Council to Homeless Persons

Victorian Election 2026

A Home for Every Victorian

Acknowledgement of Country

Council to Homeless Persons acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung People on whose land our office is located, and the Traditional Custodians of the many lands on which we work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

We honour the histories, cultures, knowledges, and enduring connection to Country of First Nations peoples. We support Treaty as a pathway to self-determination, justice, and a future where First Peoples' voices, rights and sovereignty are respected. We work to address the overrepresentation of First Nations people in homelessness, building on the achievements of First Nations land rights, housing, and social justice warriors.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

About Council to Homeless Persons

Council to Homeless Persons is the peak body representing organisations and individuals in Victoria working to end homelessness.

Our vision is to end homelessness in our State.

We work towards this goal through leadership in policy and advocacy, building the capacity of Victoria's homelessness sector, and working in partnership with people who are or who have been without a home.

This election, put housing fairness first.

This election is a crucial choice for our political representatives, and for the voters of our state.

Record numbers of Victorians are coming to homelessness services. In a dual housing and cost of living crisis, people from all walks of life now need assistance: working Victorians who are making great sacrifices but still struggling to pay the rent; women and children leaving family violence; young people who should be dreaming of their futures but instead are worrying where they'll sleep tonight; and older Victorians who, after a lifetime contributing to society, now find themselves couch-surfing or sleeping rough.

Homelessness can happen to anyone, and the human cost is tragic: people experiencing homelessness in Australia die at an average age of just 44.[i]

The good news is that we know how to end homelessness. The evidence is clear and the models are available – some have been achieved overseas, and many others right here in Victoria.

What's been missing is the decisive government investment to implement those solutions at scale.

So this election, we ask Victoria's political candidates to choose to prioritise the forward-thinking, community-building responses that will end homelessness, as outlined in this guide.

And we ask Victorians to choose to give their votes to those candidates who put housing fairness first.

Deborah Di Natale
CEO – Council to Homeless Persons

Summary: This election...

STRENGTHEN the sector
to provide best outcomes for clients & vital support for workers

Implement a cutting-edge, all-of-government approach to ending homelessness by developing a new Victorian Homelessness Strategy. This should include detailed Action Plans for:

- Prevention & early intervention
- Ending youth homelessness
- Embedding lived experience voices throughout the sector to elevate impact
- Workforce development, to support practitioners to meet the very different challenges now facing the sector

HELP Victorians in crisis
to save lives and create a safer, more cohesive community

Help Victorians sleeping rough achieve long-term housing by a Housing First uplift that doubles Supportive Housing funding linked to Assertive Outreach programs.

Deliver 500 medium-term supported housing places for young people who are living with mental illness and experiencing homelessness.

Launch a Public Housing Repair Blitz to bring back online properties currently unutilized because awaiting repairs. Allocations of these reactivated properties should prioritise people sleeping rough engaged through Assertive Outreach, and family violence victim-survivors.

BUILD Victoria's housing future
so every Victorian has a safe foundation for a dignified & productive life

Commit to a Public and Community Housing Building Blitz delivering 80,000 homes over the next 10 years, to lift Victoria to the national average for social housing. This must also include sustained and significant increases in public housing.

Stimulate this Building Blitz by:

- Increasing the uplift in public and community housing through the public towers redevelopment, so that the finished towers have an equal number of social and community housing compared to affordable & market housing
- Implementing mandatory inclusionary zoning to include public and community housing in activity centres and growth corridors
- Making at least 20% of homes in unlocked and rezoned surplus government housing public and community housing

PRIORITISE housing fairness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people
to help repair the inequity caused by colonisation

Continue implementation of *Manna-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort* with particular focus on the election priorities identified by the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum.

Deliver housing fairness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people...

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For 250 years, colonisation and dispossession have caused incalculable harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and led to rates of homelessness far exceeding the rest of the population. Last year, 1 in 5 Aboriginal people sought support from Victoria's homelessness sector, compared to 1 in 70 of the overall population.

