

## **BACKGROUND & DISCUSSION PAPER**

### **Homelessness Strategy 2020-2023**

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Attachment A: Protocol for Responding to Rough Sleeping and Squatting in Yarra 2012

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 AIM OF THIS PAPER

This Background and Discussion Paper is to assist with the development of Yarra City Council's Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025. Initial consultation with key stakeholders, in particular people with lived experience of homelessness, will inform a draft Strategy for consideration by Council's Executive and Councillors. The endorsed draft will then proceed to public consultation.

The paper:

- Outlines the methodology being utilised to develop the Yarra City Council\_Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2023;
- Provides a background to Yarra's historic and current response to homelessness through policy and action to date;
- Reviews current frameworks and strategic approaches at a local, state and international level;
- Raises key emerging trends and issues in homelessness and related areas; and,
- Sets out a template/framework for the strategy for feedback from internal and external stakeholders.

### 1.2 YARRA'S RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS

Previously, Yarra's strategic directions and actions in response to homelessness have been incorporated into Council's Social and Affordable Housing Strategy 2012-2014. The organisation's operational response to homelessness has been guided by the Protocol for Responding to Rough Sleeping and Squatting in Yarra which was developed in 2012 (Attachment A), and by our Emergency Management response to people sleeping rough in extreme weather.

Development of Yarra's first Homelessness Strategy will ensure that Council's strategic directions, and operational responses to, homelessness will be well informed, principled, and sustained through a robust and constructive framework.

This paper benchmarks existing frameworks and principles at a local, state and international level to ensure Yarra's Homelessness Strategy is best practice. As the Strategy is effectively an 'unfunded commitment' (that is, a response in a policy area without a revenue stream to fund this activity (Beer et al, 2014 p.13) to be delivered within current budget, the paper will take a pragmatic and aspirational approach to the capacity and role of local government in delivering an effective strategy given that the drivers of homelessness are systemic, and where policy levers are controlled by state and federal governments.

## 2 Methodology

This Background and Discussion Paper has been developed after desk research, and initial discussions with key networks, local service providers and the Department of Health and Human Services (Housing). Outlined below are the next steps in the process for developing and finalising the strategy.

- Distribute this Background and Discussion Paper to seek input and feedback on the contents and suggested template of the strategy from:
  - Key members of the Yarra Housing and Homelessness Network;
  - Homelessness policy officers in neighbouring inner Melbourne municipalities
  - Inner Melbourne Action Plan (IMAP);
  - Other key stakeholders (internal and external); and,
  - People with lived experience of homelessness.
- Development of the draft Strategy for consideration by members of Executive.
- Feedback incorporated in final draft for consideration by Councillors.
- Release of the draft strategy for public consultation.
- Consultation results incorporated into strategy for final endorsement by Council.

### 3 Definitions, Data & Protocols

#### 3.1 HOMELESSNESS DEFINED

While there is no universally agreed definition of homelessness, the ABS define it as a lack of one or more of the elements that represent home, which may include a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety and the ability to control living space, conceptualised as a broad phenomenon incorporating six 'operational groups' (ABS 2012):

- Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
- Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless
- Persons staying temporarily with other households
- Persons in other temporary lodgings
- Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings

The Victorian Government's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan references a further definition in terms of length of homelessness. These three groups have different support requirements due to the "stage" of their homelessness:

- **Recently homeless and sleeping rough** due to personal crises such as eviction, job loss, family violence or relationship breakdown – many of whom will successfully resolve their homelessness, either independently, or with the help of specialist homelessness services
- **Sleeping rough for an extended period of time** (that is, longer than 12 months) who have multiple related issues – such as mental and physical illness, alcohol and other drug use issues and past trauma – and are unlikely to successfully negotiate and sustain a pathway out of chronic homelessness without intensive resources and ongoing support
- **Chronic homelessness and rough sleeping** following their release or discharge from institutional settings including prisons, youth justice centres and inpatient health facilities, as well as young people leaving out-of-home care.

