



**CITY OF
CANNING**

Homelessness Plan 2021 - 2024

Introduction

The City of Canning recognises that homelessness is a complex and growing issue affecting people in Canning, and more broadly across Australia. The issues that result in homelessness are complex and varied. Poverty and the inability to afford adequate housing are central to the cause of homelessness. The lives of those facing homelessness may be burdened by neglect, abuse, poverty, disability, substance abuse, mental illness, and social isolation. Without the right support, breaking the cycle of homelessness is near impossible.

Homelessness takes a range of forms – from those who have suddenly become homeless, to those who have been sleeping rough in public places over a long period of time, or those who “couch surf” with friends, family or acquaintances.

No one sphere of Government or service provider has the capacity nor the mandate to address the contributing factors of homelessness. A multi-disciplinary, collaborative approach across government, not-for-profits, community, business and those with lived experience is required to address this growing and often complex issue.

The sharing of knowledge, resources and programming across all sectors will go a long way to maximising the provision of services available to support our community, and to make a meaningful impact on the quality of life for people experiencing homelessness.

The City of Canning is committed to working in **partnership** to prevent and respond to the challenges of homelessness.

Understanding homelessness

While there is no internationally agreed definition of homelessness, there is common agreement that “rough sleeping” (i.e. unsheltered homelessness), as well as emergency, temporary or transitional accommodation provided to those who would otherwise be without shelter are contexts of homelessness.

In Australia, a ‘cultural’ definition has been widely used since the early 1990s, which identifies three tiers to homelessness:

1. **Primary homelessness** experienced by people without conventional accommodation (i.e. sleeping rough or improvised dwellings) Note: this tier relates to those most “at risk” and as such would be considered highest priority for City support.
2. **Secondary homelessness** experienced by people who frequently move from one temporary shelter to another (i.e. emergency accommodation, youth refuges, “couch surfing”).
3. **Tertiary homelessness** experienced by people staying in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards (i.e. boarding houses and caravan parks).¹

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) uses the following statistical definition:

“A person without suitable accommodation alternatives is considered homeless if 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

¹ C. Chamberlain and D. Mackenzie, “Understanding Contemporary Homelessness: Issues of Definition and Meaning”, *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*, November 1992.

- does not allow them to have control of, and access to, space for social relations”.²

In 2018, the Department for Communities published a report – *Homelessness in Western Australia: A review of the research and statistical evidence*, researched and delivered by the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia. This report identified a number of drivers and causal factors that often present in populations of homeless peoples. These include (but are not limited to):

- Trauma and PTSD
- Mental health issues
- Substance use problems
- Domestic and Family violence
- Interactions with the justice system

It has been identified that these factors are more often than not co-occurring and/or interconnected. Trauma, substance use and physical and mental illness often occur before, during and after periods of homelessness. It is similar with interactions with the justice system in that there is research to indicate that there are high rates of ex-prisoners without a secure home, but also that many experiencing homelessness (particularly as it relates to Primary homelessness) are more vulnerable to criminal activities and interacting with Police. Domestic violence is the other key contributing factor with numerous qualitative studies and a wide range of statistical data validating the link between domestic and family violence and homelessness.³

In addition to the above identified individual-impact drivers that often relate to life events or experiences, there are also structural determinants of homelessness, which relate to the conditions in the socio-economic landscape which enable people to access the resources they need to maintain secure housing. These resources include:

- Financial;
- Educational;
- Employment; and
- Factors in the housing market that make housing more or less affordable.

This is where the provision of services intersects with affordable housing options – i.e. the State Government’s Housing first approach, with wrap around service support if required, is critical in the prevention of homelessness. For low income earners, access to affordable housing, supported by access to education, employment and financial support services will have an effect at both the structural level and in relation to individual-level antecedents to homelessness.⁴

To prevent and/or end homelessness, there is a recognised need that supporting people who have been homeless or are at risk of homelessness requires both access to secure accommodation as well as addressing causes of homelessness through ongoing wrap-around supports.

Homelessness in Canning

In March 2018, the ABS released homelessness estimates based on the 2016 Census of Population and Housing. At this time, the City’s population count was 90,184, with the ABS identifying 334 of them as experiencing homelessness, or 0.37% of our total population. Of the 334 individuals, seven people

² ABS, 2012

³ The Centre for Social Impact, *Homelessness in Western Australia: A review of the research and statistical evidence*, prepared for the Department of Communities, 2018, p.38

⁴ *Homelessness in Western Australia*, p.39

identified as “sleeping rough”, 19 were living in supported accommodation, 96 in boarding houses, 46 individuals were temporarily staying with other households, and 167 identified as living in “severely” crowded dwellings.

