



**Council to Homeless Persons**  
STRATEGIC PLAN 2020–2023

# Letter from CHP Board Chair and Chief Executive Officer

The Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) is the peak body representing organisations and individuals in Victoria with a commitment to ending homelessness.

Over the last four years, CHP has focused on elevating the issue of homelessness in our community, influencing policy decisions and building the capacity of homelessness services to reduce homelessness and to minimise the impact of homelessness experiences.

Over the life of the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan, CHP has:

- Elevated ending homelessness as a priority in the public debate by amplifying CHP's presence in the media, crafting effective budget and election funding asks, and playing a national role through Homelessness Australia and the Everybody's Home campaign
- Influenced the development of new and more effective models of specialist homelessness services provision working in partnership with the sector and other partners, such as philanthropy, business and other health and human services sectors
- Increased participation by people who are or who have been without a home in policy and practice development. This work has included: consolidating the reach of the Peer Education and Support Program (PESP) to new audiences; actively supporting the development of new consumer participation reference groups in the sector modelled on PESP; piloting a peer support resettlement program for people who have slept rough; delivering to, and learning from the experience of people who are or who have been without a home accessing the Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS); and embedding the input of people who are or who have been without a home into CHP policy, advocacy, communications and capacity building efforts
- Built Victoria's capacity to end homelessness by disseminating information on policy and best practice through Parity magazine, developed and commenced implementation of the SHS Transition Plan and Workforce Capability Framework, and extended CHP's role in the development and delivery of capacity building offerings supporting evidence-based contemporary practice
- Strengthened CHP's capacity and sustainability by securing philanthropic funding for significant projects, and again achieving accreditation.

This 2020–2023 Strategic Plan builds on the work of the previous plan.

CHP's work is underpinned by strong partnerships with people who have experienced homelessness, and it is guided by cross-sector collaboration. CHP recognises that sound evidence, combined with the voices of people who are or who have been without a home, offers the most powerful way to inform decisions about policy and practice.

Our members and key external stakeholders have told us that they value CHP's: focus on solutions; advocacy role at national, state and local levels; strongly collaborative style; work to bring the perspectives of people who are or who have been without a home to different sector discussions; and the policy focus on provision of housing as one of the key enablers to ending homelessness.

They have told us that they would like to see an even greater focus on: capacity building and development of the Specialist Homelessness Sector; promotion of evidence-based interventions; and on influencing better outcomes for people who are without a home across broader human services.

After reviewing CHP's progress against the last Plan and considering the views of our stakeholders, we look forward to working closely with all our partners in ending homelessness in Victoria and beyond, throughout the life of this Strategic Plan 2020–2023.



Cathy Humphrey, Board Chair



Jenny Smith, Chief Executive Officer

# Introduction

The Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) is the peak body representing organisations and individuals in Victoria with an interest in and commitment to ending homelessness.

## CHP currently:

- seeks to influence federal, state and local government policy in ending homelessness through providing policy advice and advocating to the Victorian Government and local Councils within Victoria, as well as making a significant national contribution to Homelessness Australia, the national (unfunded) peak body, and to the Everybody's Home national campaign
- provides the Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS) — the pioneering complaints service of Victoria's SHS services;
- leads consumer participation within Victoria's SHS and partnership with people who are or who have been without a home, through the Peer Education and Support Program (PESP)
- enhances the capacity of Victoria's SHS and broader service sectors through the provision of training, forums and dissemination of current policy, evidence based practice and research information
- produces *Parity*, Australia's leading national publication on homelessness and delivers a statewide biennial conference.

This Strategic Plan supports the CHP Board's vision for ending homelessness in Victoria.

## The strategic planning process

The plan is strongly evidence based, grounded in the experience of people who are or who have been without a home, and developed through considered cross-sector consultation.

To inform this 2020–2023 Strategic Plan, CHP undertook a member survey, together with consultations with key stakeholders, staff and a focus group with graduates and members of PESP.

## What we mean by 'ending homelessness'

Homelessness occurs at the intersection of personal vulnerabilities and structural forces, such as poverty and housing affordability. People who become homeless are often financially disadvantaged and some will have spent a lifetime in insecure housing.

