Community Safety Roundtable March 2025

Final Report

Ian Gray AM

Acknowledgements

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- The participants in the Roundtable of 19 March (see Attachment B);
- The organisations which made written submissions; many of them detailed and all of them constructive (see Attachment D);
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details an intensive round of consultations and observations focussed on community safety and amenity in the City of Port Phillip (CoPP), culminating in a lively and collaborative Roundtable on 19 March 2025, attended by 20 stakeholders from the social services sector and Victoria Police. Further engagements with the community, including residents and local traders took place after the Roundtable. I had the benefit of joining CoPP Local Laws officers on their patrols and saw for myself the circumstances of rough sleepers and encampments.

The issues raised and discussed here are not new and have been almost intractably difficult for local governments in many parts of the world for a long time. There is of course no 'silver bullet'.

There are recommendations – from the structural to the very practical – for short-, and longer-term actions. They are intended to assist the CoPP to better manage the safety and amenity issues generated by rough sleeping, homelessness and encampments.

I conclude that improvements to community safety, the perception of safety, and the amenity of public places in the CoPP will be likely to occur when there is a combination of, at least, these key elements:

- An increase in resources by Victoria Police to the Neighbourhood Policing model, ensuring consistent Police visibility on the streets of the city, particularly at 'hot spot' streets, lanes and carparks;
- An effective system of CoPP Local Laws officers and Victoria Police joint street patrols;
- Maintenance of CoPP's commitment to a human-rights based policy approach to housing, homelessness and mental health;
- Maintenance of the CoPP's close collaborative/partnership model with the support sector;
- Strengthening of key support service providers to enable expanded outreach services to their clients, and greater capacity to collaborate with CoPP Local Laws officers and Victoria Police on the ground;
- An increased supply of emergency accommodation;
- Hubs and gathering places for homeless people to spend time during the day.

This report recognises that there are many policy and program strengths in the current approach – the overall CoPP strategy and trajectory on safety and amenity is sound. But simply more of the same will not be acceptable – improvements can and should be made in a number of areas and these are the subject of the recommendations in this report.

INTRODUCTION

There is a long history of the CoPP addressing the issue of community safety and local perceptions of safety in this diverse and changing community. Most recently the *Community Safety Plan* of 2019 was extended and updated in August 2023 and the *Community Amenity Local Law 2023* (the Local Law) enacted. The 2019 Plan has three areas of priority focus: Creating Safe Spaces, Building Resilience and Healthy Living. That plan is currently under review. The review will be informed by the outcomes of this Roundtable process.

At the 24 November 2024 meeting of Council members of the community spoke of their distress, anxiety and fear caused by the behaviour of some rough sleepers camping in their immediate vicinity. On 11 December Councillor Buckingham put forward a motion to the Council.[1] It was passed unanimously.

In the background to her Notice of Motion Cr Buckingham stated, "Concerns have been raised by our community, including traders, about antisocial and illegal behaviour (including public drug and alcohol use, dealing, abuse and harassment of passersby). Council receives many complaints about the issue, its impacts upon amenity, safety, perceptions of safety and the appeal of high streets and other areas as vibrant, attractive and safe places to visit. In many cases those who are involved include people experiencing homelessness, mental health, addiction and other challenges."

The Motion requests "that City of Port Phillip (CoPP) initiate a Roundtable of key stakeholders, incorporating the City of Port Phillip, health, housing, community legal and social service providers, Victoria Police and other relevant stakeholders or recognised expertise to examine the current situation and review place-based models to address community safety issues in our high streets and surrounding areas.

Requests that the Roundtable:

a) Provide advice and case studies from other jurisdictions on community outreach models and consider opportunities to ensure best practice in the City of Port Phillip;

b) Provide advice and case studies from other Council jurisdictions on how Local Laws can be used to provide community safety and protect the amenity of public spaces within the City of Port Phillip. The advice is to include consideration of Police protocols and operations within the City of Melbourne and their applicability to the City of Port Phillip;

c) Review the merit and feasibility of establishing an ongoing alliance to continue this work over the next four years.

d) Provide recommendations to Council on the above within the short and long-term."

On 18 February 2025 the Mayor issued a statement[2] re-affirming the Council's "commitment to creating a safe, liveable and just community". She listed the CoPP's actions that contribute to "creating a safer city" including collaboration with and support for local Police, the work of the Local Laws patrols and Amenity Services, CoPP's work with, and support for homeless, housing and social

[1] See Appendix C in the Roundtable Pre-reading pack at Attachment A of this report.
[2] https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/about-the-council/news-and-media/community-safety-in-the-city-of-port-phillip/

support services, investment in activation and improvements of key precincts and how the Victorian government can assist.

This list is clear evidence of good policy and good intent but the amenity and safety issues generated by rough sleeping, particularly encampments, persist and remain extremely challenging.

ROUNDTABLE OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The objectives of the Roundtable are specified in the Terms of Reference[3], clearly outlining the three key areas:

1. To review existing and propose new intervention and prevention models (including community legal, drug and alcohol, health, housing, and mental health services) and how they can be implemented and improved in the City of Port Phillip.
2. To explore how Local Laws can be used to improve community safety and the amenity of public spaces within the City of Port Phillip.
3. To consider and recommend actions that can be undertaken by Council, the State Government, Victoria Police, Service Providers and others to improve community safety and the perceptions of safety in the City of Port Phillip.

The focus of this report is on the first and third of the Terms of Reference, however submissions regarding the proposed Local Law changes were received from Roundtable participants and are discussed in Section 1.1. There is a concurrent investigation of the relevant by laws by Council officers pursuant to the resolution of Council of 19 February 2025.

Methodology:

- The Terms of Reference specified that: “Participants will be selected based on:
    - Ensuring a balance across a variety of perspectives (community legal, Police, health, housing and social service providers), and expertise.
    - Consideration for outcomes to include both prevention and treatment initiatives.
    - Helping to understand impact of adverse community safety outcomes."

  I am satisfied that the participants at the Roundtable amply met these requirements.
- On 19 March I chaired the Roundtable which was facilitated by Anika Dell and attended by 20 subject matter experts and representatives from 18 organisations (see Attachment B).
- In the weeks surrounding the Roundtable, I met personally with 49 individuals which included representatives of residents, traders, service organisations, relevant Council staff, Police, Aboriginal organisations, and those with lived experience of homelessness, drug & alcohol and mental health issues (see Attachment C).
- I accompanied City Amenity/Local Laws Officers on their morning patrols on three occasions to see first-hand some of the issues of concern and observe the current approach by Council to addressing amenity impacts utilising existing Local Laws.

[3] See the Roundtable Pre-reading pack at Attachment A.

- I viewed the video of the Council meetings of 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2024 where resident and trader concerns were presented. The impact of the current issues on their lives and livelihoods was clearly evident.
- Pre-meetings prior to the Roundtable with relevant stakeholders provided valuable contextual information regarding the housing, health and legal sectors which helped refine the focus of the Roundtable and guide the discussion on the day.
- A pre-reading pack (see Attachment A) containing information about the local context in Port Phillip and an extensive literature review with examples of existing local, national and international best practice models, was provided to participants prior to the Roundtable session. This information has also informed this report.
- Data from a number of sources relevant to the local context was examined, including Police-recorded crime data, council administrative data and other government datasets.
- At the Roundtable, Council staff attended to take notes of the discussion. Participant input was also recorded via online Padlet contributions, via sticky notes at tables, and on whiteboards. All notes, ideas and contributions were consolidated into electronic format for analysis.
- Councillors had the opportunity to attend the final session of the Roundtable on 19 March to hear the participants report back on their ideas and recommendations.
- Following the Roundtable, participants were invited to make a written submission setting out more formally their position on the issues under consideration. 14 submissions representing 21 organisations were received (see Attachment D).
- I read recommendations of Leanne Mitchell on her 2022 Churchill Fellowship investigation into *'How Councils respond to rough sleeping while balancing responsibilities to the wider community'* and note the recommendation that Councils focus on "homelessness beyond rough sleeping".
- I also read a summary of Lucinda Adams' Churchill Fellowship study on addressing *'The negative impact of laws regulating public space on people experiencing homelessness'*.
- Each of the consultations, observations, discussions, readings and submissions have been the subject of extensive and careful consideration in the writing of this report and the formulation of its recommendations.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

In setting out to further define the issue, there was some evidence of conflation of crime and homelessness in the community as they relate to perceptions of safety. **They should not be conflated.**

I have attempted to define the activities commonly seen or experienced in the City of Port Phillip that are causing concern. These categories are not mutually exclusive and may occur concurrently at different times or places.

- Crime – people experiencing violence - actual or threatened assault, criminal damage, and exposure to visible weapons, from individuals who appear to be drug and/or alcohol affected and/or experiencing a psychotic episode.

- Drug use/dealing – people 'shooting up' on the street, openly buying and selling drugs which makes some residents, traders and their customers distinctly uncomfortable and sometimes fearful. This fear may trigger a sense of lawlessness and uncertainty about subsequent erratic/violent behaviour once drugs take effect.
- Visible homelessness – people sleeping rough in shop doorways or on the street causing an obstruction causing discomfort, sometimes fear. Traders are concerned that it drives away customers.
- Encampments – groups of people in carparks, parks or other locations who set up tents and might become noisy, messy, smelly, impacting the amenity of the area for residents who sometimes also feel threatened, and anxious traversing the area, especially at night.
- Disorder - People congregating on the street who may/may not be homeless but may have AOD/mental health issues, might act erratically, noisy, etc. These people may be "hanging out" and socialising on the street with unhoused peers during the day. Ngwala Willumbong uses the term "people experiencing street-based living".

These issues are occurring across the CoPP, however not at a uniform level. There are pockets of more intense activity: high streets in Balaclava, St Kilda, Port Melbourne, and South Melbourne. My consultation with residents and traders also identified broader concerns about crime occurring within the municipality, including burglary, car theft, and even organised crime. Local Police recorded crime rates have risen by 19% over the last year[4] in a return to pre-Covid levels, and whilst I acknowledge the reality and impact of this concern, crime per se is not the main focus of this report.

It became evident that there are quite different viewpoints within the community regarding these issues: one holds that this is part of life in Port Phillip, the diversity is what makes it a vibrant place to live, they generally feel safe in the area and there is, historically, a high degree of tolerance for homelessness and some level of erratic and unusual behaviour. Another viewpoint holds that the disorder is evidence of lawlessness and breakdown; the community shouldn't have to tolerate it, children shouldn't be exposed to it, and their poor perceptions of safety are seriously impacting their quality of life. Finding the balance between these competing viewpoints to ensure a "Liveable and Vibrant city", and a safe city, is the difficult task that Councillors and the CoPP are daily engaged in.

I note that although individual perceptions of crime and safety are not always aligned with recorded crime data or actual risk of crime victimisation, fear of crime can have a significant impact on quality of life whether it is well-founded or not. Research indicates that people tend to associate low-level neighbourhood disorder and certain social groups with higher subjective risks of victimisation.[5] The same research also found that where people engage in 'prosocial' activities in response to concerns about crime (such as discussing the issue with their neighbours, volunteering in their community, joining a local sporting or social group, seeking advice from police or the local council) their sense of

[4] Crime Statistics Agency Criminal Incident Rate per 100,000 population for City of Port Phillip year ending December 2024 https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/crime-statistics/latest-crime-data-by-area

[5] Lee, M., Wickes, R. & Jackson, J. (2020) "Social Cohesion and Pro-Social Responses to Perceptions of Crime: The Victorian Report." https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/handle/2123/21903/FINAL_Social%20Cohesion%20and%20Pro-Social%20Responses%20to%20Perceptions%20of%20Crime.pdf Accessed 15/4/25

connection and belonging in their neighbourhood increases, and their perceptions of safety similarly increase.[6]

DETAILED EXPLORATION OF ISSUES

1. Policing and enforcement

1.1. Local Laws and regulatory framework

An objective of the Roundtable, and the second Term of Reference, was to "explore how the use of Local Laws could improve community safety and the amenity of public spaces within the city of Port Phillip" as per Cr Hardy's February Notice of Motion of 19 February 2025. This element of the Roundtable was the subject of intense discussion and was given emphasis in the written submissions from the support service, Police and legal sectors. It also received considerable attention in the media, where the proposed changes to bylaws were frequently framed as the Council planning to "criminalise homelessness"[7] by removing the exemption for camping on council land if a person is homeless or has complex needs (*Section 42(2), Community Amenity Local Laws 2023*).

It is important to note that there is a concurrent and separate "investigation" by Council officers of three by laws (17 (1) (b), 42 and 43 of *Community Amenity Local Laws 2023*) pursuant to the 19 February resolution, and I do not comment in this report on the wording or operation of those by laws other than one aspect of by law 42. Before doing so I address the approach of the Local Laws officers and Victoria Police officers to the application and enforcement of the by laws.

LOCAL LAWS OFFICERS

I set out here the current approach by the CoPP to addressing rough sleeping within the municipality as I observed it in action on three occasions and from discussions with management at the CoPP.

The CoPP deploys Local Laws Officers who work on the streets every day of the year. They work across the whole city and focus intensely on known hotspots, and areas where there have been complaints by residents. They work in teams of 2-3 and start early in the morning. They know most of the rough sleepers by name and treat them fairly, but firmly. They speak to rough sleepers individually, ask them to clean up their camps and belongings, and tell them that the officers will be returning to check on them. The officers contact, or attempt to contact, local support services who they know are working with particular individuals. They ask Victoria Police for back up when confronting more dangerous or volatile situations. The Local Laws officers perform a critical task and perform it very impressively. They clearly have the confidence of residents, traders and the grudging respect of many of the campers. They are unarmed and exposed to personal risk in some situations. They rely, appropriately, on their communication skills and bring a mix of fairness, firmness, compassion and pragmatism to the task.

Where Local Laws Officers identify other categories of people camping or sleeping in public areas such as backpackers or tourists, they are advised of the prohibitions on this behaviour and the fines they will incur if they don't comply. When appropriate they also issue infringement notices.

[6] Ibid.
[7] https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/surging-crime-prompts-port-phillip-council-to-consider-fining-homeless-20250226-p5lfaa.html Accessed 14/4/25

POLICING

The Victoria Police submission described its current approach as follows:

> *The policing response to date has been one of enforcement, joint patrols with City of Port Phillip Local Laws Officers and engagement with social welfare agencies. Outside of a regular presence by the Neighbourhood Policing Team, Operation LION is a standing operation deployed to target encampments in commercial zones such as Fitzroy Street, which is a significant driver of complaints from across the community. Operation LION, whilst having a foundation in enforcement and disruption, also sees our members engage with social and support services as a matter of practice.*
>
> *Operation LION is an intensive fixed period focus on crime and anti-social behaviour in and around encampments and has been undertaken during August, November 2024 and March 2025 over the course of 14 – 21 days at a time. Operation LION sees a heavy Police investment in human resources and specialist policing services, however routinely yields low offending data resulting in short term positive outcomes with little or no impact on the foundational issue of the encampments themselves.*

My observation is that Victoria Police appears not to be routinely deploying officers to the streets and hotspots, whether under the banner of Operation LION, or otherwise. Routine joint patrols with Council Local Laws officers are needed. Daily joint patrols, which engage with the relevant support agencies on the ground, should become a high priority and should take place on a systematic, coordinated basis. This should be the norm. The current practice of Police providing ad hoc back up (when available) to Local Laws officers is unsatisfactory; it does not inspire community confidence and contributes to a perception of reduced safety. I acknowledge that resourcing, recruiting and rostering are issues here, but this is a fundamentally important safety issue in this city.

In this context I reviewed the report on the *'Adoption of Community Amenity Local Law 2023'.*which went to Council on 21 June 2023 and noted the reported high level of community support for Clause 17 (behaviour on Council land) and Clause 43 (safety risks created by furniture on Council land and footpaths). I note also that under the heading 'Key considerations' regarding the proposed local law, there were quite low feedback numbers from the community on camps, gatherings, anti-social behaviour and drug use. However, as consultations with residents and traders have shown there is now, two years on, serious concern about them. I note here in that report, under 'Key considerations' was the statement *"Council will continue to work with Victoria Police in relation to community safety, and advocate for increased police visibility, and consistent joint patrols of our high streets".*Council's advocacy for this outcome will need to remain consistently strong.

BY LAW 42

This by law prohibits camping on Council land or in a public place, but people who are homeless or have "complex needs" are effectively exempted from that prohibition (*Section 42(2), Community Amenity Local Laws 2023*).

The proposed by law changes were discussed at the Roundtable session on 19 March, with attendees invited to add commentary to an online Padlet board outlining anticipated impacts of the changes for their organisations and the cohorts they work with. Comments on the proposed changes were also provided in a number of the submissions received. The main focus was on the proposed

removal of the exemptions in by law 42 for homeless and those with "complex needs". The general sentiment about the impact of Local Laws changes was overwhelmingly negative, with stakeholders (apart from Victoria Police) viewing them as ineffective, damaging, and counterproductive. Service provider respondents expressed serious concerns about the repercussions of bringing already vulnerable populations into contact with the justice system, potentially increasing stress, distress, and worsening housing stability and mental health. It was noted that the sanction available to Local Laws officers for noncompliance is the imposition of a fine, and Southside Justice made the point that 98% of fines review applications submitted on behalf of their clients resulted in fines being waived.

> *Given the resources Council and local support services will ultimately commit to issuing, processing, enforcing and then challenging and processing the withdrawal of such fines and the further harm and trauma caused along the way, we believe seeking to rely further on Local Laws is unproductive.* (Southside Justice Submission)

I agree with this submission and note that issuing infringements to rough sleepers is not the preferred practice of CoPP Local Laws officers.

Given the strength of the consensus in relation to the proposed, removal by law 42 exemptions, it seems to me that the proposed by law change would potentially put at risk the excellent working relationship/partnerships that the CoPP has built up over time with many of the key support service providers - a relationship of trust. They praise CoPP's commitment to the human rights principles inherent in the exemptions. These are critical relationships and partnerships; the potential damage to CoPP's reputation would be a high price to pay. I note also the potential adverse impact on Aboriginal community members of increased enforcement. Ngwala Willumbong put this concern as follows:

> *Aboriginal people will be disproportionately targeted and impacted by these proposed by laws. Reasons for this include the Cultural practice of gathering in community groups, which makes us more vulnerable to compliance measures, and escalation of behaviours which can lead to arrest and incarceration. Unconscious bias, racism and discrimination are issues that always impact our community particularly around compliance*. (Ngwala Willumbong Submission)

Victoria Police played a constructive role in the Roundtable process and put forward a submission, which I quote:

> *"An examination of the social and legal landscape reveals the City of Port Phillip's Local Laws to be inadequate in their ability to limit or stop the encampments. The existing provisions and exemptions within the relevant Local Laws, in particular Local Law 42, appears to have enabled growth in encampments and a degree of permanency at some locations. As a result, there is a heavy and ever-increasing reliance on Police by the community to regulate behaviour within the encampments.*
>
> *I have addressed councillors* […] *on this challenge on two occasions in the preceding months. I support councillors in their commitment to local law reform including but not limited to Local Law 17, Local Law 42 and Local Law 43 and encourage council to continue to consult with Victoria Police to ensure the workability of such reforms.* (Victoria Police submission)

The exemptions are grounded in principles of compassion and human rights. They are consistent with the CoPP's policy approach to vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community. Their preservation will not limit or compromise the use of Police powers to enforce the criminal law, or the persuasive/supportive influence of Local Laws officers on rough sleepers. And, as a number of submissions argued, the blunt instrument of infringement notices will not deter people who have no, or very few options, and who can't or won't pay fines.

Ultimately, as I see it, removing the exemptions, will not help to "improve public safety" or amenity in the City of Port Phillip. What will be far more likely to do so will be a continuation of the CoPP's existing human rights approach to housing, homelessness and mental health i*n combination with* an increase in resources by Victoria Police to the neighbourhood policing model and joint patrols with CoPP Local Laws officers.

1.2. Homelessness Operating Protocol

As outlined above, Victoria Police responded favourably to the proposed Local Laws changes while noting that the "principal remedies to these challenges sit within the remit of social and therapeutic intervention and housing" and suggesting a tiered on-the-ground response to the effecting of the Local Laws as follows:

1. ***Assessment*** *– that social and therapeutic agencies swiftly determine needs and alternative living, sleeping, medical and gathering arrangements are implemented should they be determined.*
2. ***Intervention*** *- that social and therapeutic intervention is undertaken primarily, intervention is swift and alternative living, sleeping, and gathering arrangements are implemented.*
3. ***Enforcement*** *- is undertaken by Local Laws Officers and the Neighbourhood Policing Team to dismantle encampments occupied by those who have rejected support, or whom have been deemed as not requiring support. (Victoria Police submission)*[8]

A tiered approach with certainty of responsibility and action has merit, and I note that the idea of a Homelessness Protocol or Operating Policy agreed upon by council, Police and relevant service providers received support during my consultations. The development of such a protocol should be a priority.

Southside Justice suggest that *"CoPP could consider developing a more detailed operating protocol for its existing local law, in consultation with the organisations involved in the Community Safety Roundtable and adopting a trauma-informed, culturally safe and human rights-based approach, particularly to guide Local Laws officers in the exercise of their existing powers".* I agree.

CoPP developed a Homelessness Protocol in 2001, which was updated in 2011 into the *Protocol for Assisting People Sleeping Rough*.[9] These documents were developed in consultation with housing and social support agencies and people experiencing homelessness in the City of Port Phillip. They affirm Council's stance that housing is a human right, and homelessness itself is not an issue

[8] After discussion with Victoria Police the order of these tiered actions was altered to place Assessment before Intervention – the order here therefore differs from their written submission.
[9] https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/media/zpkjsjkj/city-of-port-phillip-protocol-assisting-people-sleeping-rough.docx Accessed 30/4/25

requiring enforcement of any kind.[10] While clearly setting out actions for CoPP staff to follow in various scenarios, and updated to include Port Phillip Zero processes, the Protocol does not include an active role for Victoria Police beyond responding to 000 calls. Having protocols defining the processes, responsibilities and pathways for dealing with the common situations encountered by Council staff enshrined in protocols, to guide CoPP officers, Police, and support agencies will be a necessary development. Such a protocol would express the active role for Victoria Police to be more than simply responding to 000 calls. As important as 000 calls are, an increase by Victoria Police in resourcing of the local Neighbourhood Policing model, and a collaborative working relationship with the CoPP officers and homeless/health outreach support services is where the solutions lie.

I note the current example of the City of Melbourne's Homeless Operating Protocol/Policy Operating Statement (see Attachment E) which formalises the protocols and operating policies that apply to interactions with rough sleepers.[11] The Protocol is signed by the City of Melbourne and Victoria Police and describes the operating partnership approach between Council, Police, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (formerly DHHS) and service providers.

I recommend the CoPP work with Victoria Police, homeless sector partners and relevant state government agencies to develop, operationalise and trial a similar Homelessness Operating Protocol. Ideally, this protocol details the trauma-informed, culturally safe and human rights-based approach Council has historically taken to balance the rights of all people to be in public places, while respecting the right of communities to live in a safe and peaceful environment. The focus should be on assessing and responding to situations where there are evident safety or amenity impacts that require active intervention. CoPP should consult with Ngwala Willumbong on whether to include specific considerations in the Protocol for Aboriginal community members. A trial period with clear evaluation measures, and regular opportunities for review with all partners will be essential for maintaining trust and building on lessons learned to achieve the best possible outcomes.

1.3. Joint/welfare patrols

The Roundtable consultations identified a diverse and sometimes contrasting set of views on the role of Police patrols in the current context. Some traders and residents urged Council to lobby the State Government for more Police resourcing and visible, round-the-clock patrols to deal with crime and antisocial behaviour (citing St Kilda's status as a major tourist precinct). There is a legitimate community expectation that Police resources will be effectively applied to dealing with crime. At the same time there can be little doubt that policing that follows a Neighbourhood Policing model of foot and/or bicycle patrols combined with community engagement and problem solving is likely to have positive effects on actual and perceived safety within the CoPP (see Neighbourhood Policing below).

There was also a recognition that Police enforcement patrols as a *one-dimensional* response to visible homelessness, mental health incidents and substance dependence, is likely to be ineffective and counterproductive. As numerous submissions and consultations made abundantly clear: **homelessness is not a crime, and it is wrong to conflate homelessness with criminality**.

[10] https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/media/zpkjsjkj/city-of-port-phillip-protocol-assisting-people-sleeping-rough.docx Accessed 15/4/25
[11] https://mvga-prod-files.s3.ap-southeast-4.amazonaws.com/public/2024-04/homelessness-operating-protocol.pdf

There was, however, general agreement on the need for regular welfare-based joint patrols or alternate first responder model that bring together some combination of Police, Council Local Laws officers, outreach services and peer workers to provide immediate practical support and crisis intervention. These teams would prioritise engagement, de-escalation, and service referrals before enforcement. As Southside Justice note: *The CoPP is fortunate to have local services that already have enormous skill and experience in deploying a harm reduction and public health response to situations that were once considered law enforcement matters and could draw further on this resource*. I agree.

South Port Community Housing Group suggested investing in brokered, intensive case management services and embedding support workers alongside Local Laws staff as a potential model. Windana recommended a welfare-based patrol model, where peer workers or outreach staff accompany Local Laws officers and Police, making contact more trauma-informed and service-focused. Ngwala Willumbong proposed establishing a dedicated Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (ACLO) rather than a Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer (PALO) in Port Phillip Police Service Area to improve interactions between Victoria Police and Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness[12]. There is currently one ACLO based in Dandenong servicing the entire Southern Metropolitan Police Region. This is clearly inadequate. Ngwala indicated they would consider supporting joint patrols when they are culturally safe, well-trained, and focus on support and diversion, rather than compliance.

Carlisle Street Traders Association calls for a Specially Trained Safety Response Team, including on-call patrols that can respond to drug use, chronic homelessness, and mental health incidents.

The development of any model that involves welfare-based joint patrols should be extensively co-designed with key stakeholders, subject to an initial pilot, with transparency and accountability measures built in, and a robust evaluation of its effectiveness undertaken before longer term adoption of the model.

Victoria Police's submission to the Roundtable described their current practice this way:

> *The policing response to date has been one of enforcement, joint patrols with City of Port Phillip Local Laws Officers and engagement with social welfare agencies. ...There is a need for a greater role played by social and therapeutic services.* (Victoria Police submission)

It appears that joint patrols between Police and Local Laws officers are not currently systematised but occur on an ad hoc basis depending on resourcing demands within the Police Service Area (PSA). There is, as the Victoria Police submission puts it, a critically important role for "social and therapeutic intervention and housing," but the solutions will actually lie in a broader systematic, cohesive and coordinated approach - joint patrols with CoPP officers, and close collaboration with support services.

1.4. Neighbourhood Policing

The Neighbourhood Policing team at Port Phillip Police Service Area is small - as I understand it, four officers. Although they are in daily contact with CoPP Local Laws officers re rosters, they often get

[12] ACLOs are Aboriginal community representatives within Victoria Police who liaise between Aboriginal communities and Police to improve relations, provide advice and training, and solve problems. PALOs are sworn members of Victoria Police who are not Aboriginal, but take on liaison duties in addition to their operational role. https://www.Police.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-community-liaison-officer-program

pulled away for other duties or on leave. The result is they are not consistently, routinely available for daily patrols.

Research indicates that random or reactive Police patrols have no crime reduction effect, however targeted foot patrols implemented alongside positive community engagement and problem-solving can reduce crime as well as increase perceptions of safety and confidence in Police.[13]

Victoria Police has a stated organisational commitment to a Neighbourhood Policing approach where Local Safety Committees made up of community groups, government and business stakeholders work together with Police to adopt a problem-solving response to local community safety issues.[14] The Port Phillip Police Service Area hosted a Neighbourhood Policing Forum in December 2024 which was attended by over 100 people, and the top three local safety concerns were presented: 1. Safety in public places 2. Safety of property and possessions 3. Drugs and alcohol.

The promise of Neighbourhood Policing as a vehicle for a prevention -first approach to community safety that prioritises local concerns and works in partnership to solve problems using policing and non-policing interventions, seems a perfect fit for the issues being experienced in the City of Port Phillip. I commend the Neighbourhood Policing approach as an essential policing strategy in the Port Phillip PSA and recommend that a collaborative and accountable Local Safety Committee[15] be instigated as a matter of urgency in accordance with the Neighbourhood Policing Framework.[16]

[13] https://www.college.police.uk/research/what-works-policing-reduce-crime/visible-police-patrol Accessed 12/4/25

[14] https://www.police.vic.gov.au/neighbourhood-policing Accessed 14/4/25

[15] The North Richmond Community Precinct Committee established in response to the Medically Supervised Injecting Room and related issues is an effective operating model in the City of Yarra currently under evaluation by DFFH. This could be a useful model for consideration by Council and Victoria Police for adaptation in the CoPP.

[16] https://www.police.vic.gov.au/victoria-police-strategy-2023-2028/strategic-partnerships Accessed 14/4/25

Recommendations:

1. An increase in resources by Victoria Police to the Neighbourhood Policing model in the Port Phillip Police Service Area with an increase in foot patrols, local engagement and problem solving, particularly in identified community safety "hotspots". The CoPP to continue advocating for this model and working with Victoria Police on its implementation.
2. Advocate for an ACLO role specific to the Port Phillip Police Service Area.
3. Develop and pilot a welfare-based model of joint patrols with Victoria Police, CoPP Local Laws, outreach workers, peer supports and other services to engage with rough sleepers and those with complex needs.
4. Work with relevant agencies to develop a formal partnership agreement between Victoria Police and CoPP for an effective, coordinated response to homelessness – taking guidance from the City of Melbourne and Victoria Police's *Homelessness Operating Protocol /Policy Operating Statement* (see Attachment E)
5. Work closely with local services to update CoPP's *Protocol for Assisting People Sleeping Rough* to ensure it reflects a culturally safe, trauma-informed, human rights based non-enforcement approach. This should be developed in tandem with the formal Police/CoPP Protocol referred to above.
6. Confirm adequacy of current by laws, emphasizing the need for effective implementation and coordination rather than legislative change.
7. CoPP and Victoria Police protocols guiding the frontline role of Victoria Police engaged in homelessness response should emphasise rapid social and therapeutic intervention (problem solving) as the primary goal, with enforcement actions being secondary, or a last resort.

2. Housing and accommodation

Much of the focus of the Roundtable consultations has been on housing. It is a key part of this report for these reasons:

- The perception of safety by members of the community, and the amenity of public places and spaces is often affected by rough sleeping and encampments of rough sleepers- generally people who are either homeless or who have chosen not to sleep in their houses, flats or rooms because of their perceived lack of safety, or for social gathering reasons. Homelessness is integrally tied in with community perceptions of safety and as mentioned above it is frequently conflated with crime, or heightened fear of crime.
- Submissions came from organisations with deep experience in dealing with the matrix of homelessness, health, legal and social disadvantage issues. They accept the implications and impacts of homelessness on perceptions of safety and amenity. Their submissions argue for greater investment in social housing and other forms of accommodation for their clients because housing is a foundation of health and stability. They are strongly supported in this contention by worldwide research and experience, and by the CoPP's own commitment over time to the principle of "Housing First".
- It is not suggested that housing alone is the solution to increasing crime, and it is not a panacea for all social problems. But there can be no doubt that housing the homeless is a

fundamental ingredient in any attempt to ameliorate the impacts of rough sleepers, and rough sleeping encampments on perceptions of safety in the community.

2.1 Housing shortfall

It is apparent that there is a significant shortfall of affordable housing and emergency accommodation in the City of Port Phillip, despite significant investment by all three levels of government, social investors and the service sector over the last decade. Some of the groups particularly feeling the impact of the housing crisis include women escaping family violence, unwaged or low waged families, older people, Aboriginal people, and those with complex mental and physical health challenges and/or justice system involvement.

Many of the organisations consulted stressed that the root cause of visible rough sleeping and related safety concerns is the lack of emergency and long-term housing, compounded by inadequate support services for those with complex needs. The provision of housing alone is insufficient to address the needs of many within the complex cohort of rough sleepers. Many require significant, sustained support with daily living tasks in order to successfully navigate the path out of chronic homelessness. A chronic lack of beds in mental health and drug/alcohol rehabilitation facilities throughout the state is also a significant factor in people cycling in and out of homelessness and into criminal legal system involvement.

There was strong, aligned agreement across service providers, housing groups, and community representatives involved in the Roundtable process that the availability of emergency, transitional, and supportive housing in Port Phillip is grossly inadequate for current needs. Without immediate investment, vulnerable cohorts—especially First Nations people, older women, and those with dual diagnosis—will remain at risk of rough sleeping and entrenched homelessness, with downstream impacts on public safety, justice, and health systems.

Despite Council's significant investment in projects such as Wellington Street Common Ground, South Port Community Housing noted Council's *In Our Backyard, Growing Affordable Housing in Port Phillip 2015-2025 Plan* which has not met its targets for the number of dwellings created or the transfer of Council land for affordable housing developments. Sacred Heart Mission recommends that Council utilise its influence to advocate for greater investment in public and social housing, including fast-tracking developments and repurposing vacant properties.

> **Numerous programs that support emergency and transitional housing face imminent funding lapses (e.g., Sacred Heart Mission's GreenLight, Ngwala's Entry Point, SKCH's PASH model). There is an urgent need to review these and consider available avenues of funding support. 2.2 Wellington Street Common Ground Project**

The Wellington Street Common Ground (WSCG) project is being delivered by St Kilda Community Housing and will be completed by mid-2025. It will comprise 26 permanent self-contained units of supported social housing using the evidence-based Housing First approach, which is designed to address the multiple and complex needs of people who have been sleeping rough, and the Common Ground model, that supports residents with complex needs who were previously sleeping rough to maintain their housing and reconnect with their community. Persons to be housed will be allocated from the Port Phillip Zero program's 'By-Name List' (see 4.1 Port Phillip Zero).

The project has been funded by:

- The Victorian Government, which is providing a $5.8 million capital grant under its Big Housing Build, and a $6 million operating subsidy over four years.
- The City of Port Phillip, which is providing a $4.755 million capital grant, and transfer of a surplus lane ($365,000 value in 2022), which was located on the property driveway.[17]

The WSCG project is broadly recognised as a cornerstone initiative in Port Phillip's homelessness response. Submissions affirm its value not just in providing housing, but also in shifting public perception and community safety through a stable, supportive model. At the same time, stakeholders emphasised the urgency of scaling up and resourcing similar projects, ensuring they are inclusive, culturally appropriate, and well-integrated with the broader support ecosystem.

Port Phillip Zero note: "This new and soon to start tenanting initiative should be supported with additional resourcing to ensure culturally safe alcohol and other drug, legal, and mental health services are provided through a combination of support from First Step, Ngwala Willumbong, Better Health Network and Alfred Health."

Ngwala note: "For our community, who have strong ties to the St Kilda area, tenancies such as Wellington Street Common Ground are crucial to ending Aboriginal homelessness, sustaining tenancies and reducing the risk of re-entry into homelessness. We support further investment into supported housing with a Culturally specific component of support."

2.3 St Kilda Community Housing (SKCH) and Ngwala Willumbong: The "Four-Building Solution"

SKCH and Ngwala propose scaling up the WSCG model through a complementary four-building solution, using a mix of repurposed and new buildings to permanently house 52 rough sleepers—most of whom are already on the Port Phillip Zero By-Name List.

