

SINGLETON HOMELESSNESS

POLICY | Community Growth and Evolution

This policy outlines Singleton Council's role and commitment to reducing the impacts of homelessness within the Singleton Local Government Area (LGA) .

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Service Unit:	Community Growth and Evolution		
Responsible Officer:	Senior Community Development Specialist		
Responsible Director:	General Manager		
Authorisation Date:		Review Date:	
Minute No:			

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1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Title of the Policy and Commencement Date

The Singleton Council Homelessness Policy takes effect upon adoption by Council.

1.2 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to define the role and commitment of Singleton Council in mitigating the impacts of homelessness within the community. It aims to provide a structured framework that empowers Council and its staff to effectively support individuals experiencing homelessness and respond to community concerns related to homelessness. This policy emphasises a collaborative approach, engaging various stakeholders, including government entities, service providers, and community organisations, to create a unified response to homelessness.

Additionally, this policy ensures that people facing homelessness are treated with dignity and respect, safeguarding them from discrimination based on their housing status. It encompasses all Council services, with a particular focus on:

- Interactions with homeless individuals in public spaces.
- Access to Council services and facilities.
- Council's regulatory functions.
- Strategic planning initiatives.
- Community development efforts.

Through this comprehensive approach, the policy seeks to foster an inclusive environment that promotes support, understanding, and effective action to address homelessness in our community.

When looking specifically at rough sleepers in public spaces, the policy will follow the NSW Government Protocol for homeless people in public places.

2 OBJECTIVE

2.1 Objectives and Coverage of the Policy

- Align with the Council's Community Strategic Plan (CSP) priorities to foster a community that is creative, vibrant, inclusive, safe, healthy and sustainable.
- Define Council's role in addressing homelessness.
- Establish overarching principles for staff engagement with people experiencing homelessness in alignment with the NSW Government Protocol for homeless people in public places

3 APPLICATION

3.1 Application of this Policy

This policy applies to all Councillors and Council employees who interact with, advocate for, or strategically plan for, people experiencing homelessness. It will provide a framework and direction for homelessness protocols and strategies.

4 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy:

Term	Meaning
Homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none">People are considered homeless when they do not have accommodation that is safe, secure and appropriate. People can experience homelessness in 3 ways; Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Homelessness
Primary Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">People who live in improvised dwellings. This includes people who sleep on the street, in parks, derelict buildings or cars
Secondary Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">People who live in temporary accommodation. This includes people in emergency or short-term homeless services and people residing temporarily with friends or family;
Tertiary Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">People who live in accommodation without a lease or the private use of bathroom or kitchen facilities. This includes people in medium to long term boarding houses or caravan parks.
Public places	<ul style="list-style-type: none">For the purposes of this policy, public places are defined as land, buildings or places that are accessible to the public and are designated, regulated or managed by or on behalf of Council.
Rough sleeper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Someone who sleeps or lives outside because they have no alternative accommodation.

5 PRINCIPLES/BODY

5.1 Guiding Principles

The Homelessness policy recognises that:

- People who are homeless represent some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members in our community. People who experience homelessness face additional significant challenges to their health, wellbeing, dignity and often face exclusion from society.
- People who are homeless are not a homogenous group. As such, assumptions should not be made about the reasons people become

homeless; the types of people who experience homelessness; and whether or not they may be interested in accessing homelessness services.

- The Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Article 25, recognises that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of themselves and their family, including access to housing.
- People experiencing homelessness have the same rights as any member of the public to:
 - be in public places.
 - participate in public activities or events.
 - carry with them and manage their own belongings.
 - request or decline support or assistance.
- All members of the community, including those experiencing homelessness, have a shared responsibility to respect other users of public spaces and not unduly infringe on the safe and peaceful use of the public domain by others.
- Where possible, and when agreed upon by the person, people experiencing homelessness may be supported by specialist homelessness services and supported to exit homelessness.
- Council's Homelessness Policy does not override existing laws, statutory requirements or regulations; nor does it diminish the ability of agencies to enforce them.

5.2 Council's role and approach to supporting people who experience homelessness

The Commonwealth and State Governments hold primary responsibility for funding and delivering services to assist individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The role of local government in this space is not defined under Australian legislation and is generally limited to advocacy and support.

Singleton Council does not have a direct role in the delivery of homelessness services. However, Council recognises that homelessness is a complex issue influenced by a range of social, economic, and systemic factors. Addressing it effectively requires a coordinated and collaborative approach across all levels of government, service providers, and the broader community.

Council's contribution to this collective effort may include:

- Facilitating partnerships and collaborative responses with relevant service providers to support individuals experiencing homelessness and connecting people experiencing homelessness with appropriate services.
- Working with emergency response agencies to ensure people experiencing homelessness are considered in disaster preparedness and response planning.
- Delivering strategically planned infrastructure and social programs that benefit the broader community, including those experiencing homelessness.
- Collaborating with government and non-government stakeholders to identify and respond to unmet needs within the local community.

- Advocating on behalf of vulnerable community members, including those experiencing homelessness.
- Providing education and awareness programs that promote understanding of the rights of people experiencing homelessness and fostering community cohesion.
- Where public spaces are required for events, programs, or ceremonies and are occupied by people sleeping rough, Council may issue notice of the upcoming activity and request temporary relocation. It is important to note that Council does not hold legislative authority to enforce relocation.

Singleton Council will take a human-centred approach to interacting with people who experience homelessness, with the same respect and dignity provided to the whole community. In all interactions with people sleeping rough in Council-managed public spaces, Council will adhere to the NSW Government Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places. Council will also apply all relevant laws, statutory requirements, and regulations, including but not limited to child-safe legislation.

Further detail on Council's approach to homelessness is outlined in the Singleton Council Homelessness Framework, which supports the implementation of this policy.

6 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)*
- *Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act 2022*
- *Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Regulation 2022*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*
- *Children's Guardian Act 2019*

7 DOCUMENT INFORMATION

7.1 Related Documents

Number	Title
25/77804	• Homelessness Framework
25/29872	• Community Strategic Plan
22/68636	• Community Development Strategy 2022-2026
25/67072	• Advocacy Agenda
POL/1028.1	• Child Safe Policy
POL/1011	• Code of Conduct
POL/40009	• Social Media Policy
25/73171	• NSW Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places

8 RESPONSIBLE OFFICER / POLICY OWNER

Ownership of this policy rests with the Senior Community Development Specialist.

9 RESPONSIBILITIES

Parties or Persons	Responsibilities
ELT and Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocate for homelessness solutions and funding
Rangers or delegated Council staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In line with NSW Protocol for homeless people in public spaces, engage with people who experience homelessness.• Respond to community concerns raised on people experiencing homelessness.
Senior Community Development Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor homeless data and implementation of relevant actions in Council strategies and plans• Maintain referral networks and keep referral documents up to date.
Manager Infrastructure Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate homelessness needs into emergency planning.
Manager Community Services Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement child safety training to relevant staff.

10 APPROVAL

As per cover sheet.

11 MONITORING

This policy will be monitored by the Senior Community Development Specialist to ensure compliance.

12 REVIEW DATE

This policy, once adopted, is to remain in force until it is reviewed by Council. This policy is to be reviewed approximately every four (4) years to ensure that it meets legislative requirements.

13 RECORD KEEPING, CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

This policy is to be made available for public viewing as required under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act, 2009*.

14 BREACHES AND SANCTIONS

Any breaches of this Policy will be referred to the General Manager for appropriate action.

15 DOCUMENT HISTORY

The below table provides a summary of changes and amendments to this document.

Version	Date Amended	Author	Comments (eg reasons for review)
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