The City’s own understandings align with the ABS data as it relates to those sleeping rough. The City’s Community Safety team have anecdotal evidence of dealing with between seven and ten known incidents of “rough sleepers” each year. There have been two persistent “rough sleepers” in the district who, despite the City’s best efforts, refuse to connect with support agencies. Community calls received by the City often relate to people sleeping rough, with a mix of those calling showing concern for the individual’s welfare, and others that automatically assume the presence of a “rough sleeper” will result in crime or antisocial behaviour and are seeking to have the individual moved on.

Data relating “severely crowded” dwellings is complicated, with no single standard or measure applied. The common definition of “severely crowded” is a dwelling that needs four or more extra bedrooms to house the people living there, with the accepted principal being no more than two adults in any one bedroom. Research indicates that overcrowding often occurs in relation to complex family relationships, with ABS data identifying higher prevalence of overcrowding occurring mainly in families, extended families or multiple family contexts. Such household arrangements are often seen in migrant populations, with multiple generations living in one household. Student housing is also often identified as sites of overcrowding. The figures relating to overcrowding are thus perhaps, not surprising.

Currently there are a number of homelessness support services available within the Canning community, such as financial counselling, tenancy support programs (which assist individuals and families that are unable to meet their rent payments) and a number of food relief services. There are also a number of emergency and community housing options, including the City’s own Wilson Retirement Village and Caprice Place Units, which operate as over 55s affordable housing.

While frontline City staff have received training on understanding and responding to homelessness, and the City’s Ranger and Community Safety Service staff are all specifically trained to deal with those sleeping rough in a supportive and compassionate manner, at present the City lacks any clear protocol for guiding staff on the process for reporting rough sleepers, or tracking referrals to support agencies. The City does maintain an up-to-date register of services for referring those in need, and has a close working relationship with a number of these providers, particularly in the Youth Services space.

The City refers those in need to appropriate services, and is focused on advocating for prevention elements such as financial counselling services and delivering community learning programs and activities which encourage social engagement and connection. Through the City’s Youth Services program, the City also provides direct support for “at risk” youth, through varied targeted programs, direct 1:1 support, mentoring, and referrals.

The City is also an active participant in the Cannington District Leadership Group (CDLG), which is responsible for developing and leading on-the-ground responses to achieve local outcomes. Membership of the group include representatives from State and Commonwealth government, local government, WA Police (WAPOL), the community services sector etc. At present, there is a key focus on supporting regional collaboration and coordination to address homelessness, particularly as it relates to youth homelessness, as well as affordable housing and accommodation, community safety and mental wellbeing. The CDLG is one of the City’s key avenues for working collaboratively to address issues of homelessness.

Principles

The City of Canning will align its efforts to end homelessness with the State Government's 10 Year Strategy on Homelessness – *All Paths Lead to a Home*.

Recognising that responsibility for ending homelessness does not sit with any one entity, we will look to collaborate with Government, the community services sector, community, business and those with lived experience.