This includes:

1. **Wellington Street Common Ground (publicly owned, managed by SKCH)** – 26 residents, project almost completed.
2. [redacted] **(publicly owned, managed by SKCH)** – 18 residents, plus an office for visiting support services.
3. [redacted] **Safe Grounds (publicly owned, managed by SKCH)** – Housing 8-10 Aboriginal men per year with complex trauma, with wraparound support from Ngwala.
4. **A future fourth building**, with funds to be raised for purchase or construction.

Their proposed Permanent Affordable Supportive Housing (PASH) model complements WSCG with lower-cost, scalable alternatives that maintain many benefits of traditional supportive housing. The aim is to avoid the revolving door of evictions that commonly occur when vulnerable renters accrue arrears, cause property damage that they cannot repay, or are consistently disruptive to other tenants. PASH aims to deliver intensive, persistent, proactive and assertive tenancy management underpinned by Housing First principles. The model outlined in SCH's submission would require state government investment as well as Council contributions and high levels of cooperation among

[17] https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/people-and-community/health-and-wellbeing/affordable-housing/ Accessed 12/4/25

service providers. The model appears to be well-developed and costed, able to be implemented rapidly, and targets the cohort most likely to impact local concerns about safety and amenity. This appears to be a compelling initiative, and I recommend that Council consider implementing the approach as a matter of priority.

2.4 Staying housed

Some of the people engaged in street-based living who are coming to the attention of Council, Police and service providers are found to have housing tenancies of some kind and are therefore technically not in the 'homeless' category. This has implications for the kind of supports available to them and for the potential application of local law exemptions.

There are many reasons why a 'housed' person may be sleeping rough. I heard from more than one service provider about people with tenancies in public housing estates who feel so unsafe in their home that they prefer to sleep on the streets. I heard that the chaos and trauma for some people is so extreme that daily living tasks such as keeping track of house keys is almost impossible without significant support. I also heard from Ngwala:

> *Often our community members have tenancies which are located far from their kinship and community ties. Further, Rough Sleepers are often lacking the skills to sustain a tenancy and have no ongoing tenancy support. These community members are not eligible for support outside of Ngwala's services, due to having a tenancy. Ngwala provides services to this cohort, however, housing options are dependent on non-Aboriginal services. As we are all aware, there is a lack of public and social housing which further impacts the health of tenancies. People are often housed in areas which isolate them resulting in failed tenancies.* (Ngwala Willumbong submission)

I consider it unhelpful to refer to this cohort as 'purportedly homeless' and prefer the term 'engaged in street-based living' which recognises the reality of factors and constrained choices that some particularly vulnerable individuals must make on a daily basis.

Ending homelessness for people with complex needs requires much more than simply providing a house. Wraparound, intensive support (including Intensive Tenancy Management) is often required to ensure these people can maintain their housing in the face of physical and mental health challenges, family and other violence, addiction, justice system interaction, disability, extreme poverty and social isolation.

Recommendations

8. Conduct an immediate audit of available housing and emergency accommodation along with options for transfer/use/repurposing of Council owned land for affordable housing development.
9. Identify and establish new emergency and short-term accommodation options, with culturally appropriate spaces specifically for Aboriginal people.
10. Ensure adequate provision of supports to assist individuals in maintaining long-term housing placements.
11. Consider CoPP support for the St Kilda Community Housing "Four Building Solution" detailed in their submission- noting that it has been costed. Consider staged implementation as soon as possible.

3. Support services and service provider response

3.1 Assertive outreach /early intervention

Throughout the Roundtable consultation and submissions, assertive outreach was consistently raised as a core mechanism for reducing rough sleeping, decreasing anti-social behaviour, building trust and diverting people from punitive systems into therapeutic supports. Assertive outreach can be defined as a proactive engagement model where workers go into public spaces to identify, build relationships with, and provide support to people experiencing homelessness, particularly those with complex needs who are disconnected from mainstream services. Essentially it is "meeting people where they are at".

A particularly striking example of this in action was shared with me by a person with lived experience of rough sleeping and drug addiction. Their first meaningful interaction with a service provider was when an outreach worker simply offered: "Let's get you healthy". This proved to be a turning point in their journey back to stable housing and out of addiction. Many examples of effective outreach and early intervention programs and services were shared with me, including the following:

- Greenlight Supportive Housing Program (Sacred Heart Mission)
- Journey 2 Social Inclusion (Sacred Heart Mission)
- Living Free Project (Windana)
- Dedicated Intensive Brokered In-Reach Trial (South Port Community Housing)
- Assertive InReach (Port Phillip Community Group)

Funding for these programs is often miniscule and insecure (eg. Greenlight funding is due to lapse on 30 June 2025). I recommend a desktop review of current outreach services operating within the CoPP to identify any duplication or opportunities for agencies to better coordinate their efforts and/or collaborate to secure funding from alternate sources.

3.2 Case management

Case management was mentioned multiple times during the Roundtable discussions, as a critical but under-resourced element of effective support for people experiencing homelessness, addiction, and complex social issues. There was concern that the current service model allows people to fall through the cracks when they transition between systems such as leaving detox or rehab, exiting

prison or remand, or moving between housing types. A participant noted “the current funding doesn’t follow a person’s journey”, requiring people to retell their story repeatedly to different services which can be retraumatising.

I heard that outreach workers were seen as vital in the initial engagement and coordination of support, but they’re often stretched thin or lack the capacity to provide the deep, ongoing casework that enables real progress for people facing complex challenges.

Consultations also reinforced the need for case management, housing and other supports to be culturally safe for specific cohorts in need of particularly safe care – Aboriginal people, members of the LGBTQI community, those experiencing family violence, and people exiting prison. I encourage all service agencies to bring an intersectional lens to their organisations and practice.

3.3 After hours support

A frequently raised concern during consultations was the lack of adequate after-hours and weekend outreach support creating gaps in care, making it challenging for service providers to respond effectively to urgent issues outside standard business hours. Local Laws Officers felt hamstrung when patrolling early in the morning and being unable to raise support for people in need until agency offices open at 8 or 9am, or at all on weekends. Similarly, Police and council officers responding to after-hours noise and behaviour complaints that could potentially be de-escalated by appropriately skilled and trusted community/support workers find it not possible to get in contact with the right people who can attend and deal with the situation.

In my opinion appropriately resourcing select key agencies to provide this level of 24/7 on-call service would likely have a *very* positive impact on safety and amenity for the entire Port Phillip community. This gap is something Council should consider in its service agreements with support agencies and as part of the development of joint patrols (see 1.3) and a Homeless Operating Protocol (see 1.2). The effective coordination of these after hours responses would be a key responsibility of the Council internal outreach role I have recommended below (see 4).

3.4 Crisis response – who is responsible?

A matter of significant concern to the community and to service providers, which became very apparent through the Roundtable process, is that of responding to people who are experiencing acute mental health or psychotic episodes which might be related to drug and/or alcohol use. These people may or may not be homeless, but as Sacred Heart Mission note:

> *In our experience, people who have been rough sleeping for extensive periods of time have significant trauma, untreated mental health and substance use. This often leads to complex behaviours, including repeated evictions from previous housing and crisis accommodation. It is well understood that people’s experiences of trauma can lead to adaptive behaviours that present as high-risk - aggression, difficulties with emotional regulation and paranoia.* (Sacred Heart Mission submission)

This is a serious perception of safety issue. Witnessing these behaviours in public can be frightening for other members of the community, and there appears to be uncertainty over how to deal with incidents as they unfold, even among first responding agencies. The Mental Health Royal Commission recommended ambulances as first responders to mental health callouts rather than

Police, a recommendation which was accepted by the state government and budgeted, but which has not commenced.[18]

There are several programs and teams that can respond to homeless people experiencing severe mental health episodes. These include the Homeless Outreach Psychiatric Service (HOPS), Police and CATT Early Response (PACER) and the Crisis Assessment Treatment (CAT) Team.[19]

My understanding of the homeless mental health emergency response system is as follows:

Homeless Mental Health Crisis Response Programs

Program	Description	Activation	Crisis Role	Relationship
HOPS	Outreach for homelessness	Scheduled support	Builds trust, psychiatric support	Refers to CAT for urgent needs
PACER	Police + Ambulance + Clinician team	Triggered by emergencies	On-site crisis triage	Clinician often seconded from CAT
CAT Team	Clinical crisis team	Community referrals	24/7 mobile crisis response	Backbone of crisis care

The question of who can summon the CAT and PACER teams was a recurring one that leads to some confusion. Police might be reluctant to intervene in acute mental health incidents in the absence of ambulance personnel, but ambulance personnel may have legitimate safety concerns when responding if Police are not present. The PACER program is intended to address this, however in practice it was reported to me that due to a lack of resources the response time for the PACER team is often unacceptably slow, leading to poor outcomes for individuals and the broader community.

An associated concern raised by service providers is the question of what is to be done when people are taken to hospital Emergency Departments, refuse to be assessed, and are subsequently discharged back into homelessness without treatment or support. There appears to be a lack of clearly identified pathways and processes for crisis intervention and ongoing support for homeless people experiencing acute mental health episodes. I frequently heard that the HOPS service is grossly underfunded, and that the current systems don't accommodate cultural needs or the realities of trauma in First Nations communities.

These are glaring gaps and issues of high/urgent priority requiring a coordinated advocacy campaign by Council and relevant stakeholders to push for improvements to HOPS & PACERs resourcing and capacity, and the resourcing and capacity of other mental health support programs. Port Phillip Zero recommend Council play a leadership role in advocating for *"legislative changes to ensure a more balanced approach to mental health care, particularly around involuntary admissions for at-risk individuals"* (Port Phillip Zero submission).

[18] https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/four-year-delay-in-transferring-power-from-police-to-paramedics-for-mental-health-callouts-20250403-p5lou7.html Accessed 12/4/25
[19] https://www.alfredhealth.org.au/services/emergency-psychiatry Accessed 28/4/25
https://www.alfredhealth.org.au/services/homeless-outreach-psychiatric-service Accessed 28/4/25

An issue raised by Alfred Health psychiatry outreach staff relates to being unable to provide home visits to some clients because of unsafe conditions at public housing estates, leading to relapses and sometimes tenancy loss if people can't maintain their treatment. This requires further investigation.

Recommendations

12. Maintain and enhance existing partnership protocols among CoPP, Victoria Police, and key service providers (e.g., Launch, Access Health, Ngwala Willumbong).

13. Continue to support and adequately fund service providers demonstrating effectiveness, particularly those working with high-impact cohorts (individuals leaving prison, mental health, or rehabilitation facilities).

14. Lead a coordinated advocacy campaign to increase the resources of PACER and HOPS and advocate for the State Govt to ensure implementation of Mental Health Royal Commission recommendations including transfer of first response to mental health emergency services calls from Police to Ambulance Victoria.

15. Tackle the service gap for responding to people experiencing acute mental health episodes in public places, particularly the gap in culturally appropriate supports for Aboriginal people.

4. Improving partnerships and service coordination

The CoPP has service agreements in place with a number of service providers to support volunteers, information and referral services, food relief and support, legal services, and assertive outreach and support work. This includes funding the Coordinator Rough Sleeper Initiative at Launch Housing as part of Port Phillip Zero.

This investment demonstrates Council's commitment to its housing and homelessness goals and is to be commended. During my consultation for the Roundtable I heard that responsibility for the service agreement contracts sits in a different area of council to the area receiving the service, leading to a potential lack of oversight as to whether best use is being made of the agreement. This siloed approach appears to be hampering best practice in Council's extensive work in the homelessness space.

I also heard that Council's work on this could be strengthened by appointing an internal outreach coordinator to follow up on referrals and act as a conduit for information and communication both within Council and for interacting with external agencies, particularly those with whom Council has service agreements.

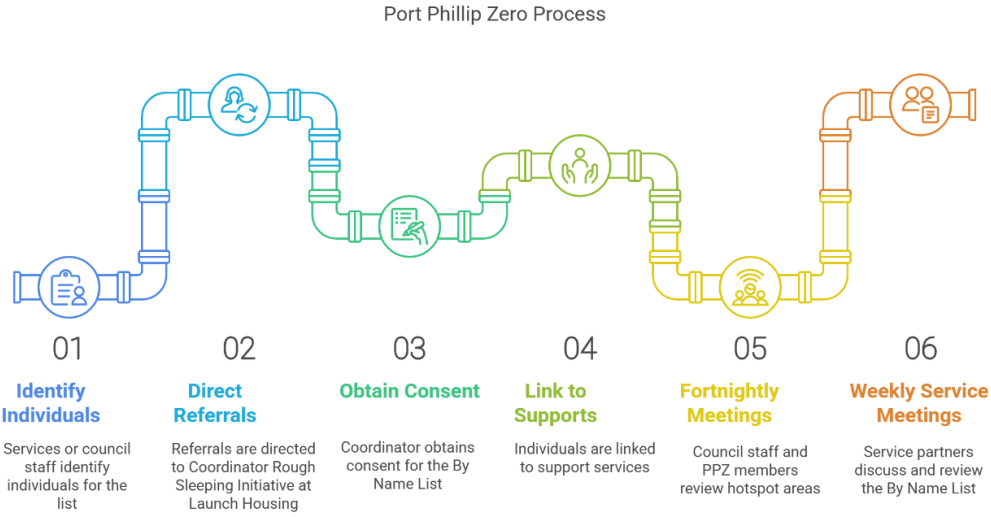
4.1. Port Phillip Zero

Port Phillip Zero (PPZ) is a partnership between Council, local organisations[20] and the community that work together to manage amenity of sites and find opportunities to create new housing and reduce rough sleeping. The goal is to end rough sleeping homelessness in the City of Port Phillip by providing appropriate, secure, affordable long-term housing, and support, to all people who are living without a home. It uses a 'housing first' approach that places people experiencing

[20] Local organisations involved in PPZ include Council, Victoria Police, Alfred Health, Better Health Network, First Step, Housing First, Launch Housing, Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation, Port Phillip Community Group, Sacred Heart Mission, Salvation Army, Southern Homeless Services Network, South Port Community Housing Group, Southside Justice, St Kilda Community Housing, Uniting, and Wintringham

homelessness directly into permanent and safe housing with 'wrap around' support services to address complex needs such as mental health and alcohol and drug support.

PPZ utilises a ‘By Name List’ (BNL) which is an up-to-date list of everyone known to be sleeping rough, in their cars or in abandoned buildings (squats). The objective of this approach is for all relevant stakeholders to know everyone by name, learn their support and housing requirements and better address their complex needs. The CoPP funds a Coordinator role at Launch Housing to manage the referral and consent procedures. The process seems to work like this:



There was wide recognition of and appreciation for the effective collaborative work of Port Phillip Zero throughout the Roundtable consultations, and its impact has been significant. Sacred Heart Mission notes a 40% decrease in rough sleeping from February 2022 to February 2024, and the Port Phillip Zero submission states rough sleeping has declined from 91 people in June 2018 to less than half that number by March 2025, using the BNL to strategically support individuals into stable housing.

The use of the BNL was repeatedly highlighted as a key strength of PPZ as it allows precise tracking of individuals, their housing status, and required interventions, ensuring services are targeted effectively and continuously updated. This data-led approach was recognised as instrumental in the success of housing placements and long-term stability and Roundtable attendees suggested a similar approach to case management and data should be adopted as standard practice by all agencies.

PPZ was also acknowledged as a progressive, compassionate model aligned with Port Phillip’s values and Sacred Heart Mission and Port Phillip Community Group both highlighted CoPP’s historically sensitive approach, urging continued investment in this compassionate model rather than punitive measures.

Despite the broad support, several ideas for improvement and expansion were elicited during the Roundtable sessions and consultation. Multiple stakeholders noted that PPZ is overly focused on St Kilda, leaving other parts of the municipality (e.g., Port Melbourne, South Melbourne) underserved. There was some concern that not all relevant agencies are at the table, and suggestions to revisit and diversify the participant list, especially at the executive level. It was suggested that new services, roles (e.g., NDIS Navigators), and sectors like disability support be brought into the PPZ collaborative model to increase the likelihood of getting NDIS packages for eligible individuals.

Stakeholders called for improved communication of PPZ's successes, activities, and methods—both to service providers and the broader community. This included ideas for more public visibility and storytelling about how the model works and what impact it's having.

There was also a call for more direct coordination and communication from the PPZ initiative with Victoria Police regarding community concerns about safety. CoPP Local Law Officers suggested that the weekly hotspot meetings could be more useful by reporting back ("closing the loop") on what actions had been taken by service providers to support particular individuals who had come into contact with the Local Law Team.

4.2. Strengthening the Partnership with Ngwala Willumbong

Ngwala Willumbong is the lead agency in Aboriginal Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) and Homelessness support in Victoria. It has two rehabilitation facilities in St Kilda, a Sobering Up Centre (established under the Public Intoxication Response) and the only Aboriginal Homelessness Entry Point in Melbourne which is based in St Kilda. Ngwala provides services within the City of Port Phillip which are Aboriginal specific, outreach based and holistic.

Ngwala currently collaborates with Council in many ways to address Aboriginal community issues, including as part of Port Phillip Zero and the WSCG project. Ngwala has indicated a willingness to strengthen the partnership with Council, though they note

> *our current participation is impacted by resourcing which results in ad-hoc and reactive participation rather than consistent and proactive approaches. If we had a dedicated program to supporting this work, it would ensure consistency in addressing need*. (Ngwala Willumbong Submission)

A significant number of the people in the larger camping groups are Aboriginal people and there is a key role to be played by Ngwala Willumbong. It is the agency best placed to intervene, and it can work to assist both the Aboriginal people and the Local Laws officers on the ground. Its role is potentially decisive. Formalising the partnership, increasing information sharing and having a regular presence on joint patrols are actions that can be taken immediately, and to the extent that Ngwala needs more resources, appropriate funding bids should be supported by CoPP.

Recommendations

16. Renew and clearly define service agreements between CoPP and community service agencies, outlining explicit mandates, outreach obligations, required capacities, and accountability mechanisms.
17. Enhance the Port Phillip Zero collaboration, implementing identified improvements based on participant feedback.
18. Establish a dedicated CoPP internal outreach coordinator to ensure effective and assertive 24/7 outreach and response.
19. Extend and formalise the partnership with Ngwala Willumbong, giving due consideration to the need for increased funding, and capacity building.

5. Safe spaces and community hubs

The concept of hubs and gathering spaces enjoys strong, cross-sector support in the submissions. As Port Phillip Zero's submission noted, this is *"a long-standing idea whose time has come"*. These spaces are envisioned not just as shelter alternatives, but as key nodes for care, culture, connection, and community safety. Whether through large-scale facilities like Sacred Heart Mission's Engagement Hub, purpose-built Aboriginal Gathering Places, or multi-service drop-in centres, the underlying vision is one of inclusive, trauma-informed urban spaces that serve both vulnerable populations and broader community interests.

Roundtable participants suggest creating multiple safe, supervised gathering spaces or daytime facilities for social connection, practical support, and engagement in meaningful activities. The aim is to provide low-barrier access with high-service density: combining drop-in elements (showers, meals, lockers) with wraparound support like Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) counselling, housing and legal services, cultural workers, and mental health clinics. These spaces would help reduce isolation, provide critical social links, and serve as entry points into broader support systems. This includes co-designing culturally appropriate gathering places with the Aboriginal community, ensuring safe environments for culturally sensitive and community-driven engagement. These proposals are practical, collaborative, and represent a clear alternative to criminalisation — one rooted in prevention, healing, and belonging.

The establishment of centrally located, integrated hubs providing multiple essential services (health, legal, housing, Centrelink, substance use, mental health, cultural services, and ID support) in a single, welcoming, and non-judgmental location is not a new idea and has been advocated for over time. Although some hubs like Access Health exist, they currently have limited capacity and capability to fully meet the complex needs of clients all in one location.

Some specific examples/ideas offered in the submissions include:

Ngwala Willumbong

- Proposes a culturally designed, led, responsive and trauma-informed gathering place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness.
- Emphasises this as a non-negotiable cultural practice, not a problem, noting places like Catani Gardens have historically served this role.

- The space would offer food, amenities, support, and safety, addressing mental health, trauma, and isolation while reducing antisocial behaviour.
- Viewed as the most important intervention to reduce rough sleeping and improve safety in Port Phillip.

Port Phillip Community Group

- Recommends councils require communal areas and concierge-style services in public and social housing developments.
- Notes that people living in temporary, or bedsit-style accommodation lack spaces to socialise, often leading them to gather in public.
- Proposes reviving the Alma Road Community House as a community hub for engagement, recreation, and service access.

Port Phillip Zero

- Supports the creation of a "low-barrier, safe gathering space" where people can:
    - Connect with services
    - Engage in recreation
    - Build relationships and community
- Envisions this as a long-overdue initiative that moves people from mere survival to reconnection and long-term stability.

Victoria Police

- Supports establishing a gathering place “away from residential and business zones”, allowing for:
    - Orderly congregation
    - Proximity to housing, health, and social support services
    - Reduction of encampments in sensitive commercial areas

Gathering places are seen as an important part of the solution by a number of agencies, particularly for Aboriginal people. Gathering place locations will need to be identified and developed in close consultation with Ngwala Willumbong and other key stakeholders. It is my opinion that their location should be well considered but should not necessarily be required to be “away from residential and business zones”.

Participants envisioned hubs and gathering spaces not just as service points, but as community connectors – places that create safety, restore dignity, and provide structure and support in a fragmented system. The emphasis was on co-design, flexibility, inclusion, and local responsiveness to the diverse needs within Port Phillip.

There is a recognition that the location of any hubs and gathering places would need to be carefully considered, having regard to potential or perceived impacts on surrounding properties. In order to mitigate these potential impacts, the following principles should be applied:

- Engage in genuine co-design with residents and businesses nearby — not just service users. Transparent engagement is key to building support. South Port CHG recommends campaigns and dialogue that frame the space as a local safety and wellness asset, not a risk.
- Include lived experience voices in design and operations, ensuring users feel ownership and dignity, while also listening to and incorporating local concerns.
- Establish governance frameworks (like Project Control Groups with diverse membership) to manage ongoing oversight, responsiveness, and accountability — as modelled in St Kilda Community Housing's pilot with Ngwala.
- The site must be well-connected to support services, public transport, and existing outreach pathways. This ensures clients can engage without needing to linger in commercial streets.
- Human-centred branding: Position the hub as a "place of care and connection" — not a crisis facility or containment site. Names, signage, and design should reflect dignity and inclusion.
- "Front of house" for community engagement: Include welcoming entrances, signage, and (for hubs) concierge-style staff presence that reflect the centre's values — respect, dignity, safety — to de-escalate tension, reduce stigma and reassure both users and neighbours.

Recommendations

20. Identify, develop, and sustain accessible, safe daytime social spaces ("hubs") for rough sleepers and vulnerable community members, potentially modelled after existing successful services (e.g., Sacred Heart).
21. Council support the establishment of Community Gathering place that respects gathering as a cultural norm and practice for Aboriginal people.
22. Ensure the development of hubs or gathering places is undertaken utilising strong community development and engagement principles.
23. Map existing drop-in and support services within CoPP to identify service gaps and opportunities for co-location or integration ("wraparound support").

6. Public space design solutions

My consultations and observations revealed that the design of some public spaces is contributing to problems. Research indicates that environmental design (e.g., poorly lit, concealed or vacant areas) contributes significantly to perceptions of safety.[21] Street cleaning, graffiti removal, and maintenance are also widely recognised as contributing to perceptions of safety and economic vitality. In the context of street cleaning, I note the excellent work of the CoPP Rapid Response Cleaning Crew which accompanies the Local Laws Officers each day.

Simple and immediate solutions should be considered as appropriate to deter problematic behaviour in specific locations, although hostile design interventions that increase marginalisation and push vulnerable people into more dangerous areas should be avoided. I heard that existing processes for implementing changes can be cumbersome and time-consuming, meaning responses

[21] Saville, G., Mihinjac, M. (2022). Third-Generation CPTED—Integrating Crime Prevention and Neighbourhood Liveability. In: Saraiva, M. (eds) Urban Crime Prevention. The Urban Book Series. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15108-8_2

are delayed and problems escalate. I recommend that these processes be reviewed and simplified as a matter of urgency to enable the implementation of rapid but well-considered infrastructure responses as circumstances require.

Participants suggested activating empty spaces, improving lighting and landscaping to make streets feel safe, and increasing positive activities to enhance community feelings of safety. The recent lighting in the palm trees on Acland Street was proffered as an example of good practice that increased patronage in the area and improved perceptions of safety. Conducting night walking audits with community members can be beneficial in identifying locations for modifications to lighting and streetscapes that will improve actual and perceived safety. Even simple interim measures such as lamps on timers in empty shopfronts that emit a warm glow at night can have a large impact on perceptions.

The use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles when built into city planning processes can reduce the likelihood of issues developing down the track. Integrating first generation CPTED 'target hardening' techniques with second and third generation CPTED tactics focused on social cohesion and sustainability is an imperative for all Council public space projects.

In short, environmental design doesn't just shape how a space looks—it directly impacts how safe people *feel*. Lighting, visibility, activation of spaces, and thoughtful integration of inclusive design principles create a psychological sense of order and care, reducing fear and increasing community cohesion. When the built environment is designed with both security and inclusivity in mind, it becomes a powerful tool in promoting public safety.

6.1. CCTV

During my consultations I note that traders and residents call for increases in public area CCTV. For example, the Fitzroy Street Business Association submits that cameras should be installed permanently in the Jackson St carpark to cover the carpark, the back of the Pride Centre, and Rowland S Howard Lane. It recommends re-aligning the camera on Little Fitzroy St to cover behind the Selina Hotel. I note that there has recently been a mobile CCTV camera stationed in the Jackson St carpark. The Carlisle St Traders Association recommend enhanced street lighting in high-risk areas (Woodstock Street and Dianella Lane behind the Balaclava Hotel,) and the installation of CCTV "in key locations", highlighting its value in evidence collection and improving Police response.

Most business groups see CCTV as complementary, not a standalone solution or a silver bullet. They often link it with improved lighting, urban activation, and stronger local law enforcement. None of the community or housing-focused submissions argue against CCTV directly, but they generally emphasise housing-first and service-led solutions rather than surveillance-driven ones. The evidence on the effectiveness of public area CCTV as a *crime prevention* measure is mixed at best.[22] It has been shown to be most effective in car parks for property crime (theft), when combined with other elements such as lighting. It has little effect on spontaneous violent crimes such as street level assaults. There is some evidence of CCTV's positive impact on perceptions of safety for some members of the community, but for others it can have the opposite effect. There is also the risk of over-surveillance (and over-policing) of marginalised groups. So in determining the placement of

[22] Welsh, B. C., & Farrington, D. P. (2009). *Public area CCTV and crime prevention: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis.* Justice Quarterly, 26(4), 716–745. https://doi.org/10.1080/07418820802506206

CCTV, rights to privacy of homeless people with no alternative but to sleep on the streets, should be taken into account.

Council-owned public space CCTV camera locations are as follows:

- Fitzroy Street, St Kilda
- Little Grey and Grey Streets, St Kilda
- The St Kilda Foreshore
- The Acland Street, St Kilda Entertainment Precinct

As part of the 2024/25 budget process, Council made provision of $800K over the next three years to renew the current network as part of planned maintenance. In 2022 Council purchased a mobile CCTV trailer which is used by Victoria Police under the terms of a loan agreement. Footage from Council's CCTV cameras is streamed live into the Victoria Police station at St Kilda where it can be used to assist with operational response decision-making. Recorded footage can also be retrieved and used retrospectively for investigations. Given Police resourcing constraints, it is unrealistic to expect that Police will be actively monitoring CCTV cameras 24 hours a day. Considering the totality of this evidence, I recommend that as part of the planned renewal and maintenance of the CCTV network Council review the placement of the existing cameras to determine whether any changes should be made to increase the efficacy of its significant investment in this technology.

Recommendations

24. Urgently review and modify problematic public spaces (e.g., Woodstock), applying Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
25. Review current processes and establish clear procedures enabling rapid infrastructure interventions in public spaces contributing to unsafe conditions.
26. Elevate consideration of CPTED principles in planning decisions for key developments within CoPP and mandate their use for Council urban design projects.
27. Review the current placement of CCTV cameras to ensure their ongoing value and efficacy to community safety efforts in the CoPP.

7. Addressing stigma and enhancing community understanding

Roundtable participants felt strongly about the need for community education and awareness campaigns to reduce stigma surrounding homelessness and mental health issues. It was felt that encouraging empathy through peer-led consultation and lived-experience narratives can reduce fear and increase perceptions of safety. Providing opportunities for all parties impacted by homelessness to come together to discuss solutions will also increase social cohesion and rebuild a sense of community. There are a number of ways this can be done, and these are discussed below.

7.1. Anti-stigma campaigns

Roundtable participants felt that a crucial element of increasing perceptions of safety within the CoPP should focus on reducing negative perceptions and stigma around homelessness, substance use, mental health, and rough sleeping. Along with impacting community fear about crime, stigma was recognised as a significant barrier preventing vulnerable people from engaging with services and receiving community support.

Some of the ideas suggested at the Roundtable and in subsequent submissions include

- Conduct community education initiatives to inform the general public about homelessness, substance use, and mental health, providing clear, factual information to correct misconceptions and reduce fears. These campaigns would highlight personal stories and lived experiences to humanise affected individuals and groups.
- Actively engage local media outlets to shift negative narratives, promoting stories that build empathy, understanding, and supportive community attitudes. It was suggested to leverage social media strategies that incorporate voices of people with lived experiences, ensuring authenticity and relatability.
- Facilitate forums or "human library" events where community members interact directly with individuals who have experienced homelessness, mental health challenges, or substance use issues. This dialogue-oriented approach was seen as valuable for empathy-building.
- Specifically address cultural stigma, particularly toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Cultural safety training was recommended for service providers and frontline workers to reduce biases and foster respectful engagements.
- Develop a coordinated, multi-agency approach to ensure consistent messaging across services, council communications, Local Laws teams, Police, and support agencies. Unified messaging was highlighted as essential for effectiveness.

The discussions collectively highlighted the importance of these anti-stigma campaigns as part of a holistic approach to improving community safety, fostering social cohesion, and ensuring effective support for vulnerable populations.

7.2. Ongoing alliance

Cr Buckingham's December Notice of Motion requested that the Roundtable *"review the merit and feasibility of establishing an ongoing alliance to continue this work over the next four years"*. Throughout my consultations I witnessed a strong commitment from all stakeholders to work together collaboratively on the issues at hand. There was recognition that some alliances and partnerships are working well, and also that some new ways of working are required, with the elevation of additional voices necessary in the conversation.

Southside Justice suggested that an alliance *"support and feed into the work of Trauma Aware Port Phillip in educating, supporting and building the skills and resilience of local traders and residents to enhance social cohesion",* while Port Phillip Community Group advocated *"a council led trauma informed conversation to build the capacity and capability of the traders in the area [that] will assist to navigate the challenges faced by traders".*

That an ongoing alliance is required in indisputable, but the form of the alliance, it's purpose and the membership thereof is a topic requiring further discussion. Some stakeholders suggested expanding existing alliances such as Port Phillip Zero to include the voices of people with lived experience of sleeping rough and other agencies who have been part of the Roundtable. Many of the ideas and recommendations made in this report would require governance structures of some kind to implement and monitor, such as working groups, that might involve many of the same actors. The

answer might lie in a flexible alliance structure that identifies a core, common purpose and then breaks into sub-groups for particular tasks or foci.

I recommend that Council lead the discussion with all relevant parties with a view to identifying the purpose, form and membership of an ongoing alliance that will continue the work in this space over the next four years.

7.3. Community Peacemaking

During my consultations I became aware of an approach to conflict resolution within communities that is being used successfully within the City of Yarra by the Neighbourhood Justice Centre. The Peacemaking Program[23] aims to intervene early and resolve conflicts before formal legal processes are engaged. The conflicts might involve poor behaviour that is not criminal but is fuelling tension. The peacemaking process involves the facilitation of a peacemaking circle where everyone gets to have a say and agreement is reached far more quickly than utilising traditional bureaucratic or legal processes. The program also trains local community members in the peacemaking process, helping them to prevent and resolve conflicts themselves.

I commend the Peacemaking Program to the Port Phillip community as a potential means of resolving community conflict around homelessness, street-based living, and the impacts on residents and traders and urge the Council to consider introducing the Program to the community.

7.4. Trauma Aware Port Phillip

Trauma is at the heart of many of the issues we see playing out on the streets in the City of Port Phillip. The accumulation of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in the absence of protective relationships and positive experiences can create changes in the developing brain that impact thinking, emotions and behaviour. Many of the individuals experiencing homelessness, mental ill health and drug and alcohol addictions have histories of trauma and abuse. Ngwala Willumbong reminded me that from an Indigenous perspective, that includes the continuing trauma of colonisation.

“Trauma Aware Port Phillip (TAPP) is a community-led, evidence-informed project to strengthen resilience and reduce the impact of trauma and shame in the Port Phillip community.

The TAPP Working Group is a network of individuals, organisations and service providers in the Port Phillip local government area who are collaborating to empower sectors and community to enhance connection and capacity, reduce trauma and shame in everyday interactions, build inclusion, and share knowledge. Through this work we aim to improve community health and wellbeing, increase social cohesion and resilience, support local services sectors, and build sustainable positive change.”[24]

A trauma aware approach has been utilised successfully in Scotland at the national level where the National Trauma Transformation Programme’s vision “is for a trauma informed workforce and services across Scotland, capable of recognising where people are affected by trauma and adversity, that is able to respond in ways that prevent further harm and support recovery, and can address

[23] https://www.neighbourhoodjustice.vic.gov.au/learn-visit/our-model/peacemaking-program Accessed 17/4/25

[24] https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/people-and-community/community-safety Accessed 12/4/25

inequalities and improve life chances."[25] Government agencies, service provider organisations, advocacy groups and professional associations can sign up to a pledge where they agree to:

- Work with others to put trauma-informed and responsive practice in place across our workforce and services.
- Deliver services that wherever possible are actively informed by people with lived experience of trauma.
- Recognise the central importance of relationships that offer collaboration, choice, empowerment, safety and trust as part of a trauma-informed approach.
- Respond in ways that prevent further harm, and that reduce barriers so that people affected by trauma have equal access to the services they need, when they need it, to support their recovery.[26]

Recommendations

28. Develop a community education and awareness anti-stigma campaign targeting perceptions of people experiencing mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness issues, aiming to reduce fear, encourage understanding, and ultimately enhance community safety perceptions.
29. Continue to invest in and publicise the work of the Trauma Aware Port Phillip group with a view to expanding its reach and impact.
30. That Council lead discussions for the establishment of an ongoing alliance that will continue the work in this space over the next four years.
31. That Council consider introducing a Peacemaking Program similar to that operating in the City of Yarra to reduce community conflict.

8. Equipment and resources for council staff

From my direct observations, it is evident that Council Local Laws officers do an excellent job, treating the people they interact with respectfully; they know them by name and often go above and beyond their formal roles to assist. However, they are encountering increased safety risks and need additional protection in some situations such as stab-proof vests. Officers are aware of the risk of heightening trauma and anxiety for some people if their attire and equipment has an overtly enforcement appearance, therefore any additional protective gear would need to be unobtrusive.

Local Laws officers also require additional equipment to allow them to respond to the dynamic situations they face without having to wait for other departments to attend. This might include essential equipment for emergency situations and site management, including temporary fencing, pressure cleaning equipment, and access control measures.

Recommendations

32. Review the need to equip CoPP Local Laws officers with protective gear (such as stab-proof vests) due to increased safety risks encountered.

