

Council to Homeless Persons – 2022 Budget Briefing Paper

Homelessness has skyrocketed in the past two years. As entire industries have been stood down, and regional rents have increased rapidly, an enormous surge in demand has seen many homelessness services overwhelmed with calls for assistance. Without the staff to respond, many services have been forced to turn off their voicemails. Those who don't succeed in making contact with a worker, aren't recorded in the statistics.

Council to Homeless Person has produced a series of Budget briefing papers to highlight strategic priorities to scale homelessness services to meet the demand. We will be calling for investment in targeted programs to address gaps in the current services, including housing and support for young people, and long term flexible support for adults and families with complex needs. This budget submission was written with the current moment in mind.

This push builds on and complements recent investments by the Victorian Government in the Private Rental Assistance Program, From Homelessness to a Home, and the Rough Sleeping Initiative. It also accounts for opportunities stemming from the Big Housing Build which is currently underway, and the soon to be published Ten Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy, and Social Housing Regulation Review.

There are so many opportunities at this moment to reimagine homelessness service delivery in Victoria, and to build a homelessness service system that can end homelessness in our State. But the stressors of the current time also mean that alongside seizing the opportunities, we need to bolster the foundations.

April 2022



**Council
to Homeless
Persons**

THE ISSUE: PREVENTING MORE HOMELESSNESS

To access most of Victoria’s approximately 140 homelessness support organisations, people without a home must first visit an ‘entry point’ service, to have their needs assessed, and be matched to the most relevant local service.

Since 2011, the number of people accessing Victoria’s homelessness services has increased by almost 30,000 and has grown in complexity. More clients have mental health issues (from 18% of clients to 31%), have experienced family violence (36% - 46%), or are without income (4% - 9%). More people are also requiring support multiple times each year. Despite this growth in need, there has not been any permanent increase to the entry point workforce since 2009.

In 2019-20, entry points were already so under-resourced they were unable to meet the needs of 108 people seeking help each day. In 2021, new surges in homelessness have made demand impossible to manage, with staff so busy, they don’t have any capacity to return calls. Unmet demand has increased to 133 people each day, not including those who couldn’t get through.

The result is a greater proportion of effort inevitably directed to responding to immediate crises, such as finding a roof for the night for as many people as possible. This leaves less capacity for the time consuming, but critical work that can prevent or help to quickly end homelessness.

To enable homelessness services to prevent as much homelessness as possible, we need to urgently increase resources for homelessness prevention. These staff can help people update social housing applications, get back onto Centrelink payments, negotiate an impending eviction, and connect with other supports. In 2021, the Victorian Government funded 11 workers to support the Covid-19 hotel response. This expanded capacity needs to be retained, and expanded.

THE ASK:

CHP is urging for a \$118.4 million commitment over the next four years to increase services for homelessness prevention.

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Homelessness Prevention/ Intake	\$2.2M	\$2.3M	\$2.3M	\$2.4M
Assessment and Planning workers	\$26.1M	\$26.9M	\$27.7M	\$28.5M
Brokerage	40.500	40.500	40.500	40.500
Total additional homelessness	\$28.3M	\$29.2M	\$30.0M	\$30.9M