



Homelessness Policy

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Scope

City of Parramatta Council's Homelessness Policy recognises that the number of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the local government area (LGA) is growing. This is a concern not only for those individuals affected, but also for the wider community including residents, workers, services, visitors and businesses.

Homelessness takes a range of forms. Some people may have become suddenly homeless requiring crisis accommodation, while others may be chronically homeless, sleeping rough in public places over a long period of time or 'couch surfing' between friends, family and acquaintances. Many are at risk struggling to maintain private tenancies.

This policy outlines the principles Council will apply to its services and activities which seek to minimise homelessness in the Parramatta LGA.

Purpose

The aim of the Homelessness Policy is to minimise homelessness in the Parramatta LGA, and in doing so:

- Improve the wellbeing of those at risk and those who are homeless, and;
- Support the continued prosperity of the City for the benefit of the wider business and residential community

The objectives of this policy focus on driving actions that together will:

- Contribute to preventing homelessness – Prevent those at risk from tipping over into homelessness
- Support and work with the local homelessness sector – Build the capacity locally to break the cycle for homeless people
- Maintain and promote use of public spaces and assets for the whole community including assisting people off the streets, and
- Champion regional planning and partnerships – Encourage collaborative evidence based actions to combat homelessness by government, businesses and service providers.

Homelessness Policy		
Owner: Manager Social and Community Services	Area: Social & Community Services	POL No: 324
Date of Commencement: 2011	Approval Authority: Council	Date Approved: 10/2017
Amendment 2	Date of Next Review: 2019	Review Period: 2



Definitions

Homelessness

(from Australian Bureau of Statistics and developed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2001))

Primary homelessness – applies when a person lives on the street, sleeps in parks, squats in derelict buildings, or uses cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter. (Rough sleepers fall into this category of homelessness).

Secondary homelessness – is used to describe people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. Secondary homelessness applies to people using emergency accommodation, youth refuges or women’s refuges, people residing temporarily with relatives or with friends (because they have no accommodation of their own), and people using boarding houses on an occasional or intermittent basis (up to 12 weeks).

Tertiary homelessness – is used to describe people who live in premises where they don’t have the security of a lease guaranteeing them accommodation, nor access to basic private facilities (such as a private bathroom, kitchen or living space). It can include people living in boarding houses on a medium to long term basis (more than 13 weeks) or in caravan parks. Increasingly, in Greater Sydney’s unaffordable housing market, it also applies to people paying well above 30% of their income in rent who are at risk of homelessness.

Rough Sleepers

Rough sleepers are people who sleep or are bedded down in the open air. They may also be sleeping in buildings or other places not designed for habitation, such as sheds, carparks, derelict boats and so on.

Policy

City of Parramatta Council recognises that access to secure, appropriate and affordable housing is not only a basic requirement for all people, but also an essential component of an inclusive, dynamic and sustainable city.

Diverse, multi-disciplinary strategies from multiple levels of Government and other stakeholders are required to address this growing and often complex issue.

Council’s contribution to addressing homelessness will be guided by the nine policy principles outlined below.

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1. Right to Housing

Council recognises that access to affordable, secure, appropriate and accessible housing is a basic requirement for all people and an essential ingredient of a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable community. Council is committed to formulating policy to address homelessness, housing needs and the provision of diverse housing options.

2. Support for Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Groups

Council recognises that people who are homeless are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our community. Council further acknowledges that the population who are homeless have higher rates of trauma, mental and physical illnesses, substance dependence, gambling additions, intellectual disabilities and are likely to be victims of violence. Council has a statutory and moral obligation to address and advocate for the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged people within the community.

3. Use of Public Spaces

Council recognises the NSW State Government Protocol for Homeless People in Public Spaces. Council acknowledges the rights of all members of the community to use public spaces, whilst also recognising their responsibility towards other members of the community who have the right to live in a safe and peaceful environment.

4. Right to Participate

Council recognises and encourages all members of the community to participate in cultural and community activities and events. Council also realises that some vulnerable and socially excluded people within its population may need special assistance to enable them to participate and experience greater social inclusion.

5. Supporting City Prosperity

Council acknowledges that the presence of visibly homeless people has the potential to impact on current and prospective resident, business, and visitor perceptions of the city. Council is committed to affecting change to improve the lives of homeless people themselves, and to also ensure the ongoing economic, environmental and social prosperity of the city and its various communities.

Council further acknowledges that 'managing or servicing' homelessness is very costly to local communities, and that planning to solve people's homelessness, through permanent supportive and affordable housing, is a significantly more cost effective strategy long term.

6. Taking a Regional Approach

Council recognises that Parramatta City is a large employment, shopping and services centre, and as a result is a significant drawcard location for the people of Western Sydney. Council is committed to working with a Western Sydney perspective and seeks regional partners to ensure homeless people are supported appropriately within their local communities. Further, Council seeks consistency and continuity between the policies and actions being taken regionally.

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7. Advocacy

Council recognises its responsibility to advocate on behalf of all members of its community. Specifically, it recognises the need to advocate to other levels of government to reduce the incidence of homelessness within the community through the provision of appropriate State and Federal Government provided or funded services and effective housing, employment and social services policies.

8. Partnerships and Service Coordination

Council understands that the provision of services and the empowerment of the homeless and socially disadvantaged is best provided when people who are homeless, workers and agencies act cooperatively. Through stronger partnerships, and consultation with service consumers to encourage co-ordination of services and activities, Council seeks seamless services and effective exits from homelessness for people in the local government area. Importantly, Council acknowledges local private businesses and commercial enterprises as key partners in the fight against homelessness, and believes they have much to contribute and gain in creating local solutions to local homelessness.

9. Key Roles for other levels of Government

Council recognises the key roles of other levels of Government in addressing the needs of people who are homeless through:

- Social Housing
- Affordable Housing and Housing Relief Services
- Emergency, short and medium term accommodation
- Income support
- Employment and training assistance
- Health (including mental health) services
- Services for people with a substance or gambling dependency
- Services for people with a disability
- Children's, youth and other community services
- Justice system (including police, courts, corrective services)

History

Revision of 2011 PCC Policy made in June 2017

REFERENCES	
POLICIES	
ATTACHMENTS	

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