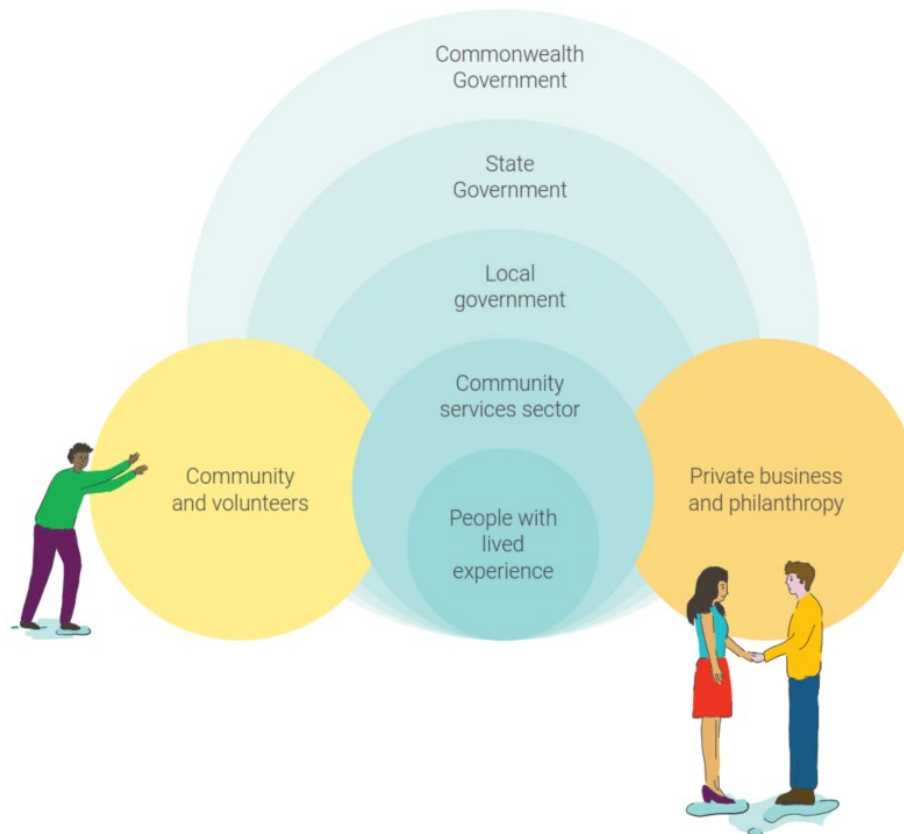


IMAGE 1 – ALL PATHS LEAD TO A HOME

COLLABORATION WILL AFFECT THE GREATEST POSITIVE CHANGE

In line with the State's 10 Year Strategy, we recognise that Local Government can play a pivotal role towards ending homelessness. The City of Canning will contribute in the following areas:

- Making information available on local services and supports;
- Ensuring frontline staff are informed and supported to interact with people experiencing homelessness and that staff have adequate knowledge to make direct referrals to identified service providers;
- Work with Police to support and refer people experiencing homelessness to local services and supports;
- Coordinate volunteer and charity groups seeking to support those at risk of or experiencing homelessness; and

- Utilising land and assets to create places that are inclusive and can support vulnerable people.⁵

Vision

The City of Canning is committed to working in partnership with all tiers of Government, the community services sector and our local community to prevent and respond to the challenges of homelessness. We will work collaboratively to ensure that people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness are given every opportunity to improve their circumstances.

Actions identified within this plan will be achieved through collaborative action, with a focus on the City's role in building understanding; coordinating supports and opportunities for social connection; and advocating for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

In line with the above Principles, this plan:

- articulates our role as a Local Government in addressing homelessness;
- identifies opportunities for collaborative action;
- provides strategic direction for the City in addressing homelessness and the often accompanying complexities; and
- guides the City's role as an advocate at the State and National level.

⁵ Department of Communities, *All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030*, 2020, p.19 *All Paths Lead to a Home*, p.19

Action Plan 2021-2022 – 2023-2024

1. Build Capacity and Understanding

Objective		Action	Timeline	Measure
1.1	We are working collaboratively to address issues relating to homelessness and in support of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.	a) Maintain active participation in the District Leadership Group as the primary interagency network in the South East Corridor for collaborative action.	2021-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in a minimum of 5 meetings annually.
1.2	We have strong relationships with the community services sector, WA Police, Government and peak bodies.	a) Identify key service providers, agencies and community groups operating within Canning and the South East corridor. b) Develop a stakeholder management plan. c) Facilitate opportunities for key stakeholders to come together and share opportunities and issues. d) Continue the City's strong working relationship with WA Police through regular meetings and information sharing.	2021 2021 2021-2024 2021-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder management plan developed and implemented. One stakeholder meeting hosted per quarter.
1.3	We have a sound understanding of inter-agency interrelationships and actively encourage increased collaboration.	a) Map services within the South East Corridor and the gaps in service/support provision. b) Maintain up-to-date service directory of local service providers that support people at risk or experiencing homelessness and promote existing directories.	2021 2021-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services are mapped and updated annually. Service directory is developed and updated annually.

