

11 December 2019

Municipal Association of Victoria
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Ask for: Melanie O'Neil

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Our Ref: A3231358

Dear Jan,

Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) submission to the inquiry into homelessness in Victoria

Hobsons Bay City Council welcomes MAV's submission to the inquiry into homelessness in Victoria, and welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback. Council recognises the growing issue of homelessness across Victoria and seeks to contextualise the scale and nature of homelessness in Hobsons Bay and the Western Metropolitan Region.

Hobsons Bay City Council will prepare a submission directly to the inquiry into homelessness in Victoria. However, some general comments on key issues of focus and concern from Hobsons Bay City Council which may be relevant for the MAV team that is preparing its submission are outlined below.

Emergency accommodation

- Northern and Western Homelessness Networks have identified increasing demands for emergency accommodation as a result of increasing rates of homelessness, which is linked to Melbourne's housing crisis, particularly to the lack of affordable housing (NWHN 2018).
- Emergency accommodation is often unsafe and typically of a very poor standard (NWHN 2018).
- Emergency accommodation is a short term solution that is ineffective in breaking the cycle of homelessness.

Difficulties measuring population groups

- Census data on homelessness is insufficient. There is no single variable in the Census which can accurately inform on homelessness. In addition, Census data does not capture hard to reach populations, transit and seasonal fluctuations.
- Within Hobsons Bay, it is difficult to measure homelessness levels. For example, anecdotal evidence from local services supporting young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness suggests there may be a small transient population temporarily living in the municipality not accurately accounted for in the Census.

Lack of affordable housing

- As at September 2018, there were 4,251 'priority access' social housing applicants on the Victorian Housing Register in Melbourne's west (Victorian Government, 2019).
- There are flow on benefits of affordable housing across the housing spectrum, including assisting people at risk of homelessness and those living in housing stress.

NWHN. (2018). A Crisis in Crisis. Retrieved from <http://www.nwhn.net.au/Crisis-in-Crisis.aspx>

Victorian Government. (2019). Victorian Housing Register. Retrieved from <https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/victorian-housing-register>

- There is net community benefit for affordable housing, which can be quantified using cost/benefit analysis which can demonstrate the impacts on health, education and employment outcomes, as well as reduced use of justice services.

Hobsons Bay policy approach

- Council is committed to more fully understanding the level of homelessness in Hobsons Bay including the drivers and types of homelessness as outlined in our social policy – A Fair Hobsons Bay For All. State government leadership to improve data standards and collection would assist with a unified and meaningful approach across local government to understanding the level of homelessness and account for transit populations.
- Council is committed, through our Affordable Housing Policy Statement, to ensuring all households in the municipality are able to live in affordable, secure and appropriate housing that meets their needs, particularly those with low and moderate incomes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback. For further information please contact Melanie O'Neil, Senior Social Planning and Policy Officer, on 9932 1103.

Regards,



Penelope Winslade
Director Sustainable Communities