[25] https://www.traumatransformation.scot/ Accessed 12/4/25
[26] https://www.traumatransformation.scot/about/pledged-support/ Accessed 12/4/25

33. Provide Local Laws officers with essential equipment for emergency situations and site management, including temporary fencing, pressure cleaning equipment, and access control measures.

THE ROLE OF STATE GOVERNMENT

There is an important role for state government. As the Mayor said in her February statement the Victorian Government can help the CoPP on a number of important public safety measures. There is clearly a history of advocacy to state governments on these issues, but it is not necessary to set out that background. The issues listed by the mayor are:

- "Continue to assist with the three year City Street Health outreach service in St Kilda." According to the Mayor's statement this "includes a trial for Victoria's first overdose prevention and response helpline;"
- "Provide additional Police resources, including dedicated, rostered neighbourhood policing for weekly joint patrols with Council's Local Laws Officers;"
- "Engage PTV PSOs to patrol tram stops, particularly in areas like Acland and Fitzroy streets;"
- "Provide funding to upgrade and expand public place CCTV and mobile CCTV trailers".[27]

These proposals/requests go directly to public safety and amenity. With one qualification, I support and adopt them as recommendations of this report. The qualification is that in relation to the second point, my recommendation is that "dedicated, rostered neighbourhood policing" take place daily not just weekly – although weekly would be a good start, if consistent.

In relation to the Health Outreach Service, I note the media statement of the Victorian Minister for Mental Health on 5 September 2024 announcing an expansion of the "Street Outreach Services to Reduce Drug Harm"[28]. The statement says that these mobile services will be "staffed by a multi-disciplinary health team", that the St Kilda service would commence on 31 October, that it would be delivered by the Salvation Army and operate 7 days per week. I understand that this service is now operating. It is obviously complementary to the existing suite of services operating in the CoPP and those currently being delivered by Access Health/ Salvation Army. It can contribute to mitigation of health risks to drug users through the provision of wraparound health services; and can contribute to mitigating the actual and perceived risk to the safety of members of the community caused by the behaviour (some of it threatening and dangerous) of some drug users.

[27] https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/about-the-council/news-and-media/community-safety-in-the-city-of-port-phillip/ Accessed 16/4/25

[28] https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-09/240509-Expanding-Street-Outreach-Services-To-Reduce-Drug-Harm.pdf Accessed 16/4/25

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

No.	Recommendation	Type	Timeframe
1.	An increase in resources by Victoria Police to the Neighbourhood Policing model in the Port Phillip Police Service Area with an increase in foot patrols, local engagement and problem solving, particularly in identified community safety "hotspots". The CoPP to continue advocating for this model and working with Victoria Police on its implementation.	Advocacy, Police	Immediate
2.	Advocate for an ACLO role specific to the Port Phillip Police Service Area.	Advocacy, Police	Immediate
3.	Develop and pilot a welfare-based model of joint patrols with Victoria Police, CoPP Local Laws, outreach workers, peer supports and other services to engage with rough sleepers and those with complex needs.	Protocol/ process, Police, Coordinate	Short-medium term
4.	Work with relevant agencies to develop a formal partnership agreement between Victoria Police and CoPP for an effective, coordinated response to homelessness – taking guidance from the City of Melbourne and Victoria Police's *Homeless Protocol and Operating Policy*	Protocol/ process, Police, Coordinate	Short term
5.	Work closely with local services to update CoPP's *Protocol for Assisting People Sleeping Rough* to ensure it reflects a culturally safe, trauma-informed, human rights based non-enforcement approach. This should be developed in tandem with the formal Police/CoPP Protocol referred to above.	Protocol/ process, Review, Coordinate	Short term
6.	Confirm adequacy of current by laws, emphasizing the need for effective implementation and coordination rather than legislative change.	Approach	Immediate
7.	CoPP and Victoria Police protocols guiding the frontline role of Victoria Police engaged in homelessness response should emphasise rapid social and therapeutic intervention (problem solving) as the primary goal, with enforcement actions being secondary, or a last resort.	Approach	Immediate
8.	Conduct an immediate audit of available housing and emergency accommodation along with options for transfer/use/repurposing of Council owned land for affordable housing development.	Review, Council funding	Immediate
9.	Identify and establish new emergency and short-term accommodation options, with culturally appropriate spaces specifically for Aboriginal people.	Review, Council funding	Short-medium term
10.	Ensure adequate provision of supports to assist individuals in maintaining long-term housing placements.	Approach, Advocacy,	Medium-long term
11.	Consider CoPP support for the St Kilda Community Housing "Four Building Solution" detailed in their submission- noting that it has been costed. Consider staged implementation as soon as possible.	Advocacy, Council funding	Short-medium term
12.	Maintain and enhance existing partnership protocols among CoPP, Victoria Police, and key service providers (e.g., Launch, Access Health, Ngwala Willumbong).	Protocol/ process, Review, Coordinate	Short-medium term

13.	Continue to support and adequately fund service providers demonstrating effectiveness, particularly those working with high-impact cohorts (individuals leaving prison, mental health, or rehabilitation facilities).	Council funding, Coordinate	Short-medium term
14.	Lead a coordinated advocacy campaign to increase the resources of PACER and HOPS and advocate for the State Govt to ensure implementation of Mental Health Royal Commission recommendations including transfer of first response to mental health emergency services calls from Police to Ambulance Victoria.	Advocacy, Coordinate	Short-medium term
15.	Tackle the service gap for responding to people experiencing acute mental health episodes in public places, particularly the gap in culturally appropriate supports for Aboriginal people.	Advocacy, Process	Medium term
16.	Renew and clearly define service agreements between CoPP and community service agencies, outlining explicit mandates, outreach obligations, required capacities, and accountability mechanisms.	Review, Process, Council funding	Short term
17.	Enhance the Port Phillip Zero collaboration, implementing identified improvements based on participant feedback.	Review, Protocol/ process, Council funding, Coordinate	Immediate
18.	Establish a dedicated CoPP internal outreach coordinator to ensure effective and assertive 24/7 outreach and response.	Council funding	Immediate
19.	Extend and formalise the partnership with Ngwala Willumbong, giving due consideration to the need for increased funding, and capacity building.	Council funding	Immediate
20.	Identify, develop, and sustain accessible, safe daytime social spaces ("hubs") for rough sleepers and vulnerable community members, potentially modelled after existing successful services (e.g., Sacred Heart).	Advocacy, Coordinate, Council funding	Short-medium term
21.	Council support the establishment of Community Gathering place that respects gathering as a cultural norm and practice for Aboriginal people.	Advocacy, approach,	Short-medium term
22.	Ensure the development of hubs or gathering places is undertaken utilising strong community development and engagement principles.	Approach, Coordinate	Short-medium term
23.	Map existing drop-in and support services within CoPP to identify service gaps and opportunities for co-location or integration ("wraparound support").	Review, Coordinate	Immediate
24.	Urgently review and modify problematic public spaces (e.g., Woodstock), applying Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.	Review, Council funding	Immediate
25.	Elevate consideration of CPTED principles in planning decisions for key developments within CoPP and mandate their use for Council urban design projects.	Approach	Short-medium term
26.	Review current processes and establish clear procedures enabling rapid infrastructure interventions in public spaces contributing to unsafe conditions.	Review	Immediate

27.	Review the current placement of CCTV cameras to ensure their ongoing value and efficacy to community safety efforts in the CoPP.	Review	Short term
28.	Develop a community education and awareness anti-stigma campaign targeting perceptions of people experiencing mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness issues, aiming to reduce fear, encourage understanding, and ultimately enhance community safety perceptions.	Approach, Coordinate, Council funding	Short-medium term
29.	Continue to invest in and publicise the work of the Trauma Aware Port Phillip group with a view to expanding its reach and impact.	Approach, Advocacy, Coordinate	Short-medium term
30.	That Council lead discussions for the establishment of an ongoing alliance that will continue the work in this space over the next four years.	Coordinate	Immediate
31.	That Council consider introducing a Peacemaking Program similar to that operating in the City of Yarra to reduce community conflict.	Approach, Coordinate	Short-medium term
32.	Review the need to equip CoPP Local Laws officers with protective gear (such as stab-proof vests) due to increased safety risks encountered.	Review, Council funding	Immediate
33.	Provide Local Laws officers with essential equipment for emergency situations and site management, including temporary fencing, pressure cleaning equipment, and access control measures.	Council funding	Immediate
	Recommendations for State Government from Mayor's list		
34.	Continue to assist with the three year City Street Health outreach service in St Kilda. Including a trial for Victoria's first overdose prevention and response helpline.		Short - medium term
35.	Provide additional Police resources, including dedicated, rostered neighbourhood policing for weekly/daily joint patrols with Council's Local Laws Officers.		Short term
36.	Engage PTV PSOs to patrol tram stops, particularly in areas like Acland and Fitzroy streets.		Short term
37.	Provide funding to upgrade and expand public place CCTV and mobile CCTV trailers.		Short term

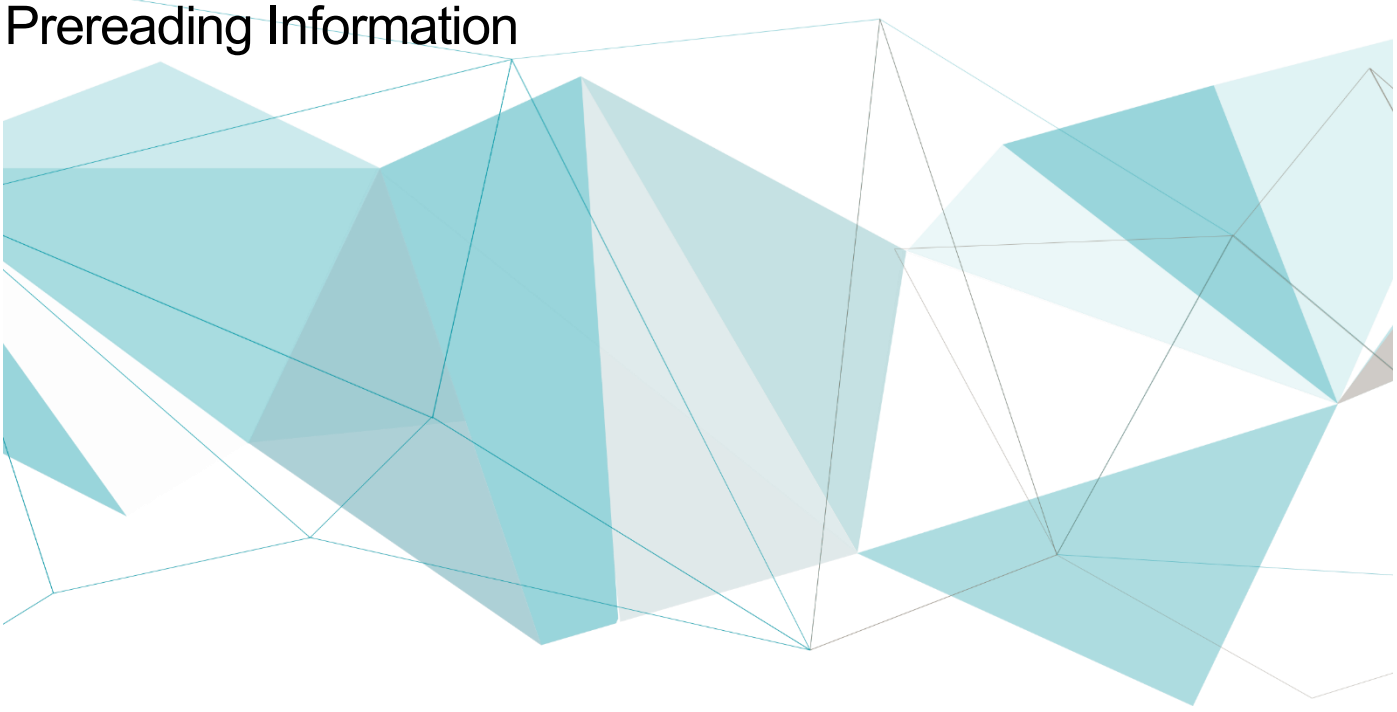
ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Roundtable Pre-reading Pack
- Attachment B: List of Roundtable participant organisations
- Attachment C: List of consultations/visits outside of Roundtable
- Attachment D: Written submissions received
- Attachment E: City of Melbourne Homeless Operating Protocol/Policy Operating Statement

Attachment A: Roundtable Pre-reading Pack

Community Safety Roundtable – 19 March 2025

Prereading Information



Acknowledgement

Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their legacy and spiritual connection to the land and waterways across the City of Port Phillip and pay our heartfelt respect to their Elders, past, present, and future.

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Introduction

Background

Community safety refers to when all sections or groups in an area feel comfortable and secure in their environment, where they can live, work, and travel freely. This can be achieved through policies, programs and actions by multiple stakeholders, including government, police and individuals.

The purpose of the Community Safety Roundtable is to:

- Review best-practice community outreach models from other jurisdictions and explore opportunities to strengthen community safety in the City of Port Phillip.
- Examine the role of local laws in protecting public spaces and consider police protocols and operations - such as those implemented by City of Melbourne - and their relevance to Port Phillip.
- Assess the feasibility of establishing an ongoing alliance to continue this work over the next four years.
- Provide short- and long-term recommendations to the Council to improve safety and public amenity.

This document seeks to provide Community Safety Roundtable participants with an overview of the following prior to the Round Table session in March 2025:

- City of Port Phillip current activity and practice.
- Benchmarking of selected Victorian councils.
- Community safety best practice models from around the world.

Port Phillip at a Glance

Port Phillip is located between 2 and 8km from the Melbourne CBD and covers an area of 21km^2.

Port Phillip is home to people from over 163 birthplaces, with our residents speaking 114 different languages. While there is no typical resident, about three in five are aged 18 to 49 years. It is likely our community will continue to feature many people aged 18 to 49 years; however, the largest growth is expected to be in those aged over 60, suggesting many residents will retire and age within our community.

91% of the estimated 109,515[1] people live in medium to high density housing. Forty-one per cent of households belong to singles and 44% of residents in Port Phillip are renting. There is a housing crisis across Australia and Council has advocated to State and Federal governments to address this.

On any given night, around 25 people sleep rough on the streets, parks or foreshore in Port Phillip. There are many more sleeping on someone's couch, in their cars, in crisis accommodation, rooming houses or overcrowded dwellings.

Causes of homelessness are many and varied. Family violence, a critical shortage of affordable housing, unemployment, mental illness, family breakdown and drug and alcohol abuse all contribute to the level of homelessness in Australia.

Safety and security are important determinants of people's health and wellbeing. Overall, Port Phillip residents have a sense of safety and security that is comparable with the Victorian average. However, criminal incidents are persistently more common in Port Phillip than Victoria overall**.**

The rates of criminal incidents in Port Phillip have been consistently higher than the Victorian average over the past ten years. In the year ending in September 2024, the criminal incident rate per 100,000 population in Port Phillip was 9,596, an increase of 11.4% compared to the previous year. The Victorian average was 6,196.

Port Phillip's incidence of family violence has been below the Victorian average since 2018. While rates in Port Phillip increased in 2021 and 2022; they have decreased across 2023 and 2024. In the year ending in September 2024, the family violence incident rate per 100,000 population in Port Phillip was 1,270, compared with the Victorian average of 1,465.[2]

In 2021, alcohol and other drug consumption accounted for 22.6 hospitalisations per 1,000 residents in Port Phillip – compared with the Victorian average of 8.7.[3]

In 2020/21, the rate of alleged drug offences recorded by police was 50% higher than the Victorian rate and the 9th highest in the State.

In 2020/21, Victoria Police recorded 2.2 alcohol-related incidents of family violence, per 1,000 population – 71% higher than the corresponding Victorian rate and the 19th highest level in the State.

The forecasted population growth in Port Phillip by more than 60,000 residents by 2041 is expected to have implications for social disadvantage, rough sleeping, and crime. Addressing these challenges will require a coordinated effort from local authorities, community organisations, and residents to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all.

[1] ABS resident population 2023.
[2] Latest crime data by area | Crime Statistics Agency Victoria
[3] Victorian alcohol and drug statistics - AODstats

City of Port Phillip – What We Currently Do

Summary

Community safety is a part of all aspects of our lives and is essential to health and wellbeing. It includes:

- increasing community wellbeing and cohesion, and social and cultural inclusion,
- increasing opportunities for social and physical activity,
- improving public amenities,
- preventing and reducing hardship and insecure housing,
- preventing and reducing incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour.

We know that community safety requires a partnership approach. This is why we work collaboratively with our communities, support and service organisations, Victoria Police and State Government. We play a role in:

- fostering diversity, inclusion and social connection,
- activating public spaces through community grants and funding,
- providing supports for those experiencing hardship and insecure housing,
- maintaining and upgrading public amenities and addressing identified traffic blackspot issues,
- fostering strong partnerships with police and other emergency services, local traders and community groups,
- activating and revitalising our high streets,
- developing regulations to promote and maintain safety,
- maintaining safe public spaces through CCTV, Local Laws and joint patrols with Police and partnerships with service providers.

The City of Port Phillip shares our community's concern about safety and stands with the community in our expectation and commitment to Port Phillip as being a safe, liveable and vibrant place to live, work and visit.

We are actively working to consider joint solutions to community safety issues acknowledging the issues are complex and not in the remit of any one party to resolve.

This year we are commencing development of a new Community Safety Plan including extensive community consultation throughout 2025, seeking meaningful and lasting progress.

The Community Safety Plan is the umbrella under which Council's safety-focussed programs, activities and projects sit. Engagement on the plan will provide us with qualitative and quantitative understanding of where people feel and experience safe and unsafe spaces in the municipality, and the current sense of community resilience and social cohesion.

Health and Wellbeing

We have a legislated responsibility under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Victoria)* to prepare a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan every four years.

To recognise the important role Council plays in supporting health and wellbeing across all our activities, we have integrated the planning, implementation and evaluation requirements of Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan into the Council Plan 2021-31.

This means we are working to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing in everything we do.

See **Appendix D** for a list of services identified in the City of Port Phillip currently in the City of Port Phillip working in the areas of community support services and social infrastructure (2024).

Community Safety Plan

Community safety is a priority for the City of Port Phillip. It influences our physical health and wellbeing by altering how people use, and interact with the built environment, local amenities, parks and community facilities. A safe city contributes to positive social and economic outcomes for our community.

The Community Safety Plan details the City of Port Phillip's contribution to making our community a safe and resilient place to live, work and visit. It highlights three key priority areas of focus, foundational to the Action Plan.

Priority 1: Creating Safe Spaces

Priority 2: Building Resilience

Priority 3: Healthy Living

The Plan also aligns with a range of state and national strategies that relate to crime prevention, family violence, reducing harm from alcohol and drugs, emergency response and community safety.

Delivery of some Community Safety Plan actions has been delayed due to the impacts of COVID19, including lockdowns, service closures and the diversion of Council resources to support the emergency response. Despite this unexpected extra demand on our resources, we have managed to achieve many actions in the Community Safety Plan since its inception in 2019. These include:

- Maintaining our public place CCTV network and purchasing a mobile CCTV trailer.
- A comprehensive Local Laws review in 2023.
- The Renew Fitzroy Street, Acland Street and Carlisle Street vacant shopfront projects to help revitalise these high streets.
- Substantial financial contribution to the Wellington Street Common Ground Project to support people with complex needs who have been sleeping rough.
- Helping provide housing for those who need it most through our sponsorship housing program and connecting vulnerable members of our community to services.
- Partnering with Victoria Police and advocating for community safety needs.
- Ongoing support of Port Phillip Zero
- Increase in Local Laws officer shifts
- Installation of graffiti deterring murals bringing colour and vibrancy to our streets.
- Activation of public spaces through performances and community grants and funding.

On 2 August 2023, Council extended the Community Safety Plan and updated the action plan to set priorities and initiatives to November 2025. Review of the Community Safety Plan is currently underway and will include outcomes from this Roundtable and further community consultation.

Local Laws and Regulatory Framework

Council's Local Laws outline what is and isn't allowed on Council land, roads and streets. These Laws are developed under The *Local Government Act 1989 (Victoria)* to manage a range of community issues.

Our activities to manage and protect the safety and amenity of our community, including protection of amenity and Council land and how this is enforced are outlined in the Community Amenity Local Law 2023.

Please see Appendix A: Regulatory Framework Considerations.

Council Notice of Motion 19 February 2025

At the 19 February 2025 Council meeting, a Notice of Motion was passed requesting officers investigate changes to the current Local Law, and provide a report back to Council by May 2025, with a particular focus on:

- Clause 17 – Behaviour on Council Land and Roads.
- Clause 42 – Camping on Council Land
- Clause 43 – Furniture and Other Items on Council Land and Roads.

see Appendix B: City of Port Phillip Notice of Motion 19 February 2025.

Local Laws Officers

Council's Local Laws officers are authorised to issue warnings, Notices to Comply and infringement notices to people and organisations who breach the Local Law. They may impound items, goods, or equipment in relation to a breach. They do not have the legal power to move people on or respond to criminal behaviour. Police, not Local Laws officers, have the training, equipment and authority to respond to these issues.

Our officers are out seven days a week, undertaking daily patrols and working with Victoria Police around hot spots.

Joint Patrols

Our Locals Laws officers work collaboratively with Victoria Police members from South Melbourne and St Kilda Stations to patrol on foot together along key high streets in the City.

These patrols are an opportunity to share information about issues on the streets, and for traders and residents to ask questions of our local Victoria Police and Local Laws Officers. Joint patrols are dependent on police resourcing. We continue to advocate for extra police resources for these patrols to be held regularly.

Rapid Response

Our Rapid Response team patrol key areas of the City daily to clean the streets and support people sleeping rough.

Additionally, Council has recently increased overnight street sweeping and pressure washing of Fitzroy and Acland Streets.

What is the Role of Victoria Police?

Police are responsible for public safety, law enforcement and crime prevention. It is their responsibility to:

- Respond to calls for assistance for personal and public safety, emergencies, and serious incidents.
- Work to prevent crime through a range of proactive community safety programs.
- Detect and investigates offences and brings to justice those responsible for committing them.
- Provide a visible presence within the community and at major events.

In January 2025, Council wrote to the Chief Commissioner of Police to seek advice on potential Local Law amendments to address community safety issues; and formally requested additional resources and joint patrols.

For more information about Victoria Police, visit https://www.police.vic.gov.au/

Recent Changes to Legislation

Recent changes to Victorian legislation and initiatives to achieve better public health and human rights outcomes that have changed policing practice and responses, include:

Sex Work Decriminalisation Act 2022

Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Act 2021 which has led to new public intoxication response services

Bail law amendments 2023

CCTV

CCTV is a crime prevention tool that assists with incident response, and crime management surveillance. We have CCTV cameras in four precincts in St Kilda. It is one tool we use to keep the community safe and prevent crime. There is also a rapid deployment CCTV trailer that is used by Victoria Police at different locations across Port Phillip.

Council is responsible for the infrastructure associated with the system. Victoria Police are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the cameras and monitoring of the network. Victoria Police own all footage.

CCTV camera locations:

- Fitzroy Street, St Kilda
- Little Grey and Grey Streets, St Kilda
- The St Kilda Foreshore
- The Acland Street, St Kilda Entertainment Precinct

As part of the 2024/25 budget process, Council made provision of $800K over the next three years to renew the current network as part of planned maintenance. In 2022 Council purchased a mobile CCTV trailer which is used by Victoria Police under the terms of a loan agreement

For further information, please see the Public Place Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Policy.

Public Place Design and Activation

Community ownership of public space sends positive signals to the broader community. Places that feel owned and cared for are likely to be used, enjoyed, and revisited. Research shows that woman and gender diverse people can experience safety and perceptions of safety differently. Our approach to community safety needs to address these different experiences to ensure equitable access to public spaces.

Spaces that are inviting and appealing, have good lighting, clear lines of sight, and a sense of ownership by the community can help people to feel safe, and prevent crime. All space, even if well planned and well-designed, need to be effectively used and maintained to maximise community safety. Conversely, places that are infrequently used are commonly abused.

Public places can be designed to discourage criminal activity by ensuring there is more chance for offenders to be seen, challenged, or caught; reducing opportunities for criminal activity; and creating a need for more effort to commit a crime, with limited rewards. This approach is referred to as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

Aspects such as poor lighting, amenity, visibility, and wayfinding, and limited natural surveillance may present greater opportunities for crimes to occur. The City of Port Phillip applies strategies to improve perceptions of safety and reduce the likelihood of crime, for broad community benefit.

The ongoing maintenance, cleansing and removal of graffiti and waste from our City contributes to enhancing actual and perceived safety for members of the public. Our work includes upgrading our infrastructure such as bike corridors, footpaths, parks, and signage. We also have a focus on improving and maintaining a high standard of lighting across the city.

Council has a program of street activation, festivals and events, and supported community activities and link to the City of Port Phillip Events Strategy, Outdoor Events Policy, Great Places and Precincts initiative and the Creative and Prosperous City Strategy, and Public Space Strategy.

Family and Gender Based Violence

National, State and local governments across Victoria have established family violence as a key priority for action. Council has a legislated obligation to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victim survivors and includes this in our Council Plan. Council will:

- Take action to advance gender equality across the organisation and in the community, including through our Gender Equality Action Plan 2022 to 2025 .
- Ensure that all staff employed in health and human service delivery have undertaken professional development in risk assessment for family violence.
- Ensure that the development of Council policies, programs and services consider the specific impacts of gender inequality on health, wellbeing and safety.
- Seek to provide safe and gender-equitable facilities and public environments.
- Play a leadership role in collaborating and co-ordinating initiatives tailored to the local community that focus on public education and community development.
- Participate in the Southern Metropolitan Region's Promoting Respect and Equity Together (PRET) Strategy group led by Women's Health in the South-East (WHISE), including working with community health and NGO partners.
- Develop an organisational Family Violence policy to support staff experiencing family violence.

City of Port Phillip has a Family Support Team where families can receive support and advice on topics such as family violence.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

Part of our approach to reducing alcohol-related harm includes controls on public consumption through our Local Laws. This includes alcohol and glass bans at certain times of the year and in certain places.

We support the safe disposal of drug litter through daily cleaning programs and syringe disposal collection.

We also work with partners to minimise harm through awareness raising campaigns and local engagement activities.

Housing and Homelessness

We take a human rights approach to people sleeping rough and managing public space. This means working in a coordinated way to ensure the rights and interests of vulnerable people, who are sleeping rough, are also met.

Increasing Access to Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is an important element of our strategy to help those experiencing housing stress and who have no home. In our Backyard: Growing Affordable Housing in Port Phillip 2015-2025 is Council's affordable housing strategy.

There may be potential future issues related to changes in the housing space within the City of Port Phillip, especially if the state government's housing program includes significant demolition and redevelopment projects. Some key aspects to consider:

- Pipeline Impacts: How planned demolitions and rebuilds may affect the housing supply, affordability, and availability in the area.
- Displacement Concerns: Whether temporary or permanent displacement of residents will be a factor, and what mitigation strategies might be in place.
- Infrastructure & Services: Potential strain or upgrades needed in transport, utilities, and community services due to redevelopment.
- Market & Investment Effects: Changes in property values, rental market shifts, and investor sentiment.

Council continues to advocate for an increase in affordable and community housing stock.

Housing and Homelessness Support

Council's Think and Act: Homelessness Action Strategy 2015 – 2020 is Council's specific homelessness strategy.

Through the Homelessness Action Strategy, we have worked with over 1,300 people aged over 50 to assist them to apply for a range of housing and support. We've also directly assisted over 300 people aged 50 plus to move into social housing locally (most through Council's sponsorship nomination into older persons public housing). Over half of these people were long term local residents on very low incomes, mainly receiving Centrelink Job Seeker benefits, who were losing their private housing.

Supporting People Sleeping Rough

Port Phillip Zero is a partnership between Council, local organisations and the community. We work together to manage amenity of sites and find opportunities to create new housing and reduce rough sleeping.

The goal is to end rough sleeping homelessness in the City of Port Phillip by providing appropriate, secure, affordable long-term housing, and support, to all people who are living without a home. This uses a 'housing first' approach that places people experiencing homelessness directly into permanent and safe housing with 'wrap around' support services to address complex needs such as mental health and alcohol and drug support.

The By Name List is an up-to-date list of everyone we know to be sleeping rough, in their cars or in abandoned buildings (known as squats). The objective of this approach is that we know everyone by name, learn their support and housing requirements and address complex needs.

Between February 2022 to February 2024, the Port Phillip Zero achieved a 40% decrease in rough sleeping in the City of Port Phillip.

Recently, people who have access to housing but are sleeping rough due to barriers in access have been included on the By Name List.

Local organisations involved include Council, Victoria Police, Housing First, Alfred Health, First Step, Launch Housing, Sacred Heart Mission, Salvation Army, Better Health Network, Housing First, St Kilda Community Housing, Port Phillip Community Group, Tenants Victoria, Uniting Care, Wintringham, Ngwala Willumbong, Southside Justice and Southport Community Housing.

For recent statistics see the Social and Amenity Management reports on Council's community safety webpage

Housing needs analysis from December 2024 identified the following requirements for people on the By Name List:

- DFFH housing
- Permanent Supported Housing
- Community Housing
- Support for Transition
- Support for Long Term Housing

For more information see the following documents:

No fixed address - Council's responses to people sleeping rough in Port Phillip (PDF 2.4 MB)

Protocol for Assisting People Who Sleep Rough

Trauma Aware Port Phillip

Trauma Aware Port Phillip (TAPP) is a community-led, evidence-informed project to strengthen resilience and reduce the impact of trauma and shame in the Port Phillip community.

The TAPP Working Group is a network of individuals, organisations and service providers in the Port Phillip local government area who are collaborating to empower sectors and community to enhance connection and capacity, reduce trauma and shame in everyday interactions, build inclusion, and share knowledge. Through this work the aim is improve community health and wellbeing, increase social cohesion and resilience, support local services sectors, and build sustainable positive change.

Community Funding and Service Agreements

Community grants programs and funding agreements support eligible community groups and organisations to apply for funding for projects and programs that: strengthen capacity, encourage social connection, address health and well-being inequities, enable access and inclusion for diverse communities, and support sustainability initiatives.

Please also see Council's Community Funding Policy.

Service Agreements

Council has service agreements in place with a number of service providers to support volunteers, information and referral services, food relief and support, legal services, and assertive outreach and support work.

Benchmarking of selected Victorian Councils

Summary

A summary of community safety approaches is provided for the following Councils.

- City of Melbourne
- Frankston City Council
- Knox City Council
- Stonnington City Council
- Glen Eira City Council
- Yarra City Council

City of Melbourne

CITY OF MELBOURNE - SUMMARY	
Health and Wellbeing	The Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2021-2015 focus areas are: 1. Public health and safety 2. Mental wellbeing and inclusion 3. Healthy and sustainable lifestyles 4. Housing and homelessness 5. Food security 6. Health impacts of climate change
Inclusive Melbourne	The Inclusive Melbourne Strategy responds to the Council Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Plan and provides a framework for the City of Melbourne that progresses inclusion for the city. Priority 3 – Empowered Participatory Communities aims to build connection and empowerment. • People have the capacity to identify local needs and are empowered to lead change in their neighbourhoods. • People and communities are connected and participate fully in community life. • All people can participate in city decision-making.
Activities Local Law 2024 summary	Prohibited activities in public places (2.1 and 2.2) • Causing nuisance, affecting amenity, enjoyment or personal comfort of other persons in a public place • Indecent behaviour, such as defecating, offensive acts, threatening, abusive or insulting words. • Damaging public places. • Instruction to leave a place that is not open to the public. Camping in public places (2.8) Unless in accordance with a permit, a person must not camp in or on any public place in a vehicle, tent, caravan or any type of temporary or provisional form of accommodation. *(note that this does not include rough sleepers with minimal belongings – i.e. without furniture, tents or structures – see Homelessness Protocol)*

CITY OF MELBOURNE - SUMMARY	
	Causing obstruction (8.9) A person must not without a permit, unreasonably obstruct or interfere with the passage of pedestrian or vehicular traffic in or on a public place. Furniture in public places (8.10) Unless in accordance with a permit, a person must not place or cause to be placed any furniture in or on a public place. Consumption and possession of liquor is prohibited in certain circumstances • Cannot consume or possess liquor in prescribed areas (other than in a sealed container). • Exemptions for permitted festivals and events. • Officer direction to seal or dispose of contents.
Regulatory Activities	Local Laws Officers Council's Local Laws officers are authorised to issue warnings, Notices to Comply and infringement notices to people and organisations who breach the Local Law. They may impound items, goods, or equipment in relation to a breach. They do not have the legal power to move people on or respond to criminal behaviour. Police, not Local Laws officers, have the training, equipment and authority to respond to these issues. Security Contractors Council commenced a trial in February 2025 where security guards are contracted to address complex on-street issues. It comes after 37 incidents of violence were recorded over the past two years against council staff members who were enforcing local laws, with the council seeking to address the community's safety concerns. Under the trial, an external security services firm will provide two contracted security guards to support Local Laws Officers who are responsible for on-street behaviour-related issues. Role of Victoria Police Victoria Police Officers are not authorised under the Local Law, rather they support Council Officers if and when a safety risk is perceived. Currently, police provide support to those experiencing homelessness, as well as running regular daily patrols across the CBD. Rapid Response The Rapid Response Clean Team patrols the CBD seven days a week. The team responds in real time to requests for street cleaning and graffiti removal.
CCTV	Melbourne Security Upgrades In 2021, the State Government completed a $52.5 million security upgrade project in Melbourne's CBD including the installation of physical barriers at Melbourne's busiest locations, upgrades to CCTV cameras and a new public address system. Safe City Cameras

CITY OF MELBOURNE - SUMMARY	
	Closed circuit TV (CCTV) surveillance cameras are installed throughout the city and parts of Carlton, as part of the City of Melbourne's Safe City Cameras Program (SCCP). The City of Melbourne employs specially trained security contractors to monitor the cameras 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Staff record incidents captured by the cameras and notify police immediately. Reports are prepared detailing the nature, time and place of an incident, as well as the action taken by staff and emergency services. The 200+ cameras help to create a safer environment and reduce crime levels by deterring potential offenders and helping in crime detection. Speaker sets are also in place across the CBD to create a Public Address System and can be used to communicate important messages in an emergency.
Public Place Design and Activation	The draft Future Streets Framework 2030 and Beyond proposes to guide the future planning and design of our city streets to create safe, efficient and vibrant spaces for everyone. Streets support safety and wellbeing by catering to a spectrum of user requirements across genders, ages, cultures, life stages and abilities. Ensuring everyone feels safe to occupy public spaces, and can access the same places and opportunities, is crucial to fostering diverse environments. This is further supported through actions in the Transport Strategy 2030. • Ensure best-practice lighting design is employed in new projects and address lighting shortfalls in areas where a significant problem is identified. • Support improvements to public transport safety and user experience.
Family Violence	The Creating Communities of Equality and Respect: Women's Safety and Empowerment Action Plan was developed in consultation with City of Melbourne leaders, practice leaders in the prevention sector, community and business leaders and other stakeholders on opportunities for our external-facing work. While prevalent and serious, violence against women is not inevitable and all of us can take action to prevent violence. This Action Plan focusses on how to: • transform the deep underlying causes of violence against women so that violence against women doesn't occur in the first place, and • target and disrupt the drivers of violence against women. This approach is known as primary prevention. The four broad themes contained in our plan are: • Advance women and gender diverse people's leadership and participation in economic, social and civic life across the municipality • Promote the safety of women and gender diverse people in our communities and public spaces • Engage men and boys to shift unhealthy norms of masculinity and condoning of violence • Achieve sustainable primary prevention for our municipality.

