

6.1 NOM NO.5-2023 - HOMELESSNESS IN VICTORIA

Submitting Councillor: Dr Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council:

- 1. Notes with alarm that data recently released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that the number of Victorians experiencing homelessness rose by almost 12% between the 2016 Census and 2021 Census¹;*
- 2. Notes that the number of women and girls experiencing homelessness increased by around 10% over that period of time²;*
- 3. Notes that the cost of not acting on the need for social and affordable housing has been estimated by SGS Economics to be \$25 billion per year by 2051 and the cost of ending homelessness across Australia may be as little as \$17 billion over the same period of time³;*
- 4. Writes to the Victorian Government Minister for Housing expressing its strong concern regarding increased rates of homelessness and its support for urgent and sustained investment in ending homelessness in Victoria.*

BACKGROUND

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines it as “affecting a person who does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, and 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”.

ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL PLANS AND STRATEGIES

This notice of motion aligns with Council’s Affordable Housing Strategy, the Monash Social Housing Framework, and Council’s membership of the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance (EAHA).

¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/nearly-1-200-people-homeless-census-night-2021>

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/estimating-homelessness-census/2021>

³ <https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2023/03/how-much-would-it-cost-to-end-homelessness-weve-got-the-answer/>

NOM NO. 5-2023 – HOMELESSNESS IN VICTORIA - OFFICERS' REPORT

Submitting Councillor: Dr Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Notes with alarm that data recently released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that the number of Victorians experiencing homelessness rose by almost 12% between the 2016 Census and 2021 Census¹;*
2. *Notes that the number of women and girls experiencing homelessness increased by around 10% over that period of time²;*
3. *Notes that the cost of not acting on the need for social and affordable housing has been estimated by SGS Economics to be \$25 billion per year by 2051 and the cost of ending homelessness across Australia may be as little as \$17 billion over the same period of time³;*
4. *Writes to the Victorian Government Minister for Housing expressing its strong concern regarding increased rates of homelessness and its support for urgent and sustained investment in ending homelessness in Victoria.*

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

This motion has no financial impact to Council.

IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES

There is no impact on internal resources given the commitment and work currently being undertaken by officers to address homelessness and housing affordability in Monash.

Through existing frameworks and policies, Council seeks action towards systemic change to improve responses to homelessness, takes action and advocates for real impact on housing affordability, and to increase the provision of social and affordable housing in the City of Monash.

The specific requirement to write to the *Victorian Government Minister for Housing expressing its strong concern regarding increased rates of homelessness and its support for urgent and sustained investment in ending homelessness in Victoria*, is in line with the advocacy aims of the regional Charter group and Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance.

¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/nearly-1-200-people-homeless-census-night-2021>

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/estimating-homelessness-census/2021>

³ <https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2023/03/how-much-would-it-cost-to-end-homelessness-weve-got-the-answer/>

COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

The following motion is consistent with a range of strategic policy directions of Monash Council:

- Monash Social Housing Framework 2020-2025
- Council's Draft Affordable Housing Strategy November 2019
- Monash Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
- Council's membership of the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance (EAHA)
- Council's membership of Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Group Charter (Charter group)

RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES

During late 2019, CEOs and executive staff representing 13 Eastern and South-Eastern Councils came together in a forum focused on homelessness and social housing hosted by Monash Council in response to an increase in homelessness and rough sleeping across the region. Since then, Monash Council has implemented a range of strategies and actions to address these issues and to assist in increasing the supply of social and affordable housing in Monash. These include:

- A Charter detailing a unified, local government response to homelessness and advocacy for reform to increase the supply of social housing across Victoria was developed.
- A Social Housing Framework (2020-2025) demonstrating Council's commitment to addressing homelessness and the housing affordability crisis.
- Draft Affordable Housing Strategy 2019 demonstrating a clear case for taking action on the reform of policy settings that impact housing affordability, and to increase the provision of affordable housing in the City of Monash. This draft is currently under review.
- Council has identified three Council-owned areas of land as potential sites to be considered for the development of social housing.
- Monash is among six eastern metropolitan councils to share \$180,000 in Victorian Government funding for a project to prevent homelessness among older women undertaken by the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance (EAHA).
- Monash convenes the Charter group that meet regularly to ensure the 13 metropolitan Councils are united to address the urgent need for increased social housing and a more effective, integrated and supported homelessness system, through cooperating regionally and taking action locally.

- Council takes an active role in advocacy and is a member of the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance (EAHA). The Alliance advocates for increased Affordable Housing in the Eastern Metropolitan Region to respond to current and future housing needs.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In November 2020, the State Government announced a \$5.3 billion investment into the Big Housing Build, to deliver the largest investment in social and affordable housing in Victoria's history. Homes Victoria is the State Government agency that was created to deliver the Big Housing Build.

The State Government also released a discussion paper to assist in the development of a Ten-Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy for Victoria in early 2021. This strategy is still under development and its launch is yet to be confirmed.