Aboriginal homelessness is one the greatest injustices in Victoria today, but community leaders have developed a pathway to address it through *Manna-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort*, the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework.

The next Victorian Government should continue implementation of *Manna-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort* with particular focus on the following priorities identified by the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum:

1. Build 3000 culturally appropriate social housing dwellings over ten years, owned and managed by Aboriginal housing providers through the Aboriginal Social Housing Growth Strategy.

2. Expand the Aboriginal Private Rental Access Program across all Victorian regions and increase brokerage and tenancy support funding.

3. Establish a statewide network of Aboriginal Entry Points to provide consistent and reliable access to housing and homelessness support

4. Prevent homelessness before it happens by expansion of Aboriginal Homes Thrive and the Aboriginal Tenancies at Risk program.

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5. End homelessness for Aboriginal children and young people by establishing a cross-government taskforce bringing together housing, child protection and related portfolios to develop practical solutions that reduce service fragmentation and respond to emerging need.

6. Invest in Aboriginal-led Youth Foyers and targeted youth housing programs to increase access to safe and sustainable housing for Aboriginal young people across Victoria.

7. Build a stronger Aboriginal homelessness sector by supporting workforce development pathways, leadership programs and a statewide capability framework to strengthen culturally informed practice, improve service coordination and ensure the Aboriginal homelessness system is equipped to meet future demand.

8. Expand Aboriginal-led Housing First responses, including Homes First for Aboriginal Victorians, to help end rough sleeping, reduce chronic homelessness and improve outcomes for the most vulnerable Aboriginal Victorians.

Strengthen the sector...

to provide best outcomes for clients and vital support for workers.

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As construction of social housing in Victoria over recent few decades failed to keep pace with population growth and rising cost of living, the state's level of homelessness has reached crisis level – and then continued to increase.

The number of presentations at Victorian homelessness services is now over 105,000 people per year.[ii] The priority social housing waiting list is perilously close to 40,000 applications.[iii] A lack of long-term housing has kept people in crisis and transitional accommodation longer.

This has in turn forced homelessness providers to resort to expensive and unsafe motels to house clients - and to turn many more away with no outcome at all. Faced with levels of demand they are not resourced to support, access points have to close their doors early each day.

As frustrations mount, demoralised staff are leaving the homelessness sector in numbers approaching 30% turnover each year[iv]; incidents jeopardising psychosocial safety at services are increasing; and tens of thousands of Victorians are being left in unsafe situations without any reason to believe a solution is in sight.

Put simply, Victoria's homelessness system is not built to handle this level of demand, and the fragmented, short-term fixes we have relied on are not sufficient to end this crisis.

Victoria's next government should deliver a Homelessness Strategy to create a cutting-edge, all-of-government homelessness response that is consciously designed to meet the full extent and shape of the challenge we now face.

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This Strategy should build upon the important work already done by the Ministerial Homelessness Reform Advisory Group to identify and develop reforms to the homelessness system, such as:

- new triage processes and technology at the Initial Assessment and Planning stage
- allocation and prioritisation processes that better help people get services suited to their level of need
- governance procedures that balance statewide consistency and co-ordination with place- and community-based knowledge, authority and accountability.

This will ensure the sector's valuable and limited resources are being most efficiently and effectively used to deliver the best outcomes for Victorians.

The Strategy should also include detailed Action Plans for the following key areas that have too often been overlooked in strategic planning and/or are critical for dealing with current challenges:

- **Prevention & early intervention;**
- **Ending youth homelessness;**
- **Embedding lived experience; and**
- **Workforce development.**

Prevention and early intervention

Building the amount of social housing to meet Victoria's need will take time. But a strategic statewide approach to homelessness prevention and early intervention can protect Victorians sooner, and provide vital relief to homelessness

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services and the Victorian Housing Register. Prevention is also more cost-effective than supporting people through an experience of homelessness.

