

Attachment A

**A City for All - Homelessness Action Plan
(with Additions and Deletions)**



Sydney2030/Green/Global/Connected

A City for All

**Towards a socially just
and resilient Sydney**



Homelessness Action Plan 2020

Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Lord Mayor's message | 4 |
| Acknowledgement | 5 |
| Executive summary | 6 |
| Part 1: Responding to homelessness | 10 |
| 1. Introduction | 12 |
| 2. Homelessness in context | 14 |
| 3. The policy context | 22 |
| 4. Our role and approach | 24 |
| Part 2: Action plan | 32 |
| 5. Our strategic priorities | 34 |
| Strategic priority 1: Increase access to safe and sustainable housing and support, and monitor trends in inner city homelessness | 36 |
| Strategic priority 2: Respond to the impacts of homelessness on public spaces | 38 |
| Strategic priority 3: Work smarter together to have a greater impact | 40 |
| 6. Monitoring and evaluation | 42 |
| 7. Glossary of key terms | 44 |
| 8. Endnotes | 48 |

Lord Mayor's message



Despite Australia's prosperous economy, almost a million Australians are living in housing stress, and like other global cities around the world, our city community faces a homelessness crisis.

Becoming homeless is a devastating experience that can happen to anyone. At its most acute, it means having to sleep rough on the streets or live in unsafe housing. This ~~winter~~ **summer**, our street count found ~~254~~ **334** people sleeping rough in our local area.

Sydney's housing affordability crisis is especially acute in the inner city, driven by high private rental prices, the lack of affordable rental housing, and inadequate social housing.

Providing access to safe, affordable and secure housing and services for those who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless is critical to ensuring that Sydney's economic growth is inclusive and delivers opportunities for all.

Our ~~Draft~~ *Homelessness Action Plan* includes key actions to reduce homelessness and its impacts in Sydney by working closely with community members, services and other agencies.

The actions build on the success of our previous work, and our 30 year commitment to ending homelessness.

Homelessness is a complex issue with no single set of causes and no single solution. However, homelessness and its impacts could be dramatically reduced in Sydney with commitment and leadership from all levels of Government.

The positive results of genuine collaboration can be seen in the portraits throughout this document, that show people who have previously experienced homelessness now living in their own homes, safer and connected to their community.

We are committed to;

- Working collaboratively with other levels of Government, Non-Government Services and the community to address homelessness
- Continuing to invest in and advocate for services and supports to reduce homelessness in Sydney
- Service coordination at a street level and at a strategic level to assist in preventing homelessness and assisting people to exit homelessness
- Advocating to increase social and affordable housing in Sydney.



Clover Moore Lord Mayor

Acknowledgement

The Council of the City of Sydney acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of our land – Australia. The City acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of this place we now call Sydney.

In 1788, the British established a convict outpost on the shores of Sydney Harbour. This had far reaching and devastating impacts on the Eora Nation, including the occupation and appropriation of their traditional lands.

Today, Sydney is of prime importance as the first place in which longstanding ways of life were disrupted by invasion, as well as an ongoing centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, cultures, traditions and histories.

Despite the destructive impact of this invasion, Aboriginal culture endured and are now globally recognised as one of the world's oldest living cultures. Aboriginal peoples have shown, and continue to show, enormous resilience coupled with generosity of spirit towards other peoples with whom they now share their land.

The Council of the City of Sydney recognises that, by acknowledging our shared past, we are laying the groundwork for a future which embraces all Australians, a future based on mutual respect and shared responsibility for our land. The ongoing custodianship of the Gadigal of the Eora Nation is an essential part of this future, as is Sydney's continuing place as centre of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities.

There are many sites across our local government area with historical and cultural significance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The City has documented many of these in Barani / Barrabagu (Yesterday / Tomorrow) as its first expression of the Eora Journey project.

The City works with, and has achieved much with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the City's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel, consistent with the Principles of Cooperation signed between the City of Sydney and the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council in 2006. The City is deeply committed to Reconciliation in partnership with its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and in 2015 adopted our inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan. In 2016, the Eora Journey Economic Development Plan was adopted. These actions and others will help to ensure their political, economic, social and cultural rights are embedded in subsequent economic, social, environmental and cultural change.

The City of Sydney is committed to acknowledging, sharing and celebrating a living culture in the heart of our city.

Sustainable Sydney 2030 Community Strategic Plan

Executive summary

There is no place for homelessness in a prosperous, global city like Sydney. Homelessness is a complex problem with complex causes. It reflects poverty, inequality and a growing housing affordability crisis.

Our vision

The City's vision for a socially sustainable Sydney is a city for all.

It is a socially just and resilient city where people from all walks of life can live, work, learn, play and grow.

It's a city that puts First Nations people first – recognising 60,000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander living cultures.

It's a city that offers people opportunities to realise their full potential and enjoy a great quality of life.

It's a city where people have a shared commitment to the wellbeing of their community is outlined in the City's *Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan - A City for All*.¹

The ~~Draft~~ *Homelessness Action Plan* seeks to work with our partners to create a socially just, inclusive and resilient city – a city with safe and sustainable housing for everyone.

A major step towards this goal, will be achieving 'functional zero' homelessness. The term describes a city in which homelessness has become a manageable problem, and the available services and resources match or exceed demand for them.



Sydney CBD | Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney

We cannot achieve this vision alone. All levels of government must collaborate, showing leadership and commitment, and work from a shared agenda to end homelessness. It is vital to sustaining the social wellbeing of the whole community, and to ensuring that Sydney's economic growth is inclusive and delivers opportunities for all.

We understand homelessness is a complex problem that cannot be tackled alone, so we work in partnership. The City works with government agencies, local organisations, peak bodies and the community by:

- Investing to support people exit homelessness

- Work with our community to ensure our public spaces are safe and accessible for all
- Collaborating with our partners to achieve our shared goals.

We follow the guidelines of the NSW Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places acknowledging that, like all other members of the public, people experiencing homelessness have a right to be in public places at the same time respecting the right of local communities to live in a safe and peaceful environment. We seek to take a compassionate approach to responding to homelessness in Sydney.

To achieve this vision, we have drawn up the following three strategic priorities.

Our action plan focuses on the following priorities:

Strategic priority 1: Increase access to safe and sustainable housing and support, and monitor trends in inner city homelessness

We will take a holistic approach, using strategies ranging from increasing the supply of new affordable housing, to funding services and monitoring homelessness in the inner city. We will:

- Facilitate the delivery of innovative housing solutions to reduce inner city homelessness, **including housing first and supported housing models**
- Invest in services that reduce the risk of people becoming homeless and break the cycle of homelessness
- Advocate to the Australian and NSW Governments to deliver a sustainable supply of **supported**, social and affordable rental housing
- Maintain a robust evidence base on the extent and nature of homelessness in the inner city to inform policy responses.



Strategic priority 2: Supporting people sleeping rough and managing the public domain

We are committed to supporting the safety and wellbeing of all people in our community through maintaining the amenity of the public domain.

We are also responsible for maintaining the quality of the public domain. Residents, workers, business owners, visitors and people sleeping rough use our public spaces and have different perspectives on how to respond to homelessness.

To ensure the public domain is safe and accessible for all, we will:

- Connect people with services and support to exit homelessness
- Work with our partners to reduce the impacts of homelessness on amenity in the public domain
- Improve the safety and well-being of people sleeping rough and/or begging.

Strategic priority 3: Work smarter together to have a greater impact

We work with many stakeholders, including the community, businesses and all governments to support people who are homeless to access safe and sustainable housing and support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

To ensure that we work smarter together to have a greater impact, we will:

- Work with other levels of Government and NGOs to improve systems to reduce homelessness
- Include people with lived experience of homelessness in project design and delivery
- Build the capacity of organisations and community to support people who are homeless
- Increase community understanding of, participation in and support for initiatives that respond to homelessness
- Work with mobile voluntary services and other stakeholders to ensure services are targeted, meet the needs of service users and use public space appropriately.

Strategic priority 1:

Increase access to safe and sustainable housing and support, and monitor trends in inner city homelessness

1. Facilitate the delivery of innovative housing solutions to reduce inner city homelessness

2. Invest in services that reduce the risk of people becoming homeless and break the cycle of homelessness, **including housing first and supported housing models**

3. Advocate to the Australian and NSW Governments to deliver a sustainable supply of **supported**, social and affordable rental housing

4. Maintain a robust evidence base on the extent and nature of homelessness in the inner city to inform policy responses

Strategic priority 2:

Supporting people who are sleeping rough and managing the public domain

5. Connect people with services and support to exit homelessness

6. Work with our partners to reduce the impacts of homelessness on amenity in the public domain

7. Improve the safety and well-being of people sleeping rough and/or begging

Strategic priority 3:

Working smarter together for greater impact

8. Work with other levels of Government and NGOs to improve systems to reduce homelessness

9. Include people with lived experience of homelessness in project design and delivery

10. Build the capacity of organisations and community to support people who are homeless

11. Increase community understanding of, participation in and support for initiatives that respond to homelessness

12. Work with mobile voluntary services and other stakeholders to ensure services are targeted, meet the needs of service users and use public space appropriately

Part 1: Responding to homelessness





1.

