstrates 'Housing First' approaches to homelessness are effective in reducing rough sleeping.
 - The biggest barrier to implementing Housing First approaches in Victoria is a lack of social housing (offering secure, permanent housing rather than crisis accommodation).
 - Despite significant recent investment by government, social housing stock has continued to decline in Victoria while levels of homelessness, including rough sleeping, has increased.



- 4.8.4 *Early Intervention and Prevention Programs* can prevent or minimise episodes and length of homelessness, such as:
- Rapid ReHousing – intervention that ensures a person is re-housed quickly.
 - Programs offering support ('wrap around' services) that help people to maintain their housing.
 - Youth Foyers – targeted housing and employment / education support for young persons.
- 4.9 The submission also provides an overview of levels of homelessness in the City of Port Phillip, and relevant Council policies and programs. This highlights that:
- 4.9.1 Port Phillip has the fourth highest number of homeless citizens in the state of Victoria.
- 4.9.2 Rough sleeping occurs in large numbers in only a few local government areas including Port Phillip, and that this is the most extreme form of homelessness and causes greatest personal harm to individuals.
- 4.9.3 Rough sleeping has increased substantially in the City of Port Phillip since 2016. A street-count in February 2018 indicated 91 people were sleeping rough where as currently this has increased to 107 people.
- 4.9.4 Council has established policy and programs that guide its response to homelessness and to increasing the supply of affordable housing:
- Think and Act - Homelessness Action Strategy (2015-20).
 - In Our Backyard – Growing Affordable Housing in Port Phillip (2015-25).
 - Port Phillip Zero.
- 4.9.5 Port Phillip Zero is a 'collective impact' response to rough sleeping where groups from different sectors are working together to solve the problem. The aim is to achieve 'functional zero' rough sleeping in the City (where the number of people who enter rough sleeping each fortnight is no greater than the number of people who are housed and supported each fortnight).
- 4.9.6 A key component of this response is the 'By Name List' which allows Council to know the number of people rough sleeping in 'real time'. It is used to monitor service delivery, allocate responsibility for finding solutions for people, track trends and outcomes, identify system barriers, and to inform and drive system improvements.
- 4.9.7 The submission also details that the City of Port Phillip has some of the most expensive housing in Victoria which means that without a significant subsidy, private rental is not affordable for low income households, nor a viable housing exit for people who are rough sleeping. This highlights the urgent need to increase the supply of social housing in the City.
- 4.10 The submission makes specific recommendations in respect of both:



- 4.10.1 The need for more affordable housing.
- 4.10.2 The need for a Housing First approach and response to rough sleeping.
- 4.11 Recommendations to address the decline in social housing and overall housing affordability:
- 4.11.1 The Victorian State Government develops and advocates for a holistic approach, across different sectors and all levels of Government, to address the scale of the affordable housing challenge; incorporating policy, funding/financing, innovative delivery models and supporting governance arrangements.
- 4.11.2 The Victorian State Government establishes a dedicated funding stream to ensure a continual program of new social housing stock, upgrades and renewal of existing social housing stock.
- 4.11.3 The level of investment provided through this funding stream, combined with other measures (e.g. changes to planning), is sufficient to maintain social (public and community) housing levels in Victoria at 3.5% of total dwellings, requiring an average of 3,000 new dwellings per year until 2031, and over 1,800 dwellings per year between 2031 and 2051.
- 4.11.4 The Victorian State Government maximises opportunities presented by the Victorian Planning System to deliver significant new social and affordable housing through a combination of:
- Enhanced 'value sharing' mechanisms (available under the current system of Voluntary Housing Agreements) where additional development yield above a nominated level is 'paid for' through the delivery of social and affordable housing.
 - Mandatory inclusionary mechanisms that require inclusion of a specified proportion of social and affordable housing within a development.
- 4.12 Recommendations relating to Housing First and reducing rough sleeping:
- 4.12.1 Victoria reviews its policies and programs to 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 services. This necessitates sourcing an adequate supply of housing to match the investment which the State has already made in assertive outreach programs.
- 4.12.2 At least one Common Ground be developed in each of the Cities of Melbourne, Yarra and Port Phillip, including sufficient ongoing, operational funding to enable 24-hour support at each site.
- 4.12.3 Explore with relevant providers and stakeholders the introduction of a 'By Name List' across the inner metropolitan area, with dedicated co-ordination of services to match people with housing and support.



- 4.12.4 Allocate 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.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

5.1 Given the timeframe for Council to prepare a submission, there has not been an opportunity to engage directly with the community. The content of the submission is however based on the established policy position of Council which has previously undergone engagement via Council's:

- Think and Act - Homelessness Action Strategy (2015-20).
- In Our Backyard – Growing Affordable Housing in Port Phillip (2015-25).
- Protocol for Assisting People Who Sleep Rough.

5.2 The submission will be shared at the next meeting of Council's Affordable Housing Forum.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal issues raised in making a submission.

6.2 The City of Port Phillip experiences high rates of homelessness, including rough sleeping. Council is also regarded as a local government leader in the way it responds to homelessness, such as its Port Phillip Zero program and By-Name List initiative. Given this context, not making a submission would present a reputational risk.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

7.1 There is no cost to making a submission, excepting officer time.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1 There is no environmental impact of making a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

9.1 Reducing the incidence of homelessness and particularly rough sleeping in Port Phillip offers significant benefits to the individual and community overall. The submission recommends the most effective means to achieve this outcome is through the provision of additional affordable housing and a Housing First approach which combines secure, permanent housing with appropriate support services.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

10.1 The submission is aligned with:

10.1.1 The Council Plan 2017-27 (Strategy 1.2) which includes the priority to '*provide support for people experiencing homelessness to access suitable housing*'.

10.1.2 Council's policy position in:

- Think and Act - Homelessness Action Strategy (2015-20).

ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL 19 FEBRUARY 2020



- In Our Backyard – Growing Affordable Housing in Port Phillip (2015-25).

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

- 11.1.1 An interim submission was forwarded to the Inquiry prior to the closing date of 31 January 2020.
- 11.1.2 The Committee will be advised of Council's endorsement of the submission should this be determined at this meeting.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

- 11.2.1 A copy of the endorsed submission will be made available on Council's website and provided to members of its Affordable Housing Forum.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

- 12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.

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ATTACHMENTS 1. Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria - January 2020