

## Local Government Homelessness Knowledge Hub Case Study



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Communities**

Submitted by **City of Mandurah**  
Case Study **Collaborating on Common Ground**



## **Background**

In past years, the City of Mandurah has noted an increasing number of rough sleepers as determined through reports from service providers, rough sleeper counts and the By-Name List. In March 2022, the City reported 68 people sleeping rough and 76 people experiencing other sorts of homelessness.

The City of Mandurah has evidenced a strong and sustained commitment to ending homelessness with key initiatives including coordination of the Peel Street Present Network, development of the inaugural [Mandurah Homelessness & Street Presence Strategy](#), support of Peel Community Kitchen, support of Peel Community Showers, commencement of Homelessness Assertive Outreach, involvement in the Housing First initiative with City of Rockingham, support for Social Housing Economic Recovery Package (SHERP) funding, and advocacy efforts.

The City is excited to be working with the State Government which has committed \$28.1m to construct [Mandurah's Common Ground](#). It will comprise up to 50 self-contained apartments located at 81-87A Allnutt Street, Mandurah. The accommodation is designed for adults, with 50 per cent of units reserved for those who have experienced chronic homelessness and 50 per cent for low-income earners. The purpose and principles of Common Ground can be found [here](#).

The building will include communal areas, on-site support services and commercial space. The Department of Communities will own the asset which will be leased to a Community Housing Organisation to manage the property and a Community Service Provider to provide on-site case management support service to tenants. Common Ground is expected to be operational by the end of 2024.

The City's Director Place and Community was appointed to the Common Ground Project Board (later became Project Advisory Group) which provides strategic direction and oversight of Common Ground projects. The Board included a variety of stakeholders from State Government, Federal Government, City of Perth, City of Mandurah and Shelter WA and met as required, generally bi-monthly.

This Case Study outlines the collaboration between the State Government (project owner and lead) and the City of Mandurah in relation to Common Ground.

## **Case Evaluation**

A key pillar of the Mandurah Homelessness & Street Presence Strategy is accessible accommodation with a goal to "increase the stock and variety of accommodation options" locally. Common Ground is included in the City's Strategy with an action to "Advocate for Common Ground".

Originating in New York, 'Common Ground' is a model of purpose-built permanent, supportive housing for adults who have experienced chronic homelessness or are low-income earners. The Common Ground model has been successfully adopted in other Australian cities and centres on a 'Housing First' approach where people are placed in housing as a first priority and provided with wrap-around supports.

Common Ground is a key component of the [All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030](#), which aims to improve outcomes for Western Australians experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

## ***Advocacy***

In 2020, the State Government announced a commitment to deliver two Common Grounds, with the first to be located in East Perth. The City of Mandurah had been on a journey to address homelessness for several years and was acutely aware of the need for increased local housing options. The City of Mandurah was eager to be selected as the second location for Common Ground.

The City of Mandurah undertook direct advocacy to the State Government in support of securing the second Common Ground, including:

- A Council resolution at its meeting on 28 July 2020 that resolved a variety of matters in relation to homelessness, including advocating support for Common Ground to be located in Mandurah.
- Writing to the Minister in support of Common Ground.
- Common Ground was included in the City's Mandurah Homelessness & Street Presence Strategy 2021-2023, specifically action "1.2. Increase range of suitable accommodation options" with an action to "Advocate for Common Ground".

This layered approach to advocacy demonstrated a united voice from Council, administration and the local community services sector who all were in favour of Common Ground in Mandurah.

In September 2020, the City was advised it was shortlisted, and in December 2020 the Premier and Minister for Community Services issued a joint media statement announcing that Mandurah was chosen by the State Government as the location for the second Common Ground.

## ***Challenges and Issues***

### Challenge 1 – Site Selection

Whilst Mandurah was announced as the second Common Ground location, the exact site had not been determined. In the period between February and June 2021, the City assisted the Department of Communities to find a suitable site. Informal site visits were held on locations owned by the Crown, local government, private and community. The City was not involved in determining the criteria, analysing or selecting the preferred site. Ultimately, the State Government selected land that was owned in freehold by the City, and Council resolved to sell the land.

### Challenge 2 – Some Community Discontent

In September 2021, the Minister for Community Services **announced** the Mandurah Common Ground site to be located on the corner of Allnutt Street and Dower Street, Mandurah. The site was selected because of a variety of factors that contribute to the success of the housing model, including access to main transport nodes and access to health and other services.

Community information sessions were held soon after the announcement, with residents expressing interest, concern and some deep opposition to Common Ground, mainly in relation to the height and scale of the five-storey building within a landscape of mainly single storey homes; safety and security issues; traffic and parking concerns; and potential issues associated with attracting an increased number of people experiencing homelessness to Mandurah. Importantly, Common Ground matched exactly the mixed-use, high-density zoning for the site that the City had been trying to attract consistent with the City's Inner City Precinct Plan endorsed in 2011.