CITY OF MELBOURNE - SUMMARY	
	This Action Plan is dedicated to our external-facing work with communities and sits alongside the newly enacted Gender Equality Act 2020 requiring all local councils to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality, and to consider and promote gender equality in policies, programs and services that interface with communities.
Alcohol and Other Drugs	Council partners with a number of organisations to provide a network of City Drug Support Services.
Housing and Homelessness	Homelessness Protocol Council, Victoria Police and DHHS have a formal operating protocol to address rough sleeping in the city. Council continues to work with the Victorian Government and housing and homelessness agencies on medium and long-term solutions to homelessness. The protocol and ongoing work to address homelessness means Council can act quickly to protect public safety and amenity, while also ensuring that the most vulnerable people in the city have access to the services they need. Daily Support Team (through Launch Housing) The team delivers daily engagement with and provides support to people sleeping rough. Partnerships Council, VicPol, DHHS and the homeless sector (including the Daily Support Team) work together daily to address immediate issues. The group also meets weekly to ensure the appropriate and timely level of support services are provided to rough sleepers, and that there is a balanced approach to support, compliance and enforcement. Homes Melbourne Recognising that the complexity and extent of the housing crisis needed a comprehensive, targeted response, Council created Homes Melbourne in 2022 – a multi-disciplinary team committed to ending homelessness and increasing safe, secure, and affordable housing in our city. Homes Melbourne is helping to solve the affordable housing crisis and create pathways out of homelessness – at pace and scale. The Homes Melbourne team brings housing, homelessness and policy experts together to innovate, advocate and collaborate with partners across the housing sector. The team are working with governments, businesses, developers, funders, community housing organisations and the not-for-profit sector to deliver facilitate 6000 affordable homes and reduce homelessness in the city. Initiatives include: • Make Room: Providing secure supported housing for people experiencing rough sleeping or chronic homelessness for up to 12 months, or until they can secure access to long-term housing.

CITY OF MELBOURNE - SUMMARY	

	• Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2030 outlines Council's commitment to deliver, plan, advocate for and deliver more affordable housing in the City of Melbourne.
	• Affordable housing projects:
	  ○ Currently investigating converting a Council-owned car park site at 44-60 Curzon Street, North Melbourne, into affordable housing.
	  ○ Delivered 48 affordable housing units in the Munro development alongside Queen Victoria Market.
	  ○ Delivering 40 affordable housing units at the Boyd development in Southbank.
	  ○ Will deliver affordable housing as part of the Southern Precinct at the Queen Victoria Market. 15 per cent of the floor space in one of the proposed buildings will be secured as affordable housing.

Community Food Relief	The City of Melbourne has identified food security as a key health and wellbeing focus area within our Council Plan 2021-2025. One of our major initiatives is to develop and deliver programs that will provide food relief to vulnerable members of the community and improve local food production by supporting communities to grow their own food. In December 2021, councillors endorsed Community Food Relief 2021 - 2025: Planning for a food secure city. This plan outlines Council's role and commitment to improving access to food relief services and includes the following initiatives: • Partnering with food relief and other charities to provide groceries and meals to vulnerable residents. • Investigating community food enterprise models, including opportunities to work with Queen Victoria Market traders to redirect surplus food that would otherwise go to waste. • Advocating to State and Federal Governments to raise income support above the poverty line and increase investment in social housing. Council's strategic priority is to move beyond food relief to increased food security for everyone, especially the most vulnerable.
Comprehensive list of community services	The Helping Out Guide is a comprehensive list of free and low cost services from more than 90 organisations in the central city and surrounding suburbs. The agencies listed offer many types of support and services. These include: 1. Homelessness accommodation (including rental assistance) 2. Services for women 3. Essential items and services (including food, clothes, showers, laundry, travel) 4. Support for addictions (including drugs, alcohol, gambling, needle exchange) 5. Health and wellbeing services (including hospitals, counselling, medical) 6. Legal and financial services 7. Assistance with employment services 8. Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples The City of Melbourne updates this information periodically to make sure the service details are as accurate as possible

CITY OF MELBOURNE - SUMMARY	
Community Funding and Grants	The City of Melbourne offers many funding opportunities to support and empower people and communities to become engaged, to connect and to take local action. Some of these include: • Aboriginal community grants -Funding for First Nations initiatives. • Connected neighbourhood small grants – funding to support connection, social inclusion, access and participation. • Community event grants – funding for events that increase connection and belonging. • Community inclusion grants – supporting diverse communities. • Community meals subsidy program – creating welcoming spaces to enjoy a meal together. • Operational small grants – supporting volunteer-run organisations with operational costs. • Social investment partnership grants – partnering with organisations to address social issues. • Community use of town halls – supporting not for profit organisations.

Frankston City Council

FRANKSTON CITY COUNCIL - SUMMARY	
Health and Wellbeing	The Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2021-2015 focus areas are: 1. Building healthy and active communities 2. Building fair and inclusive communities 3. Increasing mental wellbeing and resilience 4. Strengthening climate action for community wellbeing 5. Strengthening gender equality and respectful relationships 6. Building safe communities
Safer Community Strategy	The Safer Community Strategy 2023 provides Frankston City Council with the strategic direction for how it will work with the community and partners over the next ten years to create a safe, fair and inclusive municipality where people feel safe, well connected and empowered to participate in community life. The strategy identifies our strategic priorities and key strategies to guide Council and its partners in taking collaborative approaches towards four long-term outcomes: • Community strength and connection • Healthy and safe behaviours • Well planned and liveable communities • Collaboration, innovation and empowerment The implementation of this strategy supports the facilitation of strategic partnerships and enable more integrated and innovative approaches to community safety and crime prevention.
Community Local Law 2020 summary	Behaviour (2.1) • Causing nuisance, affecting amenity, or other persons reasonable use of a public place. • Dangerous behaviour. • Indecent behaviour, such as defecating and spitting. • Damaging public places. • Hinder or harass Council staff. • Instruction to leave a place that is not open to the public. Camping and caravans (3.14(c)) A person must not without a permit camp in a tent, caravan, motor home or other temporary structure on a road or in a municipal place. *(Council does not have powers or the authority to move people who are homeless. People who are homeless have a right to be in public spaces and will be treated as any other member of the public. This means working in a coordinated way to ensure the rights and interests of vulnerable people, who are experiencing homelessness, are met.)* Obstructions on roads and Council land (2.2) A person must not without a permit, store or leave items on a road or Council land.

FRANKSTON CITY COUNCIL - SUMMARY	
	Liquor (3.17) • Cannot without a permit consume or possess liquor in a public place (other than in a sealed container). • Cannot consume or possess liquor on vacant private land (other than in a sealed container – and with permission of occupier or owner). • Officer direction to seal or dispose of contents.
Regulatory Activities	Local Laws Officers Council's Local Laws officers are authorised to issue warnings, Notices to Comply and infringement notices to people and organisations who breach the Local Law. They may impound items, goods, or equipment in relation to a breach. They do not have the legal power to move people on or respond to criminal behaviour. Police, not Local Laws officers, have the training, equipment and authority to respond to these issues. Rapid Response Council's Rapid Response Team provide a visible presence throughout the municipality, focusing on proactive patrols and providing a quick response to Local Law issues. The team: • Perform proactive patrols across Frankston City, including beaches, reserves, suburban retail shopping strips and town centres • Investigate Local Law offences • Educate the community to reduce offences and reported issues • Quickly respond to reported issues from the community Role of Victoria Police Currently, police provide support to those experiencing homelessness, as well as running regular daily patrols. Protective Services Officers (PSO's) at Frankston Station Protective Service Officers (PSOs) are posted at Frankston Station. They work with local Police, who have continued their regular foot patrols in and around Frankston Station. PSO powers include: • being able to move people on • arresting those found to be drunk and disorderly • detaining people believed to have committed a serious offence. • They patrol Frankston Station from 6:00PM until after the last train
CCTV	Council's CCTV program has been hugely successful in improving residents' feelings of safety and helping Victoria Police respond to crime in the area. There are a number of CCTV cameras mounted throughout Frankston City. Footage is streamed directly to the Frankston Police Station and can only be viewed by police investigators as part of a criminal enquiry. Council's Safer Communities team works closely with Frankston Police to identify sites for the new cameras based on community need. The Frankston City Council CCTV program has been supported by State and Federal Government via numerous grant programs.

FRANKSTON CITY COUNCIL - SUMMARY	
Public Place Design and Activation	The Open Space Strategy 2016-2036 addresses community safety and seeks to create well maintained and actively managed spaces that ensure people feel safe and secure. • Ensure active open edges to open space reserves. • Encourage natural surveillance through design and planning. • Undertake CEPTED and land assessments for spaces with a history or risk of antisocial behaviour, These other plans and strategies listed below have also been developed to help Council deliver equitable public realm and open space improvements across Frankston City. • Lighting Frankston Plan. • Local Park Action Plan. • Frankston Local Strip Action Plan. • Public Toilet Action Plan
Family and Gender Based Violence	Council has overviewed our preventative action in the 2024-2028 Family Violence Prevention Action Plan, which outlines how Council will lead prevention in four unique ways – as a leader, a workplace, a service provider and a connector. Council also developed the 2021-2025 Gender Equality Action Plan that sets out vision, objectives and actions to ensure Council is working to exceed its obligations under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*. More recently, at a Council meeting held on 29 January 2025, a motion was unanimously approved, which asked Council to continue investing in advocating for funding to support local family and domestic violence programs and services. Some of Council's current initiatives include: • Support for community to lead or participate in gender equality initiatives such as International Women's Day, IDAHOBIT, Men's Health Week and 16 Days of Activism; • Education and training for workforce and community in addressing the drivers of violence; • Partnerships with specialist agencies, groups and networks to prevent violence and promote gender equality such as the Frankston City & Mornington Peninsula Family Violence Prevention Collaborative.
Alcohol and Other Drugs	Council partners with a number of organisations to provide a network of alcohol and other drug support services.
Housing and Homelessness	Partnerships While Council does not directly offer housing, it continues to work with partners, including community organisations and government agencies, to support the community members experiencing or at risk of homelessness. • Frankston City has a single-entry point for homelessness support which is operated locally by The **Salvation Army - Homelessness Services**. The purpose of entry points is to have a coordinated approach among

FRANKSTON CITY COUNCIL - SUMMARY	
	local homelessness services, assess a person's needs, prioritise their case, and connect people to the most appropriate local service • **Frankston Strategic Housing and Homelessness Alliance** – an alliance of local service providers who are committed to increasing our city's capacity to respond increasing system pressures from homelessness. • **Frankston & Mornington Peninsula Zero** – a coordinated homelessness response where information and resources are shared between partners to reduce the number of rough sleepers locally. • **Regional Local Government Charter and Homelessness and Social Housing** – 13 councils who have come together to highlight regional housing and homelessness issues. • **Winter Shelter** – a local initiative of Frankston churches coming together to provide beds, warms meals and a safer place for the night – five nights a week through the winter months. • **Community Support Frankston** (CSF) is a not-for-profit charitable organisation providing emergency relief and essential supports for residents in Frankston City experiencing hardship. Assistance is provided with food and essential items, medications, clothing, education, housing and much more. CSF is not a housing provider but will connect clients to the most appropriate, local agency. CSF has co-located services and programs assisting financially vulnerable residents, including the Services Australia, Bolton Clarke Homeless Persons Program, Orange Sky Laundry, and the Mental Health Legal Clinic. <u>Free Training for Volunteers</u> Council is providing free training for volunteers engaging with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and in need of emergency relief – building their skills and capacity to engage with community members who are often experiencing multiple and complex hardships. Future training opportunities are currently being planned for 2025. Training was developed in consultation with volunteers and commenced in 2024 and included: • Five Conflict Resolution Workshops delivered to 73 volunteers from 14 local charities and not-for-profit organisations. • Five Mental Health and Wellbeing Workshops delivered to 65 volunteers representing 12 local charities and not-for-profit organisations. <u>Increasing Access to Affordable Housing</u> The Housing Advisory Committee was established by Council in 2022 to monitor, advocate, and provide advice to the Council on local housing needs within Frankston City. The Committee was established in response to the current housing affordability crisis and the need to identify opportunities and innovative solutions to facilitate sustainable housing outcomes. Council is currently developing an affordable housing policy that will provide the Council's position and framework to guide and facilitate an increase in the supply of affordable housing on public and private land within Frankston

FRANKSTON CITY COUNCIL - SUMMARY	
	City by enabling housing supply through the local land use planning system, advocacy, and partnerships. Community engagement is open on the Draft Affordable Housing Policy until 23 March 2025.
Community Connectors (public transport safety)	Council has partnered with Metro Trains Melbourne and South East Community Links (SECL) to support community members who visit Frankston Station and are facing complex challenges – such as mental health, substance abuse, financial, family violence, and housing insecurity issues. Two SECL community practitioners with social work, mental health and nursing qualifications will be present at Frankston Station from 1pm – 5pm on weekdays. The program follows a successful pilot at Dandenong Station. Council is seeking additional funding from the federal government to ensure we can continue to provide this initiative beyond the pilot program. Key benefits of the program include: • Rapid and effective responses to people experiencing mental health issues or participating in anti-social behaviours • Ensuring commuters feel safe at Frankston Station and on public transport • De-escalation of situations before they become major incidents • Building positive rapport with individuals requiring support and establishing referral pathways • Increased safety for all users in the Young Street precinct
Monash University Social Work Clinic	The Monash University Social Work Clinic offers free services from the Frankston Library on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm. The Clinic is staffed by Monash University postgraduate social work students, with all participating students being supervised by qualified and experienced social works practitioners. The students are equipped to help community members deal with hardship, connect to emotional supports, develop essential skills and access resources.
Community Funding and Grants	Community Grants Frankston City Council offers a range of grants to support both local not-for-profit organisations and community members. Some grants that have previously and continue to support vulnerable community members, include: • The Annual Community Grants • Child and Youth Inclusion Grants • Urgent Grants • The Frankston Charitable Fund • Community Service Partnership Grants • Emergency Relief Funding 2024/25

FRANKSTON CITY COUNCIL - SUMMARY	
	A total of $200,000 was allocated through the one-off Emergency Relief Fund 2024/25 enabling 12 vital organisations to increase their capacity and provide essential support to over 43,000 individuals across Frankston City. Through that grant, funding was provided to: • Frankston Brekky Club • Mums Supporting Families in Need Inc • Project Fresh Start Inc • Local 2 Community • Peninsula Christian Care • Theodora House • Bolton Clarke • Sikh Volunteers Australia • Operation Larder • St. Vincent de Paul • Salvation Army Carrum Downs • LifeGate <u>Financial Hardship Assistance</u> Council understands that financial hardship can affect anyone, at any time, without any notice. Council offers a free and confidential financial counselling service, rate repayment plans, and Pensioner rates concessions.
Advocating for local supports for vulnerable residents	Council is committed to advocating to the Australian Government for secure, long-term funding to support vulnerable community members. As our local need for support services increases, it requires increased annual funding to continue to meet that need. Council has requested additional $500,000 per annum (increased by CPI each year) to support local emergency relief providers and $350,000 per annum over three years (2026-2028) to continue the Community Connectors initiative beyond the pilot program at Frankston Station.

Knox City Council

KNOX CITY COUNCIL - SUMMARY	
Health and Wellbeing	The Council Plan 2021-2025 incorporates the following health and wellbeing principles. • Having access to lifelong learning opportunities and local employment is essential for our social connection, mental health, self-expression, and financial stability and growth. • Affordable and accessible housing and infrastructure are essential to the safety and wellbeing of individuals and increase the liveability of Knox. • A healthy natural environment is essential to good food supplies and clean air and water. Our reserves and parkland also provide spaces to enjoy and connect with nature, which can also reduce stress and improve our mental health. • Belonging and social inclusion are essential to mental health and general wellbeing. The ability to practice and connect with culture is also essential to all forms of health and wellbeing. • The opportunity to be heard allows people to help shape their community and in turn create a sense of belonging and being valued.
Knox CARES Strategy 2022-2027	The Knox Connection, Access, Respect, Equality and Safety (Knox CARES) Strategy guides Council's commitment to building a safer, healthier and more inclusive Knox. Actions have been developed to support 'people in Knox feeling safe in their home and their neighbourhood and having a positive sense of belonging to their community. Previously Council has developed discrete action plans for a range of key planning and policy areas, as well as different priority populations. These are now captured within the Knox CARES Strategy: • Family Violence Action Plan • Disability Access and Equity Plan • First Nations Action Plan • Community Safety Plan • Multicultural Communities Plan • LGBTIQ+ Action Plan There remain a number of other Council plans and strategies that are closely related to this strategy. These include the Reconciliation Action Plan, Mobility and Access Action Plan, Social and Affordable Housing Strategy, and the Mental Health Action Plan.
Knox Empowering Communities	The Knox – Empowering Communities Program is a community-led program aimed at enhancing safety in Ferntree Gully through local engagement, partnerships, and targeted projects.

Program (evaluation report)	Key Highlights: • Funding & Goals: The Victorian Government allocated $700,000 to Knox City Council under the Empowering Communities Grant to address crime and safety concerns through community-led initiatives. • Community Consultation: Over 275 individuals participated in discussions to identify major safety concerns, including family violence, substance abuse, and public disorder. • Action Group: A diverse local group was formed to oversee project implementation and funding distribution. • Funded Initiatives: Six community projects were launched to build relationships, reduce isolation, and foster safety: 1. Cultural Safety Program – Focused on First Nations youth and cultural inclusion. 2. Ferntree Gully Village Markets – Designed to activate public spaces and promote local businesses. 3. Community Safety Outreach – Support for vulnerable residents, particularly those experiencing homelessness. 4. Neighbour Day – Strengthening social ties through local events. 5. Knox Nocturnals Youth Group – Providing safe, inclusive spaces for youth. 6. YES Program – Aiding youth engagement and social inclusion. • Community Engagement & Impact: o Over 4,300 participants were engaged across projects. o Improved perceptions of safety in Ferntree Gully, particularly during evening hours. o Increased social connections and community pride. o Fostered long-term collaborations between local organizations, law enforcement, and service providers. Evaluation & Findings: • Successes: o The community-led model effectively engaged local voices and needs. o The Action Group played a key role in ensuring inclusivity and program alignment. o Strong partnerships were developed between stakeholders, leading to potential sustainability of certain initiatives beyond the project period. • Challenges: o Stakeholder participation varied, with some groups disengaging over time. o Sustainability concerns for certain projects, particularly those needing ongoing funding.

	○ Evaluation data gaps for some initiatives, limiting the ability to measure full impact. The Knox Empowering Communities project was successful in fostering community-led safety improvements, enhancing social cohesion, and activating public spaces. The initiative established sustainable community partnerships, though ongoing support and funding will be necessary to maintain long-term benefits.
Amenity Local Law 2020 summary	Behaviour on Council land and roads (5.1, 5.2) • Interfere with another person's reasonable use. • Dangerous behaviour. Camping on Council land (5.4) Without a permit, a person must not camp in or on any Council land or road. *(Camp means using a caravan, tent, sleeping bag, vehicle, shipping container, shed or like structure for residential accommodation (either temporary or permanent) by a person).* Obstructions on roads and Council land (5.5) Without a permit, a person must not place or permit to be placed or allow to remain on a road or Council land: (a) a bulk rubbish container; or (b) a shipping container; or (c) a donation bin; or (d) any other thing Alcohol (8.1) • Cannot without a permit consume or possess liquor in a public place (other than in a sealed container). • Officer direction to seal or dispose of contents.
Regulatory Activities	Local Laws Officers Council's Local Laws officers are authorised to issue warnings, Notices to Comply and infringement notices to people and organisations who breach the Local Law. They may impound items, goods, or equipment in relation to a breach. They do not have the legal power to move people on or respond to criminal behaviour. Police, not Local Laws officers, have the training, equipment and authority to respond to these issues. Role of Victoria Police Currently, police provide support to those experiencing homelessness, as well as running regular daily patrols.

Public Place Design and Activation	The Knox CARES strategy, at the highest level, seeks to lead collaborative partnerships across Council to promote a 'whole of business' approach promoting safer public places, including the use of safer design principles and the urban design framework, as well as responding to CCTV enquiries. The Open Space Asset Management Plan addresses community safety and seeks to create well maintained and actively managed spaces that ensure people feel safe and secure. • Providing for safe, well-lit and readily accessible passive open spaces. • Encourage natural surveillance through design and planning. • Undertake CEPTED and land assessments for spaces with a history or risk of an! social behaviour, These other plans and strategies listed below have also been developed to help Council deliver equitable public realm and open space improvements across Frankston City. • Lighting Frankston Plan. • Local Park Action Plan. • Frankston Local Strip Action Plan. • Public Toilet Action Plan
Family and Gender Based Violence	Knox City Council pledges its commitment to working toward a community free from violence. Family violence is a major health and human rights issue and can affect anyone in the community regardless of gender, age, location, socio-economic and health status, culture, sexual identity, ability, ethnicity, religion or family type. This commitment is embedded in the Council Plan, incorporating the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, the Knox CARES strategy and the Mental Health Action Plan.
Mental Health Action Plan	The Mental Health Action Plan 2021 applies a partnership approach with peak bodies and other organisations to achieve collective impact. Key initiatives broadly address: • Health promotion. • Community education. • Sector collaboration and coordination. • Advocacy.
Alcohol and Other Drugs	Statement of Commitment for Reducing Alcohol Harm Knox City Council is committed to taking steps that improve the health and wellbeing of the community by reducing the harm caused by alcohol misuse. The statement outlines areas where Council can have most impact: Managing alcohol on Council land, at recreation reserves, in sporting and community facilities.

	• Promoting a responsible drinking culture within Council and community. • Designing public places to be family friendly and manage alcohol consumption in areas where this is a problem. • Working together with Victoria Police, local community organisations and businesses to develop solutions, share resources and advocate for change in state government policies. • Strengthening Council assessments of liquor licensing applications which will include assessing the impact on community. • Providing education about responsible alcohol consumption, the risks associated with misuse, and information on local support services. • Taking leadership by prioritising alcohol harm reduction in our health and wellbeing strategies, policies, and programs. • Researching and monitoring data on alcohol harm to guide Council decisions and development of effective harm reduction programs.
Housing and Homelessness	Council's approach to homelessness and rough sleeping in Knox is: • connecting people who are homeless or sleeping rough with support services • linking people with suitable housing or services before they become homeless, where possible • working with other organisations towards the goal of preventing homelessness • monitoring accessibility to housing providers and support services • increasing awareness and community education on the cause of homelessness. <u>Homelessness Information and Support - Partnerships</u> Support and services are available for people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or escaping family violence in Knox. • Housing support services • Community meals • Emergency food relief • Shower and washing machine services • Crisis support services • Family violence support services <u>Support for Older People</u> Council provides support for eligible Knox residents aged 55 years or older who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Housing support services can include: • advice • advocacy • referrals and help in applying for public housing • recommendation for sponsorship housing within Knox

	• helping existing tenants in sponsorship properties to transfer to more suitable accommodation. E.g. moving from upstairs to a ground floor unit. Council has sponsored housing for older residents, provided through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). Sponsorship housing allows older residents of Knox who are eligible for public housing to remain within the local area. Increasing Access to Affordable Housing The Knox Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027 current evidence of the housing needs in Knox. Importantly, access to safe, secure and affordable housing was a key priority identified by the community when developing the Knox Council Plan 2021-25. In addition to this strategy, Council has a Housing Strategy (Knox Housing Strategy January 2015). That Strategy provides direction for residential development and provides the basis for planning controls such as Clause 21.06 (Housing) and Clause 22.07 (Development in Residential Areas and Neighbourhood Character). Further, it identifies a number of Strategic Investigation Sites which may contribute to new housing development.
Community Funding and Grants	Community Grants Knox offers a range of grants to support both local not-for-profit organisations and community members. Some grants that have previously and continue to support vulnerable community members, include: • The Empowering Communities Program • Community Partnership Funding • Community Development Fund.

Stonnington City Council

STONNINGTON CITY COUNCIL - SUMMARY	
Health and Wellbeing	The Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 priority areas are: Priority 1- Healthy and Well • Our community is more physically active. • Our community has a healthier diet. • Services, supports and information are easier to access in our community. • Our community is health in a changing climate. Priority 2- Respectful and Safe • Equity and respect are thriving in our community. • Our community is a safer place for everyone. • Harm from alcohol, gambling, tobacco and other drugs is reduced. Priority 3 – Connected and Supportive • Mental wellbeing is strengthened in our community. • Our community is more socially connected and able to participate in community life. • All members of our community are valued, supported and connected.
Safer Stonnington Community Safety Plan	The Safer Stonnington Community Safety Plan 2024-2027 provides Stonnington with the strategic direction for how it will work with partners to make the City safe and enjoyable for everyone. The Plan's four priority areas are: • People: Encouraging safe behaviours and community connections, recognising the unique needs of different population groups • Place: Creating a safe and well-maintained physical environment so that people can engage in community life and explore our city with confidence. • Planning: Developing integrated, evidence-based approaches with strong governance frameworks to respond to current and future needs. • Partnerships: Working collaboratively with local agencies and community to identify solutions to complex issues and address safety concerns.
General Local Law 2018 summary	Behaviour (117) • Behave in a manner that is indecent, insulting, riotous. • Engage in behaviour that is dangerous. • Engage in behaviour that interferes with another person. • Dangerous behaviour.

	Camping on Council land and roads (143) (3) A person must not, without a Permit, camp on Council Land, a Public Place or on any Road in a tent, caravan, Motor Vehicle or other temporary or makeshift structure unless within a caravan park licensed under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. (4) A person must not leave any personal goods or effects on Council Land, Public Place or any Road as part of any camp. *(Council does not have the power to move people on. People who are homeless have a right to be in public spaces and will be treated as any other member of the public. Reports of homelessness will be investigated by Council's Local Laws Officers who will liaise with local police and make a referral to the Launch Housing and Star Health outreach services. These services will visit the location and offer a variety of support including emergency housing.)* Liquor (129) • Cannot without a permit consume or possess liquor in a public place (other than in a sealed container). • Officer direction to seal or dispose of contents.
Regulatory Activities	Local Laws Officers Council's Local Laws officers are authorised to issue warnings, Notices to Comply and infringement notices to people and organisations who breach the Local Law. They may impound items, goods, or equipment in relation to a breach. They do not have the legal power to move people on or respond to criminal behaviour. Police, not Local Laws officers, have the training, equipment and authority to respond to these issues. Responsive maintenance To ensure a safe and well-maintained physical environment through routine and responsive street cleaning and waste removal. Role of Victoria Police Currently, police provide support to those experiencing homelessness, as well as running regular daily patrols.
CCTV	Council's Community Safety Camera (CCTV) network is part of a package of crime prevention measures in place to improve safety. Council, Victoria Police and other stakeholders from the Public Safety CCTV Steering Committee guide decision making around needs / camera locations, including review of the network to ensure it is meeting its objectives and operational needs. There is also a formal process where the community can apply for additional CCTV cameras.

Public Place Design and Activation	The Public Realm Strategy 2010 addresses community safety through the following actions: • Ensure areas that attract high levels of vandalism are maintained on a regular basis to ensure maintenance is perceived as a priority • Ensure night lighting is adequate to reduce vandalism and improve safety • Promote safe night routes through parks where necessary; however, it is preferable to promote streetscapes for safe night-time movement • Design new facilities to ensure that blind spots are avoided, and walls are created in a manner that minimises their susceptibility to graffiti attack • Use materials that are not conducive to supporting illegal graffiti or use coatings that facilitate quick removal. The Safer Stonnington Community Safety Plan 2024-2027 flags additional initiatives to reduce criminal and antisocial behaviour, enhance road safety, ensure public places are designed to be safe and encourage positive use: • Develop Safer Design Guidelines, toolkits, and training that highlight vulnerability of women, girls, people with disability, LGBTIQA+, First Nations and cultural groups to build internal capacity to improve safety, surveillance and crime prevention in public spaces and places. • Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) training. • Applying urban design crime prevention strategies to support confidence in open spaces, including clear paths of travel, passive surveillance, adequate lighting and appropriate planting and maintenance. • Extending the hours of lighting in public spaces to enable longer periods of community use, for example, dog walking. The Urban Lighting Guidelines has also been developed to help Council deliver equitable public realm and open space improvements across Stonnington.
Family and Gender Based Violence	The City of Stonnington is committed to creating a fair, equal and safe community including taking action to reduce violence against women and family violence. Creating a respectful and safe community is a priority. The City of Stonnington remains firmly committed to working with key stakeholders to address gender-based violence affecting the Stonnington community. Stonnington is a signatory to Promoting Respect and Equality Together 2021-2025, a regional strategy developed by Women's Health in the South-East (WHISE) for collective action across Southern Metropolitan Melbourne.

	Stonnington delivers community awareness campaigns to address safety concerns including 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, training for aged services staff to recognise and report elder abuse, community awareness training sessions (e.g. Active Bystander Training and the Man Box). Stonnington also partners with specialist agencies, groups and networks to prevent violence and promote gender equality Council also developed the 2021-2025 Gender Equality Action Plan that sets out vision, objectives and actions to ensure Council is working to exceed its obligations under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.
Alcohol and Other Drugs	Stonnington has the second highest lifetime risk of alcohol related harm out of all Victorian local governments. Residents on average drink more alcohol, more frequently in comparison to surrounding areas. Council partners with a number of organisations to provide a network of alcohol and other drug support services.
Housing and Homelessness	Stonnington's approach is to: • Provide information to people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness about where they can access housing and support, • Ensure people requiring assistance are referred to the appropriate service providers as soon as possible, • Monitor the extent of homelessness in Stonnington, and • Enhance community understanding about the causes of homelessness and local support service Council does not have the power to move people on. People who are homeless have a right to be in public spaces and will be treated as any other member of the public. Council will respond to a person who is, or appears homeless if: • They request assistance, • They appear distressed or in need of assistance, • They are sheltering in circumstances that threaten the health and safety of themselves and/or others (e.g. in derelict buildings), • Their behaviour threatens their own safety or the safety of others, • Their behaviour is likely to result in damage to property or to the environment, • Their safety is threatened by others, and • They appear to be under the age of 18. Partnerships While Council does not directly offer housing, it continues to work with partners, including community organisations and government agencies, to support the community members experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Stonnington Zero

	A collaborative partnership that brings organisations and the community together to identify opportunities to create new housing and reduce rough sleeping. Homelessness Week Homelessness Week - supporting the Victorian Homelessness Network's campaign to raise awareness about the urgent need for more social and public housing. Increasing Access to Affordable Housing Stonnington has developed a draft Housing Strategy Council that considers housing needs for current and future Stonnington residents on very low, low and moderate incomes.
Community Funding and Grants	Community Grants Council provides help to eligible not-for-profit or charitable organisations to implement Stonnington-based programs meet the following objectives and priorities: • improve community health, well-being and safety • enhance social connections • promote accessibility and inclusiveness • advance social cohesion and reconciliation • actively promote environmental sustainability Partnership Grants Partnership Grants provide funding on a triennial (3 years) basis to support the planning and delivery of community-based services, programs and activities.

Glen Eira City Council

GLEN EIRA CITY COUNCIL - SUMMARY	
Health and Wellbeing	The Glen Eira Council Plan 2021–2025 includes a range of indicators within its strategic priorities that align with safety concerns of the community. These include an 'improved look and feel of activity centres, including cleanliness, footpath condition, graffiti, waste management, trees, parking, safety and lighting', 'the progression of safe, accessible and sustainable transport initiatives', and Council advocating for 'improved transport infrastructure'. The Glen Eira Community Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 has objectives related to 'improving the built environment to be more accessible, safe, walkable and interconnected', reducing 'harm to our community from tobacco, vaping, alcohol and other drugs, and gambling', and participating 'in partnerships to promote gender equality, respect and the prevention of violence'.
Community Safety Committee	Council established the Glen Eira Safety Committee in 2017 to bring together key agencies and organisations whose work has a significant impact on community safety. Membership of the Committee includes Glen Eira elected Councillors, senior Council officers, government stakeholder representatives and representatives from community organisations and Victoria Police.
Community Safety Plan	The Glen Eira Community Safety Plan 2022–2025 is a collaboration between Council, the Glen Eira Community Safety Committee, the community and other stakeholders. The Plan outlines the strategic activities that Council will undertake to improve safety and security for the community. This Plan focuses these activities through three key themes: • A strong, resilient, inclusive and connected community • Living safely and securely • Creating safe public spaces and transport.
Building Safer Communities Forum 2024	On Monday 22 July 2024, Council held the Building Safer Communities Forum. The purpose of the forum was to hear from experts on youth safety and how to support young people at risk and participate in discussions on how we can build a safer community for young people. Find out more about the forum in this report and visual snapshots: • Glen Eira City Council Building Safer Communities Forum: Summary Report (PDF) • Glen Eira City Council Building Safer Communities Forum: Visual Snapshot (PDF)

Coffee with a Cop	Coffee with a Cop aims to provide an opportunity for the community to interact and connect with their local police on community safety issues. Residents can ask any and all questions on community safety, understanding police and interact and connect with their local police.
Know your Neighbour	Know Your Neighbour is about helping neighbours get to know each other and creating connected neighbourhoods and communities.
Driving it Down	The Driving It Down campaign educates and promotes awareness to address the issue of theft from vehicles and theft of vehicles in targeted hotspot areas of Glen Eira. The campaign is funded by the Victorian State Government's Community Safety Fund. Street signs, postcards and a video have been designed with four key messages toward securing your car: 1. Park in a well-lit area. 2. Remove all valuables. 3. Always lock your car. 4. Secure your keys. Key rings have also been designed to promote the message 'secure your car'.
Living Safely	The Glen Eira Living Safely Program is a crime prevention initiative between Council, Victoria Police, Neighbourhood Watch, and the Glen Eira Neighbourhood House Network. Glen Eira enjoys a high level of community safety, and the Program acknowledges that we all have a role to play in keeping our homes and neighbourhoods safe. To help residents do this, the Program has specially designed the Crime Prevention Kit of practical tools and information on how to enhance your home and car security knowledge and practices. The Crime Prevention Kit contains: • Glen Eira City Council's 'Home Security Checklist' - Use it to increase the security in and around your home, including your car. • A wheelie bin sticker – Place it on the side (not the top) of your Council-issued bin – This will help you and your neighbours remember to lock your homes and cars and show that your neighbourhood is serious about security.
Community Local Law 2019 summary	Inappropriate behaviour on Council land (26) • Affecting amenity or interfering with other persons use and enjoyment of a public place. • Molest or obstruct other people. • Indecent, offensive or riotous act. • Display offensive, threatening or abusive words or symbols.