#### 3.2 RATES OF HOMELESSNESS - UNIVERSAL

Rates of homelessness have grown over the last decade nationally and internationally. In the 2016 Census, it was estimated that 116,000 people in Australia were homeless, an increase of 4.6% from 2011, with people in severely overcrowded dwellings, elderly and younger people, and people sleeping rough, the groups with the largest spikes.

Meanwhile, recent data on homelessness across a number of EU countries show significant increases - for example, in the UK, homelessness increased 150% from 2014-2016. Finland's drop of 18% and Norway's of 36% in numbers of people experiencing homelessness are the anomalies. Interestingly, from a policy perspective, both approached homelessness as a housing problem and a violation of fundamental rights, and developed integrated and decentralised strategies (FEANTSA 2018 p. 16). In Victoria, 24,817 were homeless in 2016, an increase of 46% on the 2006 census (CHP website). Over the five-year period to 2016–17, there has been a 72 per cent increase in the number of "first time" rough sleepers assisted by Victorian homelessness services (AIHW 2018). This indicates that the number of people sleeping rough is trending upwards at a significant rate. As a result, the sector is overwhelmed by demand for homelessness services, many of which have remained unchanged for decades.

At the February 2019 launch of 'A Crisis in Crisis' report by the North and West Homelessness Network, it was noted that Victoria's homeless numbers have increased by up to 86% in the north and west since 2016, and have worsened over the past 12 months, while since 2013 there has been a loss of over 500 emergency accommodation beds. Numbers of people living in overcrowded dwellings has increased by 91% across Melbourne's west.

### **3.3 RATES OF HOMELESSNESS – YARRA**

The 2016 ABS homeless count for Yarra was a total of 844, with 66 experiencing primary homelessness, a similar number to the 2011 census. However, this data is not reflected in current Officer and assertive outreach experience in the municipality. The on-the-ground experience is consistent growth in numbers of reported rough sleeping sites, and increasing complexity of incidents related to primary homelessness.

Prior to 2012, Council Officers were generally able to respond to issues related to homelessness through referrals to local specialist homelessness services Hanover Assertive Outreach, and HomeGround Services. At this time, Council Officer referrals of people sleeping rough and in squats were infrequent. This hands-off response to homelessness aligned with Yarra's long-standing support for specialist local organisations to address homelessness and concurrent impacts of disadvantage, recognising the specialist expertise needed for responding to people experiencing homelessness. To facilitate effective local responses, Yarra has targeted yearly community grants (currently worth around \$70,000 a year) to local organisations to run programs and projects for people experiencing disadvantage.

In 2012 it became apparent that numbers of people sleeping rough in Yarra were increasing to the point that Officers across the organisation were regularly required to respond to residents and traders who were looking to Council for action. In consultation with Hanover Assertive Outreach team and other local homelessness services, Council developed an internal protocol to assist staff to respond most effectively (Attachment A)

However, growing numbers of rough sleeping sites in 2013 led to Council taking a more proactive approach. Supported by the principles outlined in the protocol, Council developed an agreement with Hanover Welfare Services and HomeGround Services (since merged to become Launch Housing) to deliver an enhanced response through a small amount of funding from Council. The agreement enabled a faster, better coordinated and more effective referral system that leads to better outcomes for people sleeping rough in Yarra.

Since 2013 this arrangement has delivered improved capacity for Council Officers, local residents, traders and local organisations to address the impacts of systemic failure at other levels of government. In 2018, a full time Engagement Officer position was created to facilitate Council's actions related to primary homelessness in an increasingly complex environment.

### **3.4 YARRA POLICY CONTEXT & APPROACH**

The existing response to homelessness and the intention to develop a formal Homelessness Strategy aligns with key objectives and directions outlined in the Yarra Council Plan (which incorporates the Public Health and Wellbeing Plan), and the Social Justice Charter (under development).

The Council Plan 2017 – 2021 commits to:

- 1 A HEALTHY YARRA Community health, safety and wellbeing are a focus in everything we do
- 2 AN INCLUSIVE YARRA Inclusion, diversity and uniqueness are welcomed, respected and celebrated

A key strategy outlined in the Plan is to promote an effective and compassionate approach to rough sleeping and advocate for affordable, appropriate housing (Strategy 1.7).