Ending homelessness doesn't mean that people will never find themselves without shelter. It means that homelessness will be rare, the experience brief, and it will only happen once.

Ending homelessness requires action to reduce poverty, address family violence and discrimination, and critically to improve the supply of housing that is affordable to people on low incomes. Action is also needed to prevent homelessness occurring in the first place, and to deliver the supports and services needed to sustain housing that meet people's needs, particularly in relation to the health, disability, and justice systems.


Victoria requires the services to help people without homes to 'get housing' and for those with significant complexity in their lives 'to keep that housing'. Some people may need relatively little assistance for a short period of time, while others may need support over a lifetime.

## What we know about homelessness

Almost 25,000 Victorians are homeless on any given night. This includes families with children, young people, older people, single adults and people with disabilities, people in regional and rural Victoria and those in urban neighborhoods. Homelessness has been increasing in Victoria, with a rise of 43 per cent between 2006 and 2016 (ABS 2017) which is driving increased demand for homelessness services each year. The Census found that 85 per cent of Victorians experiencing homelessness were in Victoria's two largest cities, 12 per cent were in inner regional areas, and three per cent were in outer regional areas.

Several structural factors continue to contribute to the steady increase in homelessness. The number of homes that are affordable to low income households continues to shrink. Incomes from government benefits and pensions have not kept pace with rising housing costs. Casualised work has made employment less secure and incomes less predictable. Community support for households to remain healthy and stable are increasingly under-resourced, harder to access and often lack a focus on keeping people housed.

Each experience of homelessness is individual, however evidence continues to show that early experiences of homelessness and ongoing trauma, contribute to prolonged periods of homelessness later in life. Preventing homelessness for children and young people is central to efforts to end long-term homelessness.



Aboriginal Victorians are overrepresented among Victorians who experience homelessness. The historical experiences of dispossession and dislocation have left a lasting legacy of housing poverty. In 2018, 10 per cent of homeless Victorians were Aboriginal and 17 per cent of all Aboriginal people sought homelessness assistance. An Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, which sets out an ambitious long term agenda for change, has been developed by the Aboriginal community, in partnership with Government. CHP will work alongside the Aboriginal community to ensure that self-determination drives a culturally safe SH service system and an empowered Aboriginal controlled homelessness support sector.

## How can homelessness be ended for good?

The communities that have been successful in reducing homelessness have identified common themes as part of an integrated response. It is realistic to end homelessness, if the following is prioritised:

- **Structural drivers of homelessness** — including adequacy of incomes and an adequate supply of housing are addressed
- **Clear and responsive access** — to make sure a person can find and receive the assistance they need when they need it
- **Targeted prevention** — to stop households losing their homes in the first place
- **Effective crisis responses** — to respond to immediate needs whenever a person or family is homeless or about to become homeless
- **Rapid re-housing** — to get people back into housing fast and build the supports they need to stay housed
- **Permanent supportive housing** — to secure long-term affordable housing for people who have experienced chronic homelessness
- **Mobilisation of other health and human services** — to maximise intervention as soon as possible
- **A strategic framework for ending homelessness** — guides a system-level, whole of community response.

# Strategic plan

## Vision

An end to homelessness in Victoria.

## Purpose

CHP is the peak Victorian body representing organisations and individuals with a commitment to ending homelessness. CHP works to achieve this purpose through providing leadership in policy development, advocacy, capacity building and working in partnership with people who are or who have been without a home.

## Guiding principles

CHP believes that homelessness is unacceptable, avoidable and within our reach to resolve. As a peak body and member organisation, CHP prioritises its work to where it can have most impact. To that end, CHP will:

- develop, support and promote evidence-based research, policy and practice
- maximise the effective influence of people who are or who have been without a home on the development of homelessness policy and practice
- reflect the diversity of experience and the importance of inclusive practice, to benefit all Victorians impacted by homelessness in all of CHP's work
- recognise Aboriginal people as the first peoples of Australia and work alongside them to realise their right to self-determination. Aboriginal people are the arbiters of good practice and must be empowered to make decisions about their own future
- provide leadership in influencing and advocating for systems change. Implement effective strategies to influence decision-makers to both end homelessness, and to address the drivers of homelessness, including: poverty, access to housing, discrimination, violence and access to appropriate health and community support
- build the capacity of CHP members, the SHS and broader service sectors to achieve the best outcomes for people who experience homelessness
- galvanise cross-sector collaboration to strengthen a shared commitment to ending homelessness. This includes working in partnership with other peaks and advocacy bodies, human service providers including justice and health, government, private and philanthropic sectors, and with the community to enhance outcomes for people who experience homelessness.

