

Report to the Future Melbourne (People City) Committee

Agenda item 6.4

Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17

12 August 2014

Presenter: Dean Griggs, Manager Community Safety and Wellbeing

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the *Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17*.
2. The new strategy is the third homelessness strategy developed by Council and builds on previous achievements; a significant research base and innovative programs (refer Attachment 2).
3. The strategy continues to focus on creating sustainable pathways out of homelessness and provides a strong, clear direction for Council's response to homelessness for the period 2014–17.

Key issues

4. The draft strategy was available for initial consultation from November 2013 to February 2014 with approximately 180 people involved in stakeholder forums, consumer discussion groups, written submissions and an online survey.
5. The second phase of consultation from 14 May to 13 June 2014 gathered feedback from 50 people and included a service sector forum, Participate Melbourne website, homelessness peer educators consultation, an internal council staff forum and written submissions (refer Attachment 3).
6. A number of respondents in the second phase of consultation commended Council on its strong commitment to homelessness, urged it to aspire to end homelessness and were supportive of the general direction of the draft strategy. Suggested major changes included the following:
 - 6.1 Strengthen Council's advocacy role concerning homelessness.
 - 6.2 Undertake a leadership role regarding service co-ordination for rough sleepers.
 - 6.3 Continue to recognise the gender differences in service response.
 - 6.4 Include a specific theme regarding health and wellbeing.
 - 6.5 Recognise the strategy is informed by a human rights based approach.
 - 6.6 Assist at least 100 women and children at risk of, or experiencing homelessness as a result of family violence to obtain safe accommodation (increased from 50).
 - 6.7 Engage young people, older women, rooming house residents and culturally diverse groups when implementing the strategy.
7. Feedback from the consultation process has been analysed and the strategy redrafted to include the major changes together with more comprehensive explanation of definitions, data and cohorts. Additional actions under the themes of 'Know our City', 'Be Inclusive' and 'Health and Wellbeing' have been added (refer highlighted changes Attachment 4).

Recommendation from management

8. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 8.1. Endorses the Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17.
 - 8.2. Authorises the Director Community Development to make minor editorial changes to the Strategy prior to publication.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment
2. Achievements
3. Community Consultation
4. Final Draft Strategy

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. No direct legal issues arise from the recommendation from management.

Finance

2. There are no immediate financial implications arising from this strategy. Expenditure for implementing first year actions of the homelessness strategy has been budgeted for in the 2014–15 budget. Any investment in subsequent years will be subject to annual budget and Council approval.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Stakeholder consultation

4. The consultation process undertaken for the draft *Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17* included a service sector forum; consultation meetings with people experiencing homelessness; an online survey accessed through the Participate Melbourne website; an internal staff consultation and written submissions received from various organisations and individuals.

Relation to Council policy (if applicable)

5. The draft *Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17* supports the vision of Future Melbourne and the Council Plan 2013–17 and is aligned with Goal 1: A City for People.

Environmental sustainability

6. In implementing the *Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17*, environmental sustainability issues and opportunities will be considered in all projects and initiatives.

Achievements: Pathways Homelessness Strategy 2011-13

| Theme A - Know our city | Achievements |
|---|---|
| Continue annual StreetCount program to assess needs and continue to build a picture of homelessness in the city. | StreetCount research projects held in 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 (a qualitative research project was conducted in 2013). |
| Continue involvement in local service networks in order to understand service gaps for men and women. | Supported various homeless related networks including the CBD Homelessness Network, the Melbourne Metropolitan Rooming House Group, and Inner City Squats Group. |
| Undertake research to better understand the profile of rooming house residents. | Completed <i>Needs and Aspirations of Rooming House Residents</i> research project in 2012. |
| Establish a network of service providers working in rooming houses. | Rooming House Service Providers Network established through liaison with Inner North West Homelessness Group. |
| Work closely with crisis accommodation sector to ensure supply meets demand. | Feasibility of possibly expanding supply of crisis accommodation explored through key strategic partners such as Salvation Army; McAuley; Melbourne City Mission and Vincent Care. |
| Where possible, obtain and examine data sets for men and women and develop responses accordingly. | Research projects have included gender analysis of data where possible and relevant. |
| Acknowledge our position as a capital city and host a homelessness summit. In doing so we will explore the issue of homelessness across greater Melbourne in partnership with other local governments, the Victorian and Australian Governments, the corporate sector and the homelessness sector to better understand the issue of homelessness. | A Homelessness Summit was hosted at Melbourne Town Hall in May 2012. |
| Theme B – Be inclusive | Achievements |
| Evaluate our resources such as the Helping Out booklet to ensure we are providing the right information in the right format. | Review of the <i>Helping out Booklet</i> in 2011, 2012 and 2013. The Booklet provides resources for homeless and vulnerable people who require a range of support services, from legal advice to meals. |
| Support participation of homeless people in research and planning for improved services and sustainable solutions. | Fostered and promoted inclusion of people experiencing homelessness in research, feasibility studies, program planning and reviews to improve service outcomes and develop sustainable solutions. <i>Completion of a Feasibility Study – Safe Daytime Spaces and Activities for People Experiencing Homelessness in Melbourne.</i> Conducted the <i>Many Ways Home</i> research project to better coordinate outreach services to women sleeping rough and to seek housing solutions. |
| Improve access to community spaces and public facilities and draw on the skills of homeless people in planning community activities and events (Where the Heart is community festival). | Continued funding and support of <i>Where the Heart is...community festival</i> . |