Further, the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 is a Victorian law that sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria. The Charter requires public authorities, such as Victorian state and local government departments and agencies, and people delivering services on behalf of government, to act consistently with the human rights in the Charter. To support the effective protection of the rights of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, Human Rights Law Centre and Justice Connect have released an advocacy guide for public authorities.

The Charter, similarly to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, acts as a yardstick by which we measure right and wrong, in particular by articulating rights and freedoms to which every human being is equally and inalienably entitled. The power of both the Charter and the Universal Declaration

is the power of ideas to change the world, to inspire us to continue working to empower people to demand what should be guaranteed: their human rights.

Under the Charter, local councils must ensure that:

- all council decisions give proper consideration to human rights;
- all actions, policies and services are compatible with human rights;
- local laws are interpreted and applied consistently with human rights; and,
- people who work on behalf of councils do so in a way that respects human rights.

The current response focuses on understanding and addressing the impacts of homelessness, and its aim is to support actions that work for a community where inclusion, diversity and uniqueness are not only welcome but fundamental goals.

The intent of the Strategy to be developed is to underpin the existing strategic directions of Council through targeted community grants; through advocacy on behalf of marginalised people, and through partnerships and collaborations with stakeholders working to improve the health and wellbeing of people who are impacted by homelessness.

## **4 Benchmarking**

For the purposes of this paper several strategies were examined to assist with the development of robust strategic directions for this strategy.

### **4.1 INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES**

#### **Vancouver, Canada**

“Addressing Homelessness in Metro Vancouver” (2017) uses local information to build a case for urgent action to address the underlying problems driving the increase. In Metro Vancouver, approximately five people a week become homeless. Their conceptual framework is focussed on strategies to prevent homelessness, to service people who are currently homeless, and to create pathways out of homelessness. The strategy notes ‘extraordinary resources are being expended by municipal staff trying to keep up with an ever-increasing homeless population and the associated community impacts’ (p.4) in support of advocating for a systems wide response and long-term solutions. The strategy also notes that homelessness is estimated to cost \$55,000 per person annually in the region versus \$37,000 for housing and support (p.7).

#### **Portugal**

The Portuguese Homelessness Strategy has the following strategic directions: promote knowledge, understanding and awareness; strengthen intervention to promote integration; and strengthen coordination monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Supported by biannual action plans including: civil society action; local models of innovative collaborations; rights based approach towards social problems; and a wide range of stakeholders (public and private). For success, it needs highest level of political endorsement with a legal requirement to take action, clear responsibilities and resources allocation. strong evidence base, clear evidence base; and clear identification of financial resources. The strategy underlines the situation rather than the individual; regional and state-wide dynamics; advocates support people experiencing homelessness to achieve full citizenship; and processes that ensure high public visibility of homelessness in the wider society.

#### **European Overview**

The “Third Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2018” brings together the lessons from Europe through examining the effectiveness of strategies developed by EU nations. It notes that homelessness is a fast-growing problem, leading to ‘increasingly severe saturation of support systems and increased

pressure on emergency services' (p.4). It also notes that the fight against homelessness must be accompanied by market interventions (p.5) and calls for 'coordinated action across all relevant sectoral policies (health, employment, social protection, training, migration and justice' (p.8).

Using evidence from the two European countries (Norway and Finland) who have seen a reduction in the number of homeless people, the Overview lists five factors integral to a strategy to end homelessness (pp.23-29):

- Users and their rights should be at the centre of the strategy;
- Housing First – a response that makes housing systematically and rapidly available for homeless people;
- Adequate resources need to be mobilised to reach goals;
- A continuous and constant strategy; and,
- Multilevel governance with responsibilities defined.

The report also lists four pitfalls to avoid (pp.30-34):

- A light touch policy with watered down goals;
- 'Paper policies' - not acting on a strategy;
- Developing an ambitious strategy and sabotaging outcomes by criminalising people experiencing homelessness; and,
- Policy silos that do not reflect the complex interplay of responsibilities, resources, organisations, and practices.

