

Post Exhibition - A City for All - Homelessness Action Plan

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Summary

This report seeks Council approval of the Homelessness Action Plan 2020. The Plan builds on the considerable progress of the City's Homelessness Strategy 2007–2012. The Plan sets out the City's ongoing commitment to respond to homelessness and its impact in Sydney and details the City's role in responding to homelessness.

The City recognises that no one organisation can solve homelessness. A coordinated and systemic approach is needed. This is why the City is participating in the Inner City Homelessness Taskforce and the Sydney Rough Sleeping Covid-19 Taskforce, established by the NSW Government to coordinate the response to Covid-19.

The Taskforce is working to move people sleeping on our streets into temporary accommodation to help keep them safe and prevent the spread of Covid-19. At the week beginning 8 June 2020 there were more than 180 people in temporary accommodation in Inner Sydney, where they can stay until at least the end of June 2020.

The Taskforce is also working to transition as many people as possible from temporary accommodation into stable housing with wrap around supports that help them sustain their tenancy. The NSW Government's \$36 million Together Home package announced in early June, will enable the Taskforce to adopt a housing first approach, and to help get people off the streets for good. Homes will be secured from the private market and funding will be used for wraparound services.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made clear the vulnerability of people in insecure work, short term casuals and people on temporary visas including international students among others. We don't yet understand the full extent of the social and economic impact and cannot predict the duration of the social and economic consequences, but expect that more people will become at risk of homelessness, with young people disproportionately at risk. The Draft Homelessness Action Plan provides the City the framework in which to continue to respond to and prevent homelessness in our area.

Approval was given by Council on 18 November 2019 to publicly exhibit the Draft Homelessness Action Plan for a minimum of 28 days to allow an opportunity for the community to provide feedback.

The Draft Action Plan was on public exhibition from 20 January to 2 March 2020. Twenty-five written and online submissions were received.

Consultation included online engagement, a LinkedIn post, and direct email to more than 100 homelessness sector organisations and groups, including people with lived experience of homelessness. Members of the public were able to comment through Sydney Your Say or directly to City staff.

The overall response to the Plan was positive, with several submissions acknowledging the City's leadership and ongoing commitment to addressing homelessness, and support for the City's commitment to collaborative responses to homelessness.

A range of amendments have been made to the Draft Homelessness Action Plan to address this feedback.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) note the submissions and feedback received through the public exhibition period as shown at Attachment B to the subject report;
- (B) adopt the Homelessness Action Plan, incorporating amendments as shown at Attachment A to the subject report; and
- (C) note that people and organisations who made submissions will be notified of the adoption of the Homelessness Action Plan and the City responses as shown at Attachment B to the subject report.

Attachments

Attachment A. A City for All - Homelessness Action Plan

Attachment B. Summary of Submissions and Feedback Received

Background

1. The City's Homelessness Action Plan builds on the considerable progress made through and since the City's Homelessness Strategy 2007–2012.
2. Since 2015, the City has invested in the delivery of specialist homelessness services in the inner city via the Department of Communities and Justice, contributing \$7.1million between January 2015 and June 2020, with an additional forward commitment of \$1.2 million per annum to July 2021.
3. Homelessness is a complex issue that cannot be solved by any one organisation. In recent years the City's role in responding to homelessness has shifted to include a greater focus on collaborative efforts to prevent and respond to homelessness. The City works with government agencies, local organisations, peak bodies and the community to prevent and respond to homelessness.
4. The Homelessness Action Plan outlines the City's role in responding to the complex challenges of addressing homelessness and its impact in the City of Sydney Local Government Area. It details how the City will meet the objectives of:
 - (a) preventing homelessness and reducing rough sleeping as identified in the City's Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan - A City for All; and
 - (b) facilitating access to safe and sustainable housing and support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, as identified in Sustainable Sydney 2030.
5. The Plan also provides an evidence-based framework to:
 - (a) guide decision-making around investing in activities linked to homelessness;
 - (b) support the coordination and monitoring of the City's activities linked to homelessness; and;
 - (c) help build a greater understanding in the broader community of the City's roles, responsibilities and goals in responding to homelessness and its impact.
6. The Plan is in two parts:
 - (a) Part 1 provides an overview of the context of homelessness in Sydney and outlines the City's roles, responsibilities and partnerships; and
 - (b) Part 2 outlines the City's vision and approach to responding to homelessness, identifies strategic priority areas and actions, and outlines the monitoring and evaluation framework.
7. The Plan sets out the following three strategic priorities:
 - (a) Strategic Priority 1: Monitor trends in inner city homelessness and increase access to safe and sustainable housing and support
 - (b) Strategic Priority 2: Support people sleeping rough and manage the public domain
 - (c) Strategic Priority 3: Work smarter together to have a greater impact.