Furthermore, some residents were concerned they were not consulted about the selection of the site, or sale of land by the City. The City's Director Place and Community attended community meetings and helped to

provide information from a local government perspective, including that whilst Common Ground was a State Government project, it had full support from the City of Mandurah.

### ***Building Design – Place Strategy***

In December 2021, Gresley Abas Architects was appointed by the Department of Communities to provide design and consultancy services for the construction of Common Ground Mandurah. It was recognised that the Common Ground was designed specifically and uniquely for Mandurah, not a ‘cookie cutter’ of the East Perth facility.

Hatch RobertsDay (Town Planner) led the built form stakeholder engagement process supported to inform Gresley Abas Architects’ concept design. Key stakeholders include residents in close proximity to the site, local Aboriginal community, people with lived experience of homelessness, people with disability, Street Present Network, local service providers, and the broader community of Mandurah. The group discussed a vast range of issues such as whether:

- pets would be allowed.
- the building would have concierge or security.
- Wi-Fi would be supplied in every apartment.
- commercial offerings would be on-site and what kind they would be.

Through a myriad of operation questions, the groups focused on a simple question: “What would help make Common Ground feel like home?”

A Vision Forum with local community residents and a Collaborative Design Forum with key stakeholders, including the City of Mandurah, was held in March 2022, to input into the design to align with community needs. In May 2022, an additional community information session was held to update the community about how their ideas helped shaped the final designs. For example, residents felt having nature, greenery and a front garden was an important aspect of living in Mandurah. This is reflected in the Common Ground design.

The findings and feedback from the stakeholder engagement are reflected in the Mandurah Common Ground Place Strategy which can be accessed [here](#).

### ***Operational Model***

The capital works is only one part of the project. Once built, Common Ground needs to operate sustainably and with functionality. Principles were established to help guide the project, with an aim to create a home that is welcoming and friendly; promotes wellbeing, dignity and joy; is safe and secure with privacy respected; is sociable and neighbourly; promotes autonomy, choice and control; and is resilient and durable.

The Department of Communities engaged Ernst and Young (EY) to refine Common Ground’s operating model and facilitate a targeted stakeholder engagement process for both Common Grounds. The stakeholder engagement process included six focused workshops (combined 30+hours) and interviews with key stakeholders to critically test and refine the model to meet the needs of the Western Australian cohort, discussing components such as tenant referral, eligibility criteria, the types of on-site services to be provided, and the organisation structure. Key stakeholders participating in this engagement process include the City of Mandurah, City of Perth, key State government agencies, shortlisted service providers (Community Housing Organisations, Community Service Providers and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations), peak bodies including Shelter WA and Western Australian Council of Social Services.

A two-stage procurement process for the engagement of a Community Services Provider (CSP)/Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO) and Community Housing Organisation (CHO) has been developed

to deliver support services and property and tenancy management for Common Ground. The first stage of the procurement process, an Expression of Interest (EOI), was finalised in December 2021. Successful providers were shortlisted for consideration in stage two and were involved in the targeted stakeholder engagement process. The second stage of the procurement process is expected to be a request for tender, released to organisations shortlisted through the EOI process, to appoint a CSP/ACCO and CHO for the operational services of both Common Grounds facilities.

### ***Stakeholder Engagement***

Additional to the consultation around the building design and operating model, stakeholder engagement has included:

- Information sessions with local residents in 2021 and 2022.
- Updating council, leadership group and staff.
- The City is a key stakeholder and is a member of the Common Ground Project Advisory Group, providing oversight and guidance to program activities.
- The project team met with a range of stakeholders including PeelConnect, the Peel Health Hub, Peel Mental Health Taskforce, the CTC Key Leaders (Mandurah 'Group of Six') and Peel Homelessness and Street Present Network to present the Common Ground project and seek feedback.
- The City continues to host the Common Ground Project on the [Mandurah Matters](#) site.

### ***Lessons Learned***

Common Ground Mandurah is in its early stages of development and the City of Mandurah is proud to be involved. Key lessons learned to date are:

- Be intentional to create meaningful and endorsed advocacy positions for greatest influence and success.
- Ensure advocacy positions reflect the values of the Council and community. This helped the City keep integrity through some difficult conversations when challenged about the Common Ground model.
- Even when not the project owner or project lead, local government can play a critical role of being a conduit and connection to local community groups and local views.
- Local government has a unique insight and understanding of community. Be a voice at the table. Help guide and shape the project through being involved at every consultation, engagement and opportunity.

If you would like to know more about how the City of Mandurah is liaising with the State Government on their commitment to establish a Common Ground in Mandurah, please contact Jude Thomas, Director Place and Community on [jude.thomas@mandurah.wa.gov.au](mailto:jude.thomas@mandurah.wa.gov.au)



Mandurah Common Ground