

# Homelessness Policy

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**PREPARED BY:**

**Business, Sport and Community Services Unit**



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SUTHERLAND SHIRE

## 1. PURPOSE

Shire Council has a responsibility for the public domain and must balance the needs of all users of public space. This Policy has been developed in consultation with staff from Public Safety and Lifeguards, in addition to NSW Police, community and charitable organisations providing support and services to homeless people.

Sutherland Shire Council recognises Housing NSW's *Protocol for homeless people in public places* and is aware of the principals of this protocol in relation to homelessness issues. Council recognises that there will always be homeless people in Sutherland Shire. The aim of the policy is to improve access to facilities, services and safety for those who are homeless as well as to outline the approach to be followed by staff in supporting the delivery of services to homeless people.

## 2. APPLICATION

The policy applies to all staff employed by Council in any capacity, however it will have the greatest impact on the routine work of the Business Sport and Community Services and Public Safety and Lifeguards Units. The policy is designed to indicate the most appropriate response to designated situations. Some flexibility is required to allow for variations under different circumstances.

## 3. PRINCIPLES

Council will always work towards reducing the number of Homeless people within the Sutherland Shire. Homeless people, like all other members of the public, have the right to enjoy public places for activities that do not create an adverse impact on the rights of other users in the community.

While the provision of homeless support services and housing options are primarily State/Commonwealth Government responsibilities, homeless people do make heavy use of public infrastructure which is often owned by Council. It is therefore appropriate that Council Officers focus on the following principles to assist and complement the work of other levels of government, the private sector, community-based support services and neighbouring Councils, when dealing with homeless people in public places.

- **All people, including the homeless, have a right to use public space and assets while at the same time not creating an adverse impact on the rights of other users in the community**
- **Council has a responsibility, alongside other agencies, to protect the safety, security and wellbeing of all persons who use public spaces**
- **All people should be treated respectfully and appropriately and not discriminated against on the basis of their situation**
- **Homeless people are community members and should have access to a right of reply and appeals/complaints mechanism**
- **Council Officers are not direct service providers and cannot provide ongoing care and case management to homeless people, this specifically includes transport**

## 4. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 4.1 Responsible Officer

The Manager Business Sport and Community Services, is the Responsible Officer for this policy and is responsible for developing and reviewing guidelines to support the implementation of this policy.

#### **4.2 Council**

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1993, Council is responsible for the use and management of public land.

#### **4.3 Chief Executive Officer**

Council has delegated the Chief Executive Officer the authority to execute any necessary documentation.

#### **4.4 Directors**

Directors are responsible for ensuring their Division adheres to the requirements of this policy and provide guidance in respect of achievement of the strategic objectives of the policy within their division and the organisation.

#### **4.5 Staff**

Staff must adhere to the requirements of this policy and operate within the authorities of the Local Government Act 1993.

### **5. MONITORING**

Whilst numerical short term measures of success are very difficult to gauge in regard to homeless people, it is important that all aspects of this Policy be monitored to ascertain the level of success in achieving the stated aims. It is proposed that the Sutherland Shire Council Homelessness Policy be examined 12 months after implementation. The evaluation will consist of an examination of the activity of Council in meeting its policy directions, and the impact of this policy on both homeless people and the wider community.

The performance indicators we will examine include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Reduction in number of complaints arising from conflict over public space
- Increased referral of homeless people to relevant services
- More positive attitudes toward homeless people from the rest of the community
- An increase in collaboration between all levels of government and non-government services

### **6. RECORD KEEPING, CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY**

Council adheres to and complies with the NSW State Records Act 1998 and Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 through its Enterprise Content Management Policy and Privacy Policy.

### **7. BREACHES OF POLICY**

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with normal disciplinary procedures and will be advised to the Chief Executive Officer and / or Director Shire Service, via the Manager Business Sport and Community Services.

### **8. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Homeless People in Public Places Guidelines

### **9. RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES**

- Local Government Act 1993 (NSW).

- State Records Act 1998 (NSW).
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW).
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW).
- Housing NSW's Protocol for homeless people in public places

## 10. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Meaning
Homelessness	<p>There are three broadly accepted categories of homelessness:</p> <p><u>Primary Homeless</u> – those who are ‘sleeping rough’, without a roof over their head, often in public places or in improvised dwellings</p> <p><u>Secondary Homeless</u> - Those in transitional housing such as emergency accommodation (hostels), refuges (youth, women and children), people residing temporarily friends/relatives</p> <p><u>Tertiary Homeless</u> - People whose living arrangements do not provide them with security of tenure as provided by a lease, or who are living in accommodation which is unsafe or harmful to their health such as boarding houses, caravan parks and rooming houses</p>
Public Space	<p>A public space is a space that is generally open and accessible to people. Road (including the pavement), public square, parks, reserves and beaches are typically considered public space. To a limited extent, government buildings which are open to the public, such as public libraries are public spaces, although they tend to have restricted areas and greater limits upon use.</p>
<i>Protocol for homeless people in public places</i>	<p>The NSW Government introduced the <a href="#">Protocol for homeless people in public places</a> to help ensure that homeless people are treated respectfully and appropriately and are not discriminated against on the basis of their homeless status.</p>

End of Document

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