Introduction

About this action plan

The City of Sydney's *Draft Homelessness Action Plan* sets out our ongoing commitment to respond to homelessness and its impact in Sydney.

This plan builds on the considerable progress we have already made through and since the *Homelessness Strategy 2007–2012*. This new plan outlines our vision and a roadmap for responding to this complex challenge. It provides a coherent, evidence-based framework to:

- Guide our decision-making around investing in activities linked to homelessness
- Support the coordination and monitoring of our activities linked to homelessness
- Help build a greater understanding in the broader community of our roles, responsibilities and goals in responding to homelessness and its impacts.

Defining homelessness

There are many definitions of homelessness. For our purposes, a person is considered homeless when they:

- Live in inadequate accommodation and do not have suitable alternatives
- Have no tenure, or a tenure that is short and not extendable
- Have a tenure that does not allow them control of, and access to space for social relations e.g. boarding house or living in overcrowded dwellings.²

Our commitment

We are determined to reduce homelessness and alleviate its impacts in Sydney. We invest in a range of services and initiatives, seeking to reduce and prevent homelessness in the inner city.

We provide funding for the delivery of specialist homelessness services in the inner city via NSW Department of Communities and Justice (formerly NSW Family and Community Services), contributing ~~\$5.9~~ **\$7.1** million between January 2015 and June ~~2019~~ **2020**, with an additional forward commitment of \$1.2 million to July ~~2020~~ **2021**.

But we also know, that homelessness cannot be solved without housing, in particular social and affordable housing. The City's role in addressing housing afford ability is outlined in Housing for All: City of Sydney Local Housing Strategy, adopted by Council in February 2020.³

As of October ~~2018~~ **2019**, the City has helped finance the creation of ~~854~~ **896** affordable housing units. A further ~~423~~ **761** affordable housing units are in the pipeline - either under construction or with development approval. The City has also established ~~an~~ **the Supported Accommodation**, Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund that can provide up to \$3 million for acquiring land, design and construction and development costs associated with affordable housing projects, ~~for example the City provided \$1.5 million to HammondCare for the development of a subsidised residential aged care facility.~~ **Under this fund, the City provided \$1.5 million to Hammond Care for the development of a specialised residential aged care facility.**

The City finances affordable housing projects through an affordable housing contribution scheme – a levy on development in Green Square, Ultimo/Pymont and the new Southern Employment Lands areas. ***In 2018, Council approved a contribution scheme across the local government area that will affect land not already captured in the above schemes. This new scheme will facilitate over 1,000 additional affordable rental dwellings if approved by the NSW Government.***⁹

The City has helped finance the establishment of Act to End Street Sleeping office in Sydney. The initiative, aims to end street homelessness in 150 cities by 2030. The City, along with St Vincent De Paul Society, Mission Australia, St Vincent's Health, the Mercy Foundation and Catholic Care and the NSW Government, has also committed to participate in program to reduce homelessness in inner Sydney.

The City has led innovative, evidence-based responses to reduce homelessness and its impact in inner-Sydney. We continue to work with government, non-profit philanthropic organisations and the corporate sector.

Developing the action plan

We formed this action plan by:

- Consulting with people who have lived experience of homelessness or are currently experiencing homelessness
- Analysing the existing homelessness data and trends
- Reviewing best-practice approaches to homelessness, locally and internationally
- Engaging with individuals, including residents and our staff members, and organisations, including homelessness service providers, to identify priorities and key actions. - Considering feedback on the Draft action plan from residents, businesses and sector partners.
- **Considering feedback on the Draft action plan from residents, businesses and sector partners.**

The action plan is also built on extensive community engagement we undertook from 2015 while working on the City's *A City for All Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan 2018-2028*.

Structure of the action plan

The action plan is in two parts:

Part 1 provides an overview of the context of homelessness in Sydney and outlines our roles, responsibilities and partnerships.

Part 2 outlines our vision and approach to responding to homelessness, identifies our strategic priority areas and actions, outlines the monitoring and evaluation framework, and includes a glossary of key terms.

Links to our other strategies

The action plan contributes to our *Sustainable Sydney 2030: Community Strategic Plan*.

In particular, it addresses:

- Direction 6: Vibrant local communities and economies

- Direction 8: Housing for a diverse population
- Direction 10: Effective governance and partnerships.

The action plan supports our overarching vision for a socially just, inclusive and resilient Sydney, as set out in our *A City for All Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan 2018-2028*.

Have your say

~~We welcome feedback on the action plan. This document will be on public exhibition from Monday 20 January to Friday 17 February 2020. We will use feedback provided during this time to help finalise the homelessness action plan.~~

~~You can provide comments and submissions via:~~

~~**Online:** cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/council/your-say~~

~~**Email:**~~

~~homelessnessactionplan@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au~~

~~**Post:** Manager, Homelessness Unit
City of Sydney, Town Hall House
456 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000~~

~~Please provide your name and address or the details of the organisation you represent in your submission. We will not distribute your personal information without your consent.~~

~~Need assistance providing feedback?~~

~~We want to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to provide ideas and feedback. If you or someone you know would like to talk to us in person about the action plan, please phone our Customer Service Centre on 02 9265 9333 to connect with the City of Sydney Homelessness Unit.~~

~~An accessible version of the document suitable for screen readers can be downloaded from the SydneyYourSay webpage. Printed versions of the action plan are also available at City of Sydney libraries and our neighbourhood service centres.~~

Homelessness in context

Understanding homelessness

People do not choose to become homeless.

The NSW Homelessness Strategy says 'homelessness is the culmination of a lack of housing and accumulated experiences of disadvantage. Its causes are complex and involve a number of interacting factors that play out in different ways from individual to individual.

A person's pathway into homelessness is impacted by a number of structural drivers, risk factors, and protective factors:

- Structural drivers include housing affordability, labour market forces, reliance on income support, and intergenerational poverty
- Risk factors include unemployment, financial stress, family breakdown, domestic and family violence, trauma, mental health issues, drug or alcohol dependence, and a history of contact with state services
- Protective factors include employment, financial security, involvement in school or community, healthy family relationships, and access to and integration of services'.⁴

These factors can affect a person's risk of homelessness and their resilience if it occurs.⁵

Homelessness can affect people of all ages, from any section of the community. While for some, it may be a temporary situation, for others it can last many years or a lifetime.

When most people think of a homeless person, they think of someone sleeping rough on the streets. Sleeping rough is a dangerous and traumatising experience.⁶ People sleeping rough on our streets are a very visible sign of deep social and economic hardship affecting individuals and our wider society. This group represents 7 per cent of all people who are homeless in Australia.⁷

A person who is homeless may not necessarily be living on the streets. While not as visible, there are an

increasing number of people who are experiencing secondary or tertiary homelessness. They are either living in temporary accommodation such as refuges or staying in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards, such as older boarding houses.

The common factor for people who are homeless is their lack of access to stable, secure and affordable housing, leading to much poorer outcomes in life.

Homelessness in our local area

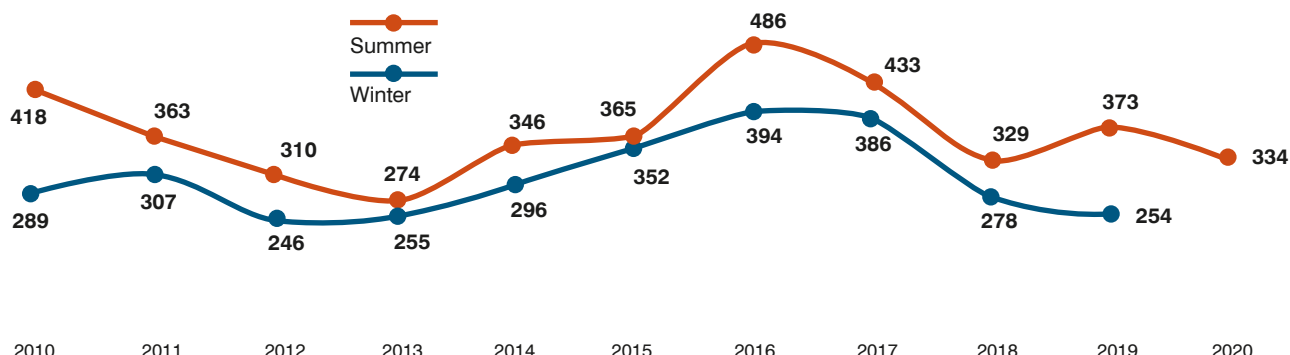
The City of Sydney Council Local Government Area includes the CBD, The Rocks, Millers Point, Ultimo, Pyrmont, Surry Hills, Woolloomooloo, Kings Cross, Elizabeth Bay, Rushcutters Bay, Darlinghurst, Chippendale, Darlington, Camperdown, Forest Lodge, Glebe, Alexandria, Beaconsfield, Centennial Park, Erskineville, Newtown, Redfern, Rosebery, Waterloo and Zetland.