	• Damaging public places. • Instruction to leave Council land. Camping, caravans, campervans and shipping containers (40) (1) A person must not without a permit pitch a tent, erect any temporary or permanent shelter, place or occupy a caravan, campervan shipping container…on any land for the purpose of camping or living. Supply and consumption of liquor (53) • Cannot without a permit supply or consume liquor in a public place. • Officer direction to seal or dispose of contents. Caulfield Alcohol-Free Zone (54) • Cannot consume or possess liquor in an unsealed container in the Caulfield Alcohol Free Zone on race meeting day.
Regulatory Activities	Local Laws Officers Council's Local Laws officers are authorised to issue warnings, Notices to Comply and infringement notices to people and organisations who breach the Local Law. They may impound items, goods, or equipment in relation to a breach. They do not have the legal power to move people on or respond to criminal behaviour. Police, not Local Laws officers, have the training, equipment and authority to respond to these issues. Responsive maintenance To ensure a safe and well-maintained physical environment through routine and responsive street cleaning and waste removal. Role of Victoria Police Currently, police provide support to those experiencing homelessness, as well as running regular daily patrols.
CCTV	Council operates CCTV systems at fixed locations throughout Glen Eira, on land and buildings that they own or control. See also CCTV Policy.
Public Place Design and Activation	Glen Eira applies Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to all new Council projects in parks and reserves and planning of public civic spaces - including consideration of lighting, clear sight lines and passive surveillance. See also • Better Streets, Better Places 2023 - guide improvements in the main streets of Glen Eira's major, neighbourhood and local activity centres and seeks to improve the vibrancy, safety and function of streets as places for the community. • Open Space Strategy 2020

Family and Gender Based Violence	Glen Eira is committed to supporting the prevention of family violence with priority actions in our Community Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 and current Action Plan 2024-2025. The plans outline the activities and actions we will implement to help prevent family violence in the workplace, community and in the home. Glen Eira is a partner in the regional gender-based violence strategy, Promoting Respect & Equity Together 2021-2025 – A Strategy to End Gendered Violence in the Southern Metropolitan Region, convened by Women's Health in the South East (WHISE). Glen Eira is committed to the delivery of the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence to increase awareness of family violence prevention within the community. The newly established Glen Eira Prevention of Family Violence Stakeholder Working Group aims to promote, guide and support strategic responses to prevent family violence in Glen Eira. As a diverse and inclusive community, Glen Eira has a reputation for collaborating with key partners across areas of intervention and prevention of family violence. In May 2024 Council hosted the Glen Eira Prevention of Family Violence Roundtable. This Roundtable provided a valuable opportunity for local agencies to work together for effective outcomes in response to ongoing incidents and community concern around the impact of family violence against women, children, families and our broader community.
Alcohol and Other Drugs	Council partners with a number of organisations to provide a network of community connections and support.
Housing and Homelessness	Partnerships Glen Eira works with partners, including community organisations and government agencies, to support the community members experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Increasing Access to Affordable Housing The purpose of the Social and Affordable Housing Strategy 2019–23 is to assess the need for social and affordable housing in Glen Eira and to identify Council's role in developing solutions that will see an increase in the provision of social and affordable housing. Independent Living Units Council provides low-cost rental accommodation for financially disadvantaged older persons in Glen Eira. There are 64 independent living

	units across three sites, consisting of bedsitters and one-bedroom accommodation. Tenants pay either market rent or a rebated rent.
Community Funding and Grants	<u>Community Grants</u> The Community Grants Program supports not-for-profit community groups and organisations to deliver projects and activities that benefit the Glen Eira community, provide meaningful social impact and respond to community need. Types of grants include: • Community strengthening grants • Partnership and event grants • Small grants program.

Yarra City Council

YARRA CITY COUNCIL - SUMMARY	
Health and Wellbeing	The Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan is embedded in the Council Plan 2021-2025 and focuses on the following themes: • Assist to reduce the harms from tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs and gambling • Promoting gender equality and reducing gendered violence • Promoting community safety • Promoting physical wellbeing • Promoting mental wellbeing • Assist in reducing health harms from climate change
Social Justice Charter	Social Justice Charter The Social Justice Charter acts as an umbrella document for all future plans, policies and frameworks. It is a lens which will guide the development of policies, processes and programs. Yarra currently employs a human rights-based approach in policy development. The Charter will ensure this approach is formalised, is responsive to community needs and has longevity.
Partnerships	Council works with a number of agencies, including Victoria Police and the State Government, to improve safety in public places and support the social, physical and mental health of our community. Council recognises that some community members have complex needs and may need specialised support, and have developed the Your Local Support Community Guide Neighbourhood House Partnership Framework Council recognises and is committed to supporting the core business of neighbourhood houses, which represent an important investment in Yarra's communities. The overall strategic direction of this framework is to work in partnership with Yarra's neighbourhood houses to build and support communities at a local level. Council works towards this in partnership with the neighbourhood houses through three key areas: 1. Build Community and Capacity 2. Add Value Through Partnerships and Collaboration 3. Communicate, Promote and Advocate These directions are intended to Neighbourhood houses are independent non-profit organisations and operate in partnership with Council and the other funding bodies. Both the State Government and Council provide core funding for neighbourhood houses.
General Local Law 2016 summary	Activities on Council land (46) A person must not…behave or carry on an activity which unreasonably interferes with any other person using the Council land.

	Camping (17) 17.1 A person must not, without a permit, camp in or on any public place in a vehicle, tent, caravan or any type of temporary or provisional form of accommodation. 17.2 The registered owner of a vehicle used for the purpose of camping in contravention of clause 17.1 is guilty of the same offence as the person who contravenes clause 17.1 Obstructions and Hazards on Roads and Council Land (10) A person must not, without a permit, place…anything that interferes with the use of a road, footway or Council land. Liquor (68) • Council may prescribe liquor free areas. • Cannot without a permit consume or possess liquor in a prescribed area, or in a municipal reserve between 9pm and 9am (other than in a sealed container). • Officer direction to seal or dispose of contents.
Regulatory Activities	Local Laws Officers Council's Local Laws officers are authorised to issue warnings, Notices to Comply and infringement notices to people and organisations who breach the Local Law. They may impound items, goods, or equipment in relation to a breach. They do not have the legal power to move people on or respond to criminal behaviour. Police, not Local Laws officers, have the training, equipment and authority to respond to these issues. Role of Victoria Police Currently, police provide support to those experiencing homelessness, as well as running regular daily patrols.
Safety in parks and outdoor spaces	Council focuses on creating safe, inclusive spaces and addresses safety concerns in Yarra parks and outdoor spaces. Council is working on creating inclusive streets, parks, trails and recreational facilities for women, girls and gender-diverse people, to help create a safer environment for the community. Council has a number of specific initiatives designed to improve safety in certain areas, including the Safe and Liveable Victoria Street Project. See also Urban Design Strategy and Open Space Strategy. CCTV Yarra has chosen to not install and operate surveillance systems, such as Closed Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV), in public spaces. The

	evidence on the effectiveness of CCTV for crime prevention is inconclusive. Yarra views CCTV as a standard police operational tool and that the installation and management of such systems should be the responsibility of the Victorian Government. Instead, Yarra applies Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles, which aim to deter criminal behaviour through optimising physical environments in order to lessen the opportunity for crime. Examples include lighting and clear sightlines to ensure visibility.
Safe and Liveable Victoria Street Project	The Victoria Street precinct in Richmond and Abbotsford is a vibrant dining, shopping and cultural destination. However, the area also faces challenges in relation to public safety, liveability, community connectedness and economic prosperity, which are often the result of drug-related activity. Yarra is working to make Victoria Street a safer, more attractive and welcoming place for everyone. <u>Litter and graffiti</u> Yarra cleans Victoria Street and the surrounding streets daily. Street bins are emptied daily and we're working with businesses to reduce the number of commercial rubbish bins being left on the street. Yarra graffiti crews clean posters and graffiti from Council assets (such as bins, signs and poles) daily. This does not include private property (e.g. shopfronts). <u>CCTV</u> In October 2017 the Victorian government installed 13 CCTV cameras in and around Victoria Street. These include: • Eight cameras affixed to three poles on the east side of Lennox Street, between Victoria and Highett streets, and • Five cameras affixed to two poles on Victoria Street, one located on the corner of Nicholson Street (on the eastern side) and the other installed opposite Little Lithgow Street (southern side of Victoria Street). <u>Improving the streetscape</u> In 2015, Council adopted the Victoria Street streetscape masterplan to guide future streetscape improvements in the Victoria Street precinct. Recent upgrades have included: • the Lennox Street/Nicholson Street intersection • paved footpaths and roadways to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists

	• improved lighting • new seating and other furniture • new street bins • new landscaping • new bicycle hoops • new protective guards for street trees • renewing existing garden beds with new soil and vegetation These improvement projects were funded by Yarra City Council and the Victorian government's Community Crime Prevention Program. <u>Shopfront improvements</u> Yarra are in the third and final year of the pilot program to help business owners improve their shopfronts and enhance the appearance of Victoria Street. With the Victoria Street Business Association, Council is working with a number a number of Victoria Street traders to refurbish their shopfronts and roller shutters with funding and in-kind support. This has included supporting 10 shops and 15 roller shutters with artwork designed by local children. This year, five new businesses will have their roller shutters improved. <u>Parking and traffic</u> Council is working to improve local streets and the safety of pedestrians and cyclists in and around Victoria Street. This process is known as a Local Area Place Making Study (LAPMS).
Family and Gender Based Violence	Council developed the Gender Equality Action Plan 2022 that sets out vision, objectives and actions to ensure Council is working to exceed its obligations under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*. <u>Family Support</u> A free, voluntary in-home service provided to families living in Yarra with children aged 0-17 years, including pre-birth. The service promotes and protects the best interests of children by building on family strengths, working with families to develop new skills and increase links with the local community. Yarra Family Services works with families from many diverse backgrounds and experiences. <u>Some of Council's current initiatives</u> Support for community to lead or participate in gender equality initiatives such as 16 Days of Activism; International Women's Day, Rainbow Advisory Committee.

Alcohol and Other Drugs	Council partners with a number of organisations to provide a network of alcohol and other drug support services. Removal of syringes and related litter Council provides a range of free services to ensure that needles and syringes are disposed of safely. Services include: • approximately 90 syringe disposal bins, located across the municipality and in all public toilets that are serviced regularly • regular patrols by cleaning crews in key areas • responsive collection of inappropriately discarded syringes. North Richmond Community Health Medically Supervised Injecting Room This Victorian Government-operated facility is a safe and hygienic place where people can inject drugs in a supervised health setting. It also provides other health services like mental health care, drug treatment, wound care and pathology. Council's role is the maintenance of public amenity surrounding the centre including litter collection, street sweeping and graffiti removal.
Housing and Homelessness	Homelessness Strategy Council's approach recognises the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities . These aim to treat people with respect and dignity and balance our duty of care to the community. To ensure that Yarra remain welcoming for everyone and address the impacts of homelessness, Council created the Yarra Homelessness Strategy The strategy guides Council to: • deliver a coordinated and compassionate response to homeless people and rough sleepers • focus on early intervention for vulnerable or at-risk people • support an increase of affordable housing and appropriate support services. Rough Sleeping Council works with Launch Housing to help rough sleepers and assess the safety of sites. Launch Housing will visit it and: • make sure there are no dangers or health issues for rough sleepers or residents • work with rough sleepers on housing and other needs • advise Council on the status of people they speak to. Social and Affordable Housing Strategy

	Yarra City Council commits to maintaining our vibrant and diverse municipality by supporting initiatives that lead to an inclusive and welcoming city for all. Sustaining a diverse population requires a diversity of housing available at prices that can be afforded by households with modest or low incomes. Yarra wants to see an increase in social and affordable housing in the municipality and are committed to equitable housing outcomes for current and future population. Council will focus its attentions on the mechanisms within its control that result in a higher proportion of new housing being affordable to very-low, low and moderate income households.
Community Funding and Grants	Community Grants Each year, Yarra distribute more than $2 million in grants to support local not-for-profits, grassroots organisations and community initiatives. The grants program provides the diverse community with the necessary support and funding to deliver tailored programs, events and services that meet their unique needs. Community Training Yarra offers community training sessions throughout the year to support not-for profit and community organisations in Yarra to run as effectively as possible. These sessions provide advice and information on how to apply for grants, managing relationships, project management, media strategies and more..
Advocating for and on behalf of the community.	Advocacy, representing the views and needs of the community, is a core function for all councils. Yarra advocate for projects and initiatives that are important to the community, and will help create a climate-safe, equitable and liveable city. Advocacy can include lobbying for funding, seeking policy changes or reforms and working with government departments and agencies to deliver joint projects. The Advocacy Action Plan sets out key positions across several policy areas, including: 1. Climate 2. Landfill 3. Transport 4. Arts and culture 5. Land use and planning 6. Public, social and affordable housing 7. Public Health and well-being 8. Early years, education and young people 9. Financial sustainability

Other Research / Best Practice Models

Below is some of the literature and research available relating to the topics being addressed at the Roundtable. It is by no means exhaustive and serves as a sample of responses to common issues

Regulatory Lens / Harm Minimisation

Victoria Police Community Sentiment Survey

The third annual Victoria Police Community Sentiment Survey was conducted state-wide over a four-week period, from 1 May 2024 to 31 May 2024.

Victorians were asked to share their local safety concerns and how comfortable they feel about approaching Police and Protective Services Officers outside of an emergency.

Over 13,000 responses were received from the 2024 Community Sentiment Survey, helping police identify issues that matter most to Victorians.

Victorian residents noted their top five safety concerns as:

2024

- Safety in public places
- Safety of my property and possessions
- Drugs and alcohol
- Road safety
- Serious and organised crime

2023

- Safety in public places
- Safety of my property and possessions
- Road safety
- Drugs and alcohol
- Cybercrime or online safety

Respondents were given an opportunity to share their ideas on how to make them feel safer. The most frequently noted comments were ‘increased police presence’ and ‘more patrols’, followed by ‘improving community environments’ e.g., better lighting on streets/more CCTV.

Alternative First Responders – National Justice Project

The "Alternative First Responders Position Paper" (February 2025) by the National Justice Project (NJP) advocates for replacing police as primary responders in situations requiring health and social care interventions. The paper critiques the reliance on police for non-criminal incidents, emphasizing the harm caused—particularly to marginalized communities, including First Nations people, those experiencing mental health crises, and individuals facing homelessness.

Key points include:

1. The Need for Alternative Responders
    - Police are frequently involved in situations that require de-escalation, medical expertise, or social services, often resulting in excessive force, criminalization, and harm.
    - Police interactions disproportionately affect marginalized communities, exacerbating issues like systemic racism and discrimination.
2. Guiding Principles for Alternative Models

- Community-led response programs should be trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and prioritizing de-escalation over enforcement.
- Responder teams should include individuals with lived experience and reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

3. Successful Alternative Models
    - Examples from Australia and internationally demonstrate effective non-police first responder programs, such as:
        - Murri Watch (Queensland, Australia) – A First Nations community patrol program.
        - Urgent Mental Health Care Centre (South Australia) – A peer-led crisis intervention service.
        - CAHOOTS (Oregon, USA) – A model that diverts emergency calls to mental health and crisis workers instead of police.
4. Policy Recommendations
    - Governments should reallocate resources from policing to community-based crisis response services.
    - Emergency call diversion programs should be expanded.
    - Justice reinvestment strategies should focus on health and social care rather than criminalization.

The paper argues that alternative first response models can improve public safety, reduce harm, and provide more effective care for vulnerable populations while decreasing unnecessary and harmful police interactions.

For more information please see National Justice Project- Alternative First Responders.

Violence Reduction Units at a Crossroads – A Positive Future

This report, authored by Professor Niven Rennie, examines the current state of Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) in the UK and proposes a future direction that emphasizes prevention over punitive responses. It critiques the historical "tough on crime" approach, arguing that addressing the root causes of violence—poverty, lack of youth services, and social inequality—would be more effective and financially sustainable in the long term.

Key Themes and Findings

1. Challenges of Crime-Focused Approaches
    - Since the 1990s, crime policies in the UK have been reactive and punitive, often prioritizing imprisonment over preventative social measures.
    - This "crisis response" model is not only ineffective but also costly, as it diverts funds away from early interventions.
2. The Rising Cost of Crisis Responses
    - Youth homelessness, school exclusions, and youth justice system involvement are increasing.
    - A lack of youth services has resulted in higher costs for alternative provisions like pupil referral units and young offender institutions.
    - The annual cost of youth homelessness in the UK is estimated at £8.5 billion, while placing a young person in custody can cost up to £300,000 per year.

3. The Importance of Prevention
    - Investing in prevention programs can reduce long-term costs while improving youth outcomes.
    - A public health approach to violence reduction—focusing on early intervention and social support—has proven successful in areas where VRUs have been implemented.
4. Key Components of a Preventative Approach
    - Safe Spaces: Youth hubs, community centres, and informal gathering places (e.g., McDonald's, libraries) can serve as safe spaces for young people.
    - Trusted Adults: Mentorship from reliable adults plays a crucial role in youth support and crime prevention.
    - Community-Led Initiatives: Programs tailored to specific community needs, such as the Brighton Streets Project and Lancashire Youth Champions, have demonstrated success in reducing youth violence.
5. Proposed Structural Changes
    - The report suggests expanding VRUs into Prevention Partnerships, which would take a broader role in youth welfare and crime prevention.
    - These partnerships could integrate with existing initiatives, such as the Labour government's proposed Young Futures Programme, to provide holistic support to young people.
    - Alternative funding sources, including private sector and philanthropic contributions, should be explored to reduce reliance on public sector finances.

The report advocates for a shift in focus from punishment to prevention, arguing that early intervention, youth support, and community engagement are more effective in reducing violence. By restructuring VRUs into broader prevention-focused bodies and securing sustainable funding sources, the UK could create a long-term strategy for reducing youth crime and supporting at-risk individuals.

For further information please see Violence Reduction Units at a Crossroads – A Positive Future

Impact of a Police Crackdown on a Street Drug Scene

This study examines the effects of *Operation Clean Heart*, a police crackdown on a street heroin market in Footscray, a suburb of Melbourne, Australia. The research is based on qualitative data from individuals involved in the drug market and harm reduction services.

Key Findings:

- Temporary and Superficial Impact: While the crackdown reduced the visible presence of the drug scene, the market quickly adapted, making the effects short-lived.
- Displacement of Drug Activity: Rather than eliminating the drug trade, the operation pushed it to nearby areas, increasing risks for users and communities.
- Negative Public Health Consequences: The increased police presence led to:
    - Riskier injecting behaviors (e.g., hurried use, reluctance to carry clean needles).
    - Unsafe disposal of needles and syringes.
    - Reduced access to harm reduction services.
- Increased Violence and Crime: The crackdown led to greater volatility, fraud, and violence within the drug scene.

- Strained Police-Community Relations: Frequent searches, surveillance, and intimidation tactics worsened relations between law enforcement and affected communities.

The study argues that police crackdowns are ineffective in addressing illicit drug problems and can have harmful unintended consequences. Instead, a balanced approach incorporating supply reduction, demand reduction, and harm reduction, as outlined in Australia's National Drug Strategic Framework, is recommended.

For more information please see The impact of a police crackdown on a street drug scene: evidence from the street (International Journal of Drug Policy – September 2002).

Public Place Design and Activation

Safe Spaces – Understanding and Enhancing Safety and Inclusion for Diverse Women

This 2023 research report focuses on enhancing safety and inclusion for diverse women in public spaces. Conducted in partnership with Victorian councils, universities and community organisations, the study aimed to identify barriers to safety and develop co-designed solutions.

Key Themes and Findings:

1. Perennial Safety Issues: The study identified recurring safety concerns such as poor lighting, lack of surveillance, and antisocial behaviour, particularly at night. Women reported feeling unsafe in certain public spaces, with a focus on racism, discrimination, and the behaviour of men and young people.
2. Co-Designing Safe Spaces: Through engagement strategies like focus groups, interviews, and a co-design workshop, women collaborated with local councils and researchers to develop practical interventions. The study emphasized that women's safety must be considered through an intersectional lens, acknowledging different experiences based on age, ability, and cultural background.
3. Planning for 24-Hour Safety: The research found that women's safety concerns varied based on time of day, with heightened fears at night. Participants proposed improved lighting, security, and activation of spaces through community programs to enhance safety.
4. Safety Through Connection: The study highlighted that inclusion and a sense of belonging contribute to perceptions of safety. Women felt safer in environments where they saw diverse representation and community activities.

Recommendations:

- Integrating gender-sensitive urban planning strategies.
- Strengthening local government partnerships with women's organizations.
- Using co-design approaches for inclusive and culturally relevant safety interventions.

Overall, the report underscores the importance of inclusive urban design and community-driven solutions in making public spaces safer for diverse women.

For more information please see Safe Spaces – Understanding and Enhancing Safety and Inclusion for Diverse Women.

Co-Designing Out Crime

The document *Co-designing Out Crime* by Olga Camacho Duarte, Rohan Lulham, and Lucy Kaldor explores how collaborative design can be used to prevent crime. It focuses on the Winter School program at the Designing Out Crime (DOC) research centre at the University of Technology

Sydney (UTS), where students, academics, and external stakeholders work together to develop crime prevention strategies.

Key Points:

- Co-Design vs. Traditional Crime Prevention: The paper critiques Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) as too rigid and prescriptive, arguing that a co-design approach fosters creativity and innovation.
- Winter School Program: A four-week design course where students, in collaboration with partner organizations (such as government agencies and businesses), work on real-world crime issues.
- Reframing Crime Problems: Instead of merely addressing symptoms, the program encourages students to redefine crime-related challenges, leading to holistic, user-centered solutions.
- Case Studies: The paper presents three case studies:
    - Improving passenger safety at a railway station.
    - Enhancing community engagement in a social housing estate.
    - Managing alcohol-related violence in an urban nightlife area.
- Challenges and Benefits: While the co-design approach provides fresh perspectives and strengthens partnerships, challenges include managing diverse stakeholders, ensuring implementation, and dealing with time constraints.

The paper argues that co-design offers a more dynamic, socially responsive way to prevent crime. It promotes the idea that engaging communities, designers, and organizations in a collaborative process leads to more effective and sustainable crime prevention solutions.

For more information, please see Co-Designing Out Crime

Want to Fight Crime? Plant Some Flowers with Your Neighbour

The article "Want to Fight Crime? Plant Some Flowers with Your Neighbour" explores how improving neighbourhood social connections can help reduce crime.

It highlights research at the University of Michigan, showing that when neighbours engage in small community activities—such as planting flowers or maintaining shared spaces—they build trust and a sense of responsibility for their surroundings. This increased social cohesion leads to more informal surveillance (more "eyes on the street"), which can deter criminal activity.

The article connects this idea to crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) and the broken windows theory, emphasizing that well-kept spaces signal community care and discourage disorder. Ultimately, the message is that small, collective actions can make neighbourhoods safer.

Housing and Homelessness

Everybody's Business: What Local Government Can Do to End Homelessness

The report, *Everybody's Business: What Local Government Can Do to End Homelessness* by Leanne Mitchell, explores the role of local councils in addressing homelessness, particularly rough sleeping. It is based on the author's 2019 Churchill Fellowship research, where she travelled to the UK, US, and Canada to study local government responses.

Key Themes and Findings:

- Challenges Faced by Local Governments: Councils often lack a clear mandate, sufficient funding, and coordinated strategies to tackle homelessness effectively. Despite this, they are at the forefront of the response due to their direct engagement with communities.

- Best Practices and Guidelines for Councils: The report presents structured recommendations across four key areas:
    1. Understanding the local homelessness situation – Collecting data, listening to communities, and establishing a shared definition.
    2. Leading collaboration and shaping the narrative – Engaging partners, using lived experience perspectives, and educating communities.
    3. Organising council strategies and workforce – Developing strategies, structuring teams, involving leadership, and securing funding.
    4. Taking action to prevent and end homelessness – Influencing housing supply, focusing on prevention, leveraging community spaces like libraries, and improving crisis response.
- Case Studies: The report features international examples of successful initiatives, such as Manchester's collaborative approach, San Francisco's Public Library engagement, and Halifax's response to encampments.
- Policy Recommendations: The report advocates for a stronger role for local councils in national homelessness strategies, better funding mechanisms, and cross-sector collaboration.

The report emphasizes that homelessness is a shared responsibility and that local governments, despite their limitations, can play a crucial role by fostering partnerships, advocating for policy change, and implementing innovative responses.

For more information please see Everybody's Business: What Local Government Can Do to End Homelessness.

"This is My Community": Reproducing and Resisting Boundaries of Exclusion in Contested Public Spaces

This U.S. 2015 study by Toolis and Hammack explores how people perceive boundaries of public spaces and how they engage and participate within them. The article explores inclusion and exclusion mediated through public spaces and determined by relationships to power. The study provides context for theories of inclusion and exclusion which support our understanding of social cohesion and community connectedness. The research setting was the Santa Cruz downtown area which has some parallels to St Kilda as both are resident and tourist destinations and receive high media attention on crime and safety. Santa Cruz is also a city with a progressive reputation, and which has harsh anti-homeless local laws.

Key finding:

- Laws that target low income and unhoused people by prohibiting non-criminal activities such as sitting, sleeping, and standing may only serve to stigmatise and exacerbate community tensions regarding economic development and inequality.
- Addressing the structural roots of inequality such as availability of affordable housing and secure employment opportunities are better placed to address community welfare,

Cash up front: Can no-strings payments help solve homelessness?

A study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* investigated the effects of a one-time, unconditional cash transfer of CAD$7,500 to individuals experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, British Columbia. The randomized controlled trial included 50 participants who received the cash transfer and 65 control participants who did not. Results indicated that recipients moved into stable housing faster and spent fewer days homeless over the following year compared to the control group. Additionally, the cash transfer led to net societal savings, primarily by reducing shelter use.

The study also explored public perceptions regarding cash transfers to homeless individuals. It found that many people harbor mistrust about how homeless individuals would spend such funds, often assuming they would misuse the money. However, the study's findings challenge these stereotypes, demonstrating that recipients used the cash to improve their housing situations without increasing spending on temptation goods.

These findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting cash transfers as a viable intervention for reducing homelessness and highlight the importance of addressing public

Social Cohesion

Mapping Social Cohesion

The *2024 Mapping Social Cohesion Report* by the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute provides an in-depth analysis of social attitudes in Australia, focusing on key factors affecting national unity and inclusion.

Key Findings:

- Economic Pressures: Rising living costs and housing challenges are affecting Australians' sense of security and cohesion.
- Immigration & Diversity: Attitudes toward multiculturalism remain mostly positive, but concerns about immigration levels persist.
- Trust in Institutions: Confidence in government and public institutions has fluctuated, reflecting broader political and social trends.
- Community Strength: Local communities play a crucial role in maintaining wellbeing and social harmony.
- Emerging Challenges: Global conflicts, misinformation, and political divides are influencing national cohesion.

While Australians generally support diversity and social inclusion, economic strains and global tensions are testing the resilience of social cohesion. The report emphasizes the need for policies that promote stability, trust, and inclusive community engagement.

For more information please see 2024 Mapping Social Cohesion Report.

Social Cohesion and Pro-Social Responses to Perceptions of Crime

The study aims to explore how perceptions of crime influence community behaviours and whether social cohesion plays a role in shaping pro-social responses (e.g., engagement in crime prevention, neighbourhood watch, and social support).

Key Findings

- High Social Cohesion Encourages Positive Responses:
    - Individuals in tightly-knit communities are more likely to respond to crime concerns with proactive and collective measures.
    - They engage in activities such as neighbourhood watch programs, supporting victims, and advocating for policy changes.
- Fear-Based Reactions in Low Social Cohesion Areas:
    - In communities with weaker social ties, crime perceptions are more likely to lead to avoidance behaviours (e.g., staying indoors, distrust of neighbours) rather than collective action.
    - This suggests that a lack of cohesion exacerbates fear rather than fostering solutions.

- Crime Perceptions Do Not Always Match Reality:
    - Some individuals overestimate crime levels due to media exposure or personal biases, which can influence their willingness to engage in community efforts.

Implications

- Policy Recommendations: The study emphasizes the need for local governments and organizations to strengthen social bonds within communities as a means to enhance crime prevention and resilience.
- Community Engagement Strategies: Encouraging neighbourhood interactions, trust-building initiatives, and shared public spaces can foster stronger collective responses to crime.

The research highlights that social cohesion is a crucial factor in determining how communities respond to crime perceptions. Strong social networks lead to proactive, collective solutions, while weaker cohesion results in avoidance and fear-driven behaviours.

For more information please see Social Cohesion and Pro-Social Responses to Perceptions of Crime.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

When we talk of people who living rough, we need to understand some of the impact of child-and adult-hood trauma.

“Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is a term used to describe very stressful events or circumstances that children may experience during their childhood. The term was introduced in a seminal 1998 US study on the impact of childhood abuse and neglect and household challenges on later-life health and wellbeing (n = 17,337) (Felitti et al., 1998). This early study showed an association between adverse experiences in childhood and potentially profound impacts on later health and social functioning.

The most widely recognised and researched ACEs relate to abuse, neglect and household adversities, and include:

- childhood physical, sexual and emotional abuse
- physical neglect and emotional neglect
- exposure to family violence
- parental substance use
- parental mental illness
- parental separation or divorce; and
- parental incarceration.

An estimated 72% of Australian children have been exposed to at least one ACE, with this rate being higher in some vulnerable Australian populations e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Zubrick et al., 2005), juvenile offenders (Baglivio et al., 2014), and children involved in welfare services (Kerker et al., 2015).

A dose-response relationship [extent of exposure] is also observed with health risk behaviours and social functioning (Bellis et al., 2016; McGavock & Spratt, 2016). For example, adults who had been exposed to four or more ACEs as a child (i.e. who had an ACEs ‘score’ of four or more) were:

- 10.3 times more likely to have injected drugs
- 6 times more likely to have had or caused unintended teenage pregnancy
- 2.5 times more likely to contract sexually transmitted infections

- 15 times more likely to have committed violence against another person in the previous 12 months
- 20 times more likely to have been incarcerated during their lifetime
- 4.6 times more likely to suffer from depression
- 12.2 times more likely to have attempted suicide.

Exposure to ACEs can have intergenerational effects. Children who experience ACEs are more likely to have parents who experienced ACEs themselves (Allen & Donkin, 2015)."

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): evidence - Emerging Minds

Additional resource Adverse childhood experiences and trauma among young people in the youth justice system

The Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS)

Community Building / Resilience Programs

Knox Empowering Communities – Evaluation Report

The document is a project evaluation report for the Knox Empowering Communities initiative, conducted by Capiche Consulting for Knox City Council and the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety. It assesses the outcomes of a community-led program aimed at enhancing safety in Ferntree Gully through local engagement, partnerships, and targeted projects.

Key Highlights:

- Funding & Goals: The Victorian Government allocated $700,000 to Knox City Council under the Empowering Communities Grant to address crime and safety concerns through community-led initiatives.
- Community Consultation: Over 275 individuals participated in discussions to identify major safety concerns, including family violence, substance abuse, and public disorder.
- Action Group: A diverse local group was formed to oversee project implementation and funding distribution.
- Funded Initiatives: Six community projects were launched to build relationships, reduce isolation, and foster safety:
    1. Cultural Safety Program – Focused on First Nations youth and cultural inclusion.
    2. Ferntree Gully Village Markets – Designed to activate public spaces and promote local businesses.
    3. Community Safety Outreach – Support for vulnerable residents, particularly those experiencing homelessness.
    4. Neighbour Day – Strengthening social ties through local events.
    5. Knox Nocturnals Youth Group – Providing safe, inclusive spaces for youth.
    6. YES Program – Aiding youth engagement and social inclusion.
- Community Engagement & Impact:
    - Over 4,300 participants were engaged across projects.
    - Improved perceptions of safety in Ferntree Gully, particularly during evening hours.
    - Increased social connections and community pride.

- Fostered long-term collaborations between local organizations, law enforcement, and service providers.

Evaluation & Findings:

- Successes:
  - The community-led model effectively engaged local voices and needs.
  - The Action Group played a key role in ensuring inclusivity and program alignment.
  - Strong partnerships were developed between stakeholders, leading to potential sustainability of certain initiatives beyond the project period.
- Challenges:
  - Stakeholder participation varied, with some groups disengaging over time.
  - Sustainability concerns for certain projects, particularly those needing ongoing funding.
  - Evaluation data gaps for some initiatives, limiting the ability to measure full impact.

The Knox Empowering Communities project was successful in fostering community-led safety improvements, enhancing social cohesion, and activating public spaces. The initiative established sustainable community partnerships, though ongoing support and funding will be necessary to maintain long-term benefits.

For more information please see the Knox – Empowering Communities Program.

Community Resilience and Crime Prevention: Applying the Community Engagement Theory to the Risk of Crime

The paper, *"Community Resilience and Crime Prevention: Applying the Community Engagement Theory to the Risk of Crime,"* examines how the Community Engagement Theory—previously applied to natural disasters—can also be used to understand and enhance community participation in crime prevention.

Key Points:

1. Growing Role of Citizens in Crime Prevention
   - Governments increasingly expect citizens to take an active role in social safety.
   - Online neighbourhood watch groups (e.g., WhatsApp-based crime alert systems) have gained popularity as a community-driven approach to preventing crime.
2. Application of Community Engagement Theory
   - The study explores psychological drivers at three levels:
     - Individual level: Personal beliefs, emotions, moral values, self-efficacy.
     - Community level: Sense of belonging, collective efficacy, prior participation.
     - Institutional level: Trust in police, legitimacy of law enforcement, perceived empowerment.
3. Research Methodology
   - Conducted an online survey with 1,245 Dutch citizens who were part of municipal citizen panels.
   - The survey measured willingness to gather crime-related information and willingness to act in crime situations.
4. Key Findings

- Information gathering was primarily influenced by individual-level factors (e.g., risk perception, moral values, emotions).
- Willingness to act was influenced by all three levels (individual, community, and institutional).
- Community participation played a strong role in crime prevention; people who had participated in neighbourhood activities were more likely to intervene in crime situations.
- Trust in the police and perceived legitimacy had a marginal effect on reporting behaviour.

5. Implications & Recommendations
    - Authorities should focus on individual-level factors (e.g., improving self-efficacy) when encouraging citizens to seek crime-related information.
    - Community engagement efforts (e.g., organizing events, strengthening local networks) can enhance crime intervention.
    - Caution is needed to avoid vigilantism, as increased citizen involvement in crime prevention may sometimes lead to unauthorized actions.

The Community Engagement Theory is applicable not just to natural hazards but also to human-made risks like crime. Encouraging citizen participation in crime prevention requires understanding psychological drivers at multiple levels. The study provides insights for policymakers on how to motivate reporting and intervention behaviours while maintaining lawfulness and community trust.

For more information please see the paper here.

Appendices

- **Appendix A: Regulatory Framework Considerations**
- **Appendix B: City of Port Phillip Notice of Motion 19 February 2025**
- **Appendix C: City of Port Phillip Notice of Motion 11 December 2024**
- **Appendix D: Services within the City of Port Phillip**

Appendix A: Regulatory Framework Considerations

Matter	Victoria Police – enforcement powers	Community Amenity Local Law 2023	Other considerations and context	Council – enforcement powers
Anti-social behaviour in public places (Individually or collectively exhibiting aggressive, abusive, threatening or intimidating behaviour in the public place)	Powers of arrest and prosecution exist if there is: ▪ the use of profane, indecent or obscene language or threatening or abusive words (s 17(c) of the SOA[4]); ▪ behaviour of a person which is riotous, indecent, offensive or insulting in manner (s 17(d) of the SOA); or ▪ disorderly behaviour (s 17A of the SOA). The power to serve an infringement notice also exists in respect of this offence. There also exists a power to issue a direction to move on (section 6(1) of the SOA).	Clause 17 in the Local Law addresses <u>*Behaviour on Council Land and Roads*</u> *(1) A person must not on or in Council land, a road or a footpath:* *a) create a nuisance;* *b) behave in a manner which unreasonably interferes with another person on or in the Council land, road or footpath;* *c) behaves in a manner which unreasonably interferes with another person occupying premises in close proximity to the Council land, road or footpath;* *d) harass any person using the Council land, a road or footpath;* *e) defecate or urinate except in a toilet or urinal (as the case may be) in a public convenience;* *f) act contrary to any conditions or signs that contain conditions applying to the use of the Council land, road or footpath;* g) *fail to comply with a reasonable direction of an Authorised Officer or Council staff member whilst on Council land.*	The breadth of power to make local laws under the *Local Government Act 2020* is tempered by context. Local Law must be administered with respect to the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.* Local Law cannot be inconsistent with existing legislation. Harassing Council staff in the performance of their duties is already covered under the Local Government Act 1989 S224(8)(b).	Power to serve an infringement notice or prosecute exists. No power of arrest.