| | |
|---|---|
| Improve access by homeless people to City of Melbourne services and cultural and recreation programs | <p>Provided free access to recreational facilities for people experiencing homelessness in extreme heat Jan 2014.</p> <p>A <i>Women's Homelessness Prevention</i> free legal clinic has been located in a library.</p> |
| Establish an Advisory Committee for Homelessness. | Homelessness Advisory Committee established in 2011 comprised of key homelessness experts and stakeholders and chaired by a Councillor. |
| Continue with inclusive and participatory processes to ensure the City of Melbourne's decisions accurately reflect the needs of people experiencing homelessness. | Expanded cross council engagement in homelessness projects, inclusion of homeless people in research projects such as annual StreetCount, Homelessness Advisory Committee, promotional awareness projects for Homelessness week and Anti-Poverty week. |
| Work with the corporate sector to enlist their support in addressing homelessness in our city. | Homelessness Summit and Affordable Housing Roundtables in June and December 2013. |
| Strengthen the City of Melbourne advocacy role in identifying service gaps for people experiencing homelessness. | Strengthened advocacy role in identifying service gaps for people who are homeless through promotion and awareness raising projects in Homelessness week; Anti-Poverty week; Women's Safe spaces projects; Café Meals, Evolution arts based education and training program. |
| Theme C – Develop skills | Achievements |
| Promote the Social Enterprise and Micro Business Grants to businesses and people experiencing homelessness. | <p>Promoted the Social Enterprise and Micro Business Grants and engaged STREAT a social enterprise to include people experiencing homelessness in their training and development program.</p> <p>SecondBite and Evolution projects, funded by the City of Melbourne, have provided valuable learning opportunities and employment training for different target groups.</p> |
| Expand the café meals program which provides access for homeless people to a dietician and low-cost meals in cafes throughout Melbourne. | Increased funding to expand the Cafe Meals Program, which includes access to healthy food options and a dietician to assist people with improved diet and health outcomes. |
| Work with organisations providing training programs to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to build our knowledge of successful initiatives and training gaps. This will assist us to know where to focus programs such as community grants and community services funding agreements in future years. | Worked with organisations such as Second Bite, Evolution, STREAT social enterprise and WIRE which have provided valuable training and employment readiness preparation for men and women and young people in different age groups and circumstances. |
| Theme D – Create pathways | Achievements |
| Develop and implement a Central City Health Service at Drill Hall. | Central City Community Health Service at Drill Hall opened in May 2012 and continues to expand the range of health and allied services for men and women at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. |
| Continue partnerships and look for new opportunities with other organisations and levels of government for additional accommodation and services. | Advocacy and support for affordable housing provision in the City has included several homelessness roundtables led by the CEO in 2013 and 2014. These have considered different models of long term affordable housing with business, philanthropic and not for profit partners. |
| Directly support additional housing options at the rear of 69 Bourke Street for supported housing. | A feasibility study was undertaken in 2013. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Ensure 20 per cent of residential development at Boyd High School is affordable housing.</p> | <p>There are 48 affordable apartments within the Boyd residential complex which represents a minimum 20 per cent of all apartments. Of the 48 affordable units there are 20 units for young people with disabilities.</p> |
| <p>Focus on those at risk – continue our funding commitment to support youth services to ensure those at risk have every chance of avoiding homelessness.</p> | <p>Three youth service contracts were awarded in June 2013 to provide services and supports to ‘at risk’ and disengaged young people including those threatened with, or experiencing homelessness: Frontyard Melbourne City Mission CBD; CoHealth Kensington/North Melbourne community youth service, and Drummond Street Services Carlton/Parkville community youth service.</p> <p>In 2012 and 2013 Council funded the Evolution arts program at Signal to re-engage young people in education and training.</p> <p>Engaged STREAT social enterprise to provide hospitality training for vulnerable young people including those experiencing, or at risk of homelessness.</p> |
| <p>Provide a range of services and subsidies which keep people out of homelessness. Many City of Melbourne services help prevent homelessness by supporting people to be independent and healthy, including aged care, children’s services and recreational services. We will ensure these services are targeted to vulnerable groups.</p> | <p>Increased the responsiveness of a range of Council services to the needs of people experiencing homelessness including Frontyard, CoHealth, Home and Community Care (HACC) services and the development of Wintringham’s Over 50s Club for older people experiencing homelessness at Central City Community Health Service. Connections also established with Aged Services, Family Services, Library Services, Park, Local Laws and Recreation services, Building and Health Services.</p> <p>Rooming house residents’ engagement project undertaken by CoHealth (formerly Dousta Galla Community Health) via Central City Community Health Service.</p> |
| <p>Further explore our role as a planning authority and the mechanisms available to us to make a difference to homelessness in our city.</p> | <p>Housing design and affordability aspects included in the Housing Strategy.</p> |
| <p>Explore the concept of a day shelter for people experiencing homelessness in the central city.</p> | <p>Feasibility Study undertaken to explore the concept of a day shelter/safe space for people experiencing homelessness and pilot projects to consider safe spaces to respond to the particular needs of women and men.</p> |
| <p>Encourage participation of community organisations, business, traders and churches and philanthropic groups to develop new initiatives.</p> | <p>Encouraged participation of community organisations, business, traders, churches and philanthropic groups to develop new initiatives including Anglicare, Library Services, WIRE; Urban Seed; North West Melbourne Homelessness Action Group; Travellers Aid; and philanthropic groups such as Lord Mayors Charitable Fund. Continued partnerships with a range of key City-based services including Frontyard, Wintringham and CoHealth.</p> |

Community Consultation

The *Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17* was developed in two stages. Stage one occurred in the period November 2013 to February 2014 and included:

- literature and context review
- review of achievements and outcomes of the *Pathways Homelessness Strategy 2011–13*
- homelessness data analysis
- homelessness service system analysis
- discussion paper
- stakeholder consultations including an online survey.

