

8.19. Homeless Strategy (Update) Community Engagement Strategy

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ATTACHMENTS:

1. Community Engagement Strategy NSC Homeless Strategy 2021 doc FV [8.19.1 - 5 pages]

PURPOSE:

This report provides details of Council's plan to update the Homeless Strategy and seeks endorsement of the proposed engagement strategy developed to inform the Strategy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council has a long history of supporting people experiencing, or at risk of becoming, homeless through assertive outreach and community development initiatives, as well as the provision of social and affordable housing stock.

The Homeless Strategy, is one of many Council plans and strategies, that is produced to align with Council's Community Strategic Plan. An update of Council's Homeless Strategy will provide opportunities to review Council's role in this area, whilst identifying other initiatives, programs and policies to address and respond to homelessness within a best-practice framework.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

\$1000 from the Access and Inclusion Sundries budget has been allocated to cover costs associated with the proposed Community Engagement Strategy. Identified costs include; incentives and reimbursements, catering and publicity.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council adopt the Community Engagement Strategy to inform review of the Homeless Strategy and note the preparation timetable.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment

1.4 Public open space and recreation facilities and services meet community needs

2. Our Built Infrastructure

2.1 Infrastructure and assets meet community needs

4. Our Social Vitality

4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe

BACKGROUND

Although largely considered the responsibility of the Federal and State governments, local government can also play a significant role in addressing homelessness. Council has a long history of supporting people experiencing, or at risk of becoming, homeless through assertive outreach and community development initiatives, as well as the provision of social and affordable housing stock.

The Homeless Strategy, is one of many Council plans and strategies, that is produced to align with Council's Community Strategic Plan. This strategy was last updated in 2013 and Council has been consistently working to achieve the actions set out in this plan. An update of Council's Homeless Strategy will provide opportunities to review Council's role in this area, whilst identifying other initiatives, programs and policies to address and respond to homelessness within a best-practice framework.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Protocol. The Community Engagement Strategy identifies key stakeholders and specific target groups that will assist in identifying actions that are reflective of the needs specific to the local government area.

DETAIL

The Community Engagement Strategy will be delivered in three phases:

Phase 1 - Research/Scoping

This phase will involve review of current literature and best practice models for addressing and responding to homelessness in the North Sydney LGA. The review will consider previous plans and strategies prepared by Council, current service delivery and amenities access for people experiencing homeless, as well as academic literature on homelessness issues. During

this phase, Council will consider the merits of resources, such as lockers for rough sleepers to securely store personal items.

Phase 2 - Design Option(s) Consultation

Between November 2021 and January 2022 Council will offer various methods by which the identified stakeholders can participate in Phase 2, including face-to-face and online, allowing the community to participate at times that best suit their needs and commitments. At the end of Phase 2 a summary of consultations outcomes (raw data) will be produced and distributed to participants and key stakeholders as well as posted on Council's website.

Phase 3 - Finalising Design(s)/Public Exhibition

Using the quantitative data of Phase 1 and qualitative information gathered in Phase 2 the draft Strategy will be prepared. This phase also involves finalising the Strategy, which includes reporting to Council and public exhibition (for a minimum of 28 days), whereby public feedback is sought regarding the Draft Strategy. This phase will occur in early 2022.

The key messaging of the Community Engagement Strategy is as follows;

- Council plays a significant role in contributing to the community response to homelessness as a social issue in North Sydney. Council provides both direct support, through the provision of assertive outreach, social and affordable housing stock, as well as facilitation of community development initiatives, to address and respond to homelessness.
- Council periodically reviews its supporting plans and strategies that contribute towards achieving the aspirational vision of the North Sydney Community Strategic Plan. Council is updating the Homeless Strategy which is a targeted and localised plan, considering the demographics and profile of this population group.
- The first phase of the Strategy development involves gathering up-to-date information on the local needs and issues affecting individuals experiencing, or at risk of becoming, homeless within the North Sydney local government area. This information will help guide Council to develop actions that address priority issues.
- Stakeholders will be provided two opportunities to participate on the preparation of the Homeless Strategy. The first phase will be delivered through a range of engagement methods seeking input from relevant stakeholders. The second phase will involve the public exhibition of the draft Strategy during, at which time the community will again be encouraged to provide feedback.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