### **Housing First / Common Ground Approach (Universal)**

The Common Ground philosophy is an example of the "housing first" or "home first" approach to homelessness that aims to facilitate immediate entry into permanent accommodation. It reverses the established approach, sometimes described as a "staircase" model, which guides clients through different levels of time-limited temporary housing until they qualify for a permanent residence.

Australian and international evidence strongly supports Housing First programs as the most effective way of achieving housing stability and improved well-being for people with histories of chronic homelessness.

The Housing First Ending Chronic Homelessness Paper (Council to Homeless Persons, 2018) states the following key principles of Housing First:

- People have a right to a home
- Flexible support for as long as it is needed
- Housing and support are separated
- Active engagement
- Individuals have choice and control
- The service is based on people's strengths & aspirations
- A harm reduction approach is used

The paper states that after two years, 70% of people in the Street to Home program were in independent secure accommodation. After four years 75% of Journey to Social Inclusion participants remained in stable housing. This success in Australia is due to assertive outreach being combined with Housing First to engage, house and support vulnerable, long-term rough sleepers.

## **4.2 NATIONAL & STATE APPROACHES**

### **National**

The national context was put succinctly by Homelessness Australia, in April 2017:

***'Access to housing that is safe and affordable is the most critical factor in preventing and ending homelessness. Australia has a shortfall of over 500,000 rental dwellings that are affordable and***

***available to households on the lowest 40% of incomes. As of June 2016, there were 194,592 applicants waiting for social housing across the country's social housing programs. This includes public housing, State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing and community housing. Across these three types of social housing, around 59,000 people were categorised as being in greatest need.'***

According to the Commonwealth Department of Social Services website, state and territory governments are responsible for service delivery, whilst the Commonwealth supports state and territory governments in their role of providing services to the homeless, or those at risk of homelessness, with funding through the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH).

In the 2017-18 Budget, the Government announced it was working with the states and territories to reform the NAHA and the NPAH into the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA).

## **Victoria**

At a state government level, Victoria's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2018 builds on the Victorian Government's Homes for Victorians Strategy (2017) in response to growing homelessness and housing need across the state. This is part of a broader reform of the specialist homelessness service system (p.11).

The Action Plan funding for specialist homelessness services delivers on early intervention, early housing of rough sleepers, post housing supports, and an effective and responsive homelessness service system.

While the Plan recognises "the successful resolution of rough sleeping must begin with housing" (p.18) in effect it looks for improvements in the existing system while planning for short term housing responses such as transitional housing, two year modular housing and head leasing (renting properties from private landlords to house tenants eligible for social housing), and for assisting people into private rental.

The Rough Sleeping Action Plan has a matrix approach to addressing the issue – it has 4 key themes that have targeted actions depending on the at-risk client base (see matrix approach over page).



Strategy Theme	At Risk Cohorts		
	Recently homeless and sleeping rough	Sleeping rough for an extended period of time	At risk of chronic homelessness and rough sleeping
<b>Intervening</b> early to prevent homelessness	Targeted Actions	Targeted Actions	Targeted Actions
Providing <b>stable</b> accommodation as quickly as possible	Targeted Actions	Targeted Actions	Targeted Actions
<b>Support</b> to maintain stable accommodation	Targeted Actions	Targeted Actions	Targeted Actions
An effective and responsive homelessness <b>service system</b>	Targeted Actions	Targeted Actions	

The Victorian government's commitment to a build of 1000 new public housing units and funds for the community housing sector to grow long term housing will not provide the 30,000 new builds per year over ten years called for by the Council to Homeless Persons' Everybody's Home campaign.

### Western Australia

The Western Australian Strategy to End Homelessness was developed in 2018 by the WA Alliance to End Homelessness, a community-led initiative informed by a community campaign and an extensive consultation process with the sector. It advocates for a whole of society response to achieve a ten year plan to end homelessness in WA through:

- A Housing First response, where services are wrapped around people after they are housed;
- Advocating through a business case for ending homelessness;
- Using coordination and partnerships for success in key actions;
- Building community capacity.