		c) Hold networking events for interagency connection and collaboration	2021-2024	
1.4	City Staff demonstrate compassion in the management of homeless people and rough sleepers throughout Canning.	<p>a) Establish a Protocol for guiding staff in supporting those experiencing homelessness. This protocol will detail a set of definitions and accepted terminology relating to homelessness; outline how we capture data on those at risk or experiencing homelessness; how we track referrals; and detail how we manage the belongings / camp sites of those sleeping rough etc.</p> <p>b) Implement a tracking mechanism for service referrals.</p> <p>c) Provide training for all frontlines staff to better understand and connect with those at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.</p> <p>d) Develop a “By Name List” of individuals sleeping rough, so as to better understand the individual circumstances and needs of those experiencing homelessness and better connect these individuals with appropriate supports.</p>	<p>2021</p> <p>2021</p> <p>Annually or as needed.</p> <p>2021 and then update as required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocol Developed and staff training provided. • Referrals are tracked and data maintained. • “By Name List” developed and staff utilising information to liaise with those in need of support.
1.5	Local community groups and businesses have a greater awareness of the contributing factors of homelessness and are able to connect with those experiencing homelessness.	a) Develop a dedicated Communications Plan that aims to increase community awareness and reduces the stigma associated with homelessness.	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training held with businesses. • 85% positive response rate to developing an improved understanding and more positive

		<p>b) Partner with service agencies to offer training opportunities for local community groups and small business to better understand and connect with those experiencing homelessness.</p>		<p>attitude towards people experiencing homelessness.</p>
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2. Prevention and Support

Objective		Action	Timeline	Measure
2.1	There is a greater internal and community awareness and understanding of the causes/ triggers leading to homelessness and support services that are available.	<p>a) Provide links to online information about homelessness, which includes material on causes and indicators for early identification and available services.</p> <p>b) Maintain up-to-date service provider referral list.</p>	<p>2021</p> <p>Update annually</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual participation in Homelessness Week. • Communications Plan developed and implemented.
2.2	The City provides opportunities that support the wellbeing of the Community and fosters connection.	<p>a) Continue to provide free services to the community, such as libraries and youth Centres/hubs.</p> <p>b) Provide learning opportunities targeting housing and homelessness issues, including tenancy rights, financial literacy and basic life skills that target individuals and families at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>c) Support partnered initiatives that address prevention and early intervention of homelessness.</p> <p>d) Support the delivery of partnered community programs that foster social connection.</p> <p>e) Implement Neighbourhood Welcome Points at each City library.</p>	<p>2021-2024</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>2021-2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Learning Programs around health and wellbeing delivered quarterly. • Development and delivery of targeted programs relating to tenancy rights, financial literacy etc. • Library Neighbourhood Welcome Points implemented with 85% customer satisfaction rate.
2.3	The City provides tailored supports for vulnerable cohorts	<p>a) Establish one stop youth hub providing integrated specialist services.</p> <p>b) Support community access to culturally sensitive support services.</p>	<p>2021</p> <p>2021-2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Hub fully operational with integrated services by 30 June 2021.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Hillview Multicultural Centre and support services to meet identified need.
2.4	Support an affordable and effective housing system.	<p>a) Encourage partnerships with affordable housing developers for future development in the City or on City owned land.</p> <p>b) Continue to provide affordable housing for financially vulnerable over-55s at Wilson Retirement Village and Caprice Place.</p>	<p>2021-2024</p> <p>2021-2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City gives due consideration to proposals by affordable housing developers.

3. Advocacy

Objective		Action	Timeline	Measure
3.1	Advocate on homelessness and rough sleeping matters to support positive and effective outcomes.	<p>a) Research and understand causal factors, impacts, and opportunities for those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>b) Ensure that in reviewing current, or developing new, Council policies, local laws, procedures etc. consideration is given to the impact they may have on those experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>c) Advocate for increased wrap around services within the South East Corridor.</p>	<p>2021</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research report prepared. • City policies reflective of consideration of and for homelessness.
3.2	Engage the Canning community to better understand homelessness and promote positive responses.	a) Support programs, services and initiatives that challenge negative stereotypes and myths, and foster understanding.	2021-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional campaigns to be delivered during Homelessness Week (August) and Anti-Poverty Week (October), with minor messaging throughout the year via social media.
3.3	Advocate for affordable and social housing and for adequate wrap around support to be made available to those in need.	<p>a) Research and understand latest trends and opportunities in the social housing space.</p> <p>b) Advocate for increased social housing across the South East Corridor.</p>	2021-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research report prepared. • Appropriate advocacy avenues pursued and documented.