Following development of the discussion paper a key aspect of developing the draft strategy and action plan involved consultation with internal and external stakeholders who had particular expertise as both deliverers and consumers of homelessness and related services. Approximately 180 people were involved in the first phase of consultation which included stakeholder forums, consumer discussion groups, written submissions and an online survey.

The draft Homelessness Strategy was developed and endorsed by Council on 14 May 2014 for community consultation until 13 June 2014. The second phase of consultation involved internal and external stakeholders, the wider community, homelessness service users and consumers. Approximately 50 people participated through various consultation forums, meetings, online surveys and written submissions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Many comments and suggestions were received through the various consultation processes including the consultation forums with consumers, City of Melbourne staff and the homelessness sector, the online survey and through the written submissions.

This feedback was based on personal and professional experience and on evidence from working in the field as well as more formal research. The feedback primarily sought to strengthen the draft Strategy, address gaps and suggest priorities for City of Melbourne in addressing homelessness in the City.

Individuals and agencies who participated in the consultation process on the draft *Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17* were broadly supportive of the Strategy and the role of Council in addressing homelessness in Melbourne. Based on the City of Melbourne consultation process and feedback a number of changes were made to strengthen the draft strategy. These changes were based on ideas generated through the feedback from all consultation processes.

Key themes –summary stakeholder feedback

| Issue | Response |
|---|---|
| 1. Stakeholders would prefer that City of Melbourne make a commitment to end homelessness. Stakeholders felt that City of Melbourne had invested greatly in the previous <i>Pathways Homelessness Strategy 2011–13</i> and had a commitment to end homelessness and felt that an explanation was warranted. | Previous <i>Pathways Homelessness Strategy 2011–13</i> states 'creating sustainable pathways out of homelessness by supporting individuals, developing robust partnerships and building strong and inclusive communities.' Explanation to stakeholders will be given that the Council Plan 2013–17 states that Council will: 'contribute to developing sustainable pathways out of homelessness.' |

| Issue | Response |
|--|--|
| <p>2. City of Melbourne’s decision to focus on primary and tertiary homelessness was broadly supported and carries through from previous strategies.</p> <p>Stakeholders also observed that not focusing on secondary homelessness may tend to exclude women and children and young people who are also a focus of the strategy.</p> | <p>The strategy includes actions for people in primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness.</p> <p>Research indicates that people sleeping rough are the most vulnerable in terms of their survival and Council is committed to this area of work.</p> <p>It is recognised that whilst the use of categories can be helpful there are limitations and that people do move between primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness.</p> |
| <p>3. Stakeholders felt that City of Melbourne has a good understanding of homelessness and related issues and uses a rights-based approach but that this needs to be clearly articulated. It was suggested a statement of principles be included to provide the context for understanding homelessness and working with people experiencing homelessness. This was felt to be particularly important for those who are unfamiliar with City of Melbourne’s work and history in this field and who may not be familiar with this philosophy unless it is clearly stated.</p> | <p>A revised ‘rights based approach’ has been included.</p> |
| <p>4. Stakeholders suggested including a fifth theme of health and wellbeing and grouping relevant actions under that theme to prioritise health and wellbeing in the Strategy.</p> | <p>A ‘health and wellbeing’ theme has been added: <i>‘foster partnerships with health and wellbeing services to ensure improved health outcome for people experiencing homelessness.’</i></p> <p>Actions have been placed under the theme.</p> |
| <p>5. Stakeholders commended Council for taking a gendered approach to homelessness and homelessness research and needs analysis. Stakeholders felt that actions in relation to women and children need to be strengthened to meet the relevant performance measure and to make this target group a priority. It was felt that the target for women and children experiencing family violence should be 100 to be consistent with the targets for rough sleepers and supportive housing.</p> | <p>The target of supporting 50 women and children has been amended to 100. There are a number of actions relating to women and children in the strategy.</p> |
| <p>6. Stakeholders commended City of Melbourne for focussing on young people in the Developing Skills theme. It was felt that this is an area that should be strengthened in the Strategy for a number of reasons including that it would better reflect the current work and commitment of City of Melbourne to supporting work with young people in an early intervention approach in preventing long term chronic homelessness in the future.</p> | <p>Actions and initiatives for young people are included in the strategy particularly related to prevention through strengthening support for families, children and young people.</p> |
| <p>7. Based on the success of City of Melbourne’s heatwave policy, consider extending this approach more broadly to provide a consistent inclusive approach at all times to all Council facilities as appropriate.</p> | <p>‘Be Inclusive’ is a theme of the strategy. Specific actions have been included to ensure Council facilities are accessible and inclusive of people experiencing homelessness and in conditions of extreme weather.</p> |

| Issue | Response |
|--|--|
| <p>8. Stakeholders felt that the current political environment at the State and Federal levels required a strong advocacy role from City of Melbourne. It was broadly acknowledged that City of Melbourne’s capital city status gave it greater influence (and possibly greater responsibility to take on advocacy) than other local governments as an advocate on homelessness/social justice issues. This should include the use of evidence, research, consumer voices and/or include stakeholders in advocacy to other levels of government.</p> | <p>Advocacy is included under ‘Creating Pathways’ theme and has a focus on advocacy related to affordable housing; effective measures to prevent homelessness; reforms to the rooming house sector and financial and economic factors impacting on vulnerable population groups.</p> |
| <p>9. Council could play an effective linking role between corporate sponsorship and the homelessness sector by promoting donor opportunities and using research to guide corporate giving and volunteering. This is an area which the City of Melbourne community sector lacks the resources to make the most of the opportunities that are available and City of Melbourne’s work could support the sector to access these opportunities. This was raised numerous times in consultations for the development of the Draft Strategy.</p> | <p>The co-ordination and cross sector linking role of Council is included under the ‘Be Inclusive’ and ‘Create Pathways’ themes and includes relevant specific actions.</p> |
| Other Suggestions | Response |
| <p>Explore more storage lockers for homeless people.</p> <p>Include young people as a specific cohort of importance.</p> <p>Provide further rationale and explanation of the narrative section.</p> <p>ABS new definition of homelessness should be added.</p> <p>National information on homelessness could be updated.</p> | <p>Additional action added.</p> <p>Additional focus given to young people.</p> <p>Section amended and strengthened.</p> <p>‘Defining Homelessness’ section amended with ABS definition.</p> <p>Reviewed and updated.</p> |