The homelessness sector is predominantly geared towards crisis responses. To change this, we need a Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan. This should include the following:

- Improving integration with other sectors that people at risk of homelessness engage with long before they come to homelessness services, such as health, education, justice, disability, and refugee & migrant support;
- Scaling up existing prevention and early intervention programs that have shown success; and
- Identifying responses that have been successfully implemented in other jurisdictions and could be introduced in Victoria.

Ending youth homelessness

In 2024–25, 22,835 young people sought support from homelessness services, representing more than 1 in 5 of all clients. Half of them presented alone.[v] These young people are forced to navigate a system that is designed with adults in mind, and which fails to adequately respond to their unique developmental and living needs. Victoria urgently needs a modern plan to end this youth homelessness emergency.

An effective Youth Homelessness Action Plan will deliver a tailored response ensuring young people have somewhere safe and dignified to call home. But it is also vital adult homelessness prevention, because youth homelessness is a key driver of long-term disadvantage and is now the most common pathway into adult homelessness. It's an essential investment not just in the future of tens of thousands of young Victorians, but in the future of Victoria itself.

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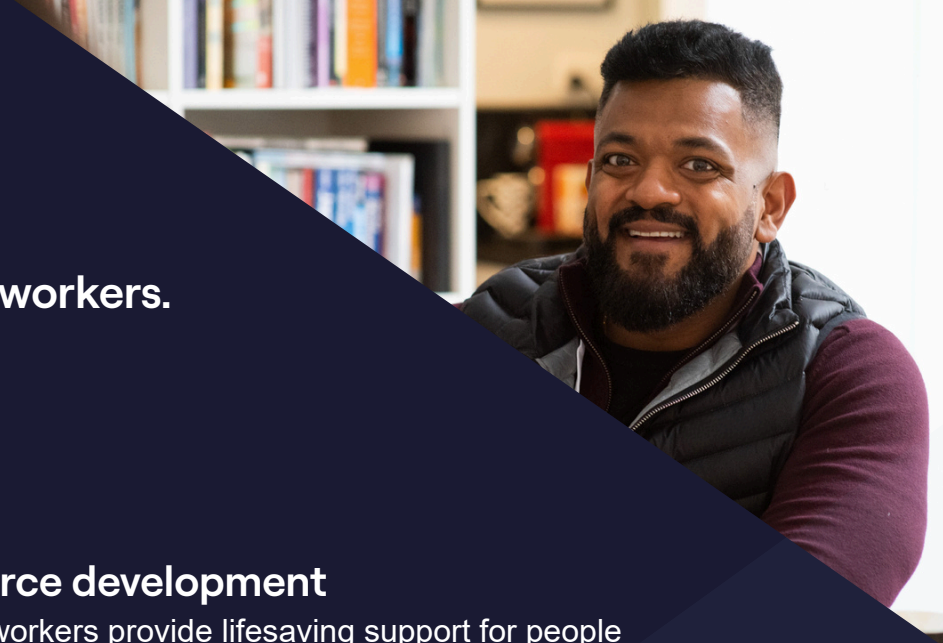

Embedding lived experience to elevate impact

People with lived experience of homelessness understand it best. To ensure Victoria's resources are used most effectively when responding to homelessness, lived experience must be integrated into all levels of service design and delivery.

As the homelessness sector's lived experience workforce grows, strategic investment is key to ensuring that workers with lived experience are well supported and agencies are prepared. Thinking strategically now means laying out a pathway for more lived experience workers to join the sector in a range of roles from the frontline to the boardroom. There is also an untapped potential in involving them in much broader types of work including governance, representation, education and training, program co-design, and co-research about homelessness.

Workforce development

Frontline workers provide lifesaving support for people experiencing homelessness, managing extremely high levels of risk. But because the homelessness system was designed decades ago for a very different context, workers themselves are not being adequately supported to meet the new challenges presented by Victoria's homelessness crisis.