## Strategic directions

To deliver impact over the next four years, CHP will:

1. Inform community attitudes and influence government policy and decision making to end homelessness
2. Strengthen partnerships with people who are or who have been without a home to end homelessness
3. Build the capacity of the human services system to end homelessness
4. Strengthen CHP as a contemporary and sustainable peak

## Monitoring and communication

The Plan includes objectives to support each of the strategic directions listed above. Each year of the Strategic Plan, CHP's Operational Plan will include KPIs designed to progressively achieve each of the plan's objectives. Updates on CHP's progress in meeting the objectives of the Plan will be provided to the CHP Board through regular reporting processes, and to our stakeholders and members through our Annual Report.

## Language

Through the language it uses, CHP strives to convey as clearly and effectively as possible, its respect for the expertise of those who have experienced homelessness.

This plan has continued to use the term 'consumer participation' to reference the expertise of those who are or who have been clients of the SHS.

The plan has introduced the term 'people who are or who have been without a home' frequently in place of using the term 'those with the lived experience of homelessness'.



# Strategic directions

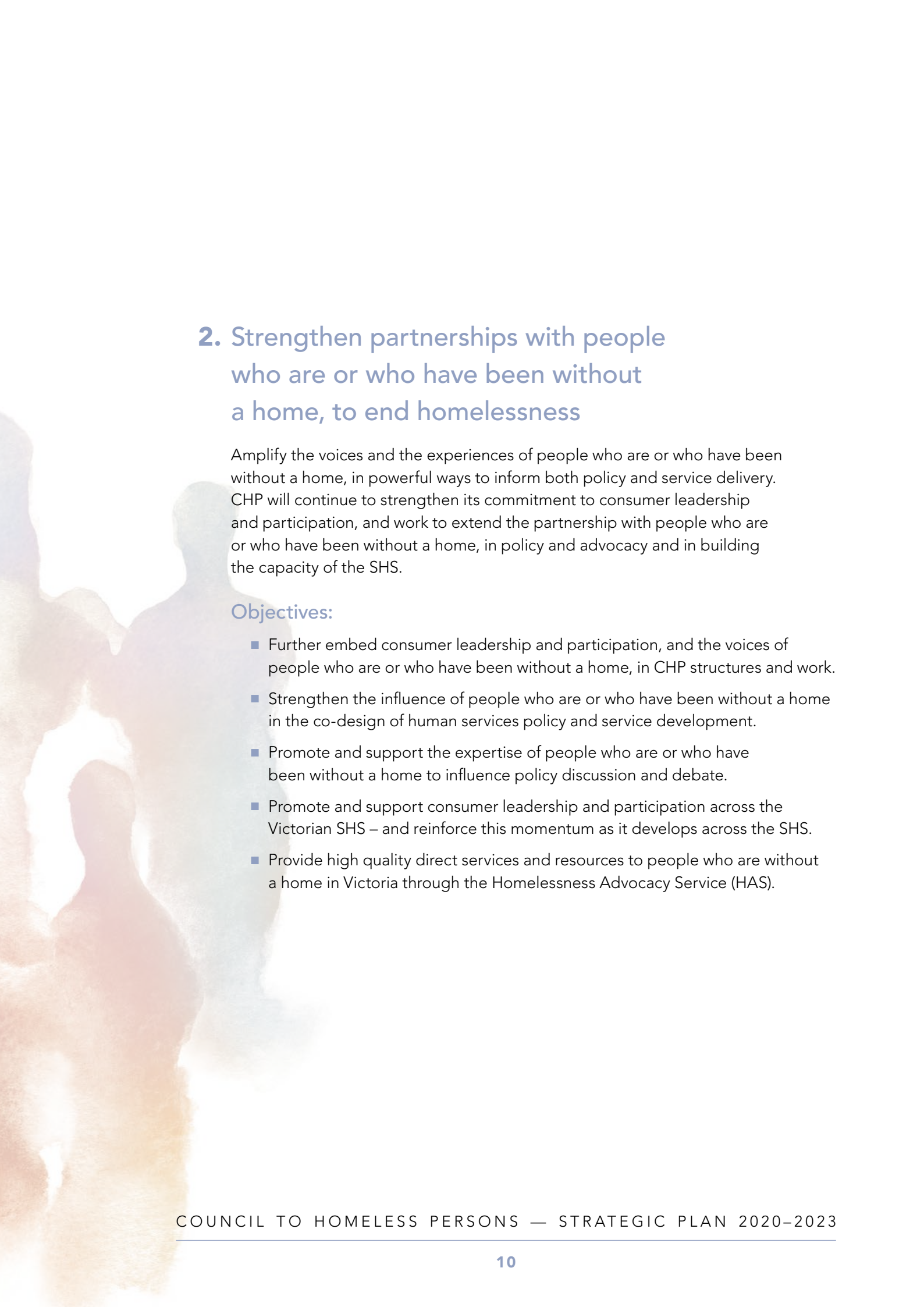
To deliver impact over the next four years, CHP will:

## 1. Inform community attitudes and influence government policy and decision making to end homelessness

CHP will engage the community and policy makers in identifying and implementing solutions to end homelessness, and promoting the interventions that research and practice demonstrate to be effective.

### Objectives:

- Influence community attitudes and government policy, both nationally and at a state level.
- Promote joined up solutions to end homelessness with a strong and independent voice at both national and state levels.
- Generate evidence-based policy and contribute to public debate
- Harness both the expertise of people who are or who have been without a home and those working in the SHS.
- Inform and advocate for development of policy and services that are designed to prevent homelessness, reduce the duration of homelessness and stop the reoccurrence of homelessness.

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## 2. Strengthen partnerships with people who are or who have been without a home, to end homelessness

Amplify the voices and the experiences of people who are or who have been without a home, in powerful ways to inform both policy and service delivery. CHP will continue to strengthen its commitment to consumer leadership and participation, and work to extend the partnership with people who are or who have been without a home, in policy and advocacy and in building the capacity of the SHS.

### Objectives:

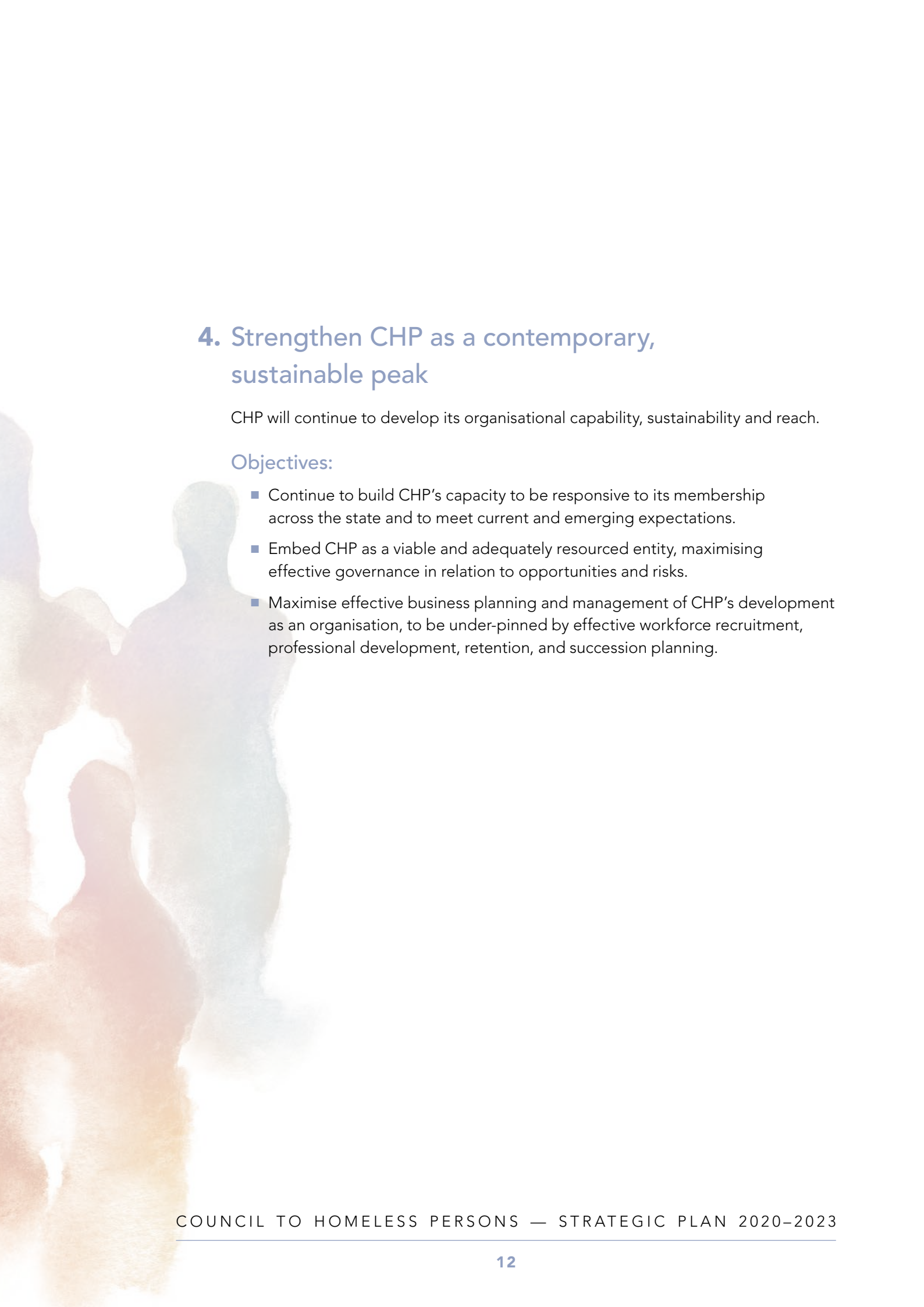
- Further embed consumer leadership and participation, and the voices of people who are or who have been without a home, in CHP structures and work.
- Strengthen the influence of people who are or who have been without a home in the co-design of human services policy and service development.
- Promote and support the expertise of people who are or who have been without a home to influence policy discussion and debate.
- Promote and support consumer leadership and participation across the Victorian SHS – and reinforce this momentum as it develops across the SHS.
- Provide high quality direct services and resources to people who are without a home in Victoria through the Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS).