PATHWAYS: HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

City of Melbourne 2014–2017

FINAL DRAFT



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1. INTRODUCTION

Homelessness affects people and communities worldwide and Melbourne is no exception. The City of Melbourne has made it a priority to address the issue of homelessness and we remain firmly committed to this aim.

People from all sections of the community including families, young people, seniors, international students, refugees and those seeking asylum can find themselves facing or experiencing homelessness. Whether it lasts for a very short time, or for a number of months or even years, it is important that as a community we understand that being without safe, secure and affordable accommodation can have devastating effects on a person's life. Addressing homelessness then is much more than just providing accommodation.

It is an issue that is made more acute by Melbourne's attraction as a capital city with a relatively large concentration of community services. This draws people to the city in their search for information, support and services including health, education and housing.

The City of Melbourne recognises that the significant diversity of homeless people demands a range of responses to ensure the particular circumstances of each person are addressed. As part of our commitments through the Council Plan 2014–2017 it is City of Melbourne's objective to:

Contribute to developing sustainable pathways out of homelessness

In order to implement this strategy, City of Melbourne recognises a whole of community response is required. We will work with our partners in the homelessness sector, the health sector, state and federal government, local communities and businesses, and with people experiencing homelessness to ensure sure they have the best chance of moving as quickly as possible out of homelessness.

As a Capital City, Melbourne will continue to take a leadership and coordination role in responding to homelessness in collaboration with homeless support services; community organisations and businesses; other levels of government; residents and people experiencing homelessness.

The strategy is underpinned and informed by a human rights based approach which:

- Is inclusive and respectful of people's rights and treats all people with dignity
- Encourages participation and listens to the voices of those experiencing homelessness
- Empowers and builds on people's strengths and knowledge of their own lives
- Reduces discrimination against people experiencing homelessness in the municipality
- Views access to safe affordable housing as a fundamental human right.

Based on the outcomes of research undertaken by ourselves and others, the City of Melbourne recognises the importance of early intervention and will continue initiatives to strengthen community resilience and ensure families and young people can quickly access service supports and interventions to effectively prevent homelessness.

OUR COMMITMENT

In order to deliver this strategy, City of Melbourne recognises a whole of community response is required.

We will show leadership across five themes:

1. **Know our City** –research, consult, refresh and share our knowledge of homelessness in Melbourne.
2. **Be inclusive** - respect, hear, welcome and include those who are homeless in our services, activities and events.
3. **Develop skills** - provide opportunities to enhance personal resilience, develop skills and strengthen social inclusion in order to avoid long term hardship.
4. **Create pathways** - work with our partners to courageously advocate for change and create sustainable pathways out of homelessness.
5. **Health and Wellbeing** – foster partnerships with health and wellbeing services to ensure improved health outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17 was developed in consultation with over 100 of our partners including people who have experienced homelessness in the City of Melbourne. We examined current and emerging trends in homelessness and more broadly, best practice in homelessness responses. The City of Melbourne and other key partners have been involved in undertaking and developing an extensive research and evidence base which has helped to build the foundation of this Strategy.

Working closely with our partners and key stakeholders our response to the themes we have articulated will make a difference in the lives of people who are homeless over the coming years. Through this work with a whole of community approach the City of Melbourne hopes to achieve enduring outcomes for people experiencing homelessness in our city.

2. OVERVIEW AND EMERGING TRENDS

INTERNATIONAL

The international response to homelessness is guided by the United Nations Human Rights covenants and legislation of which Australia is a signatory. The core tenet of the Human Rights approach is that safe, secure housing is central to ensuring social inclusion.

Recent responses to homelessness have focussed on the need to end rather than manage homelessness. This approach requires understanding and consideration of the underlying issues related to homelessness in different age groups and categories, strengthening prevention initiatives, increasing access to low cost housing and ensuring services and support are integrated with accommodation.

The results of this approach in places such as Britain and the USA indicate highly successful outcomes for the people concerned and improved cost effectiveness.

However there are a number of global economic, social and environmental shifts that are affecting cities across the world and ultimately having some impact on Victoria and more specifically Melbourne.

These include changed refugee and migration patterns with increased population pressure on Australian cities, impacts of climate change, economic changes including changes to manufacturing, mining and farming industries which together create broader migration patterns and increasing population diversity within Melbourne.

Increasing technological changes and increased accessibility to digital media pose new challenges and opportunities to create pathways out of homelessness.

NATIONAL

At the Federal level the Australian Government has two principal policy agreements which impact on homelessness: the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* (NPAH) and the *National Affordable Housing Agreement* (NAHA). These agreements are linked to funding provision for a range of Housing and Homelessness programs, services and projects which are usually distributed to local agencies with matching funding from State and Territory Governments. Significant (\$1.3 billion) funding was provided for the 2014–15 budget period, of this approximately \$250 million is allocated for 'bedrock' specialist homeless services across Australia.

