



Regional Homelessness Plan

2018/19 to 2021/22

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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYORS

The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo are proud to deliver a Regional Homelessness Plan that will assist the community with understanding, preventing and responding to homelessness in the community.

The plan has been the result of a two-year development phase, with respectful consideration given by both Cities, and includes input from stakeholders in the community who have an interest in the optimum wellbeing of people at-risk of, or experiencing homelessness. Underpinning the plan is comprehensive research into the complexities, reasons for, prevalence of and responses to homelessness.

The Regional Homelessness Plan seeks to provide a framework that will inform the process that the Cities will take regarding responding to homelessness and providing milestones for action. The plan will be reviewed, evaluated and reported on annually.

We are very pleased that the Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo are working together with a united approach and believe it will bring positive and long-lasting results for those community members who are living with the highest of needs in our growing northern metropolitan suburbs.

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Mayor Albert Jacob City of Joondalup Mayor Tracey Roberts City of Wanneroo

BACKGROUND

The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo have recognised that homelessness is a complex and growing issue affecting people in the northern suburbs as well as more broadly across Australia. The multi-dimensional nature of homelessness necessitates involvement by a wide range of agencies, including all spheres of government; the not-for-profit, commercial and private sector; community groups and individual efforts.

It is known that the causes of homelessness are incredibly varied with each person having a unique set of circumstances that impact their experience of homelessness or sleeping rough. Key factors that may contribute to homelessness include domestic violence, sexual abuse, a shortage of affordable housing, unemployment, mental health issues, trauma, family breakdown, grief and loss, and hazardous drug and alcohol use.

Given that there is no sole sphere of Government or service provider that has capacity to address every contributing factor to homelessness, it is critical that a whole of community and commitment to an inter-agency approach to a common outcome is secured. This sharing of resources, knowledge and programming can maximise the provision of services available to support a community and in doing so, take meaningful strides to sustain an improved quality of life for people experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness is an extreme representation of disadvantage and social exclusion in the community. Adding to the complexity, can be a lack of community understanding through negative stigma or stereotypes which can hamper efforts to address homelessness.

Local Government is largely considered to be the sphere of government closest to the people, responsible for the wellbeing of communities through the provision of infrastructure, services and regulation. Whilst there is no specific mandate for Local Government to play a major role in addressing homelessness, Local Government through its planning, health, community development and regulatory powers can facilitate positive local and regional responses to end homelessness.

UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 Census of Population and Housing, it is estimated that on any given night in Western Australia around 9,000 people are considered to be homeless. There are however more people who are homeless and not counted as such. Over a year, WA's specialist homelessness services are assisting over 24,000 people, with significant over-representation of Aboriginal people (41%).

While there is no internationally agreed definition of homelessness, the ABS considers the cultural definition of homelessness incorporating three tiers of homelessness as:

- Primary homelessness: people without conventional accommodation (living in the streets, in deserted buildings, improvised dwellings, under bridges, in parks, etc);
- Secondary homelessness: people moving between various forms of temporary shelter including friends, emergency accommodation, youth refuges, hostels and boarding houses; and
- Tertiary homelessness: people living in single rooms in private boarding houses without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure.

It is recognised that people will often move between these three tiers adding to the complexity of gathering accurate data of the current state of homelessness.

In 2011, a second definition of homelessness was developed by the ABS informed by an understanding of homelessness as homelessness, not rooflessness. It emphasises the core elements of 'home' in Anglo American and European interpretations of the meaning of home as identified in research evidence (Mallet, 2004). These elements may include: a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety, and the ability to control living space. Homelessness is therefore a lack of one or more of the elements that represent a 'home'.

In brief, the ABS statistical definition is that:

- When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:
- Is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- Has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- Does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

During homelessness week in 2018 the Department of Communities launched a report 'A review of the research and statistical evidence' prepared by The Centre of Social Impact, University of Western Australia. This report outlined the key causal factors, drivers or associations that commonly present in populations of homeless people. These include but are not limited to:

- Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Mental health issues.
- Substance use problems.
- Domestic and family violence.
- Interactions with the justice system.

According to the report the above factors may be co-occurring and/or interconnected. Trauma, substance use, and physical and mental illness often occur before, during and after periods of homelessness. Interactions with the Justice System are similar in that there is research to indicate that there are high rates of ex-prisoners without a secure home, but also those experiencing homelessness especially chronic forms of homelessness such as rough sleeping, which lack safety, leave people more vulnerable to criminal activities and interacting with police. Domestic violence is the other key individual antecedent for homelessness. The link between domestic and family violence and homelessness is validated across a wide range of statistical data sources, as well as qualitative studies.