~~In June 2017 more than 233,217 people were estimated to live within our boundaries, which take in 26 square kilometres.⁸ At that time, the median age of our residents was 32 and their median weekly household income was \$1,926. Recent NSW Department of Planning and Environment projections forecast that the City's population would reach about 315,000 by 2036—well over double the 2001 population—with an average annual forecast increase of about 2 per cent.~~

In June 2018 more than 240,229 people were estimated to live within our boundaries, which take in 26 square kilometres.⁸ At that time, the median age of our residents was 32 and their median weekly household income was \$1,916. By the City's projections, we forecast that the City's population would reach about 339,498 by 2036 – well over double the 2001 population – with an average annual forecast increase of about 2.1 per cent.⁹

Despite the strong economy and available wealth in Sydney, like other global cities, many people are living below the poverty line.¹⁰

Street Count 2010-2020 – Rough Sleepers within the City of Sydney



In 2016, it was estimated that almost 38,000 people in NSW were experiencing homelessness, with more than 5,000 or 13 per cent residing in the City of Sydney area. This included people sleeping rough, people in temporary accommodation, in crisis shelters or living in severe overcrowding.¹¹

Homelessness in our community

We have been working with the community, the NSW Government and not-for-profit organisations to track the levels of homelessness, identify its causes and better understand how to prevent it.

Connections Week 2019

During Connections Week 2019, we surveyed more than 360 people experiencing homelessness. We conducted the survey in late 2019 in partnership with the End Street Sleeping Collaboration, and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. The survey used the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) that captures housing, health disability, mental health and other relevant data, to develop a register of people who are homeless, and their housing and healthcare needs. This helps services to prioritise the most vulnerable for housing and support services.

The objective is to eliminate the anonymity of homeless people and create a measurable census to target housing and other support services for particularly vulnerable members of our community.

Through the surveys conducted throughout Connections Week a list has been created. This is called a By Name List, which is the first step on the path to provide the evidence needed to inform policy innovation and create systems change to prevent people ever having to sleep on the street.

City of Sydney street count

We have been conducting a twice-yearly street count of people sleeping rough in our local area since 2008.

The street count provides 'point-in-time' data that is collected with the help of more than 200 volunteers. We also record the number of homeless people staying in crisis accommodation on the night of the count.

People with lived experience of homelessness participate as advisors, accompanying teams to patrol the streets and parks between 1am and 3am every summer and winter.

~~While the~~ **The** number of people sleeping rough in our local area fell between 2011 and 2013, largely due to two projects – *Common Ground* in Camperdown and *Platform 70*, ~~there is a trend of increasing numbers between 2013 and 2019, despite the seasonal fluctuations~~ **demonstrating the effectiveness of housing first models in addressing homelessness.**

Inner Sydney Registry Week

During Inner Sydney Registry week, we surveyed more than 500 people experiencing homelessness. We conducted the survey in late 2015 in partnership with the Haymarket Foundation, Neami National, Homelessness NSW, NSW Department of Communities and Justice and the Mercy Foundation. The survey used a vulnerability index, a tool that captures housing, health and other relevant data, to develop a register of people who are homeless, and their housing and healthcare needs. This helps services to prioritise the most vulnerable for housing and support services. Who are homeless, and their housing and healthcare needs. This helps services to prioritise the most vulnerable for housing and support services.



Public housing, Gilmore Towers, Redfern | Photographer: Katherine Griffiths, City of

Lack of affordable and social housing

Sydney is experiencing a housing affordability crisis. In the last decade, rents across the metropolitan area have risen by 72 per cent, while the purchase price of dwellings has grown by 81 per cent.¹³

The shortage of alternatives to private market housing is making the situation worse. While our local area was second only to Blacktown in the number of social housing tenancies available in 2011, social housing supply has grown very little since, reaching around 9,800 properties in 2015.

This illustrates the broader issue of social housing supply falling short of demand across the state. ~~At present there are over 60,000 people on the NSW social housing waiting list.¹²~~ **At 30 June 2019, there were over 45,000 people on the NSW social housing waiting list.¹⁴**

The high demand for social housing means that in inner city Sydney, the average waiting time is ~~more than~~ **between 5 and 10 years**. While other forms of housing assistance are available, long-term, stable and affordable accommodation is critical for people with limited income and our most vulnerable households.

~~Our Registry Week~~ **The Connections Week survey in late 2015 2019** found the lack of affordable housing was the biggest barrier to ~~65~~ **69** per cent of people who are homeless changing their circumstances. ~~Just over one third~~ **Twenty-six per cent** identified that they may need long-term housing support, potentially for the rest of their lives.

Homelessness cannot be solved without increasing the supply of social and affordable rental housing, **and investing in more supported accommodation.**

People most vulnerable to homelessness

While increasing the supply of social and affordable housing is fundamental to resolving the problem, homelessness is not just the result of too few houses being available.

The causes of homelessness are many and varied. They include domestic violence, unemployment, mental illness, family breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse and people leaving prison, care or health facilities.¹⁵ The following groups have a higher risk of homelessness.

People escaping domestic and family violence

Homelessness can be both a cause and a consequence of being a victim or an offender of crime. Domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness in Australia.¹⁶ Victims fleeing an unsafe home environment are often left without the resources to access alternative accommodation. In 2018-2019, 34 per cent of people accessing specialist homelessness services in NSW were due to domestic and family violence.¹⁷

People who identify as LGBTIQ

In 2019, 15 per cent of people surveyed as part of Connections Week in inner city Sydney identified LGBTIQ.

“There is growing evidence that inequality is harmful to everyone in society and that greater social and economic inclusion is strongly associated with longer and stronger periods of sustained economic growth.”¹⁹

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Data on people accessing specialist homelessness services have so far excluded sexual orientation and gender diversity. However, research from Victoria suggests that LGBTQI people are at least twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to experience homelessness and are more likely to experience homelessness at a younger age.¹⁸

The main reason cited for homelessness among younger LGBTQI people is ‘running away’ due to rejection and fear of reprisal or being kicked out of home. When forced out of the family home, the majority of these young people end up couch surfing, rough sleeping or in boarding houses.

Young people

Those aged 12–24 may not have access to family support, be on low incomes, or have no rental history and limited independent living skills. Pathways for young people into homelessness include family breakdown and being in out of home care. Young people who first experience homelessness before the age of 18 are more likely to experience persistent homelessness in adulthood.²⁰

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

In 2015 2019, more than 19 47 per cent of people experiencing homelessness in Sydney identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. For this group **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**, homelessness can not only mean sleeping rough or living in unsafe or overcrowded dwellings **also include spiritual homelessness** that is disconnection from family or having a dwelling that is not on country or in community.²¹

Older people

~~Inner City Registry Week findings also show 15 per cent of people who are homeless in Sydney are aged over 55.¹⁸~~

Census estimates from 2016 suggest that 1.2 per cent of Sydney Inner City area 70+ year olds residents are homeless (includes those sleeping rough, in shelters, temporary, or overcrowded housing), compared to 0.3 per cent nationally.

The Connections Week Survey 2019 found that 11 per cent of people sleeping rough or in crisis services were over 55 years old. This is consistent with other studies that show that the numbers of older people experiencing homelessness in later life is growing significantly.

There is a chronic shortage of age-appropriate and affordable housing for older people who have been homeless, or are first-time homeless, and this is likely to worsen with population ageing. Older people are more vulnerable to suffering ill health and disability, having reduced income and experiencing family changes.²²

Declining housing affordability means that older people who face housing insecurity are at greater risk of becoming homeless.²³

People leaving ~~prison~~ institutions

Findings from ~~Inner Sydney Registry Week~~ **Connections Week 2019** show that one in two **28 per cent of** people experiencing homelessness in Sydney have been in prison. There are proven links between homelessness, offending and reoffending.²⁴ People who find suitable, supported and stable housing are more likely to stay out of prison, particularly those with complex needs.²⁵

Twenty-three per cent of people surveyed were in foster care when they were younger.

Approximately 5 per cent reported having served in the Australian Defence Force. This is consistent with recent research that found 5.3 per cent of Australian veterans who left the Australian Defence Force between 2001 and 2018 experienced homelessness.²⁶ This is significantly higher than that for the general population (1.9%).

Compared with veterans who had not experienced homelessness in the previous 12 months, homeless veterans were more likely to be younger; have lower education levels; be single; be unemployed or underemployed; and be experiencing financial difficulties.



Volunteers getting ready for the City of Sydney bi-annual street count | Photographer: Katherine Griffiths, City of Sydney

People with disability

There are higher rates of disability amongst people experiencing homelessness. The Connections Week 2019 Survey revealed that of the people 363 sleeping rough in the inner city, 27 per cent reported having a brain injury, 22 per cent had a learning or intellectual disability and 75 per cent reported a mental health diagnosis.

People with disability are vulnerable both to, and within, homelessness because they may have lower incomes and are more likely to be unemployed and have limited housing options. People with disability have a greater exposure to the risk of homelessness than the general population.²⁷

People with disability can also face barriers in accessing homelessness services. Many services may have disability access but not all facilities are accessible. People with disability may be unable to manage daily personal tasks such as cooking and washing and some services may not be able to accept people who require help with personal care. This group also will benefit from supported accommodation models.

Temporary visa holders (international students, migrant workers and asylum seekers) and New Zealanders

Most people seeking asylum live in the community while waiting for their refugee claim to be determined. Refugees and asylum seekers are not entitled to income support while they wait for their claim to be processed. More than half have no financial safety net. Most find it difficult to find work.

They don't speak the language, don't have local references, and don't have known work histories.

