

**Submission
No 14**

INQUIRY INTO THE PROTOCOL FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE IN PUBLIC PLACES

Organisation: Wagga Wagga City Council

Date Received: 27 February 2020

Inquiry: Protocol for homeless people in public places

Response for the Social Planner for the City of Wagga Wagga

- a) Whether the Protocol continues to provide an effective framework for government organisations with an operational presence in public places and for services that support people who are experiencing homelessness.

The protocol has provided a framework for Wagga Wagga City Council to develop their own protocol. This included informing Council staff on the appropriate circumstances under which they can or cannot approach persons who are homeless.

- b) The extent to which the Protocol is being implemented in practice by government organisations providing direct service delivery, and non-government organisations contracted on behalf of government.

The protocol has assisted Wagga Wagga City Council to develop a locally relevant protocol that provides guidance to work effectively with local not for profit organisations, who can provide support and address issues of homelessness from a person focussed and humanitarian perspective.

The Wagga Wagga City Council Homelessness Protocol has provided guidance for staff working in compliance areas in areas where people, who may be homeless, are considered to be squatting. The protocol provides clear pathways to engage services to approach persons where there are concerns and reduces the prevalence of police engagement that used to occur from a compliance perspective.

- c) The appropriateness of the Protocol to support joint responses between government organisations, non-government organisations and local governments working in partnership to respond to homelessness.

The protocol has provided some level of clarity in working more effectively with other government agencies and not for profit organisations. Wagga Wagga City Council now works closely with St Vincent de Paul and this has opened up further collaboration in relation to persons who may be at risk of homelessness, an example of this is in the area of foreclosures due to non-payment of rates for 5 years or more. As a result, we have seen less people at risk of foreclosure on their homes.

Wagga Wagga City Council is currently updating their "Can we Help" campaign that displays information for young people on bus stops on how to access services that can assist them with mental health, housing and food security.

- d) Whether the Protocol adequately protects the rights and interests of people who are experiencing homelessness who use public places, including indigenous people and minority groups.

Without being legislated I am unsure if the protocol adequately protects the rights and interests of people who are experiencing homelessness.

- e) Whether the Protocol appropriately balances the rights and interests of people who are experiencing homelessness with those of residents, businesses and other people and organisations using public places.

This is not clearly articulated in the protocol and leaves it to the interpretation of relevant areas. This could be further defined.

- f) Any other related matters.

The protocol could further recommend practice to local government areas and or other state government agencies responsible for infrastructure consider the needs of homeless people in their planning for public facilities. An example would be increasing access to showers in public facilities and or recommending best practice in planning to support our homeless population by have available storage and or washing facilities or relevant information publicly available.