### 3. Build the capacity of the human services system to end homelessness

Ending homelessness requires a service system that delivers the right support at the right time, alongside access to affordable housing and equitable access to human services, including community services, health, mental health, justice, education, and employment. CHP will support the SHS to build its capacity and expertise and take opportunities to build the awareness and expertise of other sectors to enhance outcomes for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

#### Objectives:

- Articulate and promote the interventions needed to end homelessness within an integrated human services system.
- Work in partnership with the tertiary education sector, other peak bodies and networks to maximise capacity building opportunities for the SHS and broader health and human services sectors.
- Contribute to the development of a highly skilled SHS workforce.
- Become the key provider of capacity building for the SHS in Victoria.
- Provide leadership and support to the SHS and other stakeholders by disseminating evidence-based practice.
- Provide opportunities for the SHS and human service sectors to share information, and learn about best practice for preventing and ending homelessness.
- Build on the strong foundations developed by Local Area Service Networks (LASN's) to maximise the effectiveness of local service coordination and place-based responses.

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## 4. Strengthen CHP as a contemporary, sustainable peak

CHP will continue to develop its organisational capability, sustainability and reach.

### Objectives:

- Continue to build CHP's capacity to be responsive to its membership across the state and to meet current and emerging expectations.
- Embed CHP as a viable and adequately resourced entity, maximising effective governance in relation to opportunities and risks.
- Maximise effective business planning and management of CHP's development as an organisation, to be under-pinned by effective workforce recruitment, professional development, retention, and succession planning.