For the small proportion of people seeking asylum who manage to find paid work, it is hard to rent housing. Two of the key reasons are a lack of rental references and discrimination. Despite this, people seeking asylum are often left out of the mainstream debate over homelessness²⁸.

For international students and other migrant workers on temporary visas, lack of low cost rental accommodation, lack of rental histories and lack of knowledge of rental rights can lead to experiences of hidden homelessness such as overcrowded and insecure accommodation.²⁹

In 2016, more than 35,000 international students were studying at City of Sydney campuses, and more than 10,000 were living within the local area.³⁰

People seeking asylum, international students and temporary visa's holders are not eligible for income support if they lose their job. New Zealanders living in Australia on non-protected Special Category Visas (sub class 444) are generally not eligible for income support, unless they have been in Australia continuously for 10 years.³¹ Economic shocks can also make these groups particularly vulnerable to homelessness.

In addition to monitoring at risk groups, the City continues to monitor emerging issues that lead to homelessness to tailor our own responses, and advocate to other levels of government to address emerging needs.

Other at-risk groups requiring specialist responses include veterans, people escaping family and domestic

violence, and refugees and asylum seekers and people who identify as LGBTIQ.



Sydney CBD | Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney

Homelessness in public spaces

Begging

People sleeping rough and/or begging are among the most visible signs of disadvantage in Sydney. There is a clear link between begging and homelessness. In 2014, we conducted a survey that found more than 60 per cent of people begging were also sleeping rough.

Begging is legal in NSW. People cannot be moved on unless they are causing harm to themselves or others.

People who are begging often need support. Of respondents to the 2014 survey, 40 per cent had a chronic illness, 50 per cent reported having a history of substance use and more than one-third reporting living with mental illness or disability.

Social impacts of rough sleeping

The 2015 Inner Sydney Registry found 44 per cent of people who were homeless reported being victims of crime. Rough sleepers who fear crime often seek safety in public areas, positioning themselves near lighting and crowds.

The 2019 Connections Week Survey found 53 per cent of people who were homeless reported experiencing physical harm or verbal abuse while homeless.

Sleeping rough close to other people can provide protection, but concentrations of people sleeping rough in groups can also lead to conflict among groups. However, sleeping rough away from others may leave people feeling isolated and vulnerable.³²

People begging and sleeping rough in the public domain can also sometimes make others feel unsafe. Fear of crime, whether actual or perceived, can affect people's quality of life, and social and economic wellbeing.³³

Environmental impacts

Wet and cold weather, extreme heat and air pollution are health risks for people who don't have safe shelter. Living in a street or park without access to storage and amenities can make it difficult for people to maintain a safe standard of hygiene. Food items that can't be stored safely attract vermin, while clothing, blankets and other items often become soiled, and can contribute to biological and fire hazards.

The accumulation of goods can also reduce the amenity of public spaces; for example, by blocking pathways, fire exits and shared parks. There are a large number of mobile voluntary services providing clothing, blankets, and food and hygiene items to people sleeping rough. These items are often donated without consultation with people sleeping rough. Rough sleepers regularly discard these items or identify them as unwanted. Each year, the City removes a substantial amount of unwanted items left in the public domain.

City of Sydney homelessness snapshot

- On any given night in Australia, one in 200 people are homeless
- The City of Sydney Street Count in August 2019 **February 2020** saw ~~254~~ **334** people sleeping rough on the night of the count. ~~592~~ **505** people were staying in crisis hostels that were at ~~94%~~ **91%** capacity
- 100% of homeless people in Sydney live below the poverty line
- ~~Only~~ **Less than** 1% of housing in Sydney is affordable to people on low and very low incomes
- There are more than ~~50,000~~ **45,000** households currently on the social housing waiting list. Waiting times ~~over~~ **between 5 to** 10 years for social housing in inner Sydney
- The top 3 reasons people need assistance for homelessness services in NSW are; ~~housing crisis (54%, compared with 43% nationally), financial difficulties (41%, compared with 38%) and housing affordability stress (29%, compared with 24%).~~ **financial difficulties (41% compared with 41% nationally), housing crisis (39%, compared with 37%) and family and domestic violence (34%, compared with 38%).**
- Across the state more women than men are experiencing homeless.
- *When asked what support they need, 16 per cent of people surveyed during Connections Week 2019 said they just needed housing they could afford, 53 per cent needed short term support and housing they could afford, 26 per cent needed intensive support and housing they housing they could afford and 5 per cent did not record an answer.*

People in Sydney who are homeless

~~The City of Sydney with Homelessness NSW conducted the largest register of its kind in Australia, it contains responses from 516 people experiencing homelessness in Sydney (330 people who were sleeping rough and 186 people accessing homelessness support services).~~

The City of Sydney with the End Street Sleeping Collaboration surveyed people experiencing homelessness people during Connections Week 2019. The survey captured responses from 363 people in inner Sydney including 154 people sleeping rough, 148 people in temporary accommodation, 7 people couch surfing, 7 people who were now permanently housed and 47 people whose housing circumstances were not captured.

363

154

SLEEPING
ROUGH

48

TEMPORARILY
HOUSED

61

OTHER

Connections Week 2019

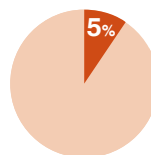
73%

OF RESPONDENTS
WERE MEN, WITH AN
AVERAGE AGE OF 44



15%

ABORIGINAL
AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER



5%

served in the
AUSTRALIAN
DEFENCE FORCE



15%

IDENTIFY
AS LGBTQI



5%



11%
55 AND
OVER



28%

HAVE BEEN
IN PRISON
in the past 6 months



27%

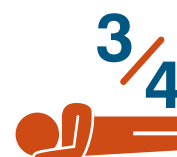
REPORTED
HAVING A
BRAIN INJURY

The average length
of time on the street
or in temporary
accommodation was
FIVE YEARS AND
SEVEN MONTHS



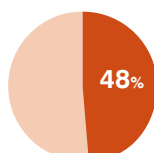
75%

REPORTED
MENTAL HEALTH
DIAGNOSIS



48%

REPORT PAST
TRAUMA OR
ABUSE



5%

OF PEOPLE
WERE WORKING



63%



63%

reported
PROBLEMATIC
SUBSTANCE USE

3. The policy context

Policy responses to homelessness

Homelessness policy in Australia is generally driven by the federal, state and territory governments, which are jointly responsible for funding and delivering housing, health and homelessness services around the country.

The context for homelessness services has changed over the past 10 years, with greater emphasis now being placed on prevention and early intervention to reduce homelessness.

The policy environment continues to evolve over time. Key activities in recent years include:

Australian Government response to homelessness

The Australian Government's *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness* ³⁴ was released in 2008 and established national priorities for reducing homelessness in Australia. These priorities guide the delivery of homelessness funding from the Australian Government to the state and territory governments through the *National Housing and Homelessness Agreement*.

The priorities are:

- To use prevention and early intervention
- To better connect people with services so they can find sustainable housing, and use work, training or support services
- To break the cycle so that people who become homeless move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing.

Homelessness services will be given an additional \$375 million over three years from 2018-19, to be matched by the States and Territories. ³⁵

Housing affordability

In an effort to boost the supply of affordable rental housing, the Australian Government has identified housing bond aggregators as an innovative financing model for affordable rental housing. They also recommended the establishment of a bond aggregator taskforce. ³⁶

State Government response to homelessness

The NSW Government has sought to reorient the homelessness service system to achieve a better balance between efforts to prevent homelessness, and early intervention and responses to crises.

Reform began in 2013 with the *Going Home Staying Home* (GHS) reforms.

The NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 ³⁷ builds on the *Going Home Staying Home* reforms and continues the shift towards prevention responses that address the contributing causes of homelessness, and early intervention responses that reduce chronic homelessness. It was developed in consultation with the sector and community.

The strategy sets the direction for the next five years, focusing on prevention responses that address the root causes of homelessness, and early intervention responses that will reduce the longer-term impact of homelessness.



Woolloomooloo | Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney

Key approaches include:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Effective supports and responses
- An integrated, person-centred service system.

This will be complemented by Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW - the NSW Government's plan for increasing the supply of social housing by redeveloping existing property and improving outcomes for social housing clients. Under this strategy, the NSW Government will also increase funding to assist people enter the private rental market.³⁸

Readers are encouraged to seek the latest information on this evolving policy environment at:

- The Australian Government Department of Social Services: dss.gov.au/housing-support/programmingservices/homelessness
- The NSW Government's Department of Communities and Justice: facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms

Other policy areas affecting homelessness

Responding to issues of domestic and family violence and mental illness with appropriate services and housing will address some of the causes of homelessness.

The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021³⁹ includes commitments to investing in social housing to provide victims of domestic and family violence with accommodation options when leaving a violent relationship, and assessing the feasibility of providing accommodation for perpetrators, to reduce immediate reoffending can

Woolloomooloo | Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney

contribute to increasing safe and appropriate accommodation and reducing homelessness.

Likewise, the Mental Health Commission of NSW Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW 2014–2024, also recommends increasing the number of accommodation and support initiatives and investigating mechanisms to assist people living with mental illness access the private rental market.⁴⁰

In response to the strategy, the NSW Government has committed to increasing its focus on assisting longterm patients to remain living in the community and strengthening prevention and early intervention

Implications for the City of Sydney

The changing funding and policy context creates opportunities and challenges for us as we deliver the Homelessness Action Plan.