VICTORIA

The Victorian State Government has developed the *Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011–2015* which has a focus on three key areas: to support innovative approaches to homelessness; investigate models that focus specifically on early intervention and prevention and; better target resources when and where they are most needed and where they will make the biggest difference. The *Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011–15* is the first step in addressing homelessness and is part of a reform process.

OTHER CAPITAL CITIES

The Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM) has identified addressing homelessness as a priority and has a stated commitment to work with other levels of government and the community in addressing homelessness. The CCCLM has established the Homelessness Sub Committee which has a national focus on a range of projects such as Homeless Connect which supports an annual homelessness festival held in each Capital City. In Melbourne the *Where the heart is ...community festival* supports and acknowledges people who are homeless within the community.

3. DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is about people rather than merely shelter and is often exacerbated by a number of other issues including poor physical and emotional health, disability, drug and alcohol issues, and financial problems. It is widely accepted that safe, appropriate, affordable and secure housing with well organised support contributes to improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

In September 2012 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released a new definition of homelessness for application to the general population in Australia. Homelessness has been defined by the ABS as a lack of one or more of the elements that represent 'home'. These elements may include a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety and the ability to control living space.

'When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- Is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- 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'.

(ABS, 4922.0, Information Paper 2012)

Prior to this more recent definition three categories of homelessness (primary, secondary and tertiary) were developed to assist in counting the number of people experiencing homelessness in Australia. Chamberlain and Mackenzie 1992, p291.

Whilst the new ABS definition is acknowledged and utilised in the new City of Melbourne Homelessness Strategy it is also recognised that utilising the three categories developed by Chamberlain and Mackenzie in 1992 is valuable in articulating the three key types of homelessness in order to better respond and create pathways out of homelessness.

PRIMARY HOMELESSNESS

People without conventional accommodation such as people living on the streets, sleeping in derelict buildings, or using cars for temporary shelter.

SECONDARY HOMELESSNESS

People who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. This category covers people accommodated in homeless services, people residing temporarily with family and friends and those using rooming/boarding houses on an occasional basis.

TERTIARY HOMELESSNESS

People who live in boarding/rooming houses on a medium to long term basis. This type of accommodation typically does not have self-contained rooms and residents share bathroom and kitchen facilities. Rooming house residents do not have the security of tenure provided by a lease.

4. WHO IS HOMELESS IN MELBOURNE?

Obtaining clear and reliable data around the number of people experiencing homelessness is difficult because of the transient nature of homelessness and reliance on point in time measures compared to longer timeframes and challenges in defining homelessness.

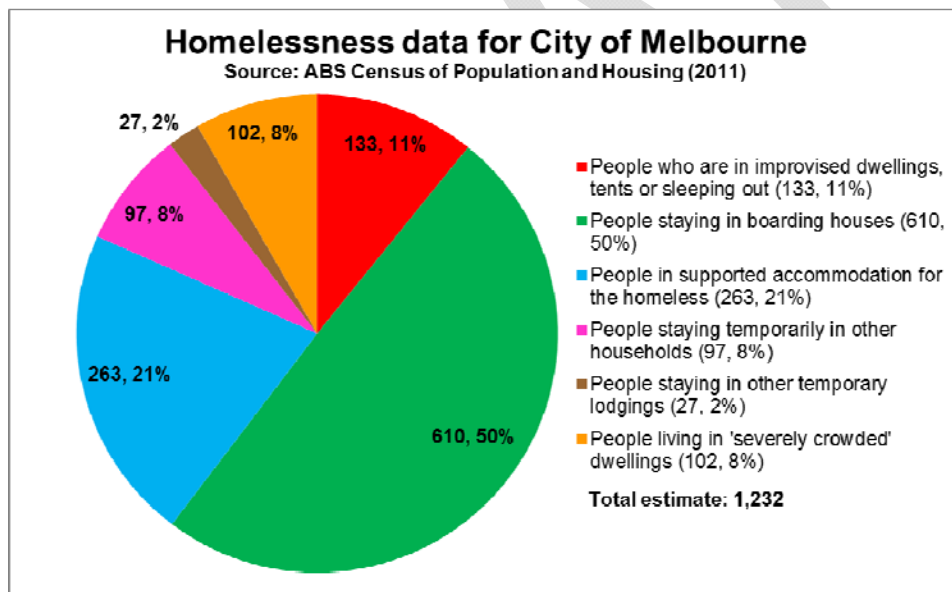
DATA SUMMARY

The ABS Census data for 2011 indicates that the City of Melbourne had the third highest number of homeless people (1,232) in Victoria after Dandenong (1,634) and Port Phillip (1,562). In the 2011 ABS Census data for the City of Melbourne 68 per cent of the homeless population were male and 32 per cent were female. The 2011 Census data also showed that 65 per cent of people counted as homeless in the City were aged between 19 and 44 years old.

In the figures below the smallest categories of homelessness are people in 'other temporary lodgings' 2 per cent; people staying temporarily in 'other households' 8 per cent; people in 'severely crowded dwellings' 8 per cent and people 'sleeping out or in improvised dwellings or tents' account for 11 per cent.

People living in boarding/rooming houses are the largest single group of people who are homeless totalling over 600 people or 50 per cent of those who were counted as homeless in the 2011 ABS Census.

Figure 1: Overview of the 2011 ABS Census of Population and Housing data for City of Melbourne.



5. NARRATIVE

In developing our approach the City of Melbourne has worked hard to know our city better and has undertaken a range of research projects to improve our understanding of the daily lives of people experiencing homelessness.

The comments below have been drawn from research projects which recorded the individual stories of people's experience of homelessness.

Many of these projects were undertaken with the active involvement of people experiencing homelessness as well as service sector agencies and key partners. Our own research, together with broader research data and information forms the basis of evidence underlining the development of this strategy, the identified themes and actions.

