



CCSP 20 Homelessness Policy

October 2016

This policy was adopted by Council to set governing principles in place that align the strategic direction of the organisation with community values and aspirations.

The Homelessness Policy relates to the following Strategic Goal of the Community Strategic Plan 2033, Goal 2: Welcoming and inclusive communities

Objectives

The objective of this Policy is to identify the role of the Shire of Augusta Margaret River (the Shire) in addressing homelessness and outline its commitment in:

1. Preventing, reducing and managing homelessness
2. Supporting and building capacity within the community to address homelessness, and
3. Encouraging collaboration, community partnerships and evidence based practices.

Policy

The Homelessness Policy reflects the following principles and commits to the following:

1. Understanding the role of local government

Commonwealth and state government hold the primary role of funding and providing services to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The role of local government in addressing homelessness is not specified in Australian legislation.

The Shire recognises that in order to ensure sustainable and consistent solutions, addressing homelessness must take on a whole of government and whole of community approach. The role of the Shire in addressing homelessness is to assist and complement the work of other tiers of government and the community sector, as facilitators of solutions to homelessness and crisis accommodation.

2. The right to housing

Like many jurisdictions locally and nationally the Shire faces a real and present housing affordability and homelessness challenge. The Shire recognises that access to affordable, secure, appropriate and accessible housing is a basic right for all people and plays an integral role in a socially, economically, environmentally and culturally sustainable community.

The Shire commits to:

- a) Plan for the provision of affordable housing
- b) Identify Shire owned land which could potentially be available for low cost housing, social, community housing and/or crisis accommodation and once identified, liaise with relevant authorities to secure a suitable tenure which would allow its future development for affordable housing purposes.

3. Advocacy

The Shire acknowledges its responsibility to advocate on behalf of all members of its community.

Homelessness is a complex issue with multiple causes and co-existing issues such as upbringing, mental health, physical health, drug and alcohol misuse, family violence, unemployment, low income, poor education, high cost of living, unaffordability of housing particularly where there is an influx of seasonal workers together with scarce supply of social, community and low cost housing.

The Shire recognises that people who are homeless are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our community and that the Shire has a moral obligation to address and advocate for their needs.

The Shire recognises its role in advocating to other levels of government for the provision of government funded services to prevent, reduce and manage homelessness within the community.

The Shire commits to:

- a) Advocate for the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged people within the community
- b) Advocate for the provision of state and federal government funded services and evidence based policies
- c) Support local community groups action towards preventing, reducing and managing homelessness

4. Building the capacity of our community

The Shire recognises the importance of supporting and strengthening the skills, competencies and abilities of our community members to enable the development of local ownership and community decision making in community development planning and programs.

The Shire commits to:

- a) Support the community in raising awareness about the nature, causes, experiences and consequences of homelessness.
- b) Build the capacity of the community in collaborating and delivering local projects to prevent, reduce and manage homelessness.

5. Partnerships and service coordination

As the issue of homelessness and crisis accommodation is not unique to the Shire of Augusta Margaret River, the Shire acknowledges the importance of ensuring consistency and continuity between federal, state and regional strategies in addressing homelessness.

The Shire commits to:

- a) Work with federal, state, non-government agencies and local community groups in planning and implementing federal and state wide plans to address homelessness and a lack of crisis accommodation
- b) Seeking to liaise with other local governments in the region, and other public sector bodies to share best practice, gather accurate data collection and discuss concerns around homelessness and its manifestation

6. Use of public spaces

The Shire recognises the rights of all members of the community to use public spaces and access community services and facilities and that all members have the right to live in a safe and peaceful environment.

The Shire commits to:

- a) Reviewing local laws and key priority projects to remove the capacity for negative impacts on homeless persons
- b) Ensuring all community members, including people who are homeless, have access to Shire / community services and facilities.

7. Right to participate

The Shire recognises that all members of the community have the right to participate in community events, activities and consultations. People who are homeless are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our community and may require extra assistance to enable them to participate.

The Shire commits to:

- a) Ensuring that all Shire events, services and consultations are accessible and inclusive of all members of the community, as far as is practicable.

Definitions

Homelessness (ABS Definition)

A universally accepted definition of homelessness does not exist in Australian legislation, and definitions of homelessness continue to be widely debated. A statistical definition of homelessness has been adopted by the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to estimate the prevalence in Australia.

In September 2012 the ABS revised the definition of homelessness applied to the general population. In brief the ABS definition is that:

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

- a) Is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- b) Has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable, or
- c) Does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations (ABS, 2012).

This definition describes homelessness 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.

Homelessness (Chamberlain and Mackenzie Definition)

Prior to the new ABS definition, homelessness was commonly defined within 3 categories developed by Australian researchers Chamberlain and Mackenzie (*Understanding Contemporary Homelessness: issues of definition and meaning*, 2012).

- a) Primary Homelessness: People who live in improvised dwellings. This includes people who sleep on the street, in parks, derelict buildings or cars;
- b) Secondary homelessness: People who live in temporary accommodation. This includes people in emergency or short-term homeless services and people residing temporarily with friends or family;
- c) Tertiary Homelessness: People who live in accommodation without a lease or the private use of bathroom or kitchen facilities. This includes people in medium to long term boarding houses or caravan parks.

Affordable Housing

The term 'affordable housing' is often and widely used but its meaning varies dependent on the context within which it is used. For the purpose of this Policy, affordable housing is housing which is affordable for households in lower or middle parts of the income scale. This housing also must be reasonably adequate in its standard and location for these households and "does not cost so much that such a household is unlikely to be able to meet other basic living costs on a sustainable basis". (Affordable Housing in Australia, Disney 2007).

Application

Responsibility of this Policy rests with the Council, CEO and staff of the Shire of Augusta Margaret River. This Policy is to be reviewed every 3 years.

Document and version control table

Strategic outcome	Goal 2: Welcoming and inclusive communities Community Outcome 1: Sense of identity and belonging Community Outcome 2: Equity and opportunities for all				
Responsible Directorate	Corporate and Community Services				
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