A Workforce Development Action Plan can ensure Victoria has enough workers with the right skills and support to make a difference. It should include:

- statewide modelling on the skills and expertise that workers need at each level and program type in the SHS
- mapping career pathways with a focus on retention
- redesigning the funding model for workers to acknowledge their expertise and their management of acute risk
- a focus on preventing workplace trauma and occupational violence and aggression
- a framework for cross-sectoral collaboration
- a plan to implement the recently announced changes to the SCHADS Award.

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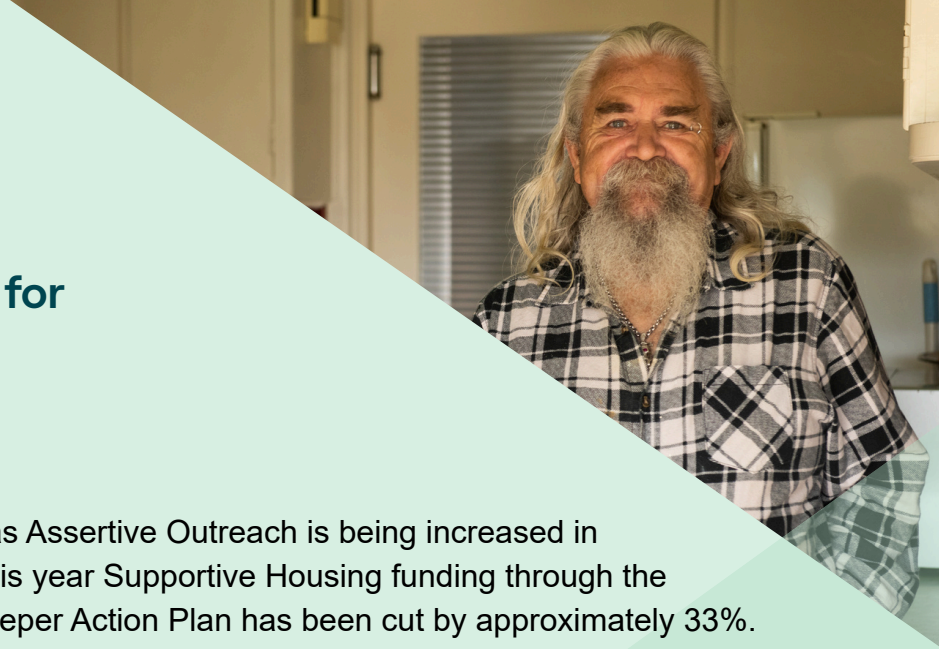

A Housing First uplift to double Supportive Housing linked to Assertive Outreach

Assertive Outreach is a potentially life-saving intervention for people sleeping rough – and this year the State Government committed new investment to expand Assertive Outreach to every DFFH region of Victoria.

But Assertive Outreach is only one half of the solution. Its success relies on also prioritising Assertive Outreach clients for Supportive Housing, so they have a stable foundation to start their recovery as soon as possible.

Victoria has very recently been a world leader at this Supportive Housing. The "From Homelessness to a Home" program ("H2H") had a 93% success rate supporting clients who had been sleeping rough to sustain a tenancy longer than 12 months, through this Housing First approach. It reduced Emergency Department presentations by 20%, homelessness service use by 16% and hospital admissions by 6%.[vi]

But even as Assertive Outreach is being increased in Victoria, this year Supportive Housing funding through the Rough Sleeper Action Plan has been cut by approximately 33%. Assertive Outreach teams have also lost their ability to give their clients a "Housing First" priority listing on the Victorian Housing Register ("VHR"), and to backdate applications to a rough sleeper's first contact with the SHS. These changes undermine the effectiveness of Assertive Outreach and reduce support to Victorians living in the most vulnerable circumstances.

Victoria's next government should double Supportive Housing funding linked to Assertive Outreach programs, to reinstate allocations lost by recent changes and provide growth. The power for Assertive Outreach teams to give their clients "Housing First" priority status on the VHR & to backdate applications should also be reinstated.