As well as individual-level drivers of homelessness that involve life events or experiences that predispose individuals to the risk of homelessness, structural determinants of homelessness are also a key driver of homelessness. Structural determinants relate to the conditions in the socioeconomic landscape which enable people to access the resources they need to maintain secure housing.

Resources include financial, educational and employment opportunities and what is required to meet the cost of housing is affected by factors in the housing market that make housing more or less affordable.

Prevention of homelessness can occur through the provision of social and affordable housing options. A Housing First approach, with wrap-around service support if required, is critical to prevent homelessness. So too is immediate access to suitable crisis accommodation. A focus on early intervention and a strong and co-ordinated service response including access to free or low-cost financial and emotional counselling, domestic and family violence and drug and alcohol support services. Understanding the local data to inform what is needed and to track change and the evidence base of what works to end homelessness is critical to guide responses.

HOMELESSNESS IN THE CITIES OF JOONDALUP AND WANNEROO

City of Joondalup

In March 2018, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released homelessness estimates based on the 2016 Census of Population and Housing. In the City of Joondalup, which records a population of 160,507 residents, the ABS estimate 143 people are experiencing homelessness, or 0.08% of the population. The reports estimate that 80 individuals are staying temporarily with others, 30 are in supported accommodation, 22 are in 'severely' crowded dwellings, 6 are living in boarding houses and 4 are sleeping rough or in an improvised dwelling.

The City's own records challenge the estimates provided by the ABS. In 2012, homelessness in the City of Joondalup became more visible, prompting the City to begin documenting and responding to reports of rough sleepers in public space. Since that time, officers have received over 300 reports of rough sleeping resulting in engagement with 240 people experiencing homelessness. The likely reason these numbers are much higher than those reflected in the Estimating Homelessness report is because people who are sleeping rough are not easily captured in the Census.

The City has a protocol which guides staff on the process for reporting rough sleepers and how to engage with a person experiencing homelessness. Under the protocol, staffs are provided training on understanding and responding to homelessness and rough sleepers are offered information, support and referral if they are open to it.

In 2015/16 there were 53 rough sleepers and in 2016/17 there were 59 rough sleepers who were offered information and services once reported to the City. During both of those periods, two thirds were male and one third female. The age range was between early twenties and 80 years; and between 50% and 60% were located within the City Centre.

From 1 July 2017 to 30 August 2018, the City has received 25 reports of 28 different rough sleepers. Of these, 43% are male 32% female and the remainder unknown. The age range was from 24 years to late sixties.

Within these reported figures on homelessness, there are currently 12 people who are regularly reported to the City, but not listed as new rough sleepers as they were first reported prior to 30 June 2017 and were not re-counted. These twelve people are well-known to City officers as they are long-term rough sleepers who do not wish to be referred to accommodation services and generally refuse support. The City receives ongoing communication from the public regarding these people, mainly concerns about their well-being.

While rough sleeping is the most visible and acute form of homelessness, other forms of 'hidden' homelessness such as overcrowding and couch surfing are known to exist in the City but the City does not record these statistics.

City of Wanneroo

Findings in the ABS, Estimating Homelessness Report state that of the 199,882 individuals living in the City of Wanneroo, 367 of them are experiencing homelessness, 0.18% of the total population. Of these 367 persons, none are sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings, 8 are living in boarding houses, 26 are in supported accommodation for the homeless, 95 are staying temporarily with others and 232 are living in 'severely' crowded dwellings.

While these numbers suggest that there are no rough sleepers in the City of Wanneroo this is likely to be because of the geographical spread of the City and the difficulties in identifying these individuals. Qualitative information has been received by City officers while engaging with members of the public indicating a significant rise in individuals and families camping in bushland or sleeping in their cars in community carparks in the City of Wanneroo.

The ABS report identified a number of suburbs in the South Ward as most at risk of or effected by homelessness. Mortgage stress has been identified in certain suburbs within the North Ward where the proportion of people more than 30 days behind their mortgage repayments is above 5 per cent.

Statistics received from a local financial counselling service provider report over a 6-month period from 1 July 2017 – 31 December 2018, 162 City residents received financial counselling advice from that provider alone and had a total combined debt of nearly \$39 million. Furthermore, 114 people within the City were declared bankrupt during the months of October, November and December last year. Data received from The National Debt helpline indicate that over 400 City residents made contact between 1 July 2017 – 31 March 2018 highlighting that some residents in the City are impacted by financial hardship and stress. With the current economic climate and forecasted population growth, the City is a strong advocate for and works closely with community groups and not for profit organisations that support community wellbeing and aid financial hardship such as financial counselling.

