

# Policy - Homelessness



### Objective

This policy is to define the approach of the City of Armadale to the issue of primary homelessness in the community.

### Scope

This policy applies to City staff and contractors who are delivering services in the community who come into contact with people at risk of, or are experiencing, primary homelessness. It also applies to how City staff support external organisations to deliver services to people at risk of, or are experiencing, primary homelessness. This guides all enforcement measures considered to be in the best interests of public health and safety, including the person experiencing homelessness.

### Policy Definitions and Terms

#### *Homelessness:*

The Australian Bureau of Statistics define a person as homeless if they do not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to, have control of, and access to space for social relations.

This includes persons living in; improvised dwellings, tents, sleeping out, in cars, buses, trains, and buildings not designed for housing (rough sleeping); supported accommodation for the homeless; temporarily with other households; boarding houses; other temporary lodging; and living in severely crowded dwellings.

#### *Primary Homelessness*

People in the sleeping rough or the sleeping out category are considered to be experiencing **primary homelessness**. This policy is focused on addressing this category of homelessness.

### Policy

#### Introduction

##### *Causes of homelessness*

The main drivers of adult homelessness are family and domestic violence, leaving prison, low incomes, housing affordability or access, physical or mental health problems, and relationship breakdown.

Risk of homelessness is increasing for low income older person households, particularly older women, which is driven by a lack of social housing, high rents, and absence of retirement savings.

Homeless children are also a large and growing group; they become homeless with their families due to poverty or because of family violence or abuse in the home. Early experiences of homelessness are highly correlated with adult homelessness. Children placed in out-of-home care have a much higher incidence of homelessness after exiting care than for other young Australians.

There is an overrepresentation of Aboriginal people seeking homelessness and social housing services compared with non-Aboriginal people. This relates to complex and interrelated factors including exposure to family violence, substance disorders, unemployment, low education levels, and poor health. These factors are both contributors to, and outcomes of, insecure housing circumstances

## **Approach**

The City of Armadale will take a compassionate approach to the issue of primary homelessness by its support and when possible, coordination of the relevant departments, sector organisations and service agencies involved in this area. City staff and its contractors who interact with people experiencing **primary homelessness** will do so with an attitude of empathy and a disposition to assist.

It is not illegal to beg or sleep rough. However there are some circumstances where the WA Police, the Rangers and Health Services can, using their discretion, deal with associated issues under their respective legislation.

The City will:

### *Direct services*

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable community members who access the Champion Centre, including people experiencing primary homelessness, through the informal drop-in service offered, the Food Relief Program, direct access to external organisations based at the Centre and referrals to other local service providers offering emergency relief.

### *City of Armadale employees and contractors*

- Proactively provide options to people experiencing primary homelessness for example:
  - Provide a list of services available including accommodation options and organisations providing food/emergency relief services including the City's Champion Centre
  - Contact relevant departments who will take a collaborative approach to assist further if required and if possible, for example, making calls to support services on behalf of the person
- For issues that are deemed to be a potential health and/or safety risk (for example, dogs belonging to the person but classified as 'stray', fires the person may use to keep warm, littering, public drinking or engagement in anti-social behaviour), staff may notify the City's Rangers and/or the WA Police for assistance. The implementation of local and State law may be required.

### *Advocacy*

- Align with the WA Government's Strategy on Homelessness where possible

### *Support to sector organisations*

Provide in-principle support to services assisting individuals to transition into housing and to maintain housing

- Provide financial assistance to organisations providing food/emergency relief services through Community Grants and contracts
- Assist organisations seeking to provide services for local people experiencing primary homelessness with the allocation of a suitable location and promotion of the service
- Lead the coordination of the South East Emergency Relief Forum

Applicable legislation

Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public Health Act 2016</li><li>• Dog Act 1976</li><li>• Litter Act 1979</li><li>• Caravan and Camping Grounds Act 1995</li></ul>
Regulation	
Local law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City of Armadale Property Local Law</li><li>• Activities and Trading in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law</li></ul>
Policy	

Delegation of Power

- NA

Link to influencing strategies or plans

- NA

Link to procedure

- NA

Other implications

*Financial/Budget Implications*

- Staff resources

*Asset Management Implications*

*Environmental Implications*

*Occupational Safety and Health Implications*

Administrative information

Adopted on	19 April 2021 – CS9/4/21
Reviewed or amended	
Responsible department	Community Development