Based on the principle of utilising a human rights approach, it is vitally important that the voices of people experiencing homelessness directly inform our work.

Research Project: Needs and Characteristics of Rooming House Residents February 2012

'I would definitely use a doctor more if I could pay less. I have been sick a lot since I came over here and I always worry that my insurance will rise if I overuse it. Doctors are very expensive if you have to pay with no subsidy.'

'I had a hernia operation ...and was pretty uncomfortable for a while... I just lay in bed and ate things out of packets and tins that I could get without moving around. I thought I could do with a hand but I hadn't a clue about how to find any - it would have been good to have a visiting nurse.'

'There are people in here who are mentally ill and they're locked away in their rooms all day, no one ever sees them. Someone should come to visit them and make sure they are ok.'

Research StreetCount 2013 Living Rough in Melbourne

'I went in to get a drink of water from a café and he said to me to get out of the café – you're just a scumbag.'

'Supports... (are needed) at night cos when the sun goes down no one can help you.'

'Mum just really couldn't handle it all so she drank.. a lot... but it was really just because she couldn't handle not having any money or anything and not being able to look after us...'

'Things were pretty tough, I suppose, we didn't really have a lot of things or money, so I left home as soon as I could to get work'

'What's important to me?'

'A photo of my son (is important to me) I didn't think I had a photo but I found one and had it laminated.'

'A letter from my brother that I always keep with me, it's the only letter that I've ever had from anyone.'

My family's phone numbers, I never ring them, but I keep them as kind of good luck charm.'

'You just can't do anything at all without having a place to stay... you can't get work, can't get healthy, can't get money, and can't get anything. But if you have a good place...you can come back to... you can start to get things and start to get (things) together.'

Safe Daytime Spaces – Pilot Project WIRE Women's Lunch Program

'Thank you for taking us to the Art Gallery. I didn't know you could just walk in here.'

'There aren't any other places out there just for women.'

'Here is a nice, warm comfortable place.'

Evaluation report: Planned Activity Group (PAG) – Drill Hall

'When I first got to (housing) I didn't know anyone, the only people I knew were street people. Now joining PAG and going to the library and now the choir, I am getting to meet more people who are outside the street situation and hopefully I can make some friends.'

'I've started drawing again, and writing a book. I would never have done that sort of stuff if I hadn't started coming to something like this. I was in limbo and worried, but after (attending the group) I felt great... and the worry left me for that bit of time....'

'The Drill Hall is my cement ... on so many levels! Strong structure that makes me strong because I have faith in the structure and the structure has respect for me. Yes, it's strengthened my life ...'

Safe Daytime Spaces feasibility study

'Sometimes it's just about working through the reasons why it's difficult dealing with travel costs, storing stuff, and access to clean clothes, showers and a haircut. These things don't cost much but can make it impossible for people to come along to groups.'

'Everyone will tell you that the worse time for people who are homeless is the nights and the weekends – they are incredibly lonely.'

'I'm pretty alright really, but there's not much to do here. I just sit and watch the telly most of the time. Don't talk to anyone much. I can go days and days without talking to anyone.'

'Now I need to think about what's going to happen next, I suppose. I've lived here five years now and I suppose I'll just keep living here. But I will need more help one day, I suppose.'

6. OUR FOCUS IN THE CITY OF MELBOURNE

The City of Melbourne will focus its efforts on supporting people who are in the primary or tertiary categories of homelessness, that is, people sleeping rough and people living in boarding/rooming houses in the City of Melbourne. This is where we can make a difference. Other levels of government provide a more immediate response to people in secondary homelessness, that is those in temporary and crisis accommodation.

In taking this approach Council will minimise duplication with other levels of government and focus on the people with the most complex needs as well as those at risk of homelessness.

ROUGH SLEEPERS

People sleeping rough or in improvised accommodation form one of the smallest groups of people experiencing homelessness. In the City of Melbourne this group numbered approximately 100 since the inception of StreetCount in 2008 until 2012. Data collected in the

ABS Census 2011 in City of Melbourne noted a total of 133 people and in the 2014 StreetCount 142 people were counted.

There is considerable evidence that people in the 'sleeping rough' category have significant health and other complex issues, and most have been homeless for over five years. This is the most vulnerable group and requires specifically tailored and coordinated responses to ensure sustainable pathways out of homelessness.

Table 1: StreetCount Data Summary

| Year | Male | Female | Unknown Gender | Total |
|------|------|--------|----------------|-------|
| 2014 | 102 | 20 | 20 | 142 |
| 2012 | 87 | 14 | 0 | 101 |
| 2011 | 81 | 13 | 11 | 105 |
| 2010 | 72 | 14 | 15 | 101 |
| 2009 | 51 | 13 | 11 | 75 |
| 2008 | 78 | 16 | 18 | 112 |

ROOMING HOUSE RESIDENTS

Rooming house residents form the largest group of people experiencing homelessness in the City of Melbourne. Whilst rooming house data is difficult to accurately calculate due to frequent changes to rooming house occupancy, currently available City of Melbourne data and information indicates that there are approximately 847 rooming house residents in Melbourne. City of Melbourne research on the needs and characteristics of rooming house residents undertaken in 2012 indicated that most of this population is male, living alone and in need of improved access to health, social and support services.

WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

We will work to better understand and respond to the gender difference in the homelessness population. Women who are single, older women, women with partners, women with children and women experiencing family violence can all enter homelessness.

Through our consultation, research and feedback we are aware that women predominantly enter homelessness as a result of family violence and are far more likely to experience secondary homelessness. Staying with friends, sleeping in cars, and moving through a range of temporary settings characterises homelessness for women.