The Western Australian Government responded by developing a 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness which commits to expand and build on the work of the Alliance, strongly informed by people with lived experience and by the sector, and to continue strong collaboration with the Alliance in delivering on the strategy.

### 4.3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPROACHES

The role of local government in responding to homelessness is not straightforward. As the tier of government that is closest to their communities and providing a range of direct and indirect services, the majority of local governments in Australia do not see responding to homelessness as part of core business.

In part this has been philosophical. Cost shifting from Federal and State Governments is an ongoing issue which severely strains local governments' funding capacity to meet the variety of services and infrastructure required and expected by communities.

A further reason local government have not seen homelessness as within their responsibilities is due to lack of internal awareness and specialised expertise. However, being public space managers and having comprehensive regulatory powers affecting the community inevitably requires that authorised officers respond to primary homelessness in their municipalities.

Research by Beer and Prance at the University of Adelaide (2013) found that most local governments believe that all three tiers of government have responsibility to respond, to work in partnership with other NGO stakeholders to bring in expertise, and to clarify the roles of different levels of government in this response. This research suggested a toolkit to better equip local governments for their specific role. The proposed toolkit would include training for elected officials, human rights modules, a library of exemplar documents and networking to share expertise between councils.

Given that many local governments are already active responders, and in many cases are using local partnerships with specialist services and other groups addressing homelessness, this paper has looked

at a range of local policies and strategic responses through which to develop the grounds for a strategic response.

### **City of Port Phillip and City of Melbourne**

Two neighbouring municipalities to Yarra, the City of Port Phillip and the City of Melbourne, have developed homelessness strategies to guide their responses to homelessness. Both approach the role of local government as one based on considerations of local governments' strengths, opportunities and capacities. The strategies' shared themes, which reflect both the strengths and challenges of local governments in the homelessness landscape, are:

- Local government's ability to know the municipality, so that responses are well informed, and to share this information with partners;
- A practice of working in collaboration and looking for joined up integrated responses and useful connections that bring in necessary expertise;
- Making sure the voices of people with lived experience are part of the picture, a mindful practice of making consultation and other forums inclusive; and
- Taking actions that focus on early intervention and prevention, and that build community resilience and capacity for social inclusion

Both these strategies have in common an explicit acknowledgement of the rights of people experiencing homelessness, in particular councils' obligations under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006.

They also include the need for a collaborative, integrated, whole of community response; the complexity of homelessness, including its invisibility apart from rough sleeping (around 7% of total numbers of homeless); and doing what local governments are best placed to do: know their local community. Both strategies reflect the opportunities for local governments to impact on individual and community well-being, and the limits to local government agency around addressing homelessness as a housing problem.

### **Parramatta**

Parramatta City Council Homelessness Policy 2011 applied their understanding of local need and of the local impacts of homelessness to develop a Homelessness Policy to minimise homelessness in the Parramatta LGA, and in doing so to improve the wellbeing of those at risk and those who are homeless. These aims are explicitly linked to the prosperity of the City for the benefit of the wider business and residential community. The policy objectives (contribute to the prevention of homelessness; support and work with the local homelessness sector; maintain and promote use of public space and assets for the whole of community; champion regional planning and partnerships; and implement, monitor and evaluate the homelessness policy and implementation plan) point to the particular strengths of local government.

## 5 Key Issues for Consideration

In the context of the above selective examples of strategic responses to homelessness and the increasing rates as identified in section 3 of this Paper, it is worth noting that Homelessness Australia, the national peak body for homelessness in Australia, was defunded by the Federal Government in December 2014. It now operates on a voluntary basis and has no employed staff. Up to the time of its de-funding it provided systemic advocacy for the homelessness sector, a wide variety of advice and information for the community and organisations such as local government seeking a range of supports for their initiatives in addressing homelessness. Meanwhile there continues to be a strategic vacuum at Federal Government level addressing housing and homelessness. The hands-off approach as identified on their own website is that it is for State and Local Governments to address.

