



# Woollahra Homelessness in Public Spaces Policy

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Adoption Date:	24 March 2025
Last Reviewed:	March 2025
Next Review Date:	March 2027
Division/Department:	Community & Customer Experience/ Community & Culture
Responsible Officer:	Manager - Community & Culture
HPE CM Record Number:	23/112898

## 1 Policy Statement

Woollahra Municipal Council's (Council) Homelessness in Public Spaces Policy aims to encourage the respectful and compassionate treatment of all people experiencing homelessness in Woollahra's public spaces and aligns with the NSW Government's Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places.

Council acknowledges the rights of all members of the community, including those who are homeless, to use public spaces, whilst also recognising their responsibility towards other members of the community who have the right to live in a safe and peaceful environment.

## 2 Application

### Purpose

The Commonwealth and State Governments have the primary responsibility to fund services and programs to assist people who are homeless. Local Governments and community organisations can play an important role in reducing and managing homelessness through monitoring homelessness, provision of information, referrals to homelessness agencies, and with education of the wider community.

People experiencing homelessness have the same rights as any member of the public to be in public places, participate in public activities or events, carry with them and manage their belongings, and request or decline support or assistance.

The main purpose of this Policy is to detail Council's responsibility and commitment towards legislation, education and information made available to the community on the dignity and rights of all individuals, including those experiencing homelessness.

### Scope

This Policy and associated procedure will be a guide for Council staff when managing homelessness across all Council facilities, parks, open spaces and outdoor areas open to the public, throughout the Woollahra Local Government area where the person:

- Requests assistance;
- Appears to be distressed or in need of assistance;
- Is displaying behaviour that threatens their safety or the safety and security of people around them, including disruption within the public domain and/or
- Prevents Council from providing its regular services to the community, including things like parks and open space maintenance.

### 3 Definitions

Term	Meaning
Council	Woollahra Municipal Council
Homelessness	<p>The Australian Bureau Statistics definition states “when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered as experiencing homelessness if their current living arrangement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is in a dwelling that is inadequate.</li> <li>• Has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or</li> <li>• Does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations”.</li> </ul>
Council facilities	Refers to Council owned and managed community buildings/facilities and their immediate surrounds which are used by community Examples include community venues, sports facilities and libraries.
Council’s customer request management (CRM) system	A system that provides facilities to enable the management of the full lifecycle of a customer request from initiation through to finalisation.
Australian Bureau of Statistics	Is an Australian Government agency that collects and analyses statistics on economic, population, environmental, and social issues to advise the Australian Government.

### 4 Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan

This Policy relates to Themes, Goals and Strategies outlined in Council’s Community Strategic Plan Woollahra 2032 and Priorities outlined in Council’s Delivery Program and Operational Plan, specifically:

Theme:	Social
Goal:	A supported, enabled and resilient community
Strategy:	2.2 Understand needs of our community so that we can facilitate access to support and services.
Priority:	2.2.1 Collaborate with a range of services to provide support for vulnerable members of our community.

### 5 Relevant Legislation

- Homelessness Bill 2013 – Parliament of Australia
- NSW Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Regulation 2022

## 6 Council's Responsibility and Working Collaboratively

This Policy outlines a collaborative approach that respects the dignity and rights of homeless individuals while ensuring safety for everyone.

Council is committed to:

- Promoting respect and upholding the rights of homeless people.
- Ensuring the rights of homeless people are respected by Council and the broader community, fostering a culture of dignity and inclusion.
- Providing information and support to homeless people.
- Striving to connect homeless individuals with available support services, empowering them to access resources and improve their well-being.
- Doing what it can to ensure the safety of everyone in our community, including homeless people, Council staff, residents and visitors.
- Upholding the rights of all community members to enjoy public spaces and services, while also acknowledging the specific needs of homeless individuals and working towards solutions that foster inclusivity.
- Providing clear information and education to the public and Council staff about Council's approach to managing homelessness, referral support services, and fostering understanding within the community.
- Fostering an environment which prioritises the protection of children and young people within our organisation and in the wider community and therefore will follow our Child Safe policy and procedure in reporting and responding to homeless children or young people under the age of 18.

### 6.1 Concerned Resident Reports

When community members report concerns about someone experiencing homelessness, Council staff take careful note of the information and make a report through Council's customer request management (CRM) system. If sufficient details are provided, Council staff will refer the information to specialist homelessness services.

### 6.2 Collaboration and Advocacy

Council staff actively participate in the annual homeless street count alongside neighbouring councils. This data is crucial for advocating for more homelessness outreach services within Woollahra and the wider Eastern Suburbs.

By working together with residents and specialist support services, we aim to ensure those experiencing homelessness in Woollahra are connected with the help they need.

## 7 Documentation/References

	HPECM Reference
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2012) 4922.0 - Information Paper - A Statistical Definition of Homelessness, 2012	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4922.0Main%20Features22012">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4922.0Main%20Features22012</a>
NSW Government's Web Page for Homeless People includes Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places (2024), and Implementation Guidelines (2024)	<a href="https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/working-with-us/programs/homelessness/specialist-services/partnerships/safe-in-public/protocol">https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/working-with-us/programs/homelessness/specialist-services/partnerships/safe-in-public/protocol</a>

## Related Policies and Procedures

	HPECM Reference
Homelessness in Public Spaces Procedure	HPE 23/112904
Homelessness in Public Spaces Information Sheet	HPE 23/176271
Child Safe Policy	HPE 23/132600

This Policy will be reviewed every two years or in accordance with legislative requirements.

Any amendment to this Policy must be by way of a Council Resolution, however minor administrative changes can be made to this Policy with the approval of the General Manager.

## Policy Amendments

Date	Responsible Officer	Description
May – October 2024	Development Officer, Community and Culture	Creation of policy with quality assurance/ review from Policy Officer