Homeless Strategy Review

Prepared October 2021

Councils are required under the *Local Government Act 1993* to inform the community of particular issues that potentially affect their way of life. North Sydney Council is committed both in principle and in practice, to engaging on matters affecting the North Sydney community.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this project-specific Community Engagement Strategy is to outline the ways stakeholders can be involved in the review of Council's *Homeless Strategy (2013)*, identifying best-practice methods for addressing this social issue.

1.1 Council's Community Engagement Protocol

This Engagement Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Council's *Community Engagement Protocol*. The Protocol is used to determine the level of 'level(s) of impact' applicable to this project/decision (proposal). Community engagement opportunities will be provided across a range of 'engagement' levels. This proposal has been determined as:

LEVEL OF IMPACT	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT
Low - LGA Wide	Inform/Consult

Council used the framework shown below in Table 1.1 to select the most appropriate 'level(s) of engagement' for this proposal to ensure an appropriate range of engagement 'levels' and methods are offered:

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Inform	Providing balanced and objective information to help the community understand problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions
Consult	Obtain public feedback on alternatives and/or decisions
Involve	Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered
Collaborate	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution

Table 1.1 Derived from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

2. Background

Although largely considered the responsibility of the Federal and State governments, local government can also play a significant role in addressing homelessness¹. Council has a long

¹ NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023

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history of supporting people experiencing, or at risk of becoming, homeless through assertive outreach and community development initiatives, as well as the provision of social and affordable housing stock.

The Homeless Strategy, is one of many Council plans and strategies, that supports the implementation of the *North Sydney Community Strategic Plan*. This Strategy was last updated in 2013 and Council has been consistently working to achieve the actions set out in this plan. The updated Strategy will provide opportunities to review Council's role in this service area, whilst identifying other initiatives, programs and policies to address and respond to homelessness within a best-practice framework.

3. Community Engagement Strategy

3.1 Who are our community stakeholders?

This Engagement Strategy identifies the following groups to engage with in the local community:

- local network interagency - Northern Sydney Homeless Network Interagency/Case Coordination Network
- specialist homelessness services/peak bodies - St George Community Housing (SGCH), Link Wentworth Housing, Mission Australia, Bridge Housing, Homelessness NSW, The Northern Centre, Phoenix House, Taldumande Youth Services
- government agencies, both state and federal, including NSW Police, Centrelink, NSW Health, NSW Department of Family and Community Services
- Council staff - particularly customer facing teams, including; rangers, library, customer service, parks and other outdoor staff
- people experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness
- other local services providers - community centres, boarding houses

3.2 Key Communication Messages

- Council plays a significant role in contributing to the community response to homelessness as a social issue in North Sydney. Council provides both direct support, through the provision of assertive outreach, social and affordable housing stock, as well as facilitation of community development initiatives, to address and respond to homelessness.
- Council periodically reviews its supporting plans and strategies that contribute towards achieving the North Sydney Community Strategic Plan. Council is updating the Homeless Strategy, which is a targeted and localised plan, considering the demographics and profile of this population group.
- The first phase of the Strategy development involves gathering up-to-date information on the local needs and issues affecting individuals experiencing, or at risk of becoming, homeless within the North Sydney local government area (LGA). This information will help guide Council to develop actions that address priority issues.

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- Stakeholders will be provided two opportunities to participate on the preparation of the Homeless Strategy. The first phase will use a range of engagement methods to seek input from key stakeholders. The second phase will involve the public exhibition of the draft Strategy during which time stakeholders will be encouraged to provide feedback.

