

**Submission  
No 21**

## **INQUIRY INTO THE PROTOCOL FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE IN PUBLIC PLACES**

**Organisation:** Byron Shire Council

**Date Received:** 28 February 2020



## Submission re. Protocol for Homeless People in Public Spaces

### Who is making the submission and how has this been informed?

This submission is being made by Byron Shire Council in consultation with the council's Homelessness Internal Working Group, the Byron Homelessness Interagency, and through observations made by the Project Officer (Rough Sleeping) and the Public Space Liaison Officers (PSLOs). The considerations below apply to the protocol generally and in some instances to the Byron Shire specifically.

### What needs further consideration?

- Byron Shire Council area has a significant number of people sleeping rough in public spaces such as bushland, scrubs and dunes etc... The current protocol doesn't take into account the different ways people can sleep rough in regional areas as opposed to the general 'street sleeping' that you see in urban areas. A number of these areas are also managed by different bodies such as council, crown land, national parks etc... and this needs to be taken into consideration. Also, the impact rough sleepers can have on the natural environment and how this is managed when considering people sleeping rough in these areas.
- Collaboration between local police and SHS services etc... to encourage better communication channels with all community stakeholders who come into contact with people sleeping rough in public spaces. There could be consideration for allocated liaison officers who work with the homeless community as part of local law enforcement. This would encourage a better response in homeless 'hot spots' and 'bushland' whilst encouraging collaboration between services. Also, it will provide a more compassionate response from officers who are specifically trained to work with the more vulnerable members of our community.
- There is a high prevalence of people sleeping rough in public places with pets/animals in the Byron Shire. This can create a number of issues involving safety when approaching rough sleepers, community safety, and appropriate service responses. People with pets, support with the care of pets on the streets, vaccinations, education for rough sleepers on safety etc needs further consideration. Any future protocol needs have a greater focus on rough sleepers with pets/animals.
- The protocol assumes that there are appropriate services to refer people to which is not necessarily the case in Byron Shire. Generally speaking people will need to travel significant distances in order to access a service. Also, whilst the protocol talks about cultural sensitivity there is a marked lack of services in the region when it comes to certain vulnerable client groups. There are a number of services that require a sensitive or targeted response such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and LGBTIQ communities. There is no reference to working with LGBTIQ rough sleepers in public spaces within the current protocol.
- An understanding of the aetiology of homelessness and the effects of trauma might be more useful in any future protocol. The protocol touches on complex needs of people sleeping rough in public places however a more explicit 'Trauma Informed' approach could be imbedded into the protocol.