2016 Census reveals unemployment within the City of Wanneroo has grown dramatically over the last five years with figures more than doubling between 2012 and 2017. As of June 2018, the unemployment rate in the City of Wanneroo was at 8.5%; 2.2% higher than the WA average. The City is working on and has developed a number of initiatives and resources to assist in increasing employment such as the refurbishment of the Girrawheen Hub. The aim of the Hub is to work with organisations to help job seekers learn skills that will help them get work and support those wanting a change of career or to start a new business.

Currently there are a number of homelessness support services available within the community, such as financial counselling, tenancy support programs which assist individuals and families that unable to meet their rent payments, and a number of food relief services. The City refers those in need of such assistance to the relevant organisations to ease their financial strain and ensure they have their daily needs met. With high numbers of at-risk people, the City is focused on advocating for prevention elements such as financial counselling services and facilitating community programs and activities which encourage social connection.

The City of Wanneroo has also developed an internal procedure for responding to reports of homelessness as a means of ensuring that those experiencing homelessness are offered the appropriate service to meet their needs. This procedure will be reviewed and updated accordingly as part of the actions and strategies set out in the plan.

JOONDALUP WANNEROO ENDING HOMELESSNESS GROUP (JWEHG)

In 2011, the Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo were founding members of the Joondalup Wanneroo Homelessness Action Group (JWHAG). After extensive consideration, the Group renamed themselves in 2018 as Joondalup Wanneroo Ending Homelessness Group.

The ambition to end homelessness aligns with the WA Alliance to End Homelessness which released its state-wide plan in 2018. Although ending homelessness may sound aspirational and is more likely to be influenced at a State and Federal level, the group considered it was important to articulate their commitment to ending homelessness, rather than managing it. The JWEHG meets regularly and is open to members from government, not for profit, corporate, faith based organisations and community who work within the homelessness sector or related industry, in and around the Joondalup and Wanneroo region.

The purpose of this group is to share information, build on opportunities, collaborate, develop partnerships and integrate services, with a vision to effectively end homelessness in the Northern Corridor. The Cities play an active role in the group, which meets on a six-weekly basis and is chaired by a local service provider. The JWEHG has welcomed the development of the Regional Homelessness Plan and are a lead agency that will contribute to the delivery of assigned actions and policies set out in the plan.

MAGDALENA'S STORY – lived experience in the northern suburbs

Magdalena is 62, softly spoken, and well groomed. She was a nurse for 40 years, well respected, with friends and interests; a happy life.

A series of stressful events at work led her to quit her job and she lost her home in regional WA after being left unable to pay her mortgage.

She decided to move to Perth but on arrival found her accommodation had fallen through. "That first night I slept in my car I had no idea I would still be sleeping in it nearly a year later" she said.

"I would spend a few days in one place and then move on. Sometimes I would sit outside a leisure centre and would take me hours to get up the courage to go and use the facilities"

Help finally came when she saw a card for a Community Connect Day at a church in Joondalup for those without a home. "Within days they had found share accommodation for me. That first night was lovely to stretch out in a bed"

Magdalena has been in secure accommodation for the past eighteen months and is rebuilding her life.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

In 2015, the Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo simultaneously adopted recommendations to develop a joint Regional Homelessness Plan. Since then, ongoing strategic and operational discussions between the two Cities have occurred.

In October 2016, a community stakeholder workshop was jointly-hosted with 64 attendees from local government, State government departments, churches, shopping centre management, community based homeless support services, real estate agents and people with lived experience. Outcomes of the workshop informed the development of the Regional Plan.

In 2017, each City held workshops with their respective Elected Members who welcomed the opportunity to input to the development of the plan. Pertinent actions in the plan were formed as a result of these workshops.

Key themes that emerged from all consultation include a targeted advocacy program to State and Federal governments to fund early intervention services; an exploration of partnership opportunities with service providers, local churches and businesses; the establishment of ongoing specialist homeless support programs and the identification of affordable housing options.

In 2018, consultation and contributions to the development of the Regional Homelessness Plan were focussed on key external stakeholders such as peak bodies, other local governments, and industry drivers such as Shelter WA, Red Cross and Western Australian Local Government Association.

REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS PLAN

Vision

The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo are committed to ensuring that people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness have the optimum opportunity to improve their circumstances. The purpose of the plan is to articulate publicly the collaborative commitment of preventing and responding to end homelessness in the region.

Actions in the plan will be achieved through the development and implementation of agreed actions through each City's role to coordinate, support, advocate, collaborate and facilitate within their respective communities. This regional vision is underpinned by three key pillars:

- Building community capacity, understanding and engagement.
- Prevention and early intervention.
- Responding to homelessness.

