

**Inquiry into the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places Parliament of NSW
Legislative Assembly, Committee on Community Services**

Response: Additional questions for Inquiry into the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places

- 1. Can Council comment on the particular types of sleeping rough and people experiencing homelessness at the moment with COVID?**

In Hawkesbury Local Government Area there has been an increase in the visible numbers of persons sleeping rough, in particular

- persons sleeping rough in motor vehicles
- persons with significant drug and alcohol issues
- persons with significant mental health issues

- 2. For example, we know that domestic violence is a big driver of homelessness. How do we incorporate particular experiences or particular groups of people experiencing homelessness, especially in regional and rural areas, into the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places?**

Whilst the existing protocol promotes joint responses, Council supports a revised protocol that describes approaches that encourage an increased the level of collaboration and accountability between the local service system, such as the collective impact framework as suggested by the LGNSW submission.

The existing Protocol clearly describes the multiple and complex issues experienced by many people experiencing homelessness, as well as recommends capacity building training within non-specialist services. Council supports the strengthening of this recommendation in a revised protocol as a consistent approach and understanding of trauma is critical when engaging with people sleeping

As the aim of the protocol is to provide a framework for interactions between officials and homeless people in public places, is to be achieved, a revised protocol may benefit from considering the social reality of the structural and physical environments in which the protocol will be implemented and by whom.

Many 'officials' utilising this protocol will be those outside of specialist and homelessness service systems and, as such, would benefit from working jointly with specialist agencies to ensure people sleeping rough are engaged with in a trauma-informed and sensitive manner. The 'service guide' component of the existing protocol is rightly recognised of great value to services outside of the specialist homelessness service system, however given the complexities that prevent a person from accessing even immediate accommodation on occasion, a revised protocol should also provide a template to be populated to reflect local agencies and include out of hours referral pathways to improve the support that all officials can provide, particularly in challenging circumstances and for people with complex needs.



3. Would you like to comment on the lack of services sometimes, particularly in regional/rural areas?

The Hawkesbury experience is similar to that of many rural communities, being that specialist services are located out of area, resulting in limited and outreach services available only occasionally on the ground. There are three assertive outreach workers allocated to the Nepean Area (Penrith, Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Hawkesbury LGA). Maintaining meaningful connections with people sleeping rough is critical to assist with referrals to support services, therefore it is critical all agencies understand how this is best achieved as there are insufficient staffing resources within the specialist homelessness service system itself to meet this need.

There is limited temporary accommodation however it is the travel required for people to register to access temporary accommodation (coupled with the fact there is no direct public transport routes) that hampers access for individuals. People can wait days for a worker to visit the Hawkesbury to enable them to access temporary accommodation.

The effectiveness of all interventions to support persons experiencing homelessness is hampered by the critical shortage of housing options. Council recognises that is not the purpose of the protocol to address social housing, but supports the submission made by Local Government NSW in that the protocol should refer to the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 and the Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW.

And finally, Council welcomes the State Government's development of the Human Services Outcomes Framework and believes that the application of this framework will advance collaboration and coordination across the diverse service systems that interact with people experiencing homelessness, ultimately improving outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to these further questions.

Yours faithfully

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