### 5.1 A Systemic Issue

While homelessness is a housing issue, it is not **just** a housing issue. As homelessness occurs within a complex landscape of micro and macro factors, and is often referred to as a systemic or structural issue, it is worth noting some of the emerging trends behind rising homelessness and inequality.

Johnson and Jacobs (2014) address the complexity around causes of homelessness, in particular the interconnection of structure and agency, by recognising that homelessness is a lived experience that is shaped by social factors (such as perspectives that pathologise homelessness and lead to stigma) as well as structural factors like poverty, disconnection from the labour market, and lack of housing for low income households. This interconnection can be described as constituting a pathway into homelessness reflecting a particular interaction between individuals and institutions (pp.32-43).

One example of an institutional/individual interaction that can impact disproportionately on people already at risk of homelessness is the current Federal Government review of the Disability Support Pension (DSP) reported in ProBono Australia on 22 February 2019. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal noted a 77% increase in appeals against decisions against applications for the DSP. Of 104,000 DSP claims in 2017-2018, about 73,000 were unsuccessful. Disability advocates are concerned the tougher eligibility requirements will force people onto Newstart (a drop from \$916 a fortnight on the DSP to \$550 a fortnight for a single person).

Housing insecurity and housing stress (where low-income households are paying over 30% of their income in housing costs) drive rates of homelessness. Economist Dr Jim Stanford's scorecard on national economic performance (The Australia Institute 2016) suggests the Australian economy is 'headed into very challenging times'. His advice is for 'concrete pragmatic strategies to boost spending, support job creation, and stabilise all debt burdens' (p.19). Stanford notes the post-war increase in housing costs leading to a steady increase in household debts. Total personal debt now exceeds 130% of GDP, one of the highest personal debt burdens in the world (p.14). With current indications of a slowdown in the capital city housing markets, he notes the risks of a personal debt crisis due to growing Australian mortgage debt.

Certain groups and households are susceptible to homelessness, which indicates that personal attributes are not part of a full picture of homelessness. Disadvantage can be multi-generational, geographic, health related, and connected to trauma, often to childhood trauma. This situation is compounded by the impact of lack of safe and appropriate housing – for those with compound trauma, being homeless can lead to worse mental health and higher levels of drug and alcohol use, leading to what is known as churning, where people are housed many times, but without the opportunity and/or support to address trauma, housing can break down and people become homeless again.

The Productivity Commission report of August 2018 notes deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia, where the low economic resources of around 3% of the population (roughly 700 000 people) means a life of poverty, material deprivation and social exclusion that is indicative of entrenched inequality (p.8). The groups most likely to experience this entrenched inequality are people living in single parent families, unemployed people, people with disabilities, and Indigenous Australians, with children living in jobless households particularly at risk. These are the people behind the comment: 'Deep social exclusion showed a small and sustained rise after 2012' (p.28)

The report noted that 'the fact that inequality levels are so different among developed countries hints at the scope for policies, institutions and political environments to shape inequality' (p. 25), that 'housing or health policies could be better fashioned to address more directly' these complex challenges', and that 'On average, income tax and highly targeted transfers reduce income inequality by about a third' (p.25) This is supported by research at the People's Poverty Project into whether increasing employment or increasing social spending most reduced poverty across OECD countries. The researcher came to the conclusion that 'developed countries achieve low levels of poverty through large welfare states' (Lewis 2018).

## **5.2 Local Government – What Should We Focus On?**

A strong advocacy role is one of the ways local governments can take community leadership on homelessness. One option for this strategy is to reframe homelessness in ways that can raise community awareness and understanding of an issue that, by all indications, will continue to grow in the near future.

In his 2018 book *No Place Like Home*, Peter Mares notes that housing wealth is the flip side of housing affordability, although the two are rarely connected, and the current housing situation in Australia indicates political failure. As a secure home is central to human welfare, to be without a home stunts productivity and impoverishes society as a whole (p.8), and Mares names this as a moral problem, as 'to approach housing as a moral issue, as a question of justice, brings us inevitably to homelessness' (p.10).