This will give thousands of Victorians the foundation they need to be healthy and pursue education, employment and other opportunities to contribute to their community. It will also create savings to the State's health and justice systems of approximately $88,000 per client per year.[vii]

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Deliver 500 medium-term supported housing places for young people living with mental illness & experiencing homelessness

Last year, more than 11,000 young people aged 12-24 sought support from Victorian homelessness services on their own.[viii] Many of them were experiencing acute mental health issues. In fact, MCM's Victorian Youth Homelessness Snapshot 2026 found that 62% of their clients in Greater Melbourne and 46% of their clients in Latrobe, Gippsland reported self-harm, suicidal ideation or suicide attempts.[ix]

These young people cycle through crisis accommodation and emergency departments without an adequate response to their mental health support needs. For example, MCM's Victorian Youth Homelessness Snapshot 2024 found half of their clients had attended an emergency department for mental health concerns, and two-thirds of those young people were discharged back into homelessness.

It was specifically to address this sort of failure that in 2021, the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recommended the State Government invest in "500 new medium-term (up to two years) supported housing places for young people aged between 18 to 25 who are living with mental illness and experiencing unstable housing or homelessness"[x].

The State Government commited to implementing the recommendation. But 5 years on, there has been no progress towards delivering these vital places.

Victoria's next government should deliver these 500 medium-term supported housing places for young people living with mental illness and experiencing homelessness.

This will give thousands of young Victorians the stability necessary to effectively engage in mental health treatment and recovery, learn essential life skills and re-engage with education and employment. It will also create savings for the health system by reducing avoidable hospitalisations. For example, a 5-year study by Latrobe University found that after moving in to Mind Australia's Haven Homes Accommodation Program, the average number of days hospitalised per client reduced from 53.1 days to 7.4 days.[xi]

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Unlock vital housing now with a Public Housing Repair Blitz

Construction of the large-scale public and community housing Victoria needs will take years, but in the meantime we can make thousands of houses available much sooner by fixing the many public housing properties that are sitting empty because they need repairs.

According to reporting by Australian Community Media in July 2025, Homes Victoria “confirmed there were an additional 1793 public housing properties sitting vacant because they required repairs”.[xii]

As of the March 2026 quarter, there were 39,838 priority applications on the Victorian Housing Register (including new applications and transfer applications). Simply by repairing existing properties, 4.5% of these applicants could be provided with safe and dignified housing.

Victoria's next government should quickly reduce the Victorian Housing Register wait list by funding a Public Housing Repair Blitz to bring back online all public housing properties currently awaiting repair.

Allocations of these reactivated properties should prioritise:

- People sleeping rough who have been added to the VHR through Assertive Outreach programs; and
- Family violence victim survivors, who currently wait an average of 18.6 months for social housing (77% longer than the government's target time of 10.5 months)

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Victoria's homelessness crisis has one clear cause: decades of neglect of social housing by successive governments, failing to keep up the pace of construction Victoria needed, and failing to properly maintain existing public housing.

This has created a social housing deficit so extreme that, even after nation-leading commitments to build more than 10,000 additional social housing homes under the Big Housing Build and the Regional Housing Fund, Victoria still sits last on Australia's social housing ladder.

There has also been a rapid reduction of public housing in Victoria's social housing mix, with a net increase of just 36 public housing homes over the past 9 years - compared to an increase of 5389 community housing homes over that same period. This is concerning as public housing provides more secure tenancies for people with complex needs.

Victoria has a choice. Continue growing social housing at the current pace, which will leave thousands of Victorians trapped in a cycle of crisis accommodation, transitional housing and rough sleeping with nowhere to go, because there is no long-term housing to exit to. Or commit to a transformational Public and Community Building Blitz that will improve public health and family cohesion, support more children & young people to stay in school and more adults to find and retain employment (cumulatively producing budget savings of $7.8 billion over 30 years[xiii]), as well as easing pressure on the private rental sector that will improve affordability across the housing system.[xiv]

The OECD has said we need to increase our social housing targets and public funding.[xv] The Victorian Government's own infrastructure adviser Infrastructure Victoria has recommended the Government commit to building 60,000 additional social housing homes.[xvi] And a study by SGS Economics has found Victoria needs to build 80,000 additional public and community housing homes over the next ten years, just to lift Victoria up to the national average for social housing.[xvii]

The consensus is clear. Now it's time for action.

