

National Housing and Homelessness Plan Submission

Town of Victoria Park Oct 2023

1. Clarifying Responsibilities and Reporting

- The role of Local Government Authorities in addressing homelessness is poorly defined.
- Efforts should be made to define Local Government responsibilities in this space, ensuring that overlaps with the State Government Department of Communities Office of Homelessness responsibilities are avoided. Resources should be allocated to reflect these distinctions.
- Local Governments are in an advantageous position to promptly respond to the rough sleeping cases of homelessness, as they are often the first to receive reports from either community or internal reports.
- A structured centralised reporting system to allow Local Governments to promptly communicate homelessness cases to the State Government should be established.

2. Challenges in the Current System

- Inner City Local Governments in Western Australia have independently taken up the task of addressing homelessness, resulting in a lack of consistency and coordination across boundaries.
- The absence of a unified outreach service across inner city councils has created inconsistencies in support for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Variations in the allocation of funding to outreach services between different Local Governments has also hindered equitable support for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Currently, there is no method for estimating the number of people experiencing homelessness within a particular area. Street counts can assist with estimating the number of rough sleepers. However, they fail to capture individuals experiencing different forms of homelessness.

3. Addressing the Complex Needs of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

- Addressing chronic homelessness requires providing not only housing but also essential life skills to empower individuals to manage their homes effectively.
- Day Centres offer comprehensive support services for individuals experiencing homelessness. However, outreach services have reported assisting individuals to complete Return to Country applications, but then having difficulty in encouraging individuals to visit the day centres to progress their applications.

4. Empowering Youth with Homeownership Information

- Ensure that youth are provided with accessible information about homeownership schemes and incentives. Freely available accurate information can help them navigate the home purchase process and alleviate financial burdens.

5. Prioritising Early Intervention

- Expanding regional community development programs, such as the justice reinvestment program, Olabud Doogethu, in the Shire of Halls Creek, could aid in reducing homelessness and addressing the growing issue of ex-prisoners' homelessness, by preventing the burden of a prison sentence from ever occurring.

6. Affordable Housing

- There is very limited data available on affordable housing supply. Local Governments must first understand their current stocks of affordable housing to then identify the need for affordable housing and opportunities for new supply.

7. Planning

- The Town supports the continued reform of the WA planning system and the focus on reducing red tape and improving the efficiency and timeframes for planning approvals for all planning instruments from strategic to statutory.