Abundant evidence suggests not only that there are effective political and policy responses that will lead to a reduction in homelessness, it also suggests that nation states choose not to implement those political and policy responses, which then becomes a moral concern.

This option is supported by working off the idea of fairness. In Australia, writes Mike Berry (who has been one of Melbourne's preeminent housing researchers for many decades) we continue to have 'deeply embedded, morally energised views on fairness' (p.98). For Berry, we have a 'moral intuition' which we use to justify moral positions which, through interactions with others, become more objective and aware (p.104). Creating opportunities for public conversations, and engaging the whole of the community on homelessness, may create opportunities for interactions that could shift understanding of homelessness.

Another question for consideration is the inclusion of people with lived experience in the development of the strategy. For a public authority with regulatory responsibilities there are challenges to embedding the perspective of people with lived experience in policy development. However, to limit the inclusion of people with lived experience maintains a hierarchy that can lead to policies that are limited in ambition and capacity. To create ongoing and constant involvement of the people for whom the policy has deep personal impact may lead to more effective strategic implementation.

Morally, what is in question is the idea of what a decent society should be, of issues of justice and basic political principles. If we consider the suggestion by Nussbaum (2005) that a state has an affirmative duty to create conditions in which people have all they need for well-being, it is the critical and deliberative character of real people that must be at the heart of any conception of well-being, which exposes the inadequacy of economic approaches to wellbeing. According to the local Government Act 1989, objectives of a council need to be to work for the wellbeing of the local community.

While the strategic examples touched on here offer a range of ideas and principles that could inform Yarra's Homelessness Strategy, to date Yarra has prioritised a response to homelessness in the municipality that attempts to ameliorate the impacts of homelessness on the whole community without compromising the wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness. It is a response characterised as much as possible by kindness, fairness, inclusion, collaboration and an understanding of a shared humanity that overrides wealth and privilege.

## 6 Development of Strategy

A systemic issue requires a systemic approach and response.

In developing a strategy to address homelessness what is clear from the background research is that a local government cannot work in isolation on this matter – partnerships with local networks and specialist service providers will be vital to the success of any document created. Further, the strategy developed by Yarra will be a more successful, effective and actionable document if it can reflect the voices of people with lived experience and the specific needs of the local community, whilst being aligned with the strategic directions of bordering municipalities (IMAP) and the Victorian State Government. This framework will ensure a unified approach to an issue that is not bound by arbitrary municipal borders.

The completed document should engage and inform the whole of the community on homelessness. Creating a greater understanding of the “what, why and who” will allow the broader community to more invested in the goals of the strategy being achieved.

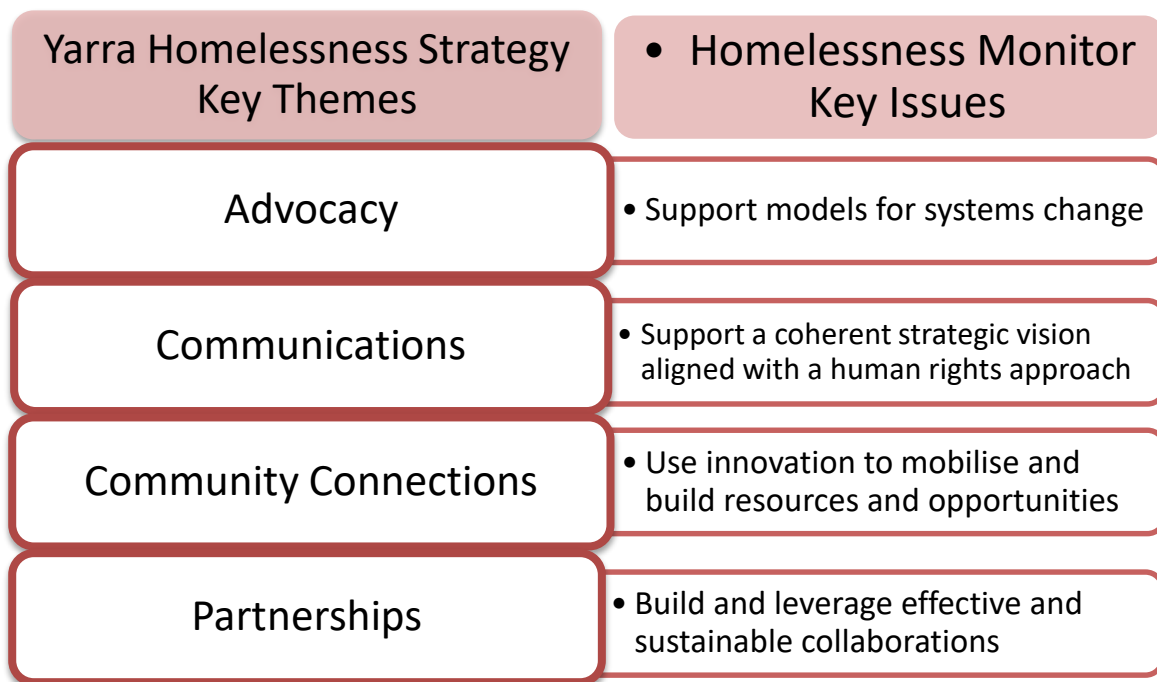
### 6.1 FRAMEWORK (TEMPLATE)