[4] SOA = Summary Offences Act 1966 Vic

Matter	Victoria Police – enforcement powers	Community Amenity Local Law 2023	Other considerations and context	Council – enforcement powers
Rough sleeping To the extent of: • materially impeding the ability of others to access or use the public place; • having a significantly adverse impact on the amenity of the public place; or • creating a security risk in the public place.	Powers of arrest and prosecution exist if there is: ▪ an obstruction of the footpath (s 4(e) of the SOA); or There also exists a power to issue a direction to move on (s 6(1) of the SOA).	Section 42 in the Local Law addresses <u>Camping on Council land:</u> *(1) A person must not camp on any Council land or in any public place in a vehicle, tent, caravan or any other type of temporary or provisional form of accommodation.* *(2) A person is not guilty of an offence under sub-clause (1) where that person establishes that they:* *a) are homeless or in need of secure accommodation; or* *b) have complex needs or is in the need of additional assistance because of mental or physical disability or illness.* This clause is not intended to criminalise social or economic disadvantage nor to create barriers to seeking or receiving support from appropriate health and social services. People may be in vulnerable circumstances if they are experiencing homelessness or are socially, culturally or economically marginalised. For these reasons, in situations in which the clause would usually apply, Authorised Officers must address the reason for the apparent breach of the clause and first offer the option of support through local health and outreach services and/or considering non-punitive options.	The breadth of power to make local laws under the *Local Government Act 2020* is tempered by context. Matters of amenity, protection of property and to some extent, safety, are of municipal concern. Local Law must be administered with respect to the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.* Prohibition on camping engages the Charter as it affects peoples': • Freedom of movement • Right to assemble peacefully • Freedom of expression • Right to not be subject to cruel or degrading behaviour. Whether an infringement could be justified under the Charter is unclear – is a response proportionate, protecting amenity, safety etc? May also engage *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, particularly where disability and mental illness is a consideration. Local Law cannot be inconsistent with existing legislation.	Power to serve an infringement notice or prosecute exists. No power of arrest.

Matter	Victoria Police – enforcement powers	Community Amenity Local Law 2023	Other considerations and context	Council – enforcement powers
Furniture and other items on Council land and roads To the extent of: • materially impeding the ability of others to access or use the public place; • having a significantly adverse impact on the amenity of the public place; or • creating a security risk in the public place.	Powers of arrest and prosecution exist if there is placed upon a footpath an obstruction likely to cause death or injury (s 7(a) of the SOA). There also exists a power to issue a direction to move on (s 6(1) of the SOA).	Typically, mattresses and other sleeping items are used in connection with rough sleeping. Council may impound what is left on Council land or the road. Section 43 in the Local Law addresses Furniture and other items on Council land and roads *(1) A person must not on a footpath or access way, place or cause to be placed any furniture that obstructs that footpath or accessway.* *(2) Council may direct a person to remove any of the items in subclause (1).* *(3) If a person fails to remove any item after being directed to do so, Council may seize any item and impound it in accordance with clause 78.*	The breadth of power to make local laws under the *Local Government Act 2020* is tempered by context. Matters of amenity, protection of property and to some extent, safety, are of municipal concern. Local Law must be administered with respect to the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.* Engages the Charter as any impoundment would involve the deprivation of property. Local Law cannot be inconsistent with existing legislation.	Power to serve an infringement notice, prosecute and impound exists. No power of arrest.
Consumption and possession of liquor	Public drunkenness is no longer a criminal offence in Victoria. Police can intervene if there's a risk to community safety or if a crime is being committed. Powers of arrest and prosecution exist if there is: ▪ the use of profane, indecent or obscene language or threatening or abusive words (s 17(c) of the SOA[5]);	Section 27 in the Local Law addresses Consumption of liquor. *(1) A person must not:* *a) in or at a public place; or* *b) in or on a vehicle which is on or at a public place -* *consume any liquor or have in their possession or control any liquor other than liquor in a sealed container in that part of the municipal district designated by Council.*	The breadth of power to make local laws under the *Local Government Act 2020* is tempered by context. Local Law must be administered with respect to the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.* Local Law cannot be inconsistent with existing legislation.	Power to serve an infringement notice, prosecute and impound exists. No power of arrest.

[5] SOA = Summary Offences Act 1966 Vic

Matter	Victoria Police – enforcement powers	Community Amenity Local Law 2023	Other considerations and context	Council – enforcement powers
	▪ behaviour of a person which is riotous, indecent, offensive or insulting in manner (s 17(d) of the SOA); or ▪ disorderly behaviour (s 17A of the SOA). The power to serve an infringement notice also exists in respect of this offence. There also exists a power to issue a direction to move on (section 6(1) of the SOA).	*(2) Without limiting sub-clause (1), a person must not:* *a) in or at a public place; or* *b) in or on a vehicle which is on or at a public place -* *possess liquor in a sealed container in that part of the municipal district designated by Council, except where the possession is for the transport of liquor to premises referred to in sub-clause (4).* *(3) Council may designate areas for purpose of this clause.* *(4) Sub-clause (1) does not apply to a person:* *a) taking part in a special event in respect of which the Council has granted a permit for persons to consume liquor or to have in their possession or control any liquor other than liquor in a sealed container;* *b) within authorised premises or licensed premises under the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 or any subsequent legislation relating to the serving and consumption of liquor; or* *c) who has been granted a permit to take liquor into an area designated by Council.* *(5) Where Council believes on reasonable grounds that a person is contravening or has contravened sub-clause (1), the Council may*	Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Act 2021 has led to new public intoxication response services. Public drunkenness is no longer a criminal offence in Victoria.	

Matter	Victoria Police – enforcement powers	Community Amenity Local Law 2023	Other considerations and context	Council – enforcement powers
		direct the person to seal any container or dispose of the contents of any unsealed container. *(6) A person to whom a direction is given under sub-clause (5) must comply with that direction.*		

Appendix B: City of Port Phillip Notice of Motion 19 February 2025

14.1 NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR HARDY - CHANGES TO LOCAL LAW

I, Councillor Rod Hardy, give notice that I intend to move the Motion outlined below at the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 19 February 2025:

That Council:

1. Requests officers to investigate the following:
   a. the statutory process under section 73 of the Local Government Act 2020 for undertaking a Local Law amendment;
   b. any regulatory compliance and application issues; and
   c. an estimate of costs and timelines for the following City of Port Phillip Local Law changes to the current Local Law:
      i. Replace 17(1b)

         A person must not on or in Council land, a road or a footpath: "behave in a manner which unreasonably interferes with another person including sitting, sleeping or laying on or in the Council land, road or footpath.
      ii. Replace section 42

         "A person must not reside in temporary accommodation including a vehicle, tent, caravan or any good or chattel that enables a living arrangement or sleep on council land or in any public place.
      iii. Replace section 43
         1. A person must not place or cause to be placed on a footpath, access way, car park, public place or Council land any furniture or good or chattel that obstructs that footpath or accessway or enables a living arrangement or sleep.
         2. A council staff member or authorised officer may remove the furniture, good, chattel or item that enables a living arrangement or sleep where in the opinion of the Council staff member or authorised officer is in contravention of Section 43 (1).
         3. A council staff member or authorised officer may impound, confiscate or dispose of any item or items removed under Section 43 (1).
         4. A Council staff member or authorised officer may in circumstances arising in contravention of Section 43(1) if in their opinion the furniture, good, chattel or property enabling a living arrangement or sleep where a person or persons deny ownership of the property and or the property in their reasonable belief has been abandoned. The Council staff member or authorised officer may impound, confiscate, or dispose of any item or items removed under Section 43 (1b).
   d. Requests officers to provide a report back to Council by May 2025.

Current and proposed amendments relating to the Notice of Motion

Current section 17(1b)

A person must not on or in Council land, a road or a footpath:

(a) create a nuisance;

(b) behave in a manner which unreasonably interferes with another person on or in the Council land, road or footpath;

Proposed amendment to Section 17(1b)

A person must not on or in Council land, a road or a footpath: "behave in a manner which unreasonably interferes with another person including sitting, sleeping or laying on or in the Council land, road or footpath.

Current section 42

(1) A person must not camp on any Council land or in any public place in a vehicle, tent, caravan or any other type of temporary or provisional form of accommodation.

(2) A person is not guilty of an offence under sub-clause (1) where that person establishes that they:

(a) are homeless or in need of secure accommodation; or

(b) have complex needs or is in the need of additional assistance because of mental or physical disability or illness.

Proposed amendment to section 42

“A person must not reside in temporary accommodation including a vehicle, tent, caravan or any good or chattel that enables a living arrangement or sleep on council land or in any public place.

Current section 43

(1) A person must not on a footpath or access way, place or cause to be placed any furniture that obstructs that footpath or accessway.

(2) Council may direct a person to remove any of the items in subclause (1).

(3) If a person fails to remove any item after being directed to do so, Council may seize any item and impound it in accordance with clause 78.

Proposed amendment to section 43

(1) A person must not place or cause to be placed on a footpath, access way, car park, public place or council land any furniture or good or chattel that obstructs that footpath or accessway or enables a living arrangement or sleep.

(2) A council staff member or authorised officer may remove the furniture, good, chattel or item that enables a living arrangement or sleep where in the opinion of the council staff member or authorised officer is in contravention of Section 43 (1).

(3) A council staff member or authorized officer may impound, confiscate or dispose of any item or items removed under Section 43 (1).

(4) A council staff member or authorised officer may in circumstances arising in contravention of Section 43(1) if in their opinion the furniture, good, chattel or property enabling a living arrangement or sleep where a person or persons deny ownership of the property and or the property in their reasonable belief has been abandoned. The council staff member or authorised officer may impound, confiscate, or dispose of any item or items removed under Section 43 (1b).

Appendix C: City of Port Phillip Notice of Motion 11 December 2024

MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL
11 DECEMBER 2024

14.1 NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR BUCKINGHAM - COMMUNITY SAFTEY

I, Councillor Libby Buckingham, give notice that I intend to move the Motion outlined below at the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 11 December 2024:

That Council:-

1. Reaffirms its commitment to a safe, liveable and just community.
2. Requests that City of Port Phillip initiate a round table of key stakeholders, incorporating the City of Port Phillip, health, housing, community legal and social service providers, Victoria Police and other relevant stakeholders or recognised expertise to examine the current situation and review place-based models to address community safety issues in our high streets and surrounding areas.
3. Requests that the round table:
   a) Provide advice and case studies from other jurisdictions on community outreach models and consider opportunities to ensure best practice in the City of Port Phillip;
   b) Provide advice and case studies from other Council jurisdictions on how local laws can be used to provide community safety and protect the amenity of public spaces within the City of Port Phillip. The advice is to include consideration of police protocols and operations with the City of Melbourne and their applicability to the City of Port Phillip;
   c) Review the merit and feasibility of establishing an ongoing alliance to continue this work over the next four years.
   d) Provide recommendations to Council on the above within the short and long-term.
4. Requests that the Mayor write to the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police seeking advice and recommendations on local laws in the City of Port Phillip, and a proposal on how any changes to the local laws would be used and work in practice.
5. Notes that officers have commenced work on the update of the City of Port Phillip's Community Safety plan including opportunities for the public to share their lived experiences in relation to community safety and that Councillors will be updated on this regularly.

Supporting Information

1. Concerns have been raised by our community, including traders, about antisocial and illegal behaviour (including public drug and alcohol use, dealing, abuse and harassment of passers-by). Council receives many complaints about the issue, its impacts upon amenity, safety, perceptions of safety and the appeal of high streets and other areas as vibrant, attractive and safe places to visit.
2. In many cases those who are involved include people experiencing homelessness, mental health, addiction and other challenges. In response, Council has:
   a) Invested and partnered with the State Government and St Kilda Community Housing in the Wellington Street Common Ground Project, to provide 26 self-contained units for people with complex needs who have been sleeping rough.
   b) Invested in CCTV in Fitzroy Street to enable Police to monitor activity.

c) Purchased a mobile CCTV unit that Victoria Police move around the city to deter poor behaviour and to provide footage of specific problem areas.

d) Funded cardboard collection for businesses on these streets.

e) Introduced the 7 day a week Rapid Response crew to provide 'instant' response to incidents, spillages, waste and cleanliness problems.

f) Introduced the 7 day a week City Amenity Officers' team to undertake daily patrols to identify and manage hotspot areas.

g) Increased overnight street sweeping and pressure washing of both Fitzroy and Acland Streets.

h) Advocated for additional Police resources to provide an increased presence, improved response times and for Police to accompany our Officers on joint patrols.

i) Committed to community engagement on the review of Council's Community Safety Plan in 2025.

j) Weekly meetings with social service agencies such as Better Health Network and Launch Housing to provide outreach and other services.

3. These issues are complex, and their resolution does not sit exclusively with the City of Port Phillip. Collaboration with police, health and other services are essential.

Appendix D: Services within the City of Port Phillip

Note this list is not exhaustive and was mapped in 2024.

Libraries / Community Centres / Rooms

1. Emerald Hill Library
2. St Kilda Library
3. Port Melbourne Library
4. Albert Park Library
5. Middle Park Library and Community Centre
6. Betty Day Community Centre
7. Mary Kehoe Community Centre
8. Sandridge Community Centre
9. South Melbourne Community Centre
10. Port Melbourne Community Centre
11. Port Melbourne Community Room
12. Sol Green Community Centre
13. Fishermands Bend Community Centre
14. Koolin-ngal Family Centre
15. Liardet Community Centre
16. Cora Graves Community Centre
17. Southport Community Centre
18. Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre
19. Peanut Farm Pavilion - Community Room
20. Alma Road Neighbourhood House
21. Christ Church Community Centre
22. Bet Anielewicz
23. Chabad North Caulfield

Mobile service:
- City of Port Phillip Home Library Service

Community Groups

1. St Kilda Police and Citizen's Youth Club (PCYC)
2. Back2Bikes
3. Port Phillip Bicycle Users Group
4. Port Phillip Men's Shed
5. St Kilda Repair Café

Community Health Services

1. Access Health - The Salvation Army St Kilda
2. Alfred Health St Kilda Road Clinic
3. Better Health Network (BHN) - South Melbourne
4. Better Health Network (BHN) - St Kilda
5. Avenues Australia (mental health service)

No exact location/various locations/based outside of CoPP:
- City of Port Phillip Immunisation Program
- MIND Australia Bayside

Community Gardens

1. South Melbourne Sustainability Group Community Gardens
2. Dig In Community Gardens
3. Mary and Basil Community Garden
4. Newton Court Reserve
5. Poet's Garden Inc
6. Simply Living Community Garden
7. South Park Towers Community Garden
8. St Kilda Community Gardens
9. Te Arai Community Gardens
10. The Heart Gardening Project (incl. South Melbourne Bee Gardens)
11. Veg Out Community Garden

Environmental Groups

1. Friends of Elster Creek
2. Friends of St Kilda Botanical Gardens
3. Port Phillip Eco Centre
4. Westgate Biodiversity and Friends of Westgate
5. South Melbourne Sustainability Group
6. Nature Calling Program

No exact location/various locations:
- Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN)
- Earthcare St Kilda
- Love Our Streets
- Port Phillip Pickers

Families and Children

1. Elwood Toy Library
2. Middle Park Toy Library
3. Port Melbourne Toy Library
4. South Melbourne Toy Library
5. St Kilda Playgroup
6. Steiner Playgroup Elwood
7. Elwood Community Playgroup
8. Baby Sensory Port Melbourne
9. Mini Maestros
10. St Kilda Adventure Playground
11. Skinners Adventure Playground
12. School holiday programs (St Kilda Library)
13. Maternal & Child Health Centre, Middle Park
14. Maternal & Child Health Centre, Ferrars Street
15. Maternal & Child Health Centre, St Kilda West
16. MacKillop Family Services
17. Smiley Days Psychology (Child Psycology

No exact location/various locations:
- City of Port Phillip Integrated Family Service
- City of Port Phillip Maternal and Child Health
- City of Port Phillip Middle Years and Youth Services
- City of Port Phillip Lead Family Worker Program
- CWA Port Phillip
- City of Port Phillip Early Years Outreach Program

Scouts

1. 1st Victorian Sea Scouts
2. Elwood Scouts
3. Port Melbourne Scouts
4. Girl Guides

Youth Support Programs

1. Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)
2. FreeZa
3. City of Port Phillip Youth Leadership Program
4. City of Port Phillip Youth Support Program
5. Youth Summit 2024
6. The Young Carer Project
7. Homework Club (Park Towers)
8. Breakfast Club (Park Towers)
9. Drop in space (Park Towers)
10. Elwood Drop in (Elwood College)
11. Games Club

Older Adults Support and Activities

1. Mary Kehoe Senior Citizen's Club
2. Port Melbourne Probus Club
3. South Port Day Links
4. South Melbourne Senior Citizens Club
5. St Kilda RSL
6. U3A Port Phillip

No exact location/various locations:
- City of Port Phillip Aged Care Services
- City of Port Phillip Linking Neighbours Program and Seniors Register
- Older Persons Advisory Committee (OPAC)
- Galini Senior Citizens Club
- Port Philip Life Activities Club
- Rotary Port Phillip
- Senior's Festival
- St Kilda Probus Club
- Yachad Senior Citizens Club
- New Life Association Inc

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support

1. Ngwala Willumbong
2. Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation
3. Star Health Indigenous Health Services
4. VISHN - Victorian Indigenous State-wide
5. Homelessness Network
6. Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership
7. Kinaway Chamber of Commerce

No exact location:
- City of Port Phillip Reconciliation Action Plan

Disability Services and Support

1. Access for All Abilities
2. Arts Access Victoria
3. Definite care support services
4. Partner N Care
5. Permalink Support Services
6. IML Support Services
7. Aligned Assist
8. Port Melbourne Beach Accessible Equipment
9. St Kilda Beach Accessibility Mobi Beach Chair

No exact location/various locations/based outside of CoPP:
- Aspergers Victoria
- Borderline Personality Disorder Community Victoria
- City of Port Phillip Disability Access Map

LGBTQIA+ Support and Recreation

1. Melbourne Rovers Soccer Club
2. Victorian Pride Centre
3. Minus18

No exact location/various locations:
- City of Port Phillip LGBTIQA+ Advisory Committee
- OUTminds (Prahran)
- Midsumma Festival
- Alice's Garage
- Melbourne Spikers Club (Volleyball)
- Melbourne Surge Water Polo Club
- The Shed
- Transfamily

Asylum Seeker Support

1. Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project
2. Space28 Social Design

No exact location/various locations:
- City of Port Phillip Multicultural Network Forum
- Multicultural Advisory Committee
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (Footscray)

Multicultural Support and Groups

1. CoPP Multicultural Network Forum
2. Jewish Care
3. Jewish Museum of Australia
4. St Kilda Islamic Society

No exact location/various locations:
- Multicultural Advisory Committee
- Port Phillip Multifaith Network
- Welcoming Cities network
- The Lotus Choir
- Ensemble Nostalgia Russian Women's Choir
- Singing Hearts Russian Choir
- Ethnic Discussion Club
- Friends of Suai Covalima
- Interpreter Services
- Jewish Ecological Coalition
- Polish Senior Citizens Club of St Kilda 'Astry'
- Port Melbourne Greek Community
- Port Phillip Multifaith Network
- Association of Former Inmates of the Nazi Concentration Camps and Ghettos from the Former Soviet Union
- The Victorian Association of WW2 Veterans from the Former Soviet Union

Religious and Spiritual

1. Catholic Parish of Sacred Heart and St Columba
2. Christ Church of St Kilda
3. South Port Uniting Church
4. St Joseph's Church
5. St Kilda Baptist Church
6. St Kilda Uniting Church
7. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church
8. Planetshakers Church
9. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia (St Eustathios Church)
10. Hare Krishna Melbourne and Bhakti Yoga
11. Yeshivah Centre - Lubavitch
12. Chabad on Carlisle-Jewish Russian Centre

Support Services

1. Inner South Family and Friends
2. Melbourne City Mission (MCM)
3. Red Cross Shop, South Melbourne
4. Sacred Heart Mission
5. The Women's House - Sacred Heart Mission
6. The Brotherhood of St Laurence
7. Emerald Hill Mission
8. The Salvation Army Crisis Services
9. The Salvation Army Youth Services
10. Southside Justice
11. Carer Solutions
12. Port Phillip Community Group (PPCG)
13. St Kilda Gatehouse (Sex worker safety)
14. The Mirabel Foundation
15. Empower Australia (food relief)

Support Services (Housing and Homelessness)

1. Launch Housing South Melbourne
2. Launch Housing East St Kilda
3. Launch Housing St Kilda
4. Housing First
5. Southport Community Housing Group
6. St Kilda Community Housing Ltd
7. Bridge It (Youth homelessness support)
8. Southern Homelessness Network
9. YWCA Australia

Support Services (Addiction)

1. Windana Drug & Alcohol Recovery
2. Gallambie Men's Recovery Centre
3. First Step
4. The Bridge Centre
5. Melbourne Addiction Treatment Program

No exact location/various locations/based outside of CoPP:

- City of Port Phillip Social Support Program
- City of Port Phillip Carer Support Group
- Free Food Directory Guide
- Lifeline
- Griefline
- Mensline Australia
- Alfred Carers Support
- Carer Information Hub
- MOIRA Carer Connect
- Carers Victoria
- Directline
- Alcoholics Anonymous Victoria
- Narcotics Anonymous Victoria
- Reconnexion

Training, Education and Employment

1. Elwood and St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre (ESNLC)
2. Uniting Employment Services St Kilda
3. IMVC Employment Services and Training and Education (HELM Youth Services)
4. Youth2Industry College
5. Embark Training
6. N & B Training and Recruitment
7. Future Path Finders
8. KM Training & Consulting PTY LTD
9. Career Coaching and Training
10. ncentric skills
11. EmployEase by Healthcare Australia

No exact location/various locations:

- Swim teacher and Lifeguard/water safety courses
- First Aid

Volunteering Opportunities

No exact location/various locations:

- Beach Patrol
- South Port Day Links

Sport and Recreation

1. Ajax Football Club
2. Albert Park Bowls Club
3. Albert Park Football and Netball Club
4. Albert Park Indoor Sports Centre
5. Albert Park Lawn Tennis Club
6. Albert Park Sailing Club
7. Albert Park Soccer Club
8. Albert Park South Melbourne Rowing Club
9. Albert Park Tennis and Hockey Centre
10. Albert Park Yachting & Angling Club
11. Albert Park College - Upskills sports program (Basketball)
12. Carmelite Middle Park Tennis Club
13. Elwood Angling Club
14. Elwood City Soccer Club
15. Elwood Cricket Club
16. Elwood Croquet Club
17. Elwood Life Saving Club
18. Elwood Sailing Club
19. Fishermens Bend Gymnastics Club
20. Maccabi Hockey Club
21. Melbourne Razorbacks Hockey Club
22. Melbourne Smashers Badminton Club
23. Middle Park Bowls Club
24. Middle Park Cricket Club
25. Middle Park Football (Soccer) Club
26. Port Melbourne Community Centre Trugo Club
27. Port Melbourne Baseball Club
28. Port Melbourne Bowls Club
29. Port Melbourne Breakers Basketball Club
30. Port Melbourne Cricket Club
31. Port Melbourne Football Club
32. Port Melbourne Life Saving Club
33. Port Melbourne Netball Club
34. Port Melbourne Soccer Club
35. Port Melbourne Tennis Club
36. Port Melbourne Yacht Club
37. Power House Rugby Union Melbourne
38. Powerhouse Football Club
39. Powerhouse and St Kilda Hockey Club
40. Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron
41. Sandridge Life Saving Clu
42. Sandridge Community Centre Trugo Club
43. South Melbourne District Sports Club
44. South Melbourne Football (Soccer) Club
45. South Melbourne Women's Football Club
46. South Melbourne Life Saving Club
47. St Kilda Baseball Club
48. St Kilda Celts Soccer Club
49. St Kilda City Football Netball Club
50. St Kilda City Junior Football Club
51. St Kilda Cricket Club
52. St Kilda Life Saving Club
53. St Kilda Sharks Womens Football Club
54. St Kilda Sports Club (Bowling Club)
55. Victorian Race Walking Club
56. Y Rowing Club
57. Six Harmonies Martial Arts
58. Absolute MMA
59. de Been 100% Jiu Jitsu St Kilda
60. Celtic Jiu-Jitsu
61. 10th Planet Jiu Jitsu South Melbourne
62. Conscious Combat Club
63. Seishinkan Iaido Martial Arts
64. Hall's Taekwondo - Port Melbourne
65. National Pickleball League
66. Soccer (Oneball) 12-17 yo
67. Kids Kung Fu 12-17 yo (Six Harmonies Martial Arts - SIMA)
68. Boxing 12-17yos (PCYC)
69. Kingswim St Kilda East (Swimming School)
70. St Kilda East and Caulfield Chess Club

No exact location/various locations:

- St Kilda Cycling Club

Arts, Music, Dance, Culture and History

1. Astor Theatre
2. Australian Tapestry Workshop
3. Brightspace
4. Carlisle Street Arts Space
5. Gasworks Arts Park
6. Linden New Art
7. Metartworld - Art Space
8. Artea Art School
9. Artbus (Artist for Kids Culture - AKC)
10. Art therapy (Colourful Journeys Art Studio)
11. Port Art
12. Paint for Fun (Paint And Sip Melbourne)
13. Champainting Melbourne
14. Vivien Anderson Gallery
15. Treble Makers Music School
16. JAANZ International Singing Academy
17. Mixx Academy Music School
18. Melbourne Music Education
19. Kidko Performing Arts School & Chambers Music
20. AML Golden Voice Studio
21. Little Feet Music
22. Treble Makers Music School
23. Palais Theatre
24. Red Stitch Theatre
25. Temperance Hall
26. The Alex Theatre
27. The National Theatre Melbourne
28. Theatre Works
29. Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company
30. Phoenix Theatre (Elwood College)
31. Geoffrey Kaye Museum
32. The Port Melbourne Preservation and Historical Society
33. Port Phillip Heritage Centre
34. St Kilda Historical Society

No exact location/various locations:

- Live n Local
- Music Classes (Music with Jade)

City of Port Phillip

99a Carlisle Street

St Kilda VIC 3182

Phone: ASSIST 03 9209 6777

Email: portphillip.vic.gov.au/contact-us

Website: portphillip.vic.gov.au

National Relay Service

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can phone us through the National Relay Service (NRS):

TTY users, dial 133677, ask for 03 9209 6777

Voice Relay users, phone 1300 555 727,

then ask for 03 9209 6777.

relayservice.gov.au

Attachment B: List of Roundtable participant organisations

Service area	Organisation
Chair	Independent Consultant
Facilitator	Independent Consultant
Drug & Alcohol	First Step
Housing	Housing First
Housing	South Port Community Housing Group
Housing	Launch Housing
Housing	St Kilda Community Housing
Housing, Drug & Alcohol, Mental Health	Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation
Housing, Drug & Alcohol, Mental Health	Port Phillip Community Group
Housing, Drug & Alcohol, Mental Health	Sacred Heart Mission
Housing, Drug & Alcohol, Mental Health	Better Health Network
Housing, Drug & Alcohol, Mental Health	Windana
Drug & Alcohol, Mental Health	Salvation Army/Access Health
Mental Health	Alfred Health
Legal	South Port Community Legal
Legal	Southside Justice
Subject Matter Expert	Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association
Subject Matter Expert	Neighbourhood Justice Centre
Subject matter expert	Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association
Police	Victoria Police

Attachment C: List of consultations/visits outside of Roundtable

Meeting	Date	No. Attendees
First Step	27/02/2025	1
Southside Justice	4/03/2025	1
Housing First, South Port Community Housing, Phillip Community Group, Sacred Heart Mission, Subject Matter Consultant	5/03/2025	5
Victoria Police	5/03/2025	1
Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association, Alfred Health, Better Health Network, Southport Legal Service	6/03/2025	4
Access Health/Salvation Army, St Kilda Community Housing	11/03/2025	2
Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Windana, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, Jesuit Social Services	14/03/2025	4
Ngwala Willumbong	17/03/2025	2
Trader Business Advisory Group	18/03/2025	7
Local Laws Team	28/03/2025	5
Lauch Housing (onsite visit)	1/04/2025	2
Access Health (onsite visit)	2/04/2025	2
Council Plan Deliberative Engagement Panel resident representatives	4/04/2025	9
Trauma Aware Port Phillip Lived Experience representative	4/04/2025	1
Sacred Heart Mission (onsite visit)	10/04/2025	1
Sacred Heart Mission (onsite visit)	6/05/2025	2

Attachment D: Written submissions received

1. Acland St Village Business Association (CONFIDENTIAL)
2. Carlisle St Traders Association (CONFIDENTIAL)
3. Fitzroy St Business Association (CONFIDENTIAL)
4. Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation
5. Port Melbourne Business Association
6. Port Phillip Community Group
7. Port Phillip Zero *(Alfred Health, Better Health Network, First Step, Housing First, Launch Housing, Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation, Port Phillip Community Group, Sacred Heart Mission, Salvation Army, Southern Homeless Services Network, South Port Community Housing Group, Southside Justice, St Kilda Community Housing, Uniting, Wintringham)*
8. Sacred Heart Mission
9. Southport Community Legal Service
10. South Port Community Housing Group
11. Southside Justice
12. St Kilda Community Housing (CONFIDENTIAL)
13. Victoria Police
14. Windana

NGWALA WILLUMBONG
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

4th April 2025

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Submission to the City of Port Phillip Council on the Community Safety Round Table

Ngwala Willumbong has a long history and foundation in the City of Port Phillip. Ngwala was established, almost 50 years ago, in St Kilda to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members who were impacted by Alcohol misuse. We have grown to become the lead agency in Aboriginal Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) and Homelessness support in Victoria and have both the Public Intoxication Response and the Aboriginal Homelessness Entry Point programs based in St Kilda.

The root cause of Aboriginal homelessness is due to colonisation. Ongoing colonisation is realised through processes that result in increased homelessness, including over-incarceration, child removal, and housing discrimination. The issues we are addressing in these Community Safety Round Tables are direct evidence of this.

Ngwala provides services within the City of Port Phillip which are Aboriginal specific, outreach based and holistic. We specialise in both homelessness and Alcohol and Drug interventions with two of our rehabilitation facilities also located in St Kilda as well as our Sobering up centre that was established in response to the Public intoxication reform. In addition to this we run the only Aboriginal Homelessness Entry Point in Melbourne which is also based in St Kilda. Currently, our Entry Point is in a Pilot stage and funding lapses in July 2025. Further, our outreach case management services are underfunded and under resourced across both AOD and Homelessness. Most of the funding and resourcing sits with non-Aboriginal specific organisations.

Our reach as an organisation is directly linked to resourcing. We do not have the resourcing provided to non-Aboriginal organisations, yet we are over-represented in all data sets pertaining to Rough Sleeping and Justice interventions. We feel for and are gravely concerned about this particular cohort of our community who are left displaced due to a lack of services available to and targeting their specific needs.

Ngwala is committed to serving our community to meet their needs, reduce trauma and create wellness. When considering self-determined and culturally responsive outcomes and solutions for our community, we are acutely aware that demand outweighs our current ability to meet community needs. However, Ngwala's responsibility to our own community requires us to stretch resources and fill service gaps to ensure that the most vulnerable are not alone.

We appreciate the opportunity to represent our community, via this submission, to find solutions for our people who are displaced. We value our partnership with the Port Phillip Council in targeting these issues and providing Community specific and focused solutions.

NGWALA WILLUMBONG ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

We value our partners at CoPP who have embraced the issues we face as a community and have actively collaborated with us in addressing issues faced by Rough Sleepers, we look forward to extending this relationship to find further interventions and solutions.
Our solutions include caring for our vulnerable community members as well as addressing safety concerns of Port Phillip Residents. We propose that in addressing these issues we consider short-, medium- and longer-term planning and implementation.

Proposed considerations to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

We propose the following interventions and resources to reduce and manage these issues:

1. Strengthening Ngwala's relationship with the Port Phillip City Council (PPCC). Our relationship with PPCC is currently one of collaboration when addressing Aboriginal community issues. This could be strengthened by formalising our partnership and increasing our presence on joint patrols and information sharing. Our partnership would continue to monitor and work collaboratively to meet issues as they arise together. Our current participation is impacted by resourcing which results in ad-hoc and reactive participation rather than consistent and proactive approaches. If we had a dedicated program to supporting this work, it would ensure consistency in addressing need. PPCC is a strong ally in addressing the issues of our community and has initiated and committed to furthering our work together. We welcome and look forward to extending our current partnership.

2. Introduce a partnership and network with Victoria Police in St Kilda. Port Phillip Police Station do not have a dedicated Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (ACLO). We understand that Victoria Police are in the process of assigning a Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer (PALO) in Port Phillip however, given the escalation of issues and concerns for community safety, we feel that the addition of a Port Phillip specific ACLO could ensure that our organisations have forged sustainable partnerships, collaborative outcomes, shared support and provide safer interactions for our community members. This will not only improve the Cultural awareness and practices within Victoria Police but will also ensure that community can be diverted from compliance processes and receive the support they need.

3. Establishment of a Community Gathering Place. Our community gathers as a Cultural norm and practice. We ***do not*** accept that this is a problematic practice, rather we require a dedicated space where this can be supported. We propose that we can greatly decrease the number of people who are

participating in anti-social behaviours by providing a drop-in Centre or gathering place. We propose a space where those experiencing street-based sleeping can find resources, amenities and support. All our community members who are rough sleeping are heavily impacted by trauma and mental health issues which render them vulnerable and unable to commit to tenancy agreements, shared living spaces or crisis/rooming house accommodation. This cohort is particularly at risk of premature and preventable deaths. A gathering place where food, amenities, information, support, acceptance and safety are available will incrementally increase individuals' wellness which can lead to seeking support for further interventions. For our community it would mean a welcoming place of belonging which is Culturally designed, led, responsive and trauma informed. This proposed Gathering place is the most imperative to reduce the number of Rough Sleepers and street-based gatherings. St Kilda has a long history of being a Gathering place for our people. Several places including Catani Gardens and more recently the Ngari Tree ensure our people can find one another, our services can find those in need, and we can continue to find strength in kinship ties. A gathering place is the most considerate option in targeting the issues we are discussing. It will ensure that people who are experiencing street-based living are supported and will also address the safety concerns of Port Phillip residents.

4. St Kilda Community Housing has proposed Culturally informed supported accommodation in addition to the Wellington Street Common Ground project. Ngwala is a partner agency in the Wellington Street Project, and we have a partnership with St Kilda Community Housing for several years to house our most vulnerable community members. Investment in supported housing collaborations with housing providers and services that are well informed and experienced in working with Rough Sleepers is imperative to reduce homelessness. The complexities and co-morbidities impacting Rough Sleeper cohorts require collaboration of multi-disciplinary teams specialising in the intersecting issues which cause homelessness. For our community, who have strong ties to the St Kilda area, tenancies such as Wellington Street Common Ground are crucial to ending Aboriginal homelessness, sustaining tenancies and reducing the risk of re-entry into homelessness. We support further investment into supported housing with a Culturally specific component of support.