3.3 Timetable

Stakeholder engagement will occur at various times. The key project development phases are outlined in the following table:

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Timing</i>
1. Research and Scoping	November 2021
2. Consultation	November 2021 to January 2022
3. Preparing the Draft Strategy/Public Exhibition	February to March 2022

3.3.1 Phase 1 - Research/Scoping

This phase will involve review of current literature and best practice models for addressing and responding to homelessness in the North Sydney LGA. The review will consider previous plans and strategies prepared by Council, current service delivery and amenities access for people experiencing homeless, as well as academic literature on homelessness issues. During this phase, Council will consider the merits of resources, such as lockers for rough sleepers to securely store personal items.

3.3.2 Phase 2 - Consultation

Between November 2021 and January 2022, Council will offer various methods by which stakeholders can participate in Phase 2, including face-to-face and online, allowing the community to participate at times that best suit their needs and commitments. At the end of Phase 2 a summary of consultations outcomes (raw data) will be produced and distributed to participants and key stakeholders as well as posted on Council's website.

Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
Webpage	All	Inform/Consult	Provide information about the project and direct people to how they can have their say
Media Release	All	Inform	
Advertisements	All		
Social Media (Facebook/Twitter)	All		
Fact Sheet	All		
e-Newsletters	Existing subscribers: North Sydney E-news, Precinct E-news and Business e-news		
Information display (various)	All		

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Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
locations)			
Focus Groups	General community, Mayor and Councillors, Precincts, Service providers, People with lived experience of homelessness	Consult	Collect feedback. Participant numbers will be limited
One-on-one interviews	Specialist Homelessness Service Providers, People with lived experience of homelessness		Collect feedback in a private and sensitive manner
Survey	Service providers, People with lived experience of homelessness, Broader community		Alternative to face-to-face interactions. There will be two surveys, one specifically targeting specialist homeless service providers and one targeting people who have an experience of homelessness. The surveys will be conducted online, with a hard copy option also made available.

Note: In accordance with Council's Community Engagement Framework described on page 1, the 'level of engagement' per engagement method is indicated.

3.3.2 Phase 3 - Public Exhibition

Using the quantitative data of Phase 1 and qualitative information gathered in Phase 2, the draft Strategy will be prepared. This phase involves finalising the Strategy, including reporting the draft Strategy to Council seeking endorsement to publicly exhibit (for a minimum of 28 days) and post-exhibition reporting back to Council, inclusive of the summary of submissions received. This phase will occur in early 2022. To do this we will undertake the following activities. Not listed in priority order.

Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
Webpage	All	Inform	Provide information about the project and direct people to how they can have a say i.e. promote the Phase 2 consultation opportunities.
Social Media (Facebook/Twitter)			
e-Newsletters			
Information display (various locations)			
Direct letter	Key stakeholders per Phase 1		
Existing e-newsletters	Subscribers of Council's various newsletters including North Sydney E-news, Business E-news		

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<i>Method</i>	<i>Target Stakeholders</i>	<i>Engagement Level</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
	and Precincts E-news		
Precinct System	All active Precinct Committees	Inform/Consult	Encourage Precinct Committees to promote consultation opportunity to members/invite to make a submission.
Submissions	All	Consult	Feedback accepted by email or posted letter as well as via online form. ²

Note: In accordance with Council's Community Engagement Framework described on page 1, the 'level of engagement' per engagement method is indicated.

4. Opportunity Cost/Rationale

Engaging the community in this proposal may entail financial costs to Council to achieve a high-quality engagement process. If the process is robust, community ownership of the decisions made will ensure efficient outcomes. Insufficient or poor quality engagement can result in poor long-term decisions requiring further resources to rectify. The aim of a high quality community engagement process is to make sustainable decisions. The engagement process will help Council staff and/or Councillors to understand the related recommendations rationale.

5. Further Information

For further information contact Council's Access and Inclusion Coordinator, Community & Library Services Division:

Phone: 9936 8100
 Email: yoursay@northsydney.nsw.gov.au
 Website: www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au

² For more information about how to make a written submission refer to Council's [Information Sheet: Making a Written Submission to Council](#).