This plan aligns closely with national and state priorities that aim to increase the supply of social and affordable housing, and improve collaboration between the NSW Government, the private sector and community organisations. This positions us to play a role in shaping the direction of these reforms. It also allows us to take advantage of opportunities they generate, such as the redevelopment of social housing in our local area.

However, changes to funding and program priorities at the national and state levels can create uncertainty and impact the homelessness service system. The City will need to respond to changes as they arise by reviewing our own actions and investments.

4. Our role

In Australia, housing and homelessness are primarily the responsibility of state and federal governments and have not been a traditional domain of local government. While councils have had a strong role in setting and implementing planning controls and delivering community services they have not been typically involved in broader aspects of housing and homelessness.

The City of Sydney understands that no one organisation can solve homelessness in isolation. We understand that our communities, businesses and stakeholders expect us to take a leadership role in addressing Sydney's needs. This includes taking direct action in areas under our own control, working with a wide range of partners to demonstrate innovative solutions and advocating for action from other levels of government.

We will work to reduce homelessness in the city through:

Leadership

The City will lead by example by supporting innovative and collaborative approaches to reduce homelessness and its impacts in Sydney.

Strategic advocacy

The City will advocate for legislative and policy change at state and federal government levels, encouraging interagency engagement, sustained funding and whole of government responsibility to prevent and reduce homelessness.

Collaboration

The City will collaborate with community members, government agencies, business and community organisations through formal and informal partnerships to deliver initiatives and advocate for change.

Resources

The City will continue to commit resources to reduce homelessness and its impact in Sydney.

Social programs and services

The City will ensure its social programs and services support individuals and families facing housing and homelessness issues in the city.

Community engagement

The City will provide information, customer service, community consultation and stakeholder engagement to raise awareness and encourage community involvement in local housing and homelessness issues.

Research and monitoring

The City will undertake and support research, analysis and monitoring of housing programs and initiatives, including developing evidence about effective models.

Capacity building

The City will provide information, education and resources to develop internal capacity and to support capacity building in the community sector, including volunteer service providers.

4. Our role and approach

For more than 30 years, we have been committed to preventing and reducing homelessness in Sydney and developing specialist skills and networks to support those who are sleeping rough in the inner city.

In Australia, housing and homelessness are primarily the responsibility of state and federal governments and have not been a traditional domain of local government. While councils have had a strong role in setting and implementing planning controls and delivering community services they have not been typically involved in broader aspects of housing and homelessness.

The City of Sydney understands that no one organisation can solve homelessness in isolation. We understand that our communities, businesses and stakeholders expect us to take a leadership role in addressing Sydney's needs. This includes taking direct action in areas under our own control, such as responding to the effects of homelessness on public spaces, working with a wide range of partners to demonstrate innovative solutions and advocating for action from other levels of government.

a. Direct investment in homelessness services

We ~~are the only~~ **were the first** council in NSW with a dedicated Homelessness Unit. We invest more than \$2 million every year to assist people find safe and sustainable accommodation with support. Between 2015 and 2019 **2020**, the City contributed funding through Department of Communities and Justice for the delivery of services to reduce the risk of and break the cycle of homelessness.

While the funding of specialist homelessness services is primarily the responsibility of the NSW Government, the City contributes funding to support the operation of key services operating in our area because homelessness remains a priority issue for the City.

Supporting people from street to home

We support an assertive outreach approach, which involves continually engaging with people sleeping rough to encourage and support them to find appropriate housing. Our staff patrol the local area every day, getting to know people who are sleeping rough, building trust, developing professional relationships and linking them with support services to support them access housing. .

Assertive outreach

The City and Department of Communities and Justice funding to Neami Way2Home helps break the cycle of homelessness for people who are sleeping rough. Outreach workers assist people on the streets gain and keep long-term housing, as well as ongoing support.³⁰ The workers partner with health and other community services. The service has helped ~~612~~ **658** people find housing between 2010 and ~~June 2019~~ **April 2020**.

Housing first

The City supports a housing first approach to responding to homelessness. This approach involves supporting people experiencing homelessness by giving people permanent housing as quickly as possible – and then providing wrap around supportive services as needed. Services are in place from the beginning working with people to access housing and then to support them to maintain their tenancy for as long as needed.

The City along with many partner organisations supported projects using the housing first approach.

Platform 70

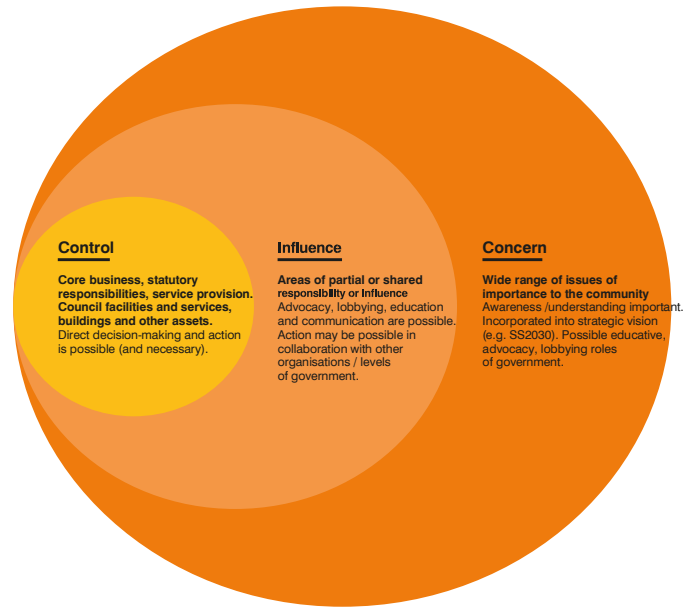
Platform 70 launched in 2011 supported people who were sleeping rough to access private rental accommodation. It uses a 'scatter site' approach that focuses on meeting individual needs, providing access to known community support services and ongoing case management. In the first four years over 80 per cent of the tenants retained their housing and continued to receive ongoing support and case management.

The Camperdown Project

Based on the Common Ground model, the Camperdown Project is a specially designed set of apartments with on-site support services for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

There are 100 self-contained units. 60 per cent are social housing and 40 per cent are affordable.

These and other outreach programs contributed to a 34 per cent reduction in the number of rough sleepers in the City of Sydney local area between February 2010 and August 2012.



Preventing homelessness

Preventing homelessness means both tackling the systemic causes and structural drivers – such as unaffordable housing and entrenched disadvantage – and identifying high-risk groups to better enable early intervention to prevent a crisis.⁴² Investing in homelessness prevention and early intervention also cuts spending across other service systems, delivering medium- and long-term social and economic benefits, as well as improving outcomes for at risk individuals and families.⁴³

A large number of people who become chronically homeless initially experience homelessness before the age of 18. Homeless young people who are not assisted at an early stage tend to remain homeless for longer periods.⁴⁴

We have supported a range of community programs and targeted services that support young people who are at risk of becoming homeless.

A large number of people who become chronically homeless initially experience homelessness before the age of 18. Homeless young people who are not assisted at an early stage tend to remain homeless for longer periods.⁴⁴

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness

Through Department of Communities and Justice, from 2015 we contributed funding to the Inner City Sydney Homelessness Prevention and Support Service for Young People. The service is delivered by Launchpad Youth Community in partnership with the Ted Noffs Foundation and Weave Youth & Community Services.

The service works to prevent homelessness and provides assertive outreach, intensive case management coordination, flexible funds and housing support. Between June 2015 and June 2019 **April 2020**, the service has prevented 1499 **1605** young people from becoming homeless. It has also helped another 605 **688** young people to find safe and sustainable accommodation.

We also recognise that increasing the supply of social and affordable housing is critical in addressing homelessness. In our local area, we aim to have 7.5 per cent of all housing stock as social housing and 7.5 per cent as affordable rental housing. We invest in delivering new affordable rental housing; working with the NSW Government to support social housing renewal; and facilitating the delivery of affordable housing across our local area, including t Green Square and Ultimo-Pyrmont.

b. Facilitating and investing in the supply of social, affordable and supported housing

We also recognise that increasing the supply of social, and affordable and supported housing is critical in addressing homelessness.

In our local area, we aim to have 7.5 per cent of all housing stock as social housing and 7.5 per cent as affordable rental housing.

State and federal governments hold the levers for social and affordable housing, but since 2007, the City has taken every opportunity to tackle affordability.

The City's role in addressing housing affordability is outlined in Housing for All: City of Sydney Local Housing Strategy, adopted by Council in February 2020.⁴⁵ The City has three available levers:

1. Affordable Rental Housing Contribution Schemes

The City uses its planning powers to facilitate the delivery of affordable rental housing. Three affordable rental housing contribution schemes currently operate in the city, including at:

- *Ultimo/Pyrmont, which requires that 0.8 percent of residential floor area and 1.1 per cent of commercial floor area be provided as affordable rental housing;*
- *Green Square, which requires that 3 per cent of residential floor area and 1 per cent of commercial floor area be provided as affordable rental housing; and*
- *Southern Enterprise Area which requires that 3 per cent of residential floor area and 1 per cent of commercial floor area be provided as affordable rental housing.*

In 2018, Council approved a contribution scheme across the local government area that will affect land not already captured in the above schemes. This new scheme will facilitate over 1,000 additional affordable rental dwellings if approved by the NSW Government. It will require 3 per cent of residential floor area and 1 per cent of commercial floor area to be provided as affordable rental housing.