5. Service sector and systemic changes are required to address the needs of Aboriginal people sleeping Rough. Dual diagnosis issues are prevalent within this cohort. The service sector does not invest in Aboriginal specific Mental Health services or Dual diagnosis services. Currently, the Homeless Outreach Psychiatric Services (HOPS) are grossly underfunded.

6. Aboriginal self-determination must be embedded throughout policy and program design. Currently our community must fit within a system which is not designed for our specific needs. We need holistic policy responses to the complex, multi-faceted and specific needs of our community to gain wellness. The Blueprint for an Aboriginal Specific Homelessness System should be supported and invested in for any real and systemic changes to occur.

7. Homelessness policy needs to change the eligibility criteria into homelessness programs for Rough Sleepers who have housing. Often our community members have tenancies which are located far from their kinship and community ties. Further, Rough Sleepers are often lacking the skills to sustain a tenancy and have no ongoing tenancy support. These community members are not eligible for support outside of Ngwala's services, due to having a tenancy. Ngwala provides services to this cohort, however, housing options are dependent on non-Aboriginal services. As we are all aware, there is a lack of public and social housing which further impacts the health of tenancies. People are often housed in areas which isolate them resulting in failed tenancies.

8. Housing First programs are designed to support Rough Sleepers throughout the housing continuum. Aboriginal specific Housing First workers would make a significant and positive impact on the cohort of community rough sleepers in PPCC. Ngwala will launch a new Housing First Program later this year which covers the Southern Bayside Peninsula region. Further investment into Housing First would be beneficial in reducing the numbers of people who are homeless in Port Phillip.

9. Ongoing support for the Functional Zero Program. Ngwala sits on the Zero network in Port Phillip. This program supports and monitors those who are rough sleeping and finds solutions for support. We propose that council continues to support this program to meet its goal of functional zero.

10. Support to continue funding for Ngwala's Aboriginal Homelessness Entry Point. The lapsing funding of our Entry Point will significantly impact and increase the numbers of unsupported homeless Aboriginal community members in the City of Port Phillip. We have support from the Federal and State Ministers, Government bodies including Homes Victoria, Community and partner organisations across the City of Port Phillip for continued funding.

Concerns for our Community

NGWALA WILLUMBONG ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

We hold grave concerns for our community if the amendment to local laws and new by laws are introduced, which will essentially criminalise homelessness. Criminalising or having public space protection orders does not solve homelessness. It drives people further from the help they need and increases the problems they face. In fact, it can make homelessness worse. Homelessness is a victimless act. The basis argument is that these laws criminalise poverty and disproportionately target vulnerable people, particularly Aboriginal people. In addition, these laws will be ineffective in addressing homelessness and instead public resources should be focused on providing support and services to those in need to deal with this community matter.

The proposed new laws by PPCC are a means of using the criminal justice system to punish people for being homeless or for engaging in activities that are a direct result of being homeless. In essence, the proposed by laws seek to prohibit sleeping in public spaces, even when there is no alternative shelter, and then punish them for their basic survival activities.

Aboriginal people will be disproportionately targeted and impacted by these proposed by laws. Reasons for this include the Cultural practice of gathering in community groups, which makes us more vulnerable to compliance measures, and escalation of behaviours which can lead to arrest and incarceration. Unconscious bias, racism and discrimination are issues that always impact our community particularly around compliance.

In reality, how will affected people know about the new laws? The reality is, they won't. If rough sleepers are unaware, it is manifestly unfair in preventing prior opportunity to avoid "unlawful behaviour". There are no preventative or alternative options for homeless people, namely as suitable, affordable and available housing.

Section 73(6) of the *Local Government Act 2020* provides:

(6) If—

(a) the Council proposes to alter a proposed local law in respect of which notice has been given under subsection (3); and

(b) the alteration will affect the rights or responsibilities of any person—

the Council must comply with subsections (2) to (5) and conduct a further community engagement process in respect of the proposed alteration.

In particular, section 73(6)(b) of the *Local Government Act* 2020 refers to the alteration of the local law affecting the rights or responsibilities of *any person (*emphasis added). The principles of natural

justice ensure fair decision-making by requiring a hearing appropriate to the circumstances, a lack of bias and evidence to support a decision, and an inquiry into matters in dispute. This principle dictates that a person must be given a fair opportunity to present their case and respond to any adverse information before a decision is made that could negatively impact them. The proposed by law, by its very nature is targeting a specific minority group, who are not able to participate in the decision making process. Furthermore, homeless people have no ability to engage and present their case with a view to participating in the community investigation.

Most strikingly and of grave concern is the inevitable lack of procedural fairness in implementing and exercising the proposed by law against homeless people. If the people being targeted are of "no fixed abode" there is an inability to serve or give proper notice of a pending court appearance. Inevitably, all hearings will be held in a defendant's absence and there is no practical way of enforcing penalties. All penalties are likely to be fines, with a defendant having no capacity to pay.
In conclusion, the law will not solve any problems. The by law will only create more problems and more hardship. The proposed law is archaic and has no place in our modern developed society. Th by law will increase trauma and racial discrimination of our community and has the potential to increase homelessness and recidivism.

We appreciate the enthusiasm which Council have shown in supporting our voice in the Round Tabe discussions and in submitting this document. It is a valued and necessary partnership which we look forward to continuing. We know that supporting one another is the only way to drive changes and end homeless in the City of Port Phillip.

We would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of the lands across the Kulin Nations and pay our respects to our Elders. We would like to acknowledge our Community Members who we are representing in this document and across the Round Table discussions, who are displaced and in need. We are committed to ensuring they are not alone and have a voice.

Report Written by:
Liza Vanspall (Director Client Services – East, South, CBD and Homelessness)
In consultation with Helena Gonebale, Motu Ese, Josephine Pepe.
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To the team,

I am sure that the thoughts of PMBA members will be replicated across all of the precincts as we discussed in the meeting.

- PMBA have already advocated for CCTV as a deterrent on Bay Street to council.
- Additional 'creative lighting' to create more vibrancy on the street at night and to try and deter any criminal activity due to the activity on the street with hospitality businesses.
- Increased police patrolling and presence – which we understand is a VICPOL issue
- The close proximity of housing commission housing to our shopping precinct makes the precinct an easy and quick target for theft and antisocial behaviour.

An increased view from the Port Melbourne community is the fact that there is often video evidence (due to RING doorbell cameras etc) showing crimes being committed, or scoping of property in order to commit crime, but there seems to be little that can be done about it.

- The car break ins and thefts, home invasions, parcel thefts, attempted break ins, and people walking around trying door handles to find an open door etc

Unfortunately we do not have solutions to offer other than addressing the above with cameras, more police and additional lighting. Relocation of housing commission properties other areas of the suburb may assist in taking the toll away from the main strip.

Thank you for helping to address these issues.

Mike Stevens RN
Port Melbourne Business Association

Submission to the City of Port Phillip Council on the Community Safety Roundtable

Port Phillip Community Group welcomes the opportunity to identify both short-term and long-term actions to enhance community safety in the City of Port Phillip. We acknowledge the concerns of residents and businesses who feel unsafe or impacted by individuals sleeping rough in public spaces.

As a wraparound support provider with two drop-in services, we encounter aggression, impacts of rough sleeping and disruptive behaviour at our hub in Carlisle Street and the Alma Road Community House. Council's outreach workers are an excellent resource that enables our service to continue as we work through issues facing the individual without clogging the justice system.

We strongly urge the City of Port Phillip to work collaboratively with Port Phillip Community Group and our network of service partners to address upstream issues such as financial hardship, maintaining tenancies, providing safe gathering places and skill building of traders and residents to address community safety at all levels of society.

In response to objective 1: Propose new interventions and prevention models

To address both community concerns and the well-being of those experiencing homelessness, we propose the following intervention and prevention strategies, either directly or in partnership with local service providers and community.

1. Assertive InReach: Increased investment in assertive InReach services to connect people to wrap-around programs which are crucial for individuals with complex needs. This approach ensures that social isolation and loneliness issues are addressed enabling tenants to maintain stable housing. This has previously included provision of Social Meals at rooming houses which provided soft referrals to support services for people who would not walk into a place –based services or hubs.

2. Building Planning Permits – councils need to consider mandatory requirements as part of planning permits for developers to provide spaces for concierge services and communal spaces for all medium to high density buildings particularly for community and public housing designs to encourage place-based socialisation. People living in temporary accommodation which tend to be bedsits often do not have appropriate space to connect and socialise leading them to congregate on streets.

3. Tenancy Transition Support: The planned public housing redevelopments must have measures to ensure housing supports for people being displaced by the Big Build construction so that they do not contribute to increased levels of rough sleeping in the LGA. Public towers tend to be unsafe places for women and children making cars a safer living option. The proposed law changes will have a negative impact on this cohort. Funding a social housing residents' network that advocates for the rights of the tenants and actively addresses unsafe behaviours in the towers will reduce the overflow of people onto streets.

4. Active Support for Traders - In the current fragmented political climate, safety of all residents has become paramount. A council led trauma informed conversation to build the capacity and capability of the traders in the area will assist to navigate the

challenges faced by traders. Additionally, material relief vouchers that can be used locally will help to change the relationship dynamics and start to rebuild community.

In response to objective 2: Explore how local laws can be used to improve community safety and the amenity of public spaces

It is commendable that City of Port Phillip and Merribek are two local government areas that have exceptions to section 42 of the local laws for a person who is homeless or in need of secure accommodation, have complex needs because of mental or physical disability or illness.

It reflects the ethos of an inclusive city that is a place for all members of our community. A liveable Port Phillip that is safer should not come at the expense of the providing supports and enabling people to be comfortable and express their identities.

Th crime data presented to support the changes to the local laws are not linked to housing outcomes and therefore cannot be used to justify a change that will further disadvantage and impinge of the human rights of members of the community who are in transitional or crisis accommodation settings. The crime data is more reflective of the transient population that enjoys the vibrant culture of the city as a hub for cultural and creative pursuits.

Introducing barriers of sleeping, laying, sitting on council land or footpath is a colonial approach that ignores the culture and practices of the first nations people of the area. There is a strong link of the local tribes to the dunes of the City of Port Phillip. To remove people from the area will further retraumatize another generation of indigenous communities' and trigger displacement trauma. This will exacerbate issues such as mental health, drug and alcohol dependence which are precursors to homelessness.

Our proposed alternative to changing the local laws is for council to support:

1. Ngargee Tree Initiative: This trial which temporarily provided a gathering space for rough sleepers before intervention from Parks Victoria and SES was a community led solution supported by service providers. Council should work with Parks Victoria and SES to make the area safe for people to congregate without fear of harassment and discrimination.
2. Alma Road Community House: Council should work with service providers to have communal spaces such as neighbourhood houses with adequate transport facilities for individuals experiencing homelessness to connect with services, engage in recreation, and build community that is not focused simply on surviving homelessness but on building the connections and capabilities they need to rebuild their lives.

The causes of homelessness are the result of decades of policy decisions across social housing, mental health, and disability care. We urge the City of Port Phillip to continue to follow the course of a compassionate, evidence-based approach.

We know that together, we can make homelessness rare, brief and once-off.

Prepared By:

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Submission to the City of Port Phillip Council on the Community Safety Roundtable

Submitted by Port Phillip Zero

Port Phillip Zero welcomes the opportunity to identify both short-term and long-term actions to enhance community safety in the City of Port Phillip. Accompanying this submission is a supplementary submission by Southside Justice to inform the proposed changes to local laws.

Councils are essential partners in the effort to end homelessness, and Port Phillip Zero is a key initiative of council working alongside the homelessness sector to create meaningful change. In the City of Port Phillip Local Government Area, the number of people sleeping rough has declined from 91 people in June 2018 to well under half that number in March 2025 (refer to appendix 1).

The causes of homelessness are the result of decades of policy decisions across social housing, mental health and disability care to name a few and its resolution for some people will take time. We urge the City of Port Phillip to choose to continue to follow the course of a compassionate, evidence-based approach rather than punitive measures that only deepen the crisis.

We strongly urge the City of Port Phillip to work collaboratively with the homelessness sector, community organizations, and people with lived experience to create sustainable and humane solutions.

Intervention and Prevention Ideas

To address both community concerns and the well-being of those experiencing homelessness, we propose the following intervention and prevention strategies, either directly or in partnership with local service providers and community.

1. Port Phillip Zero Initiative: This Collective Impact project, utilizing a By-Name List (BNL), has already demonstrated success in integrating multiple service systems to prioritize housing and support solutions. The Council should strengthen and expand this model.
2. Assertive Outreach & Housing First Programs: Increased investment in assertive outreach to connect to people sleeping rough and long-term, wrap-around case management programs is crucial for individuals with complex needs, ensuring they receive the necessary support to access and maintain stable housing.
3. Wellington Street Common Ground (WSCG): This new and soon to start tenanting initiative should be supported with additional resourcing to ensure culturally safe alcohol and other drug, legal, and mental health services are provided through a combination of support from First Step, Ngwala Willumbong, Better Health Network and Alfred Health
4. Tenancy Transition Support: Individuals on the BNL should have dedicated pathways into stable housing with support to manage the transition from homelessness to housing in a sustainable way. With planned public housing redevelopments, there must be measures to ensure housing availability extends beyond existing public housing towers tenants to people sleeping rough and on the Port Phillip BNL.
5. Harnessing available housing resources: St Kilda Community Housing has proposed a 20-bed location that could be incorporated into a new permanent supportive housing development like Wellington Street Common Ground. We urge Council to support this development either directly or through targeted advocacy with the State Government.

6. Gathering Place Initiative: A long-standing idea whose time has come. Council should lead work to locate and develop a safe, low-barrier space for individuals experiencing homelessness to connect with services, engage in recreation, and build community that is no longer focused simply on surviving homelessness but on building the connections and capabilities they need to rebuild their lives.
7. Advocacy for Systemic Change: Many key solutions lie beyond local government powers. However, the Council can play a leadership role in advocating for:
    - Improvements to PACER (Police, Ambulance, and Clinician Early Response) programs to provide crisis mental health support.
    - Legislative changes to ensure a more balanced approach to mental health care, particularly around involuntary admissions for at-risk individuals.

In addition, we recommend that Council advocate to the State and Federal Governments to invest in:

- More social housing
- More assertive outreach
- More crisis accommodation
- More Housing First housing and support responses
- Increase income support

We acknowledge the concerns of residents and businesses who feel unsafe or impacted by individuals sleeping rough in public spaces and note that not all people creating safety concerns are homeless. However, while some individuals experiencing homelessness may engage in criminal behaviour, it is critical to separate homelessness from criminality. Homelessness is not a crime, but rather a dire consequence of systemic failures, including the chronic lack of social housing in Victoria.

People who sleep rough face severe hardship and significantly reduced life expectancy compared to the general population. Many have experienced trauma, abuse, and systemic failures that have left them with no other options. Addressing homelessness through punitive measures, such as fines and confiscation of personal belongings, does not address the root cause of the issue and only exacerbates their suffering. Instead, we urge the Council to adopt compassionate, evidence-based solutions that prioritize housing and support services over criminalization.

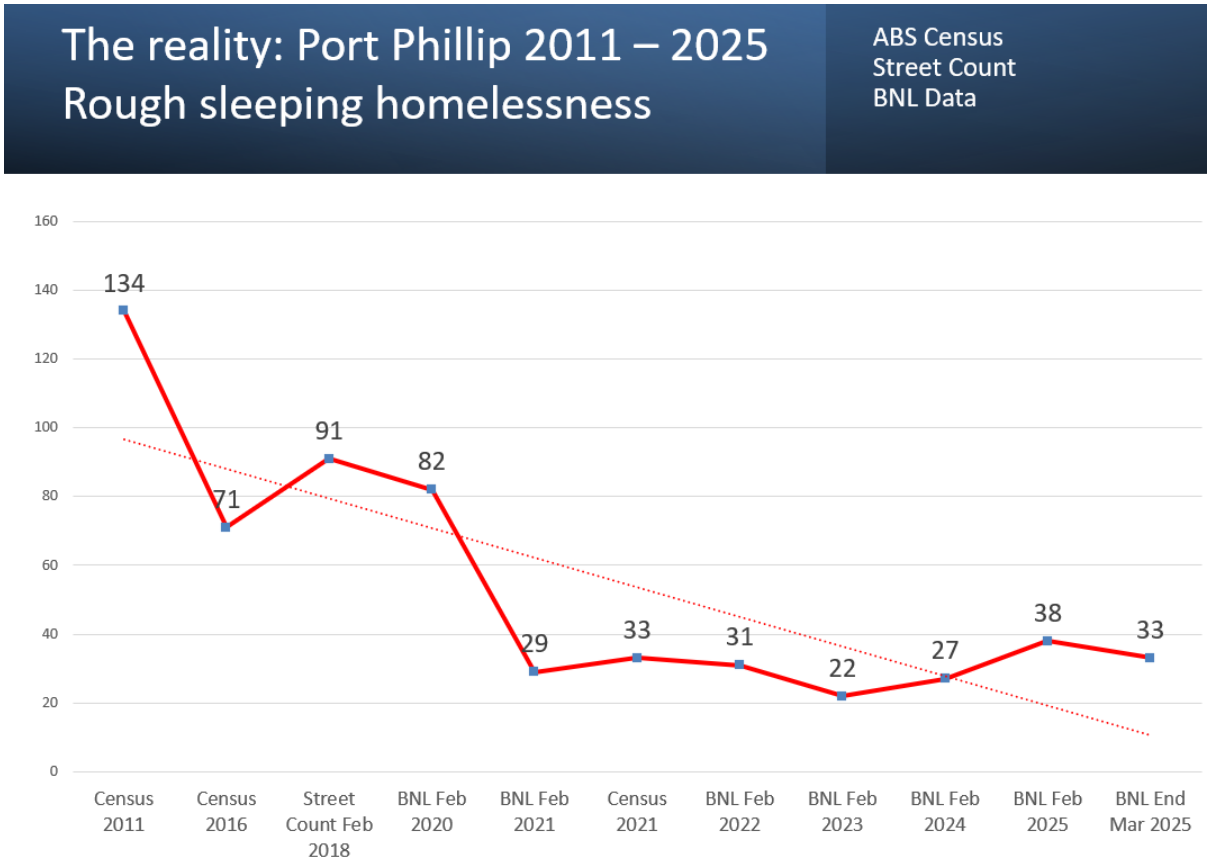
Research consistently demonstrates that enforcement-based approaches worsen homelessness rather than resolve it. Fines and legal actions are largely unenforceable against people without financial means, creating additional strain on the justice system and increasing overall costs to ratepayers. Further, punitive measures compound trauma and make it harder for individuals to transition into stable housing.

People sleeping rough are part of our community. They too face violence and danger—often at higher rates than the public. They die younger, experience more health issues, and suffer from extreme poverty. But they are not separate from us; they are us. We see this moment as an opportunity, not to move toward short-term responses that will do little to solve the issue and

instead make things worse. This is our opportunity to continue to lead the Victorian community by responding with empathy, effectiveness, and a commitment to real solutions.

We know that together, we can end homelessness.

Appendix 1: Rough sleeping homelessness Port Phillip: 2011 to 2025



Also known as 'Unsheltered homelessness' or 'Primary homelessness', sleeping rough includes people sleeping in improvised dwellings, squats, cars, railway carriages and tents, or sleeping out on the streets and in parks.

The major sources of data about the scale of rough sleeping homelessness are the ABS Census, Street Counts conducted by council and partners, and with By-Name Lists (BNL) created by the agencies who are partners within the Port Phillip Zero partnership. These are shown in the graph below along with a trendline.

ABS Census data shown starts in 2011 when LGA specific data (SA4) showing Port Phillip was first publicly available, and continues through 2016 and into 2021, the year of the last Census. In 2018 the City of Port Phillip conducted its first Street Count to investigate the prevalence of rough seeping and to provide an initial assessment, based on the severity of people's circumstances, in order to best match housing and support.

In July 2019, the Port Phillip Zero Project commenced and began using a By-Name List (BNL). People are added to the BNL when they are confirmed to be sleeping rough and only then. People stay on the list until they meet one of the 3 outflow criteria. Either they are securely and stably housed, or they become inactive (move out of area, local services lose contact with them, or they move into an institutional setting like a jail), or they die. This list keeps track of current living situations and is updated at a minimum every two weeks and usually more regularly. BNL data shown below is from February each year to retain consistency with the timing of the Street count except for the latest data which is from the end of March 2025.

Further Reading and References:

The Jack Brockhoff Foundation Churchill Fellowship to investigate how councils respond to rough sleeping while balancing responsibilities to the wider community - Churchill Trust

To address the negative impact of laws regulating public space on people experiencing homelessness - Churchill Trust

To better understand how communities around the world are reducing and ending street homelessness - Churchill Trust

Submission to the City of Port Phillip Community Safety Roundtable

4 April 2025

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sacred Heart Mission (SHM) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the City of Port Phillip's Community Safety Roundtable through this formal submission, as well as attendance at the Roundtable on 19 March 2025.

Sleeping rough is not a choice – it is a last resort for people with nowhere safe to go. Criminalising rough sleeping is not only cruel but also ignores the real issue: the severe shortage of social and affordable housing in Victoria and across Australia; and the lack of safe public spaces. 102,000 Victorians sought help from homelessness services in 2023/24; and Victoria had 30,660 people experiencing homelessness on Census night in 2021; 7.5% of them were sleeping rough.

More than 61,000 Victorians are on the public housing waitlist. Rents have risen 13.7% in a year and combined with the cost-of-living crisis, it is pushing more people into housing insecurity and homelessness.

At SHM, we are seeing this firsthand. Over the past year, around 1,100 new people have come to our Engagement Hub on Grey Street St Kilda – many experiencing homelessness for the first time. This is in addition to the hundreds of regular visitors who rely on our services, from housing support and health programs to women's services and social inclusion initiatives.

SHM has been involved with the Port Phillip Zero initiative since it began. We work closely with the City of Port Phillip and local services to identify and support people sleeping rough. Between February 2022 and February 2024, Port Phillip Zero achieved a 40% decrease in rough sleeping in the City of Port Phillip, indicating that the initiative is effective. This is the result of deep collaboration between Council and local community organisations and people with lived experience to achieve meaningful change for people sleeping rough.

We acknowledge the City of Port Phillip's historic sensitivity to this complex social issue. Over many decades, progressive approaches focused on the well-being of vulnerable people have kept the rough sleeping community safe, housed and treated with respect and care. We urge the City of Port Phillip to continue with compassionate, evidence-based approaches to support rough sleepers, rather than resorting to punitive measures including issuing fines. We believe such an approach will be ineffective, harmful to individuals and undermine the significant progress that has been made to decrease homelessness in our community. We further urge investment in real solutions: building more social housing and adequately funding homelessness and housing support services. This should include flexible specialist support services for people with complex needs, such as those related to alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and mental health challenges.

To solve the housing shortage in the City of Port Phillip and beyond, Victoria must deliver 6,000 new social homes each year. This will provide the more than 61,000 Victorians on the public housing waitlist with a stable foundation from which to rebuild their lives.

Beyond housing, people in crisis need the right support at the right time. Investing in wrap-around services – combining housing with mental health, substance use support and other essential services – ensures people don't just exit homelessness but stay housed.

With over 40 years of experience as a community services organisation, we know that when people are part of the decisions that affect them, the outcomes are always better. This is why we strongly advocate for First Nations housing responses – designed and delivered by First Nations people to meet the needs of their communities. Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort: the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework sets out the solutions and urges all levels of government to respond.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Family Violence & Housing Security

- Prioritise increasing crisis accommodation options for family violence victim-survivors and their children.
- Provide trauma-informed support services for women and children escaping violence, including case management, financial assistance and priority access to housing.

2. Housing Availability & Affordability

- Advocate for greater investment in public and social housing, including fast-tracking developments and repurposing vacant properties.
- Introduce rent caps or stronger rental protections to prevent excessive rent increases.
- Expand subsidised housing for vulnerable groups, including First Nations communities.
- Work within communities to prevent neighbour fatigue and address concerns in a timely manner.
- Advocate to the Commonwealth Government to increase income support payments, particularly JobSeeker, above the poverty line.
- Build more congregate housing models like Wellington Street Common Ground and tailor to specific cohorts such as older women.

3. Mental Health System Barriers

- Push for greater accessibility to mental health assessments to prevent individuals from falling through the cracks.
- Advocate for wraparound services that combine housing with mental health and substance use support.
- Increase funding for outreach mental health teams and develop a flexible, innovative service model able to reach individuals on the street who are undiagnosed and untreated.

4. Cultural Safety

- Work with First Nations organisations to create culturally appropriate gathering spaces within housing developments and elsewhere in the community.
- Support agencies such as Ngwala, which provides community engagement workers and Initial Assessment and Planning (IAP) Workers for assessments and crisis intervention for First Nations peoples experiencing homelessness.
- Support other agencies' programs such as Better Health Network (BHN's) Indigenous Access and Equity Program, which provides culturally safe services to First Nations communities.
- Ensure First Nations housing is located within or near their communities to prevent social isolation.
- Educate law enforcement and policymakers on culturally safe policing practices to prevent unnecessary targeting of First Nations people.
- Provide housing equity for rainbow communities, who are among the most marginalised groups and at high risk of experiencing homelessness, poverty and social exclusion.

5. Public Housing Maintenance & Allocation

- Implement timeframe guarantees for maintenance so that people can move in without long delays.
- Hold housing providers accountable for prioritising safe and habitable conditions.

- Explore tenant-led maintenance initiatives where small repairs can be addressed with community involvement.

6. Discriminatory Housing Practices

- Adequately fund community housing providers so that they can equitably accept tenancy applications from people receiving JobSeeker, without compromising their organisation's financial sustainability.
- Ensure rooming house regulations are enforced to prevent discrimination against Job Seeker recipients.
- Provide support to housing providers to house vulnerable people with higher complexities.

7. Resource & Funding Shortages

- Push for increased funding for frontline homelessness and housing support services.
- Advocate for multi-agency collaboration to ensure services (e.g., housing, mental health, family violence support) work together rather than in silos.
- Improve Housing Establishment Funds (HEF) for people, to reduce rough sleeping episodes.

8. Safe Public Spaces

- Ensure there are safe community and public places in the City of Port Phillip for First Nations and vulnerable people to gather where they are safe and access resources and information.

9. Community Education

- Provide community education on homelessness that helps people understand its root causes and emphasises that solutions should focus on housing and support, rather than punitive responses.

10. Retain positive City of Port Phillip initiatives

- Continue with the current initiatives within City of Port Phillip, including the Zero Project, Homelessness Action Strategy and Growing Affordable Housing Strategy and public forums in the community.
- Maintain commitment to Diversity. Equity and Inclusion (DEI) demonstrated by City of Port Phillip – such as the Accessibility Action Plan, LGBTIQA+ Action Plan, Reconciliation Action Plan and Welcoming Cities.

3. OUR ENGAGEMENT HUBS

The courtyard of our Grey St Engagement Hub in St Kilda is a safe gathering place for all those who need it. SHM is experiencing a growing demand for support. Over the last year, we counted approximately 1,100 new people at our hub, many of them are experiencing homelessness for the first time.

In addition, we have hundreds of regular visitors who access our services, ranging from free meals to case management and long-term housing support. Around 10% of our participants identify as First Nations people.

In 2024, our Engagement Hub provided 3,800 episodes of support - appointments, emergency relief and crisis intervention. Of these, 80 were assisted with ongoing support for a period of 8-10 weeks and linked into longer term services. We also provided support to 37 people in our 'over 50s' targeted case management program in 2024. These people were

experiencing housing, health and premature ageing related issues, and required an average of 6-8 months of support.

SHM also offers wellbeing and inclusion activities, including a music group, art therapy, drug education, optometry, yoga, vaccination clinics, haircuts and off-site osteopathy at Victoria University. We had 2,038 presentations for these wellbeing activities over a 12-month period.

Our service receives referrals from a variety of sources, both formal and informal. These referrers play a critical role in connecting individuals in need with the Engagement Hub. Examples include NDIS workers, Launch Housing, The Salvation Army Crisis Centre and Access Health, Homeless Outreach Psychiatric Service (HOPS), Ngwala, a range of Community Housing Providers, Hospital Admission Risk Program (HARP, through the Alfred) as well as referrals through word of mouth.

At present, we are open from 8.30am-1pm. Our experience is that participants can best engage during the morning and early afternoon period, which is when other services and supports are also open. We currently operate the Engagement Hubs through a mixture of government funding and our own internal revenue stream. However, with additional funding, we could expand our services to offer longer opening hours and provide a safe space for vulnerable people throughout the day.

3.1 The impact of mental health and alcohol and drug use

SHM has an ongoing relationship with Alfred Homeless Outreach Psychiatric Services (HOPS) to provide enhanced pathways to treatment and secondary consultation. We conduct a daily check-in on weekdays with HOPS, usually focusing on 2–3 participants we know - a mix of new referrals and people receiving ongoing mental health support.

Broadly, we have found there has been a general increase in presentations involving complex behaviours, including untreated mental ill health and substance use over the last two years.

In our experience, people who have been rough sleeping for extensive periods of time have significant trauma, untreated mental health and substance use. This often leads to complex behaviours, including repeated evictions from previous housing and crisis accommodation. It is well understood that people's experiences of trauma can lead to adaptive behaviours that present as high-risk - aggression, difficulties with emotional regulation and paranoia.

While this is a small cohort of people, within an increasingly large cohort of people who are experiencing homelessness, we understand this behaviour does attract attention in the local community and it is not unreasonable for people to be fearful when exposed to or interacting with those presenting in this manner. However, punitive responses are the wrong lens to examine complex social issues, and more practical solutions are needed.

We believe that the community needs advanced collaboration on the ground with psychiatric, alcohol and other drug services and homelessness services, further resources and new, targeted approaches to supporting these individuals, including services that are co-designed with rough sleepers.

4. Port Phillip Zero Project and By-Name List (BNL)

SHM is actively involved in the Port Phillip Zero Project, a collaborative initiative supported by a range of local agencies. Its' primary goal is to move individuals experiencing homelessness in the City of Port Phillip closer to long-term housing, with weekly meetings across the involved agencies to discuss individuals identified as rough sleepers in the area

and categorise them into target groups using the By Name List (BNL), ensuring continuous tracking and assessment.

The BNL is used to:

- Track housing offers and updates on the Victorian Housing Register (VHR)
- Identify individual challenges, including mental and physical health decline
- Assess risks, including aggressive behaviours
- Document last known locations and housing outcomes

Agencies continue to assess individual needs, advocate for housing solutions and monitor the effectiveness of the initiative; and the project team shares information on rooming house closures and local housing providers.

SHM plays a vital role in identifying and supporting individuals who are newly experiencing homelessness through its Engagement Hubs. When new individuals present to us, staff gather relevant information, ensuring that informed and appropriate support can be provided. If consent is given, details such as the person's name, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, gender, age and last known location are recorded. In cases where consent is not granted, the individual may be documented as Jane or John Doe.

The coordinators continuously monitor new presentations and whether service users have accessed services three or more times. When this occurs, their details are raised at the BNL meeting for potential inclusion on the list. Additionally, pathways workers assist service users in completing a Victorian Houising Register (VHR) assessment, with these updates also being shared at meetings and reflected in the tracking spreadsheet.

SHM remains committed to understanding the accommodation circumstances of those experiencing homelessness. This includes tracking where individuals are staying, whether that be couch surfing, residing in squats, living in tents or staying in their cars. Furthermore, SHM ensures that appropriate program supports are in place, such as the Care Finder initiative and the Journey to Social Inclusion (J2SI) program, helping to create pathways out of homelessness in the shortest possible time.

For individuals who have been on the BNL for an extended period, SHM continues to monitor their progress. Updates on any challenges, safety concerns or new information are regularly documented and reviewed to ensure that service users receive the most relevant and effective support available. Through this ongoing process, SHM remains dedicated to facilitating sustainable solutions for those experiencing homelessness and ensuring that no one is left without the care and assistance they need.

5. INTENSIVE SUPPORT PROGRAMS

In addition, SHM operates several programs to provide intensive, long-term support to people who have experienced and are experiencing homelessness, to break the cycle of homelessness. Some examples are detailed below:

5.1 GreenLight – outreach program

We support people to move out of rough sleeping through our outreach program GreenLight, provided in partnership with VincentCare and The Salvation Army and funded by the Rough Sleeper Action Plan in 2018. We work with people who have obtained a long-term housing offer, to settle into housing and maintain their tenancy.

Since then, the consortium has supported at least 273 referrals per financial year. SHM has already met our targets for the current financial year, supporting 107 people from July 2024 to February 2025.

The funding is due to lapse on 30 June 2025. Together with sector partners, we have advocated strongly to retain this program and adapt our response to offer tenancy support to prevent homelessness.

5.2 Journey to Social Inclusion (J2SI)

Our housing first program, Journey to Social Inclusion (J2SI), successfully works with people experiencing long-term homelessness to secure and maintain stable housing and build community connections. It was the first service in Australia to apply the 'housing first' principles whereby participants are given housing in the first six months and then engage in intensive support over a three-year period. Four years after participants start the program, 90% of people maintain stable housing. J2SI also was the first Social Impact Investment in Victoria which subsequently became the first Payment by Results program. Since the pilot program in 2009, J2SI has supported 640 participants.

We are now rolling out J2SI across Victoria, supporting hundreds more people – in partnership with the Victorian Government, The Salvation Army, Uniting Vic.Tas, VincentCare Victoria and local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. This program will run between April 2025 and 2028, supporting 240 people across the consortium and SHM will support 60 of these people directly.

6. CONCLUSION

We acknowledge that there are people in our community who are frustrated and feel unsafe because of the public presence and behaviour of people rough sleeping in the City of Port Phillip. We believe it is vital that all people – including people who are rough sleeping - have safe places to gather and are supported to access resources and information as needed.

However, we believe that criminalising homelessness by undertaking legal action and issuing fines is not the answer. People experiencing homelessness have already been failed and traumatised by the system. Compounding that by then criminalising their suffering is cruel and does more harm than good.

Financial penalties will not be enforceable to people who cannot pay them but rather exacerbate their difficulties transitioning into stable housing. Furthermore, this will create additional burdens on the justice system, be costly to taxpayers and does nothing to address the root causes of these issues.

People sleeping rough are part of our community, but they experience a much higher risk of violence, complex physical and mental health issues, poverty, trauma and premature ageing and death than the rest of the community.

City of Port Phillip is known and respected for its commitment to being a socially inclusive, equitable and economically thriving community. We believe it is vital that the City of Port Phillip rejects any proposal that is punitive and instead, continue the positive and productive work it is already doing including Port Phillp Zero, Wellington Street Common Ground, housing and homelessness strategies and its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

My comments on the proposed bylaws are as follows:

- Homelessness is not a crime.
- The right to an adequate standard of living, including housing, is recognized as a human right, and actions related to homelessness should be considered within this context.
- The council is further punishing all homeless people in CoPP for the behavior of a few.
- The imposition of a fine is pointless as people who are homeless are able to apply to have those fines waived based on 'special circumstances" under the *Infringements Act* 2006 (Vic)
- The removal of homeless person's personal property is unconscionable.
- the bylaws will capture people who are forced to live in their car due to lack of housing. For example women and children fleeing family violence.