The aim of this section is to provide a structure and direction which external and internal stakeholders can review and then provide input and/or feedback. Outlined below is a draft template (contents page) for the Yarra Homelessness Strategy.

Section	Ideas/Content
Acknowledgement of Country & Foreword (Mayor)	Statement of intent
The Facts – What, Who, How, and Why	Definitions of Homelessness, Client Cohorts in Yarra (stats), Causes/Systemic reasons for Homelessness
Council’s Vision and Position	Policy context and historical approach, including how this policy relates to other Council strategies
Themes & Actions ( <i>see below</i> )	Present 4 key themes for Yarra (see table below for potential examples) and then targeted actions.
Whole of Community – A Systemic Approach	Section addressing the partnership approach to required - roles of networks, specialist service providers, police, businesses, hospitals, GPS, etc. LGA as facilitator and advocate.
Protocol for Responding to Rough Sleeping and Squatting in Yarra	Will this document be updated, still play an operational role? This needs to be determined and included in strategy if still to be operational guide.

### Themes

Outline below are 4 possible themes for the Yarra Homelessness Strategy which could be used as the foundation for actions to be implemented by Council and its partners in this sphere. The themes (draft) are specific to the areas that local government can influence in the day to day issue of homelessness, whilst correlating to the key issues raised in the Australian Homelessness Monitor 2018.



**Advocacy:** Using Council's voice to not only advocate on housing and homelessness matters but also systemic social issues which are catalysts for homelessness, such as lack of appropriate housing and poverty.

**Communication** Develop an evidence based message about homelessness that reflects the voices of people with lived experience and aims to raise community awareness and promote understanding of the systemic nature of homelessness.

**Community Connections** Working across council, the homelessness sector and the community to develop best practice ways of utilising existing and potential resources most effectively.

**Partnerships** Building on and creating connections to stakeholders to work most effectively internally and externally for sustainable and achievable outcomes that work for the well-being of Yarra's vulnerable residents.

It is clear from the strategies reviewed in the development of this Paper that the Yarra Strategy should be a "lived" document containing real life stories/case studies. Where appropriate, pictures of, and verbatim quotes from, people who have lived experience of homelessness and specialist service providers will make the strategy a much more relatable document.

## 6.2 CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

The next stage of developing this strategy will be to consult with key networks, internal stakeholders, and the executive team on the intended themes and framework for the document (Section 6.1).

It is intended that people with lived experience participate in the development of the strategy at crucial stages, in recognition of their acknowledged expertise and understanding of the issues the strategy aims to address.

On completion of the draft strategy (based on feedback from stakeholders) the document will be processed internally, and once the draft strategy is adopted by Council it will be released for public consultation.

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**Protocol for Responding to  
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