The plan will:

- Clarify the Cities' roles in addressing homelessness.
- Work towards a strong and co-ordinated response to homelessness.
- Maximise efficiency of community resources in responding to homelessness.
- Seek to understand the nature and breadth of homelessness.
- Use data wisely to inform evidence based change and decision making.
- Engage and inform the community.
- Provide strategic direction for the Cities in relation to homelessness.
- Advocate at State and National Level.

THE ROLE OF OTHERS

The roles of the Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo are co-ordinator, supporter, facilitator, collaborator and advocate. The roles of other stakeholders in the homelessness space are identified in the table below.

Group	Role		
Australian Government	Funding provider through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement		
State Government	Fund distributor through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement		
Peak Bodies	Service Provider/Advocate/Policy Developer/Facilitator		
Specialist Homelessness Services	Service Provider/Advocate		
Faith-based organisations	Service Provider/Advocate		
Community Organisations	Service Provider/Advocate		
Small community groups	Support Provider/Advocate		
Individuals with lived experience	Receiver of services/advocacy		
Individuals in the community	Advocate		

MEASUREMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo will oversee the implementation, review, evaluation and reporting of the plan in context of their own Local Government area.

This includes ensuring the plan is distributed both externally and internally, integrated into the business plans and budgets of relevant business units and reported on annually.

In addition, each local government will develop its own localised Implementation Plan that takes into account any unique aspects applicable to the respective regions.

Due to the necessity to create foundation data, some measures in the plan will begin after benchmarking is completed in the first year of implementation. Benchmarking may also include consideration of the State Homelessness Plan which is yet to be published.

REFERENCES

During the development of this Plan extensive research was conducted to inform the pillars, goals and actions contained in the document.

Key references include:

The Western Australian Strategy to End Homelessness - 2018. Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness.

Homelessness in Western Australia – 2016 – the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Homelessness Background Paper 2016 - the Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.

Report into Preventing and Responding to Homelessness in the City of Joondalup 2015 – Shelter WA.

Preventing and Responding to Homelessness in the City of Joondalup. City of Joondalup Council Report December 2015.

Opening Doors to Address Homelessness – Western Australia Homelessness – State Plan 2010-2013.

2049.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016

https://economy.id.com.au

Homelessness in Western Australia: A review of the research and statistical evidence - Centre for Social Impact and University of Western Australia

ACTION PLAN

Pillar 1: Building Capacity, Understanding and Engagement
Goal: Stakeholders communicate and collaborate effectively with clear purpose to end homelessness

	Strategy	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
1.1	Maintain a formalised interagency network of stakeholders in the northern suburbs to ensure the sector works effectively, efficiently and collaboratively.	 a. Annual review of the Joondalup Wanneroo Ending Homelessness Group (JWEHG) and its alignment to sector strategies and policy. b. Actively participate in the JWEHG. 	2018/19-2021/22	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Annual review evidenced via written report. Participate in a minimum of five meetings annually.
1.2	Ensure relevant, accurate and consistent data is collected and made available in the northern suburbs to inform sound decision-making by stakeholders.	 a. Develop a joint approach to the definition, collection and recording of local quantitative data and statistics. Align with state or national metrics where practicable. b. Develop a shared understanding of how the data and statistics will be used to support ending homelessness. c. Develop avenues for collecting and sharing meaningful qualitative data on homelessness such as storytelling. 	2018/19 2019/20 2019/20	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Ongoing data collection reported through JWEHG meetings. Annual report evidencing data used to inform decision making and initiatives to support the goal of ending homelessness. Qualitative data collection and distribution tool developed.

	Strategy	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
1.3	Build effective relationships with key government and peak bodies to ensure the Cities are aligned with State strategic direction, and in a position to support achieving the actions of the Regional Homelessness Plan.	management plan to advocate for, accelerate and leverage pivotal relationships required for	2018/19	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Stakeholder management plan developed and implemented. Evidence of participation in research via annual report.

	Strategy	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
1.4	Improve understanding and build knowledge capacity of stakeholders within the region to deliver services and focussed effort that addresses homelessness in the northern suburbs.	 a. Explore service gaps, oversupply or duplicated effort and through a co-design approach. Advocate accordingly in an effort to create an optimal mix of service provision. b. The Cities provide information to the community about possible homelessness initiative funding sources upon request (e.g. state and federal grants). c. Promote existing directories and information platforms of all known service providers that support people experiencing homelessness. d. Communication plan developed to increase awareness of information platforms. 	2019/2020 2018/19-2021/22 2020/21 2019/20	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Report created outlining identified gaps, oversupply and advocacy avenues pursued. Record of enquiries and responses. Directories are promoted and made available. Communication plan developed and implemented.
1.5	Engage the wider community in better understanding homelessness and promoting a dignified, respectful response.	a. Coordinate and support initiatives that challenge negative stereotypes, dispel myths and foster understanding.	2018/19-2021/22	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Participation in Homelessness Week annually. Report on participation on other social marketing campaigns.