2. Preferential Zoning

The City also introduced preferential zoning for affordable rental housing on land zoned B7 – Business Park, where residential development is not otherwise permitted. This keeps land affordable for community housing providers and government who are seeking to purchase land in these areas to develop affordable rental housing.

The City uses planning agreements for affordable rental housing outcomes when changes are being made to planning controls, for example in Harold Park when it was rezoned in 2009 and for Bay Street, Glebe in 2014.

3. Direct investment in housing

We invest in delivering new affordable rental housing and supported accommodation through cash grants available from the Supported Accommodation, Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund, and by harnessing council land and property where feasible

Supported Accommodation, Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund

The City's **Supported Accommodation** Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund promotes the development of affordable and diverse rental housing in the city, by community housing providers, not-for-profit providers, and for-profit organisations. This has included grants to non-government organisations, as well as granting or selling land below cost to community housing providers.

To date, \$4.5 million in grants have been approved to support projects that provide housing for vulnerable groups and those with little capacity to enter the private housing market. The City established the fund in June 2015 with \$10.35 million allocated.

In March 2020, Council resolved to add a further \$10 million dollars to the fund, and to refocus the fund to include the delivery of supported accommodation.

This fund has contributed:

- \$1.5 million to HammondCare for the development of a subsidised residential aged care facility, that caters to people who have been homeless including people who normally aren't eligible for aged care as they are too young
- \$3 million to St George Community Housing to house and support young people at risk of homelessness
- \$250,000 to The Salvation Army for crisis accommodation in Surry Hills.
- \$1 million to Wesley Mission for redevelopment of the Wesley Edward Eagar Centre, which provides crisis accommodation since the 1970s and is no longer fit for purpose.



Residents moving into an affordable housing development in Zetland built by City West, with the City's support | Photographer: Katherine Griffiths, City of Sydney

HomeGround Sydney

In 2017, the City contributed funding to help Bridge Housing establish HomeGround Real Estate -Sydney's first not-for-profit real estate agency that aims to increase the supply of affordable housing in Sydney.

HomeGround Sydney launched in April 2018, and by June 2018 had secured the management of 41 private rental properties from property owners, investors and developers as well as taking over management of 610 properties already managed by Bridge Housing.

4. Leveraging our property

The City has supported the Property Industry Foundation Pty and the Salvation Army to target youth homelessness.

In 2011 we leased the City owned surplus property at 90 Regent Street, Redfern to the Property Industry Foundation, to deliver transitional accommodation and services through the Salvation Army's Oasis youth program. Following the sale of the Regent Street property, the existing service has re-located to new premises and the City provided a grant of a 50 year ground lease of a City owned property at 545-549

South Dowling Street, Surry Hills. Under this lease, the Property Industry Foundation will develop a new flagship facility targeting youth homelessness and will identify opportunities for continuation of the Salvation Army service established at 90 Regent Street, Redfern.

c. Responding to the effects of homelessness on public spaces

We work directly with people experiencing homelessness, as well as residents and businesses, to ensure our public spaces are safe and accessible for all.

We recognise the circumstances that often underpin rough sleeping and begging, including mental illness or substance dependence, are health and social issues and that law enforcement responses are not always the answer.

The City employs Public Space Liaison Officers who work seven days a week visiting people who are sleeping rough in the city and connecting them with services. Our Public Space Liaison Officers also talk to residents and businesses to increase understanding and resolve problems before conflicts arise. They build professional relationships and provide links to essential services. They also manage social and environmental impacts.



Leanne | Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney

We follow the NSW Government's Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places.⁴⁶ The protocol acknowledges that, like everyone, people who are homeless have a right to be in public places and to participate in public events, while at the same time respecting the right of local communities to live in a safe and peaceful environment.

We are responsible for maintaining the safety and amenity of public spaces. This includes regularly removing rubbish and abandoned items from public spaces. We work constantly with people sleeping rough, to identify abandoned and unwanted items for removal to landfill. Each week, the City takes away truckloads of unwanted food, blankets and clothing.

Responding to homeless hotspots

Our Homelessness Unit has taken a leadership role in providing and coordinating responses to homelessness in the public domain. This includes coordinating responses to 'hotspots' in our local area. A hotspot is an area where a large group of people are sleeping rough, and where there are also multiple compounding issues, including anti social behaviour and decreased amenity.

The City works with Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Police, Homeless Health Service - St Vincent's Hospital, Mission Australia, Neami National, Launchpad Youth Community services, Innari Housing Inc, the Aboriginal Corporation for Homeless and Rehabilitation Community Services, Legal Aid and other specialist homelessness services, to reduce homelessness and its effects in key hotspots.

d. Collaborating for maximum impact

Our closeness to our communities gives us a unique understanding of local conditions and issues. Our strong relationships across communities, service sectors and governments also means we can provide a valuable supporting role in coordinating service delivery.

Act to End Street Sleeping

In February 2019, the City signed an agreement with the NSW Government, the Institute of Global Homelessness, St Vincent de Paul, St Vincent's Health, Mission Australia, Salvation Army, Wesley Mission, Neami National and Yfoundations to:

- reduce rough sleeping in the City of Sydney area by 25 per cent by 2020
- reduce rough sleeping in the City of Sydney area and NSW by 50 per cent by 2025
- work towards zero rough sleeping in the City of Sydney area and NSW

The City helped finance the establishment of an independent local organisation to coordinate the collaboration in Sydney and bring together organisations and services to reduce homelessness – including the City of Sydney. This will allow for greater information sharing and enable a more coordinated response to reduce the number of people sleeping rough and to prevent people entering in to homelessness.⁴⁷



Belmore Park | Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney

WISH

The WISH originally known as the Woolloomooloo Integrated Service Hub is **currently** hosted monthly at the Wayside Chapel. It provides a one-stop-shop for people experiencing homelessness bringing together over 22 services in one location to assist people with access to health, housing, specialist support and other services. People with lived experience of homelessness assist to gather real-time feedback from participants to inform continuous service improvement.

The Homelessness Assertive Response Team

The Homelessness Assertive Response Team (HART), led by the City of Sydney and Department of Communities and Justice with members from NSW Health, St Vincent's Homeless Health, specialist homelessness services and non- government services, meet regularly with a common goal of assisting people sleeping rough in the inner city to access long-term housing with support.

HART members share skills, resources and knowledge, allowing people to access services quickly and progress their access to housing.

Since February 2015, HART has assessed more than 600 people sleeping rough, housing 190. Almost all of them have maintained their tenancy for 12 months or more.

Homelessness Outreach Support Team

Department of Communities and Justice established the Homelessness Outreach Support Team (HOST) in the inner city in March 2017. The team delivers housing and support services on-street through intensive outreach and

regular outreach patrols across the inner city, in partnership with the City of Sydney, homelessness services, the St Vincent's Homeless Health service, NSW Health and NSW Police.

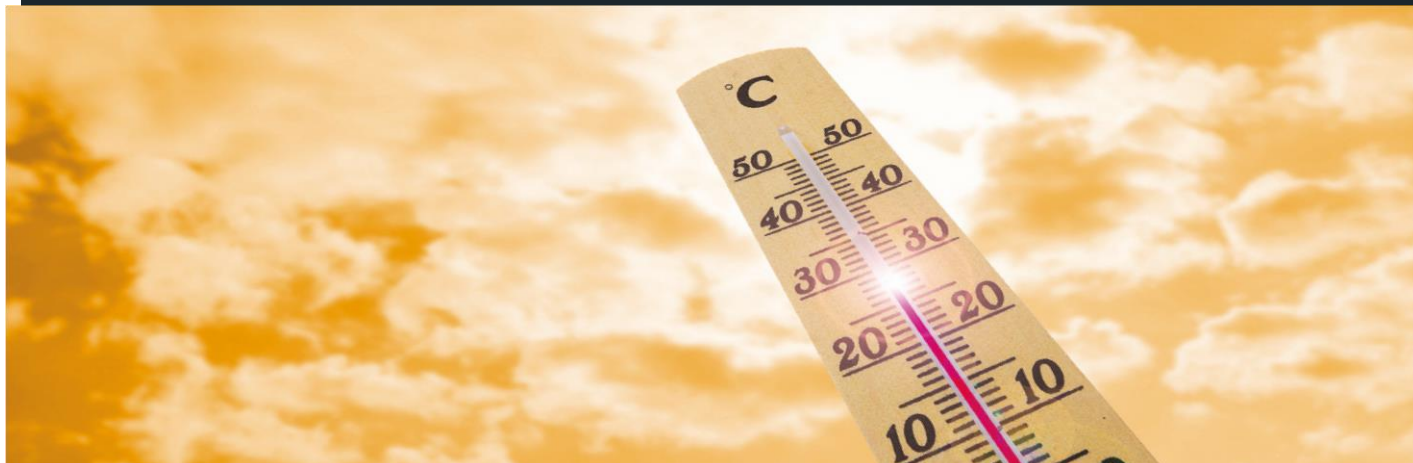
HOST outreach aims to provide immediate access to housing assessment and a rapid rehousing response into social housing for eligible people. HOST also works with specialist homelessness services and Health to wrap post-crisis support around clients who have been housed and need more sustained support. The HOST model is now being implemented in other locations in NSW.