In implementing this strategy we aim to expand our knowledge and understanding of women and children's experience of homelessness to better respond to them.

YOUNG PEOPLE

The City of Melbourne has a long standing commitment to support young people and to address youth homelessness. Particular cohorts of young people including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, refugee and culturally diverse people, international students and GLBTIQ young people can be especially vulnerable to homelessness.

We recognise that intervening early in a young person's experience of homelessness can reduce recurrent episodes of homelessness and are committed to developing pathways to social inclusion, health, housing, education and employment for young people.

7. WHAT WE WILL DO

OUR APPROACH

In developing our approach, a range of national, state and local government responses to homelessness were reviewed including how other Australian councils are responding to homelessness.

This strategy is directly related to the *City of Melbourne Council Plan 2013–17* and more specifically the first goal – 'A city for people' and the objective to 'Contribute to developing sustainable pathways out of homelessness.'

The *Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17* also has links to a number of other Council strategies including *Homes for People Housing Strategy 2014–18*; *Strategy for a Safer City 2011–13*; *A Great Place to Study International Student Strategy 2013–17*; *We Need to Talk Preventing Violence against Women Strategy 2013–16*; *Open Space Strategy 2013–28*; *A Creative City Through the Arts 2014–17*; draft *Knowledge City Strategy 2014–18* and the draft *Melbourne for All People Strategy 2014–17*.

THEMES

The themes identified below provide a focus for the City of Melbourne's response to homelessness. Council will develop an annual implementation plan for each of the themes and designated actions across the four years of the strategy.

1. Know our City

It is essential we continually research, consult, refresh and share our knowledge of homelessness in Melbourne:

- 1.1 Undertake research projects on emerging trends in the City including:
 - gaps in responding to homelessness amongst migrant and refugee communities
 - impacts of the drug 'ice' on service access and safety
 - food security/meals provision for low income households.
- 1.2 As a capital city, host forums to explore the issue of homelessness across greater Melbourne in partnership with local, state and federal governments, the corporate sector and the homeless sector.
- 1.3 Share our knowledge of trends with community organisations, businesses, traders, churches and philanthropic groups to develop new initiatives.
- 1.4 When examining or developing data sets ensure gender is considered and where possible obtain data sets for men and women and develop appropriate responses.

- 1.5 Conduct qualitative research with people who have been 'rough sleepers' and successfully found pathways out of homelessness.
- 1.6 Continue to hold an annual StreetCount research project with a qualitative data collection program every second year to assess needs and continue to build a picture of homelessness in our city.
- 1.7 Increase our knowledge of service gaps for men and women through our continued involvement in local service networks and with our partners advocate for new services to other levels of Government.
- 1.8 Establish a network of service providers working in rooming houses to share information and improve service access and delivery.
- 1.9 Conduct research with peer educators for improved and streamlined provision and distribution of service information targeting those arriving in the city as 'newly homeless'.
- 1.10 Develop a database of corporates and community groups that have an interest in addressing homelessness to ensure they have an opportunity to share their knowledge and resources to develop projects and initiatives which create pathways out of homelessness.

2. Be Inclusive

Respect, hear, welcome and include those who are homeless in our services, activities and events to ensure these are easily accessible for homeless and vulnerable people. This will help us lead by example and encourage businesses, community organisations and other levels of government to do the same.

- 2.1 Work with our partners to develop an education campaign and online information to assist the general public to make informed choices about how they can volunteer, donate or assist those who are homeless.
- 2.2 Based on City of Melbourne research and feasibility studies work with our partners to develop appropriate 'safe day and night time spaces' for people experiencing homelessness.
- 2.3 Continue with inclusive and participatory decision-making processes by including people who have experienced homelessness in the City of Melbourne Homelessness Advisory Committee and in the planning and delivery of relevant strategies, policies and programs.
- 2.4 Work with partner agencies to develop an education campaign about homelessness and its particular impacts on young people, older people and women and promote through Homeless Persons Week.
- 2.5 Evaluate and ensure resources such as the 'Helping Out' booklet are readily available and presented in an accessible electronic and hard copy format.
- 2.6 Work with our recreation facilities, community hubs and libraries to ensure that people experiencing homelessness are welcomed, included and supported.
- 2.7 Explore options for the provision of further storage lockers in the City of Melbourne so that those who are homeless can store their possessions in an affordable and secure manner.

3. Develop Skills

We can provide opportunities to enhance personal resilience develop skills and strengthen social inclusion in order to avoid long term hardship.

Linking people to education, training and employment, as well as health services, good nutrition and social inclusion programs are all key factors in helping to prevent homelessness and create pathways out of homelessness.

- 3.1 Engage with relevant organisations to promote the Social Enterprise and Micro Business Grants and to provide assistance to people experiencing homelessness to apply for grants.
- 3.2 Work with organisations providing training programs to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness to build our knowledge of successful initiatives and training gaps. This will assist us to know where to focus programs such as community grants, and community services funding agreements.
- 3.3 Work with our youth service providers to link and support young people into youth specific development and training opportunities to improve their chances of being employed.
- 3.4 Explore supportive work opportunities for those sleeping rough to build self-confidence, develop networks and supports and develop alternate sources of income.
- 3.5 Continue to provide services and supports to families vulnerable to becoming homeless and focus on strengthening resilience and improving confidence.
- 3.6 Through Maternal and Child Health and Family Services continue to assess, inform and support women and their children in family violence situations to make informed and protective decisions regarding their safety and accommodation.

4. Create Pathways

Homelessness is likely to be a constant part of our community. We will work with our partners to courageously advocate for change and create sustainable pathways out of homelessness.