8. Strategic Priority 3 recognises no one organisation can solve homelessness. A coordinated and systemic approach is needed. An example of collaborative approaches to responding to and preventing homelessness includes the City's participation in the Inner City Homelessness Taskforce and the Sydney Rough Sleeping Covid-19 Taskforce, established by the NSW Government to coordinate the response to Covid-19.
9. The Taskforce includes the Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Health, St Vincent's Health, Neami National, the City of Sydney and a range of other sector stakeholders. The City participates in a number of working groups under the Taskforce to address Aboriginal homelessness, outreach, support and care for those in temporary accommodation, food security and practical supports, and exits to stable and permanent housing with wrap around supports that help them sustain their tenancy.
10. The Taskforce has been working to move people currently sleeping on our streets into accommodation to help keep them safe and prevent the spread of Covid-19, and protect rough sleepers from infection. Many rough sleepers have pre-existing health conditions which place them at greater risk.
11. Assertive outreach patrols include housing staff, specialist caseworkers and health professionals have been engaging with rough sleepers every day in Sydney, and an extra 300 hotel and motel rooms have been booked to provide accommodation for people sleeping rough.
12. As at 8 June 2020, more than 180 people are in temporary accommodation in Inner Sydney, with rooms available until at least the end of June 2020.
13. In early June, the NSW Government announced the new \$36 million Together Home project, which will deliver the largest housing first response dedicated to rough sleepers in NSW history. The package is designed to help get people off the streets for good. Approximately half of the \$36 million will go towards securing homes from the private market and the other half will be spent on providing wraparound services including mental health, drug and alcohol treatment and linking up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
14. The actions in the plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure they align with community needs, including reviewing our responses to homelessness during the Covid-19 pandemic and aftermath. The first formal review of this action plan will be conducted in 2022.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

15. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. The Draft Homelessness Action Plan articulates how the city will meet the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 8 - Housing for a Diverse Population
 - (i) Objective 8.3: The supply of safe and sustainable social housing in the inner city is available for those who need it. The Draft Homelessness Action Plan articulates the City's role in advocating for an increased supply of social housing.
 - (ii) Objective 8.4: People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have access to safe and sustainable housing and support
 - (b) Direction 10 - Implementation through Effective Governance and Partnerships. The Draft Homelessness Action Plan recognises that homelessness cannot be solved alone and commits the City to working collaboratively with many stakeholders, including the community, businesses and all levels of government to assist people who are homeless to access safe and sustainable housing and support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Social / Cultural / Community

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

Economic

17. Maintaining and promoting Sydney's reputation as a welcoming, safe and inclusive place to live, visit and to do business will help to increase economic prosperity, to create a thriving, globally connected community.

Budget Implications

18. The delivery of the Homelessness Action Plan is largely deliverable within current business arrangements, sometimes requiring a shift in focus or realignment of existing resources, such as during the City's homelessness response during the Covid-19 pandemic.
19. Current funding contributions to specialist homelessness services via the Department of Communities and Justice (formerly Family and Community Services) are in place until June 2021.
20. The Covid-19 pandemic has made clear the vulnerability of people in insecure work, short term casuals and people on temporary visas including international students among others. We don't yet understand the full extent of the social and economic impact and cannot predict the duration of the social and economic consequences, but expect that more people will become at risk of homelessness, with young people disproportionately at risk.