Intersectoral Homelessness Health Strategy

The City collaborated on the development of the Intersectoral Homelessness Health Strategy 2020-2025, a joint initiative of South Eastern Sydney Local Health, Sydney Local Health District, St Vincent's Health Network, Central and Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network, Department of Communities and Justice - Sydney, South Eastern Sydney and Northern Sydney District and City of Sydney.

Using a collective impact framework, the strategy identifies our shared strategic priorities for improving health outcomes among people experiencing homelessness. They include:

- Improving access to the right care at the right time
- Strengthening prevention and public health
- Increasing access to primary care
- Building workforce capacity



Getty Images

The City will continue to support the initiatives of this joint initiative, and the collaborative impact model has already laid the foundation for effective coordination of health services for people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic

Mobile Voluntary Services

Mobile voluntary services play an integral role in supporting vulnerable people, by providing free food and other services like showers, blankets and clothing.

In 2019, the City commissioned research into mobile voluntary services, to better understand the needs of people using these services, ways the City could improve them and to ensure they are being operated responsibly.⁴⁸

The Mobile Voluntary Services Policy and Guidelines outlines legislation that is relevant to the operations of mobile voluntary services in public places.

The guidelines also set clear expectations about the principles mobile voluntary services should follow when planning and providing services.

~~We have a Mobile Free Food Services Policy that applies to all voluntary mobile services that provide food, blankets, clothing and social connections for people who are homeless or otherwise disadvantaged in the innercity.~~

City staff work with volunteers sharing information and advice to improve coordination of services and improve outcomes for people using the services.

As part of this plan, we will work with mobile voluntary services and other stakeholders to ensure services are targeted, meet the needs of service users and use public space appropriately.

Emergency response protocol for rough sleepers in extreme weather and other emergencies

Wet and cold weather, extreme heat and air pollution are health risks for people who don't have safe shelter. The frequency of extreme weather events expected to increase.

The City's Adapting for Climate Change Strategy identifies that as the average temperature creeps up, extreme heat days are expected to increase. This means that heatwaves will become hotter, last longer and be more frequent.⁴⁹

Natural variability in annual rainfall will continue so we will see dry spells and drought as well as wet periods. We will continue to experience heavy rainfall events, and these are likely to increase in frequency.

In April 2015, we worked with Department of Communities and Justice to develop the Emergency Response Protocol for Rough Sleepers in Sydney to support people sleeping rough during emergencies.

The protocol enables the two agencies to coordinate more than 10 organisations to provide information, advice and help (about medical or accommodation issues) to people sleeping rough in our local area.

The protocol is activated during severe storms, flooding, and extreme heat and cold, and other emergencies such as disruptions to power, transport and security. It aims to reduce the risks for people sleeping rough at these times.

Part 2: Action plan





5. Our Strategic priorities

Our action plan focuses on the following priorities:

Strategic Priority 1: Increase access to safe and sustainable housing and support, and monitor trends in inner city homelessness

We will take a holistic approach, using strategies ranging from increasing the supply of new affordable housing, to funding services and monitoring homelessness in the inner city. We will:

- Facilitate the delivery of innovative housing solutions to reduce inner city homelessness, **including housing first and supported housing models**
- Invest in services that reduce the risk of people becoming homeless and break the cycle of homelessness
- Advocate to the Australian and NSW Government to deliver a sustainable supply of **supported**, social and affordable rental housing
- Maintain a robust evidence base on the extent and nature of homelessness in the inner city to inform policy responses.

Strategic priority 2: Supporting people sleeping rough and managing the public domain

We are committed to supporting the safety and wellbeing of all people in our community through maintaining the amenity of the public domain.

We are also responsible for maintaining the quality of the public domain. Residents, workers, business owners, visitors and people sleeping rough use our public spaces and have different perspectives on how to respond to homelessness.

To ensure the public domain is safe and accessible for all, we will:

- Connect people with services and support to exit homelessness
- Work with our partners to reduce the impacts of homelessness on amenity in the public domain
- Improve the safety and well-being of people sleeping rough and/or begging

Strategic priority 3: Work smarter together to have a greater impact

We work with many stakeholders, including the community, businesses and all governments to support people who are homeless to access safe and sustainable housing and support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

To ensure that we work smarter together to have a greater impact, we will:

- Work with other levels of Government and NGOs to improve systems to reduce homelessness
- Include people with lived experience of homelessness in project design and delivery
- Build the capacity of organisations and community to support people who are homeless
- Increase community understanding of, participation in and support for initiatives that respond to homelessness
- Work with mobile voluntary services and other stakeholders to ensure services are targeted, meet the needs of service users and use public space appropriately.



Huby | Photographer: Katherine Collins City of

Strategic priority 1:

Increase access to safe and sustainable housing and support, and monitor trends in inner city homelessness.

Actions

| What will we do? | No. | How will we do it? |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Facilitate the delivery of innovative housing solutions to reduce inner city homelessness including housing first and supported housing models | 1.1 | Identify opportunities to directly support, collaborate on and/or advocate for innovative projects that increase housing and support for people who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless, including housing first and supported housing . |
| 2. Invest in services | 2.1 | Provide funding and/or other support to enhance delivery of services to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in the inner city, including services that reduce the risk of people becoming homeless and break the cycle of homelessness. |
| | 2.2 | Review outcomes of funded services and funding arrangements periodically to ensure they continue to meet the needs of vulnerable and at risk groups. |
| 3. Advocate for the Australian and NSW Governments to deliver a sustainable supply of supported, social and affordable rental housing | 3.1 | Advocate to increase supply of housing, and housing options with support for people who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless, including in urban renewal sites and new social and affordable housing developments. |
| 4. Maintain a robust evidence base on the extent and nature of homelessness in the inner-city, to inform policy responses | 4.1 | Continue to track the number of people who are sleeping rough by conducting a regular street count |
| | 4.2 | Jointly conduct research and/or monitoring activities with our partners to build understanding of the nature and determinants of homelessness in the inner-city |
| | 4.3 | Monitor services available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to identify gaps and trends |
| | 4.4 | Monitor the extent and nature of begging in the public domain |
| | 4.5 | Share data and information to improve understanding and responses to homelessness |



Strategic priority 2:

Respond to the impacts of homelessness on public spaces

Actions

| What will we do? | No. | How will we do it? |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5. Connect people with services and support to exit homelessness | 5.1 | Continue patrols of the local area to link people sleeping rough with appropriate services and support to find housing |
| | 5.2 | Coordinate multi-agency responses to link people to services through joint outreach patrols and coordinated case management |
| | 5.3 | Coordinate regular local service hubs with multiple agencies to improve housing outcomes for people who are homeless and to prevent people from becoming homeless |
| | 5.4 | <i>Work with Aboriginal homelessness organisations to implement training and other initiatives to ensure City delivered and City funded homelessness outreach services are culturally aware and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities</i> |
| 6. Work with our partners to reduce the impact of homelessness on amenity in the public domain | 6.1 | Coordinate responses between agencies for hot spot areas of rough sleeping, to maintain the amenity and safety of public spaces for all users |
| | 6.2 | Build and maintain relationships with other landowners, local businesses, visitors and residents to develop a greater understanding of homelessness and sensitively manage the use of public spaces including those that are not owned or managed by the City |
| 7. Improve the safety and wellbeing of people sleeping rough and/or begging | 7.1 | Continue to work with health services to improve health outcomes for people sleeping rough or begging |
| | 7.2 | Provide timely information to people sleeping rough about city events, construction and changes of use that may affect them |
| | 7.3 | Continue to coordinate, implement, and improve our protocol for assisting people sleeping rough during extreme weather <i>and other emergencies</i> |
| | 7.4 | Work with partners to distribute urgent information about non-weather-related emergencies- such as disruptions to power, transport and security emergencies to people who are homeless |



Strategic priority 3:

Work smarter together to have a greater impact

Actions

| What will we do? | No. | How will we do it? |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8. Work with other governments to improve systems to reduce homelessness | 8.1 | Advocate for Participate in strategic, multi-agency and cross-government responses to preventing and reducing homelessness in Sydney with shared goals, such as the End Street Sleeping Collaboration . |
| | 8.2 | Work with other local governments, state government agencies and homelessness services on shared issues to improve responses to homelessness |
| 9. Include people with lived experience of homelessness in project design and delivery | 9.1 | Identify and maintain a diverse group of advisors with lived experience of homelessness, to inform our responses and participate in the delivery of homelessness programs |
| 10. Build the capacity of organisations and community to support people who are homeless | 10.1 | Coordinate quarterly inter-agency workshops for all organisations working with people experiencing homelessness in the inner-city to share knowledge and skills |
| | 10.2 | Provide training on understanding and working with people who are homeless to ensure City staff and other agencies can effectively respond to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness |
| 11. Increase community understanding of homelessness, and improve participation in, and support for, initiatives that prevent and respond to homelessness | 11.1 | Continue to promote volunteer opportunities and link people to initiatives that support people who are homeless in the city |
| | 11.2 | Maintain and promote a public directory of services that accept donations and provide volunteer services |
| | 11.3 | Identify opportunities to introduce models that can harness corporate and philanthropic funds to prevent and reduce homelessness including through increased housing and supports Encourage people and organisations wanting to help to adopt models of good giving - activities and donations that offer meaningful support in areas of need, and that contribute to prevention of homelessness and pathways out of homelessness |
| 12. Work with mobile voluntary services and other stakeholders to ensure services are targeted, meet the needs of service users and use public space appropriately. | 12.1 | Conduct research on mobile voluntary service users and current services |
| | 12.2 | Develop practice guidelines for voluntary services engaging with people facing disadvantage, including people who are sleeping rough in Sydney |
| | 12.3 | Work with mobile voluntary services providers and other stakeholders to reduce duplication and improve coordination |
| | 12.4 | Provide advice and facilitate training to mobile voluntary services to develop knowledge and skills for working effectively with people who are facing disadvantage, including people who are homeless |
| | 12.5 | Develop and maintain a publicly available mobile voluntary service map and directory to reduce service duplication and harness opportunities for collaboration |



6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The community, all levels of government, and the private and non-profit sectors must work together to resolve the problem of homelessness.