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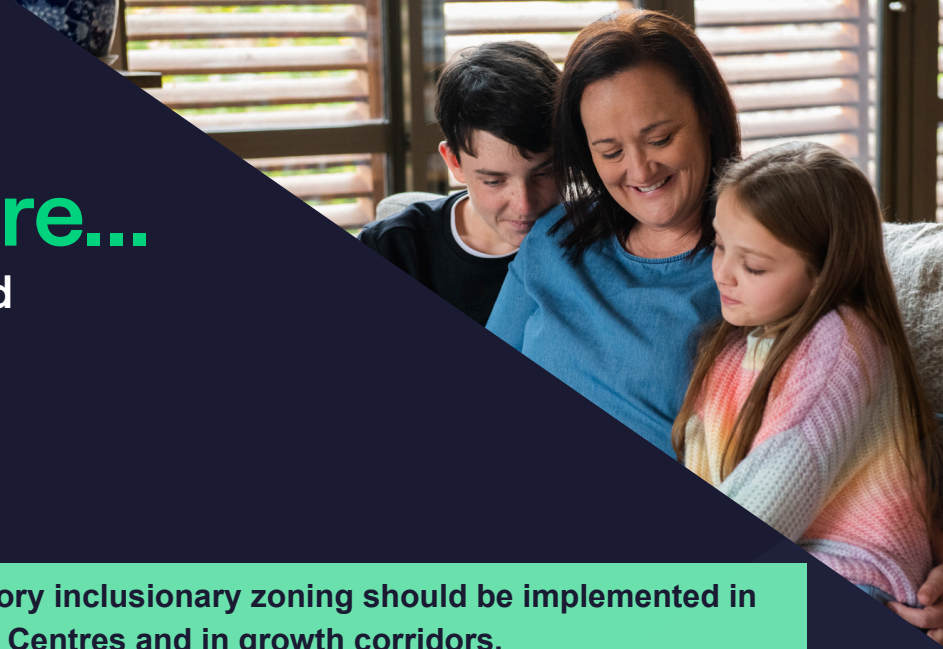

The next Victorian government should commit to a Public and Community Housing Building Blitz, delivering 80,000 additional homes over the next ten years, with a clear pipeline of interim milestones to meet this target. This should include a sustained and significant increase in public housing.

To stimulate this Building Blitz:

- **The uplift in public and community housing created through the public towers redevelopment project should be increased so that the finished towers offer an equal number of public and community housing compared to affordable and market housing.**

  The towers redevelopment project is a huge undertaking affecting a significant proportion of the State's social housing stock. It will cause disruption for thousands of residents, and increase Victoria's social housing waitlist over the medium term. For these reason it's essential that it results in a much more transformative increase in public & community housing than just the 700 additional homes currently promised;

- **Mandatory inclusionary zoning should be implemented in Activity Centres and in growth corridors.**

  Growth corridors represent the future of our state and will see a tidal wave of new builds over coming decades. For this reason, it's not just imperative but an incredible opportunity to require the inclusion of public and community housing in these areas from their planning stage. Activity Centres likewise provide a vital opportunity to build more public and community housing in already developed suburbs, enabling more Victorians to access housing within their existing communities;

- **At least 20% of homes delivered in unlocked and rezoned surplus government land should be public and community housing.**

  The State Government has previously committed to making 10% of these homes "affordable housing", but affordable housing is not a homelessness response. Given the scale of Victoria's homelessness crisis, development of public land should provide a better response for Victorians most in need of a home.

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Together we can end homelessness.

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