



We call on Melbourne City Councillors to reject homeless laws that have failed elsewhere

Joint media statement from Council to Homeless Persons, Launch Housing, Melbourne City Mission, The Salvation Army, VincentCare and Justice Connect Homeless Law

INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE WITH THE UNDERSIGNED.

Media enquiries: Kate Colvin, kate@chp.org.au, 0418 103 292

Monday 6 February

We are concerned the proposed amendments to by laws to be discussed by the City of Melbourne on Tuesday 7 February will compound the vulnerability of already vulnerable citizens, while not reducing the numbers of people sleeping rough.

The proposed amendment to clause 2.8 of the City of Melbourne Activities Local Law 2009 says: 'unless in accordance with a permit, a person must not camp in or on any public place'.

The City of Melbourne has also proposed amendments to insert a new provision clause 2.12 into the Local Law to bar people from leaving items unattended in a public place. It would allow for belongings to be confiscated and impounded and then sold, destroyed or given away unless a fee is paid within 14 days.

These reforms will enable police and council officers to require people sleeping in the street to move on, forcing people who are already extremely vulnerable into more hidden, and consequently more unsafe corners of our city.

This will expose them to greater risk of assault, and will make it more difficult for homeless services to locate and engage people to support them into housing.

Other cities, such as Los Angeles have previously enacted similar laws empowering police to move people on for sitting or sleeping on the street. Despite these laws, and considerable cost expended enforcing the provisions, at least 5,000 people still sleep in the 50-block central city area.

The laws in Los Angeles had so little effect because the drivers of homelessness remain unaddressed. Like Melbourne, Los Angeles lacks housing that people on low incomes can afford.

The City of Melbourne has had a very positive record working constructively with services and police to manage the humanitarian crisis on our streets in a way that considers public safety. The Victorian Government has also made a series of funding commitments to address homelessness over the past year.

However, the housing crisis has been created by decades of state and federal governments failing to address the growing crisis in affordable housing, both in private rental and social housing, and will take a sustained effort to turn around.

The only solution is for state and federal governments to join together to tackle the housing crisis that underlies our homelessness epidemic. In the short term the most effective solution to prevent and respond to growing homelessness in our community would be the immediate spot purchase of new public housing.

We urge Councillors to focus Council efforts on maximising the City of Melbourne's own capacity to deliver housing opportunities, and on advocacy for state and federal governments to address the housing crisis.

Undersigned by:

Council to Homeless Persons, Acting CEO, Kate Colvin
Launch Housing, CEO, Tony Keenan

The Salvation Army Victoria, Major Michael Coleman,
State Social Commander

Melbourne City Mission, CEO, Vicki Sutton
VincentCare, CEO, John Blewonski

Justice Connect Homeless Law, Manager and Principal
Lawyer, Lucy Adams