In delivering on the strategic priorities in this action plan, there are limits to what we can do acting alone.

Homelessness in our local area will be influenced by the action plan and other factors, including government policy settings, and economic and social conditions.

Therefore, we have two distinct roles, which are to:

- Monitor trends in homelessness in our area over time
- Measure the impact of our own actions.

Monitoring homelessness in our area

We track patterns and incidence of homelessness in our area. We also track the supply of social and affordable housing in our area. These measures are not within our control but help us to monitor trends over time.

We collect, analyse and report on several homelessness indicators, sometimes in partnership with homelessness service providers.

We also monitor, analyse and communicate key data collected by other organisations such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to understand trends in homelessness in our area.

The **Indicator Framework** (over page) includes relevant indicators with the desired trend, and where appropriate targets identified by the City of Sydney.

Evaluating our impact

We will also regularly evaluate the outcomes of the actions in this plan and report against these.

The **Indicator Framework** includes measures that help us to evaluate whether the programs and activities we undertake deliver their intended outcomes.

Reviewing our approach

We will also regularly review the actions in the plan to ensure they align with community needs. Our first review of this action plan will be conducted in 2022.

Indicator Framework

| Desired Trend/ Indicator (# = number % = percentage) (Unless stated, all outputs relate to our local area) | Indicator Type | Control / Influence / Concern |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Strategic Priority 1: Increase access to safe and sustainable housing and support, and monitor trends in inner city homelessness. | | |
| Maintain or increase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the # of people who were sleeping rough in Sydney each year that have been supported to exit homelessness the # of people were prevented from becoming homeless through a City funded service each year. | Monitor | Concern |
| Advocate for a sustainable supply of social and affordable rental housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the % of affordable rental housing dwellings to comprise 7.5% of all housing stock by 2030 Increase the % social housing dwellings in the City of Sydney to 7.5% by 2030 | Monitor | Concern |
| The City of Sydney Street Count shows a decrease in number of people sleeping rough in Sydney . | Monitor | Concern |
| Strategic Priority 2: Supporting people sleeping rough | | |
| Maintain or increase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the # of people who are sleeping rough in Sydney referred to housing and health services the # of people sleeping rough who are provided information and assistance during severe weather events | Evaluate | Influence |
| Strategic Priority 3: Work smarter together to have a greater impact | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services, agencies and community volunteers report increased or maintained skills and knowledge to respond to homelessness. Coordinated and collaborative impact responses to address and prevent homelessness involving the City of Sydney have clear measures of impact and demonstrate their effectiveness. Maintain the participation of people with lived experience of homelessness who have assisted in the delivery of projects at the City of Sydney. Mobile voluntary services report an increased understanding of homelessness, available supports, and capacity to deliver services that are safe and targeted to need. | Monitor | Concern |

Key:

- Indicator Type:** column shows where indicators are used for the purpose of monitoring homelessness, or evaluating the impact of our actions.
- Control/Influence/Concern:** indicates the City's ability to control or influence the outcome, or whether the outcome is something we are concerned about therefore monitor.

7. Glossary of key terms

Assertive outreach

A model for delivering a suite of individualised services to clients in situ. Assertive outreach is generally geared toward people sleeping rough but is also a model for supporting individuals sustain their tenancies once housed.

Begging

Individuals who solicit money for personal use from others without providing goods or services in return.

- **Passive begging**

Requesting help while sitting or standing with or without a sign. No verbal exchange.

- **Assertive begging**

Requesting help by either approaching people or asking people while sitting. It is a verbal exchange without intimidation or threat

- **Aggressive begging**

Approaching people in a threatening or intimidating manner and/or responding to refusal with abuse

Boarding houses

Traditionally buildings that provide lodgers with a principal place of residence for three months or more. Traditional boarding houses usually have rooms that accommodate one or more lodgers, as well as shared facilities such as a communal living room, bathroom, kitchen and laundry.

Couch Surfing

Refers to staying with friends, family and in temporary dwellings and moving frequently with no secure tenure.

Crisis or emergency accommodation, hostels, shelters and refuges

These are short-term supported housing options that allow people to deal with the immediate problems that led to their homelessness and move to longer-term housing.

Department of Communities and Justice

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice is response for homelessness services and managing access to social housing in NSW. Formerly known as Family and Community Services.

Functional zero

Functional Zero street homelessness is achieved when the number of people who are sleeping rough at any time is no greater than the average housing capacity for that same period.⁵⁰

Homeless

A person is considered 'homeless' when they live in an inadequate dwelling and do not have suitable accommodation alternatives; or have no tenure, or tenure that is short and not extendable, or that does not allow them to control and access space.

Housing diversity

A mix of housing types that meet the needs of socio-economically diverse communities. Including; student housing, boarding houses, affordable rental housing, social (including public) housing and private market housing.

Housing First and Street to Home models

An approach that places housing as the first and central aspect of responding to homelessness. A key feature of the approach is that there are 'no strings attached': clients do not have to participate in drug or alcohol rehabilitation programs or mental health treatment as a condition for receiving housing.

Street to Home is a model that follows the Housing First approach. Programs under this model generally use an assertive outreach approach to engage the most vulnerable rough sleepers, with a view to providing long term, stable housing.

Housing stress

A household is in 'housing stress' when it is spending more than 30 per cent of its gross income on the rent or mortgage while earning in the bottom 40 per cent of the household income range ('the 30/40 rule').

Low income

People described as being on a very low income are those earning less than 50% of the NSW or Sydney median income, depending on where they live. They include workers in a range of lower paid occupations, particularly in areas such as retail or manufacturing, as well as people earning the minimum wage or who are on an aged or disability pension or other government benefit. ^{51, 52}

Mobile Voluntary Services

A service, group or program that provides food and material support, social contact, and access to spiritual support to people who are homeless as well as other disadvantaged groups.

Services are typically volunteer led, however some services have professional oversight or are delivered by professional not for profit organisations working in the homelessness sector.

Mobile voluntary service refers to the fact that these services are not provided from a building or other fixed place but are provided from vans or similar types of vehicles.

Primary homelessness and sleeping rough

'Primary homelessness' refers to people who do not have conventional accommodation (for example, they are sleeping rough or in an improvised dwelling). 'Sleeping rough' refers to people who are sleeping in the open air (such as on the streets or in doorways, parks or bus shelters) or in buildings or other places

not designed for habitation (such as sheds, car parks or cars).

Public space

Land owned and managed by public authorities usually accessible to the public.

Public Space Liaison Officers

The Public Space Liaison Officers (PSLOs) engage people who are sleeping rough in the city, and connect them to services and support. PSLOs also engage with local residents and businesses to increase understanding and resolve problems before conflict arises.

Secondary homelessness

Refers to people who frequently move from one temporary shelter to another (such as emergency accommodation or youth refuges, or who 'couch surf').

Spiritual homelessness

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may experience separation from their traditional land, family or kinship groups as spiritual homelessness.

Supported housing accommodation

An umbrella term that describes various approaches to providing affordable housing and support services. Supported housing ~~housing~~ **accommodation** clients may need support, including for a disability or mental health issue.

Tertiary homelessness

Refers to people who are staying in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards (such as some boarding houses or caravan park).



Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney

Housing Terminology

Affordable rental housing

This is rental housing delivered and managed mainly by community housing providers for very low to moderate income earners (that is, those earning up to 120 per cent of the median household income), including key workers essential to a city's economic sustainability and social diversity. Key workers include:

- Essential service workers; for example, teachers, nurses and emergency service workers
- Administrative and other workers in the financial and professional services sectors
- Hospitality and tourism sector workers; for example, baristas and waiters
- Essential infrastructure workers; for example, bus drivers
- Cultural and creative sector workers; for example, artists and actors.

Rent for community rental housing is typically less than 30 per cent of the gross income of very low to moderate income households.

Social housing (including public housing)

This is housing for low-income earners and people experiencing disadvantage. It is accessed through the state housing application system and includes:

- Public housing owned and managed by the State Government
- Housing owned and/or managed by community housing providers
- Housing owned by the Aboriginal Housing Office.



Wentworth Park | Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney

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