- 4.1 Work with our partners to establish and facilitate a new Rough Sleepers Service Coordination feasibility and pilot project for all agencies working with this target group to provide a better response and create effective and sustainable pathways out of homelessness.
- 4.2 Identify how we can support housing initiatives in the central city both for young people and adult target groups including:
 - short term accommodation
 - Housing First/Supportive Housing
 - women specific housing
- 4.3 Support development and implementation of new housing models and initiatives to expand the availability of affordable private rental stock, some of which is targeted at people experiencing homelessness.
- 4.4 Continue our commitment to funding youth services to ensure those young people 'at risk' of homelessness have every chance of avoiding it.

- 4.5 Continue to actively support and contribute to the Melbourne Metropolitan Rooming House Group to work on improving rooming house accommodation.
- 4.6 Ensure all rooming house providers and premises are formally registered and comply with State Government minimum standards for privacy, security, safety and amenity and foster joint work on rooming house compliance and enforcement issues with relevant agencies.
- 4.7 As part of the *Homes for People City of Melbourne Housing Strategy 2014–18* explore supply incentives for increasing affordable housing options.
- 4.8 Identify partnership opportunities for developers and social housing providers to increase the availability of social housing within the municipality.
- 4.9 Advocate to State and Federal Government on key structural issues including:
 - increasing supply of affordable housing
 - more effective measures to prevent homelessness
 - continuing reforms to the rooming house sector
 - financial and economic factors impacting on vulnerable population groups.

5. Health and Wellbeing

We will foster partnerships with health and wellbeing services to ensure improved health outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

- 5.1 Develop innovative solutions to ensure appropriate and inclusive support is provided to people experiencing homelessness in periods of extreme weather.
- 5.2 Through community grants provide funding and support to after hours and weekend meal programs that provide low cost nutritious food to people experiencing homelessness and expand programs to increase access to women.
- 5.3 Support and expand programs that actively engage with marginalised rooming house residents to connect with health services, programs and events such as “Where the heart is community festival”, café meals program and the Women’s Information and Referral Exchange ‘AMICA’ women and children’s lunch program.
- 5.4 Expand the café meals program which provides access for homeless people to a dietician and low cost meals in cafes throughout the City of Melbourne.
- 5.6 Continue to support and promote Central City Community Health Service to mainstream health and community service workers to engage high risk clients at the earliest possible point in time, particularly women and children at risk of, or experiencing homelessness as a result of violence.

8. OUR COMMITMENT

Our key aspirational measures over the life of this strategy:

Housing people

The latest StreetCount figures indicate that there are approximately 142 rough sleepers located in the CBD and surrounding areas. Securing additional *supportive housing* such as the *Housing First model* is critical to improving the lives of those experiencing homelessness.

- Work with our partners to provide long term supportive housing and/or housing first initiatives for 100 people including those sleeping rough.

Rough sleepers

A number of health, welfare and housing services outreach to those sleeping rough and a range of Council services link rough sleepers to services and supports. Coordination of these combined resources could improve service delivery and increase pathways out of homelessness.

- Demonstrate we have improved service coordination for 100 people (including rough sleepers) experiencing homelessness.

Women and their children

ABS and other research data in Melbourne demonstrate that family violence is the largest cause of homelessness for women and children and there is a critical need for safe accommodation linked to services and supports.

- Support 100 women and children at risk of, or escaping family violence to secure services and safe accommodation.

9. OUR ACCOUNTABILITY

An annual action plan for the *Pathways Homelessness Strategy 2014–17* with clear timelines, targets and responsibilities will be developed to implement this strategy over the period 2014–17.

APPENDIX 1

Homelessness Strategy Community Consultation

The *Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17* was developed in two stages. Stage one occurred in the period November 2013 to February 2014 and included:

- literature and context review;
- review of achievements and outcomes of the *Homelessness Strategy 2011–13*;
- homelessness data analysis;
- homelessness service system analysis;
- discussion paper;
- stakeholder consultations including an online survey.

Following development of the discussion paper a key aspect of developing the draft strategy and action plan involved consultation with internal and external stakeholders who had particular expertise as both deliverers and consumers of homelessness and related services. Approximately 180 people were involved in the first phase of consultation which included stakeholder forums, consumer discussion groups, written submissions and an online survey.

The draft *Homelessness Strategy* was endorsed by Council on 13 May 2014 for community consultation until 13 June 2014. The second phase of consultation involved internal and external stakeholders, the wider community, homelessness service users and consumers. Approximately 50 people participated through various consultation forums, meetings, online surveys and written submissions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Many comments and suggestions were received through the various consultation processes including the consultation forums with consumers, City of Melbourne staff and the homelessness sector; the online survey and through the written submissions.

This feedback was based on personal and professional experience and on evidence from working in the field as well as more formal research. The feedback primarily sought to strengthen the draft Strategy, address gaps and suggest priorities for City of Melbourne in addressing homelessness in the City.

Individuals and agencies who participated in the consultation process on the draft *Pathways: Homelessness Strategy 2014–17* were broadly supportive of the Strategy and the role of Council in addressing homelessness in Melbourne. Based on the City of Melbourne consultation process and feedback a number of changes were made to strengthen the draft *strategy*. The changes were based on ideas generated through the feedback from all consultation processes.

APPENDIX 2: Bibliography

In developing the draft strategy, the following documents and programs have been considered:

City of Melbourne

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Farell, J, 2012 "Definition of homelessness changes but problems remain" 13 September 2012, in [the Conversation at https://theconversation.com/definition-of-homelessness-changes-but-problems-remain-9525](https://theconversation.com/definition-of-homelessness-changes-but-problems-remain-9525) accessed 31 January 2013

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