- There are numerous support services within CoPP to address homelessness.
- These support services need to be coordinated and located in a single place to make them easily accessible to homeless persons and the support services that assist them. This could be a website initially but ideally a physical space.
- The CoPP need to allocate resources to establish a "Hub" to house these services or provide a bus or coffee cart which can be set up where the homeless congregate, for example, Peninsula CLC Street Law coffee van

The residents of CoPP need to be educated to show more empathy for the homeless and other marginalised groups.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact us on 9646 6066 (Tuesdays and Wednesdays, or leave a message) or by return email.

Southport Community Legal Service Inc.

Office: 154 Liardet Street, Port Melbourne 3207

Mail: 341 Coventry Street, South Melbourne 3205

Ph: 9646 6066 (Tuesday and Wednesday)

SCLS acknowledges the Original Custodians of Country and we pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. Sovereignty was never ceded.

SOUTH PORT COMMUNITY HOUSING GROUP

Introduction

The increased visibility of people sleeping rough on our streets is a daily reminder of our collective inability to meet the basic needs of those most vulnerable in our community.

The staff and Board of South Port Community Housing Group feel sufficiently moved by the City of Port Phillip's proposal to investigate changing local laws to prohibit people from sleeping rough on council land, roads, or footpath by way of issuing fines, as to make this submission to Council.

Alongside other participants, whose input was sought at the Community Roundtable on 19 March 2025, we seek to highlight the urgent need for a more integrated, community led, and humane approach to addressing the increasing issue of homelessness in the City of Port Phillip.

South Port Community Housing Group has a strong 40 yearlong connection to the community within the City of Port Phillip, primarily through housing adult singles and young people who have been faced with homelessness and social exclusion. Since our formation, our Board and organisational governance have been driven by community leaders who live or have a strong connection to the area.

The City of Port Phillip has traditionally been an area with a high proportion of short-term or shared accommodation. Private boarding houses, rooming houses and hotels provided affordable housing to a mixed client group of single adults including port workers and the unemployed. However, over the last 30 years, the area has undergone rapid gentrification, which has resulted in this type of private affordable housing option all but disappearing. Less than one per cent of private rental housing is now affordable to low-income households. Closures of large rooming houses such as the Gatwick, have forced many into the spiral of homelessness and prison services. The area has for many years experienced higher levels of homelessness and rough sleeping to other local government areas of Melbourne.

In our view and experience, punishing vulnerable people for being homelessness can only serve to make the situation worse.

Our Experience, Service Model, and Expertise

Over 40 years, South Port Community Housing Group has accumulated specialist knowledge within the City of Port Phillip of the risks of homelessness and in keeping people within the community at risk of homelessness housed.

SOUTH PORT COMMUNITY HOUSING GROUP

SPCHG target housing exclusively to people in the lowest income groups coming from homelessness or housing crisis.

SPCHG runs two programs:

- Long term housing for disadvantaged single people coming from experiences of homelessness. This housing (approximately 314 units within the City of Port Phillip) is primarily high-density blocks of flats and self-contained studio apartments (once rooming houses) scattered and well located next to services and supports.
- Case managed support for young people facing homelessness.

The specialised SPCHG model of social housing management for this group incorporates the following key features.

- An intensive level of engagement with renters at a personal level.
- An intensive level of staff presence in monitoring properties.
- Highly trained and experienced staff – qualified in social service provision.
- Trauma informed service delivery practice.
- Clear communication to renters of expectations and consequences.
- Focus on prevention and early intervention in resolving tenancy issues.
- Negotiating creative strategies to sustain tenancies.
- Creating opportunities for community engagement and participation.
- Maintaining a strong network of partnerships with local support agencies.

We offer people seeking social housing the opportunity to 'advance' through SPCHG's range of housing stock from small bed-sits through to one-bedroom flats. This aligns with Housing First approaches, in meeting people where they are at, to provide flexible and tailored support when and where needed. We place a strong emphasis on meaningful and effective communication which aims to build trust and engagement in local services, events and community life.

Our youth homelessness program supports around 25 young people (and dependents) at any one time to find and obtain a safe and secure place to live and engage with relevant services. Most of the young people we support have had transient lifestyles, histories of abuse and trauma, and face significant difficulties in negotiating the demands of daily living.

SOUTH PORT COMMUNITY HOUSING GROUP

In 2021, South Port Community Housing Group led a consortium with Better Health Network for the Victorian Government's groundbreaking Homeless to Home Program launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns in Melbourne.

SPCHG held responsibility for successfully overseeing the housing of 50 individuals of highly complex needs, with case management provided by Bridge It and Better Health Network. The tangible results of this innovative program can clearly be seen in the 40 per cent reduction of rough sleeping in the City of Port Phillip, over this period. These outcomes attributed to the efforts of agencies working intensively together when housing is readily available and accessible to address this problem.

More recently, in response to increasing demands for our services and complexity of our renter cohort, we have made changes to our tenancy management model including a new case management capacity. The new role works intensively with our most vulnerable and complex renters to intervene and broker much needed supports to prevent the typical deterioration of tenancies and patterns leading to hoarding, mental illness, and anti-social behaviours.

We are seeing the value this is creating through more stable tenancies and adherence to paying rent and settling into the community. We believe that "investing" time and effort into people otherwise struggling with social exclusion can, and will, pay off with broader outcomes for the wider community.

Recommended Actions to Increase Public Safety and Perceptions of Public Safety in Port Phillip

Short Term (12 months)

1. Increase resources to Port Phillip Zero to embed further local agency support workers within the City of Port Phillip outreach response.

2. A targeted social media and print campaign promoting the outcomes and success of Port Phillip Zero among residents and retailers, to increase awareness and understanding and most importantly, buy in, to a whole of community response to the issue of homelessness within the City of Port Phillip.

SOUTH PORT COMMUNITY HOUSING GROUP

Long Term (1-4 years)

1. **Dedicated Intensive Brokered In-Reach Trial**
   South Port Community Housing Group is willing to cost share a service on terms to be negotiated with City of Port Phillip that value adds to existing services and builds upon recent experience delivering intensive case management based on Housing First approaches. This service will be dedicated within the City of Port Phillip to connecting with those who would otherwise be fined under the current proposal to change local bylaws. It will instead build the preliminary understanding of their circumstances with participating local agencies and to start the process of connecting them to the services that they might need. This service would trial for two years and be fully accountable to the City of Port Phillip via funding under the banner of Community Safety initiatives via the Port Phillip Zero initiative. The deliverables would be monitored via the existing reporting structures of the Port Phillip Zero initiative, providing valuable action research outcomes for the shared partnership and community led approach.

2. **Stronger collaboration with locally based housing providers to facilitate access to available land for social housing development.**
   The *In Our Backyard, Growing Affordable Housing in Port Phillip 2015-2025 Plan* committed Council to contribute over the decade to 2025, $30 million, through a pipeline of suitable developable Council land ($25 million value at 2016) together with cash contributions of $500,000 per year ($5m). The Plan committed Council to seek expressions of interest from Housing First, South Port Community Housing Group and St Kilda Community Housing to develop these properties, to ensure that best value (social, economic and environmental) is achieved for the residents of the City of Port Phillip.

   Its key purpose was to continue to ensure Council's longstanding leadership in affordable housing and commitment to maintaining a diverse, inclusive and equitable City, especially for those who are disadvantaged and marginalised is achieved. The Vision was to:

SOUTH PORT COMMUNITY HOUSING GROUP

to and *Grow the supply and diversity of affordable housing in the City of Port Phillip address priority local housing needs, including for the most disadvantaged marginalised.*

The outcome of this approach was to achieve the following:

- 170 new units (under one or more trusts or other mechanism)
- 750 new units (partnerships - with governments, private and philanthropic sectors, and new planning mechanisms)
- Council properties worth $25m (2015) be transferred to a one or more trusts or other mechanism.
- $5m Council cash contributions.
- Leverage of $36 - $41m investment (forecast)

In the final year of the plan and at a time of unprecedented need, the strategy has not met its targets for the number of dwellings or transfer of council land. This is despite numerous sites including the bitumen carparks at Jackson Street, Park Street, South Melbourne Market, Bath Street, recently marketed land in Carlisle Street and the air-rights above single level council assets in locations where multi-level development is supported, remaining examples of lazy assets that could already be yielding immediate positive community impact and leveraging State, Developer and Philanthropic investment. This approach is consistent with the identified need for more intensive land use and social housing as essential social infrastructure in inner City areas, close to services and supports.

Whilst SPCHG, acknowledges and applauds the contribution of Council to the Common Ground development in Wellington Street, St Kilda, we note the significant shortfall in action against need within the municipality and a significant slow-down in council initiatives.

We call on Council to recommit to a dedicated and intensive program of support, in partnership with locally based Registered Housing Agencies leveraging State and Federal funding, to increase affordable housing supply through identifying further opportunities on Council owned land.

Southside Justice

Submission to the City of Port Phillip on Community Safety

4 April 2025

About Southside Justice

Southside Justice is a place-based community legal centre providing free legal advice and support to residents with a low income living in the Local Government Areas (LGA) of Port Phillip (CoPP), Bayside and Stonnington. We also operate a state-wide legal service for sex workers. We collaborate with many local community organisations and conduct multiple outreach services to partner organisations located within the CoPP.

In the last financial year 23-24:

- **80%** of our clients were **women**
- **82%** were experiencing or at risk of **family violence**
- **50%** of our clinic clients[1] were experiencing **homelessness**
- **40%** of clients who we successfully assisted to have fines withdrawn had a direct link between the fines and their experience of homelessness, frequently co-occurring with mental health challenges and family violence
- **98%** of fines review applications submitted were successful, resulting in **fines being waived**.

Endorsement of Port Phillip Zero Submission

We endorse the submission and all recommendations of Port Phillip Zero on Community Safety.

This submission should be considered as supplementary to that of Port Phillip Zero, with a greater emphasis on the role of local laws given our expertise as a legal service.

We urge CoPP to continue to build on the established foundation of collaborative work that Port Phillip Zero exemplifies. Now more than ever, amid a worsening national homelessness crisis[2], this work must continue and be further strengthened.

Use of local laws to promote community safety and amenity

Local laws and people experiencing homelessness

Our view is that local laws are not a useful way to address the perceived impact of rough sleeping on community safety and amenity beyond those already in place in the CoPP.

We note that, as people experiencing homelessness are themselves members of our community, a human rights-based approach to addressing and ultimately ending homelessness will promote safety and amenity for all members of our community.

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[1] Clients accessing our service outside of the Moorabbin family violence duty lawyer scheme.
[2] Pawson, H., Parsell, C., Clarke, A., Moore, J., Hartley, C., Aminpour, F., & Eagles, K. (2024). Australian homelessness monitor 2024.

Local laws can sanction against or mandate individual behaviour and choices and can authorise officers to take direct steps to physically rectify or prevent a situation or hazard.

In the case of local laws targeting individual behaviour, they can only do so with the threat of punishment in the form of issuing fines or the use of coercion like the power to confiscate property. Fines and other coercion can help to shift unwanted behaviour when people are able to make unconstrained choices.[3]

People experiencing primary homelessness and sleeping rough are operating within a very limited range of choices and are engaged in a daily struggle for survival. The only realistic path to changing the way in which people are currently seeking to meet their basic needs, is to better support them in doing so. These include not just physical shelter[4] but:

- safe and secure housing
- access to daily support and essential services, and
- the ability to gather and connect with community in safety.

Our criminal legal and fines enforcement systems distinguish between people making choices about their behaviour, and those whose choices are limited by homelessness, mental health challenges, cognitive disability, addiction and family violence.

People who receive fines for conduct that is intrinsically linked to homelessness and other special circumstances[5] will overwhelmingly, with access to legal help, have those fines waived, as is reflected in Southside Justice's service data seen above.

Given the resources Council and local support services will ultimately commit to issuing, processing, enforcing and then challenging and processing the withdrawal of such fines, and the further harm and trauma caused along the way[6], we believe seeking to rely further on local laws is unproductive.[7]

We believe the CoPP's ***Community Amenity Local Law 2023*** (CALL) strikes the right balance in empowering local laws officers to remove abandoned, hazardous or genuinely obstructive items from council land (that is, to act directly to prevent and remedy hazards).

In terms of intervening where individual behaviour is concerned, the CALL already prohibits a significant scope of "antisocial behaviour".[8]

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[3] Kath Murray, Susan McVie, Ben Matthews, Victoria Gorton, From Parking Tickets to the Pandemic: Fixed Penalty Notices, Inequity and the Regulation of Everyday Behaviours, *The British Journal of Criminology*, Volume 64, Issue 6, November 2024, Pages 1310–1327, https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azae016

[4] The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines homelessness as including where a person's current living arrangement: is in a dwelling that is inadequate; has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; does not allow them to have control of, and access to, space for social relations.

[5] The legislative definition of special circumstances in the context of fines is at section 3, *Infringements Act (2006).*

[6] Adams, L. (2014). In the public eye: addressing the negative impact of laws regulating public space on people experiencing homelessness.

[7] It is worth noting this study demonstrating significant cost blow outs as a result of implementation of a 'sit, lie' ordinance in the US: Wilking, J, Roll, S, Philhour, D, Hansen, P, and Nevarez, H, 'Understanding the Implications of a Punitive Approach to Homelessness: A Local Case Study' (2020) 10(2) *Poverty & Public Policy* 95–113. See also Hauber, L, 'Criminalization of the Unhoused: A Case Study of Alternatives to a Punitive System' (2024) 31(2) Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy 199–221.

[8] As Council is aware, all of the behaviours currently prohibited in section 17 of the Community Amenity Local Law 2023 are already criminal offences in the *Summary Offences Act 1966* and can be responded to by police.

The behaviours already criminalised in both the *Summary Offences Act* 1966 and section 17 of the CALL, will overwhelmingly be linked to special circumstances such as psychosocial disability when they involve people experiencing homelessness.[9]

People experiencing homelessness and living their lives in public space are more likely to be noticed and their behaviour made the subject of a complaint than housed people who enjoy greater privacy.[10] Section 17 of the CALL already authorises enforcement activities towards people experiencing homelessness and multiple and complex needs[11], which, as previously outlined, will often ultimately lead to waived fines.

Beyond the CALL, we believe there is no useful role for further local laws in addressing the perceived impact of homelessness on community safety and amenity in CoPP.

- ***Recommendation:*** *The Council should not increase bylaw powers beyond the current Community Amenity Local Law 2023.*

- ***Recommendation:*** *The Council should retain the CALL in its current form, specifically it's protection for people experiencing homelessness and complex needs from being fined.*

City of Melbourne

In 2017, the City of Melbourne (CoM) faced similar challenges to those now confronted by the CoPP.

Ultimately, CoM did implement a comprehensive camping ban under its *Activities Local Law* which does not explicitly exempt people experiencing homelessness or complex needs from punitive sanctions, unlike CoPP.

In this regard CoPP's CALL is an improvement on CoM's approach and a standard bearer for best practice in Victoria regarding homelessness and human rights.[12] CoPP's CALL, rightly, in our view, is focused on empowering local laws officers to address specific hazards and nuisance, as well as harmful antisocial behaviour, rather than focusing on directly targeting and banning rough sleeping or people experiencing homelessness gathering in public.

To mitigate potentially harsh punitive treatment of people experiencing homelessness in the implementation of its local law, CoM ultimately adopted the Homelessness Operating Protocol.[13]

CoPP could consider developing a more detailed operating protocol for its *existing* local law, in consultation with the organisations involved in the Community Safety Roundtable and adopting a trauma informed, culturally safe and human rights-based approach, particularly to help guide local laws officers in exercising their existing powers.

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[9] Gutwinski, S., Schreiter, S., Deutscher, K., & Fazel, S. (2021). The prevalence of mental disorders among homeless people in high-income countries: an updated systematic review and meta-regression analysis. *PLoS medicine*, *18*(8), e1003750. Vallesi, S., Tuson, M., Davies, A., & Wood, L. (2021). Multimorbidity among people experiencing homelessness—insights from primary care data. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(12), 6498.

[10] Herring, C. (2019). Complaint-oriented policing: Regulating homelessness in public space. *American sociological review*, *84*(5), 769-800.

[11] Baldry, E. (2014). Disability at the margins: Limits of the law. *Griffith Law Review*, *23*(3), 370-388 offers a definition and helpful discussion of multiple and complex needs at page 373.

[12] Alongside that of Merri-bek: see Moreland City Council General Local Law 2018.

[13] Homelessness Operating Protocol / Policy Operating Statement. This followed collaboration with experts and service providers who submitted a responding to homelessness framework to CoM.

- ***Recommendation:*** *The Council should consider developing a homelessness operating protocol to guide implementation of existing local laws.*

More recently CoM has engaged private security guards in a pilot to protect Council staff undertaking local laws enforcement specifically related to public alcohol consumption and illegal begging.[14] For the reasons already mentioned, we believe this approach is likely to be unproductive and not consistent with a human rights-based approach.

Rather our recommendation would be for CoPP to explore and consult with community organisations on either an alternative first responder[15] model or some other form of enhanced collaborative service response, as opposed to an expanded or fortified enforcement approach.

The CoPP is fortunate to have local services that already have enormous skill and experience in deploying a harm reduction and public health response to situations that were once considered law enforcement matters and could draw further on this resource.

- ***Recommendation:*** *The Council should further explore and consult with the local community sector and people with lived experience about a community-based alternative first responder model for behaviour that might otherwise attract a local laws response.*

- ***Recommendation:*** *The Council should explore how resources currently committed to an enforcement response could be diverted to an alternative first responder or enhanced service response.*

Merit and feasibility of establishing an ongoing alliance to continue this work over the next four years

We believe that **together is better**, and strongly support an approach focused on continued and deepening collaboration between all relevant stakeholders in the CoPP.

An ongoing alliance involving the stakeholders from Port Phillip Zero and the Community Safety Roundtable could, among other things, help to:

- Facilitate Council hearing from people with lived experience of sleeping rough or who are otherwise experiencing homelessness in our community, whose voices are not currently being heard.
- Map existing services to understand how they are accessed and identify how modest additional resources could facilitate greater coordination for an enhanced service response to people experiencing homelessness and complex needs in the CoPP.
- Support and feed into the work of Trauma Aware Port Phillip in educating, supporting and building the skills and resilience of local traders and residents to enhance social cohesion.

An alliance of this kind would not necessarily need to be a new body. For efficiency, this could be achieved through modestly extending the terms of reference and perhaps membership of Port Phillip Zero in consultation with its member organisations.

[14] https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/protecting-streets-staff
[15] National Justice Project, Alternative First Responders Position Paper (2025).

Southside Justice is dedicated to collaborating with the CoPP and local community organisations to enhance community safety for all. Together, we can create a safer, more inclusive community for everyone.



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VICTORIA POLICE

Local Area Commander
Port Phillip Police Service Area
St Kilda Police Complex
92 Chapel Street
St Kilda 3182

3 April 2025

Mr Ian Gray
Chair, Community Safety Roundtable
City of Port Phillip
99a Carlisle Street
St Kilda 3182

Subject: **Community Safety Roundtable – Victoria Police Submission**

Dear Ian,

I take this opportunity to thank you for facilitating the Community Safety Roundtable (roundtable) on 19 March 2025 and provide a submission on behalf of Victoria Police. This submission is made in accordance with the terms of reference governing the roundtable.

Background

Over recent years, St Kilda particularly Fitzroy Street, has attracted those who are homeless and those purporting to be homeless which has enlivened pop up tent cities and encampments in and around commercial zones, shopping precincts and residential areas. It is acknowledged that the geographical footprint of such encampments is far greater and encompasses many areas within the City of Port Phillip.

Based on routine and regular feedback to police from residents, business owners and other community groups; the growth in encampments and rough sleepers in and around commercial zones and shopping precincts is the primary driver of negative community sentiment and perceptions of safety.

Perception in the community is that this cohort are engaged in crime such as theft, assault, drug use, intimidatory behaviour, weapons offences and anti-social behaviour thus impacting amenity and generating fear by those who live, pass through, or operate business where these encampments are established.

This situation has resulted in a loud, angry, frustrated and somewhat distressed resident and business cohort calling for action over the preceding years. This sentiment was reflected during the Port Phillip Neighbourhood Policing Forum on 3 December 2024 where more than 120 members of the community vocally and angrily expressed their frustration at the situation and again during the 'CoPP for COPS' rally on 20 January 2025.

Current Policing Response

The policing response to date has been one of enforcement, joint patrols with City of Port Phillip Local Laws Officers and engagement with social welfare agencies. Outside of a regular presence by the Neighbourhood Policing Team, Operation LION is a standing operation deployed to target encampments in commercial zones such as Fitzroy Street which is a significant driver of complaints from across the community. Operation LION whilst having a foundation in enforcement and disruption, also sees our members engage with social and support services as a matter of practice.

Operation LION is an intensive fixed period focus on crime and anti-social behaviour in and around encampments and has been undertaken during August, November 2024 and March 2025 over the course of 14 – 21 days at a time. Operation LION sees a heavy police investment in human resources and specialist policing services however routinely yields low offending data resulting in short term positive outcomes with little or no impact on the foundational issue of the encampments themselves.

Without strategic work in this space there exists a risk to Victoria Police in the reliance on them as a single agency to regulate behaviour in encampments that may not be being positively influenced through local laws and council practice. Additionally, and most importantly, there is a need for a greater role played by social and therapeutic services.

Victoria Police through the routine deployment of the Neighbourhood Policing Team are committed to continuing to play a pivotal role in this space no matter the outcome of this review.

Local Laws

An examination of the social and legal landscape reveals the City of Port Phillip's local laws to be inadequate in their ability to limit or stop the encampments. The existing provisions and exemptions within the relevant local laws, in particular Local Law 42, appears to have enabled growth in encampments and a degree of permanency at some locations. As a result, there is a heavy and ever-increasing reliance on police by the community to regulate behaviour within the encampments.

I have addressed councillors in chambers on this challenge on two occasions in the preceding months. I support councillors in their commitment to local law reform including but not limited to Local Law 17, Local Law 42 and Local Law 43 and encourage council to continue to consult with Victoria Police to ensure the workability of such reforms.

Social Services

The complexity of encampments, homelessness, those purporting to be homeless and their nexus to other health and social challenges is universally acknowledged by agencies operating in this space. It is submitted that the principal remedies to these challenges sit within the remit of social and therapeutic intervention and housing.

The roundtable resulted in a strong presence by support agencies, great collaboration, and a genuine desire to make a positive difference. The roundtable also revealed an apparent limited awareness by those agencies of community sentiment in addition to the caring and interventionist role that local laws officers and police engage in day in day out at all hours of the day.

It is hoped that by shining a light on this issue and coming together in a roundtable format will see an uplift in social, therapeutic, and housing support for those living in encampments.

Recommendations

The amendments to the local laws as described are strongly recommended with a caveat that execution is by way of a tiered response on the ground namely:

1. Intervention - that social and therapeutic intervention is undertaken primarily, intervention is swift and alternative living, sleeping, and gathering arrangements are implemented.
2. Assessment – that social and therapeutic agencies swiftly determine needs and alternative living, sleeping, medical and gathering arrangements are implemented should they be determined.
3. Enforcement - is undertaken by Local Laws Officers and the Neighbourhood Policing Team to dismantle encampments occupied by those who have rejected support or whom have been deemed as not requiring support.

It is recommended that the local laws are not whole of City of Port Phillip specific but with an ability for temporary application by gazette or otherwise to a problem area under the council's management.

It is recommended that a gathering place be established away from residential and business zones for use by those who would ordinarily camp in the street or other public place with access to medical, housing, and other support services.

It is recommended that social and therapeutic services employ a collaborative joined up response that steers and guides participants to services away from the encampments. This presents an opportunity to rethink an in-situ care model that is currently employed by some support agencies that unwittingly, could be supporting the presence of some encampments.

It is recommended that council rapid response cleaning teams be deployed contemporaneously with police and local laws joint patrols post the introduction of the revised local laws.

Conclusion

I take this opportunity to thank you and Nellie once again for your tireless efforts in facilitating the roundtable.

The challenges we face in this space are whole of community challenges requiring a joint and collaborative approach in addition to creative remedies. Until the foundation issue of encampments and those choosing to sleep rough, is positively impacted, only then will community sentiment begin to shift in a positive direction.

Yours sincerely

Brett COLOE
Inspector

WINDANA
Life. Changing.

Submission to Ian Gray AM

City of Port Phillip Community Safety Roundtable

April 2025

Contact:
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About Windana

Providing connected services for more people in need.

Windana provides services across Victoria for adults and young people experiencing alcohol and other drug harms, family violence, mental health challenges and social disadvantage.

Our Model of Care puts clients at the centre of what we do to create positive change in people's lives. We work with families, communities and other organisations to deliver trauma informed, equitable, culturally safe and integrated services based on evidence and practice wisdom.

By intervening early and creating purposeful partnerships, we help clients achieve improved outcomes while reducing demand on acute services. And we are influencing policy, practice and research to help shape better systems for clients. Together, we influence the broader system for a more positive and connected future.

Windana's interest in the proposed Local Law amendments and community safety

Since 1985, Windana has occupied the historic property at the corner of Alma Road and Chapel Street in St Kilda.

While we now operate 15 sites across Victoria, our St Kilda location serves as the central hub of our organisation. It's where we offer a comprehensive range of alcohol and other drug services to the local community, including our adult residential withdrawal program, counselling, Family Program, harm reduction initiatives, peer support groups and community clinic.

We also use our St Kilda base to collaborate with local partners on the frontlines who share our vision of improving outcomes for marginalised people.

Summary

Windana opposes the proposed amendments to Sections 17(1b), 42 and 43 of the Local Laws, as we believe that making it an offence for vulnerable people to sit, sleep, lay or camp on Council land will create more challenges for people already experiencing complexity. Rather than amend Local Laws, we recommend Council take actions that will help people to connect with services that will improve their circumstances and enhance community safety.

Following the Community Safety Roundtable on 19 March, Windana welcomes the chance to provide recommendations to Ian Clarke AM for the final report to be presented to Council on 21 May 2025.

The following recommendations:

- Identify both short-term and long-term actions to increase public safety and perceptions of safety in Port Phillip.
- Offer evidence-based, person-centred alternatives to the proposed amendments.
- Consider Council's three objectives for the Community Safety Roundtable process.
- Emphasise the power of assertive outreach, lived experience, early intervention and challenging stigma.
- Are aligned with our areas of expertise and focus.
- Put people first and take a human-rights based approach.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (short term): That the City of Port Phillip collaborates with local agencies to enhance the ability of Local Laws Officers to provide support and referrals that address the complex needs of our community's most vulnerable people.

Local Laws Officers are authorised to issue warnings and infringements and impound items. However, Local Laws Officers – in partnership with Victoria Police on Joint Patrols and with access to the Rapid Response Team – also play a critical role in connecting vulnerable people with services. Council can leverage Officers' direct contact with people sleeping rough by enhancing their outreach capacity. This could be achieved by developing a welfare-based patrol model where Local Laws Officers collaborate with agencies (e.g. alcohol and drug services) on joint patrols. Including lived experience, e.g. by a Peer Worker accompanying officers on patrols, would provide culturally safe support and improve outcomes for service users[1].

Recommendation 2 (short term): That the City of Port Phillip supports recommendations from VAADA for funding and structural changes that will improve Victoria's response to alcohol and other drug harms, leading to place-based improvements in community safety.

Victoria's alcohol and other drug system faces growing demand for treatment, increasing complexity (including homelessness, mental health) and service gaps. In their 2025 State Budget Submission 'Fixing the Foundations', VAADA provided 39 recommendations necessary to improve the safety of Victorians. Themes include addressing immediate funding shortfalls, development of a Harm Reduction Framework, urgently funding Aboriginal women's treatment and increasing culturally responsive services for priority CALD communities[2]. Regardless of the upcoming budget outcome, VAADA's recommendations offer structural solutions to reduce substance-related harms, and by advocating for these, Council can address challenges faced on the streets.

Recommendation 3 (long term): That the City of Port Phillip coordinates the implementation of an established, collaborative early intervention program model for vulnerable people to increase safety, manage risks, reduce homelessness and address dynamic criminogenic factors that bring people into contact with the justice system.

Council has an opportunity to be the catalyst for a program that provides direct service delivery to at-risk people (including brief intervention, outreach support and service coordination), enhanced by capacity building and reform. Windana's Living Free Project (2017-2024) offers a model that can be adapted to have positive impact in Port Phillip by adjusting two place-based factors: target cohort and the combination of local agencies that would collaborate to provide specialist support. The Living Free model works – an evaluation found that participants benefited from a range of positive outcomes including reduced involvement in offending behaviour, access to safe long-term accommodation, reduced problematic AOD use and increased engagement with services relevant to needs[3].

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[1] https://www.qmhc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Promoting-Lived-Experience-Perspective_Discussion-paper.pdf
[2] https://www.vaada.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/SUB_Fixing-the-Foundations_VAADA-25-26-SBS_FINAL.pdf
[3] https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/Living%20Free%20Project%20-%20Evaluation%20Report%202023.pdf

Council's role in Living Free could involve:

- Coordination – Assembling the appropriate services and organisations to establish a steering committee
- Capacity building – Enhancing skills across police, the justice system and key services that have contact with vulnerable people
- Advocacy – Creating sustainable change by exploring, documenting and responding to systemic gaps that contribute to homelessness and complex social disadvantage in City of Port Phillip.

Recommendation 4 (long term): That the City of Port Phillip leads an anti-stigma campaign in collaboration with alcohol and other drug, homelessness and mental health services to promote inclusion, use of services, outcomes for people facing social disadvantage and perceptions of community safety.

Stigma has negative impacts on community safety – including by delaying treatment-seeking behaviour, exacerbating complex mental health and alcohol and other drug issues, and increasing social isolation and lack of perceived safety[4]. Challenging stigma has been prioritised at different levels of government – including through the Australian Government's Draft National Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategy. At the local level, an anti-stigma campaign could focus on alcohol and other drugs, mental health and homelessness and be used to:

- Encourage help-seeking behaviours → Preventing exacerbation of social issues by encouraging people to connect with services[5]
- Reducing desire for social distance → Increasing community perceptions of safety (for example, the Time To Change campaign decreased desire for distance from people experiencing severe mental health problems)
- Enhancing knowledge and attitudes[5] → Positive relationships have been found between anti-stigma campaign awareness and community attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of target groups.

Council's anti-stigma campaign could engage the community through media and education and should leverage anti-stigma work taking place at other levels.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit Windana's recommendations to this important process and are available to speak further on any recommendations covered – including exploration of a collaborative program using the Living Free Project model.

[4] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10220277/

[5] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5663972/

OPERATING PROTOCOL / POLICY OPERATING STATEMENT

Adopted by:

.....
Chief Executive Officer
City of Melbourne

.....
Chief Commissioner
Victoria Police

Introduction

These protocols set out operating practice agreed and trialled by City of Melbourne and Victoria Police following ongoing engagement with the homeless sector service providers.

City of Melbourne (CoM), Victoria Police (VicPol), Department of Health and Human Services, and the homeless sector will partner to create an environment:

- That feels safe, friendly and accessible for the 900,000 people who daily live, work, study or socialise in the city
- Where people who are homeless are connected to the services and support that they individually request or require and their welfare is protected

By partnering we will ensure a stronger and more immediate approach to impacts on the amenity, enjoyment and use of the public space.

The key themes of the new operating protocols are:

- stronger connection and partnerships with service providers
- earlier intervention by CoM with support from VicPol
- more assertive actions by CoM and as required by VicPol
- lower tolerance of street clutter and amenity impacts
- a high level of consistency in application of the Local Law.

The parties commit to regularly reviewing the operation and effectiveness of the protocols in consultation with homeless sector.

Protocols

1. CoM will ensure rough sleepers are connected with appropriate services:
    a. to commence the pathway to housing
    b. to address drivers of homelessness which may include being a victim of family Violence, alcohol addiction, drug addiction or poor mental health.
2. Belongings should be kept to a reasonable minimum, being two bags which can be carried and other bedding like a sleeping bag, blanket or pillow.

3. Belongings not to be kept in the public space are mattresses, furniture, tents or any other structure that could be deemed as camping.

4. Items left unattended which impact on the amenity, enjoyment and use of the public space or that create a potential security risk will be removed with personal items stored and the remainder disposed of.

5. In general, groups of people sleeping rough in close proximity will be strongly discouraged due to the heightened amenity impacts and the risks to welfare for the individuals involved.

6. Behaviour in the public space should not impact the enjoyment of other users of the public place.

7. Unacceptable behaviour such as using drug paraphernalia, blocking the thoroughfare, intimidation or unruly activity which impacts on others' enjoyment of the public space is not permissible.

8. Entrances to businesses and residences must not be blocked and customers are to be free to enter and exit all buildings when open.

9. Fire escape doorways are not to be blocked at any time.

10. Access for people with a disability must not be impeded.

Relevant Operational Processes

- CoM now has a dedicated Daily Support Team delivered by Launch Housing. The team delivers daily engagement with and provides support to people sleeping rough. The team is not involved in addressing non compliance matters.

- CoM will continue to work with the homeless sector to find appropriate storage solutions for people sleeping rough.

- VicPol Officers will not be authorised under Council's Activities Local Law, rather they will support CoM Authorised Officers if and when a safety risk is perceived.

- Authorised Officers, VicPol and the homeless sector (including the daily support team) work together daily to address immediate issues.

- The group, consisting of City of Melbourne (CoM), Victoria Police (VicPol), Department of Health and Human Services, and the homeless sector will meet weekly to ensure the appropriate and timely level of support and services are provided to the rough sleepers and that there is a balanced approach to support, compliance and enforcement.

- CoM has recruited 4 additional local law officers with the requisite skills and will upskill other Authorised Officers to deal with the complex issues relating to rough sleeping and ensure that those officers have appropriate and ongoing training.

- CoM will continue to undertake occupational health and safety assessments in considering all proposed actions.

Scenario Examples

A. A small number (up to 4) of rough sleepers set up during the evening/night with their two bags and other bedding (like a sleeping bag, blanket or pillow), and sleep parallel alongside the shop fronts without blocking the doorways. When each individual leaves the area they take their belongings.

    a. CoM has no issue.

B. A small number (up to 4) of rough sleepers set up during the day with their two bags and other bedding (like a sleeping bag, blanket or pillow), and sleep parallel alongside the shop fronts without blocking the doorways. When each individual leaves the area they take their belongings.

    a. CoM will monitor for breaches of the Protocol.

C. A group of rough sleepers set up in one city block during the day which intimidates the other uses of the public space and impacts amenity.

    a. CoM will use its power under the Activities Local Law regarding behaviour (part 2), specifically nuisance (clause 2.1a) and amenity (clause 2.1b) to take action and will call upon VicPol to intervene if safety risk is perceived.

D. A camp is established which includes tents, furniture and bikes impacting the enjoyment and amenity of the public space for other users.

    a. CoM will use its power under the Activities Local Law regarding behaviour (part 2), specifically nuisance (clause 2.1a), amenity (clause 2.1b) and camping (clause 2.8) to take action and will call upon VicPol to intervene if safety risk is perceived.

E. An individual is consuming an illegal drug and or is behaving aggressively in public, impacting the enjoyment and amenity of the public space for other users.

    a. CoM will ensure that VicPol is informed if criminal behaviour is present and/or a safety risk is perceived.