21. Responding to and preventing homelessness will remain a core priority for the City as part of our Community Recovery Plan.
22. Any need or opportunity for investment in major initiatives to respond to emerging need as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic would be subject to budget processes and Council approval.

Relevant Legislation

23. Local Government Act 1993

Public Consultation

24. The draft Homelessness Action Plan was placed on public exhibition from 17 January 2020 to 2 March 2020. Submissions could be made in writing or via the City of Sydney website online survey form, telephone and email.
25. The draft Homelessness Action Plan was distributed via direct email to more than 100 organisations in the Homelessness sector inviting comment. Key stakeholders invited include:
 - (a) People with a lived experience of homelessness, including the City's Homelessness Advisors and the Street Care members from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre;
 - (b) the Department of Communities and Justice;
 - (c) Homelessness New South Wales;
 - (d) Organisations in the homelessness sector that the City regularly partners with though the Homelessness Assertive Response Team and Homelessness Outreach Support Team, including NSW Health, St Vincent's Homeless Health, NSW Police, NSW Births Deaths and Marriages, Homeless Persons Legal Service, and Partners in Recovery;
 - (e) Specialist Homelessness Services operating in our area including Launchpad Youth Community, Innari Housing, NEAMI National, HammondCare, Mission Australia, Youth Off the Streets and St Vincent De Paul Support Services;
 - (f) Community and Affordable Housing providers including Bridge Housing, City West Housing, Aboriginal Housing Corporation, Evolve Housing, Link Housing, St George Community Housing, Women's Housing Company and Home Ground Real Estate;
 - (g) Key community organisations including the Wayside Chapel, Exodus Foundation, Hopestreet, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, The Mercy Foundation and Jewish House, and;
 - (h) Domestic and family violence services including Domestic Violence NSW and Women and Girls Emergency Centre.

26. The draft Homelessness Action Plan featured in the City of Sydney's Sydney Your Say 12 February 2020 e-news with 4,064 subscribers.
27. The draft Homelessness Action Plan was available for download on the City of Sydney website. It was available as a PDF, an accessible word document, and an Easy Read version.
28. During the consultation period, the webpages were visited 1,145 times, and there were 102 documents downloaded.
29. A LinkedIn post was placed on the City's LinkedIn page on 30 January 2020 to promote the consultation. This post performed well with 99 clicks and 38 reactions. The post was shared by stakeholders which helped to further amplify the reach. A tweet was also published on the City's Twitter channel, which was viewed 9,365 times, and was engaged with by 35 people.
30. Over the public exhibition period, the City received a total of 25 submissions comprising two emails and 23 submission surveys. These included:
 - (a) ten submissions from individuals not wishing to be named;
 - (b) two submissions from Woolloomooloo residents and one from Professor Mark Brown, a physician working with Mission Australia;
 - (c) one submission from a Woolloomooloo business, and;
 - (d) eleven submissions from the following organisations and groups;
 - (i) Bobby Goldsmith Foundation;
 - (ii) Bridge Housing;
 - (iii) HammondCare;
 - (iv) Homelessness NSW;
 - (v) Jesuit Refugee Service Australia;
 - (vi) Link Housing;
 - (vii) Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks Public Housing Tenants Group;
 - (viii) Newtown Neighbourhood Centre;
 - (ix) Property Industry Foundation;
 - (x) The Haymarket Foundation; and
 - (xi) Youth off The Streets.

31. Face to face briefings and feedback sessions were provided to the City's Homelessness Advisors and the Street Care members from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre.
32. A summary of all feedback received and the City's response is provided at Attachment B.

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