	Strategy	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
1.6	Improve understanding of the interrelationships between providers to encourage increased communication and collaboration.	 a. Hold networking events to build relationships and encourage stakeholders to be aware of their own strengths and limitations. b. Advocate to improve referrals and communication between agencies to optimise the likelihood of individuals finding safe and secure accommodation when transitioning between different tiers of homelessness. 	2019/20-2021/22	JWEHG. Supported by the Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Three networking events held each year. Evidence of advocacy through JWEHG minutes.
1.7	Increase engagement with local businesses to build awareness and reduce negative stigma around homelessness.	Coordinate training for local businesses in relation to responding to homelessness and creating inclusive and respectful services.	2020/21	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Training held with businesses. 85% of participants report a positive change towards people experiencing homelessness.

Pillar 2 – Prevention and Early Intervention

Goal: People have a strong sense of wellbeing and are capable of recognising triggers that lead to homelessness enabling them to take action early

	Strategy	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
2.1	Support opportunities that benefit the wellbeing of the community and keep people connected.	 a. Continue to offer a wide range of programs that support the 'Act-Belong-Commit' message. b. Advocate for and support programs that address social isolation. c. Continue to provide free or affordable services to the community such as libraries and community hubs. d. Advocate, facilitate and support new community initiatives to address prevention and early intervention of homelessness consistent with the role of local government. 	2018/19-2021/22	Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo in partnership with organisations such as WACH (WA Council on Homelessness) , Department for Communities and WALGA.	 Continuation of relevant programming around health and wellbeing. Effectiveness of new initiatives responding to homelessness within the Cities.
2.2	Increase community awareness and understanding of the triggers that lead to homelessness and support services available.	 a. Support and encourage people to take action and seek help before the impact of the contributing factor results in homelessness (i.e. financial counselling, community law service tenancy advice, employment assistance, family mediation). 	2018/19-2021/22	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Promotional campaigns to be delivered during Homelessness Week (August) and Anti- Poverty Week (October) each year with minor messaging on at least two other occasions.

	Strategy	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
2.3	Promote and facilitate opportunities that increase positive lifestyles, promote independence and address the causal factors of homelessness.	b. Advocate for initiatives that encourage and support positive lifestyles, positive behaviours and development of life skills (for example, positive parenting, anger management, grief, addiction, financial counselling).	2018/19-2021/22	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Effectiveness of initiatives implemented. Number of community attendees and demographic statistics.
2.4	Support an effective affordable housing system.	 a. Review respective local housing strategies to include support for the provision of affordable housing. b. Identify opportunities to utilise the land system to optimise the development of social and affordable housing. 	2019/20	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Housing affordability and homelessness are considered as key strategic issues as part of the preparation of new and review of existing Local Housing Strategies.

Pillar 3 – Responding to Homelessness

Goal: People experiencing homelessness or sleeping rough have their basic needs met and ultimately are transitioned into appropriate support services

	Strategy	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
3.1	Increase awareness of initiatives and services for people experiencing homelessness, including 24/7 options.	a. Provide information about available services and support for people who identify as experiencing or at risk of homelessness through community libraries, facilities and Cities' websites.	2018/19-2021/22	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 Information in libraries and community facilities is distributed and revised twice annually. Information about hardship on CoJ and CoW websites checked for accuracy quarterly.
3.2	Local Government approaches are considerate of those experiencing homelessness.	 a. When Council and City policies, local laws, protocols and procedures are reviewed consideration of actions that may have a negative impact on those experiencing homelessness are taken into account. b. Review and implement process for responding to rough sleepers. 	2019/20-2021/22	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo.	 City policies reflective of consideration of and consideration for homelessness. Process is reviewed and communication plan developed.
3.3	Respond proactively to reports of rough sleepers being cognisant of differing needs.	Explore options for the provision of an Outreach Response program delivered by a specialist homelessness service provider.	2019/20	The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo and JWEHG.	 Provide a report by 30 June 2020. Evidence of advocacy avenues

	Strategy	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Measure
		 Advocate for the implementation of the findings from Outreach Response program report. 			pursued shown in annual report.