

Homelessness Protocol



yarraranges.vic.gov.au

Assisting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the Yarra Ranges

Background

Homelessness is a growing national problem and the increase in homelessness is being seen in our community. People are considered homeless when they do not have accommodation that is safe, secure and appropriate.

There has been an increase in Yarra Ranges in the number of people sleeping rough, including those sleeping in parks, around shopping centres and football grounds, in cars and in tents across the municipality.

In 2017/18, local agency Anchor supported a total of 967 people in the Yarra Ranges. Of these, 702 people required crisis support through Opening Doors, and 265 people were supported in transitional housing and other programs. Anchor has seen an increase in the client complexity, responding to 10,368 individual contacts in the last financial year. Of these, 3,851 enquiries were for crisis support. Across the Eastern Region, the Opening Doors Program assisted over 13,300 people in 2015/16. The 2016 ABS reported 366 people who identified as homeless in the Yarra Ranges. The highest rate of homelessness was reported in Healesville-Yarra Glen (5.12 per 1000), Belgrave-Selby (3.8 per 1000) and Mooroolbark (3.59 per 1000).

This Homelessness Protocol (the Protocol) is applied when a Council Officer comes into contact with a person who is at risk of homelessness, is currently homeless or sleeping rough. This Protocol provides staff with information and resources to refer to relevant housing and support services. This Protocol has been prepared to ensure that homeless people, and people at risk of homelessness, are responded to quickly and appropriately, and are offered relevant support services.

This Protocol was developed with the assistance of housing and support agencies based in Yarra Ranges. The following people assisted in the development of the first version of this protocol in 2016:

Council officers from Community Compliance, Economic, Youth and Community Development, Aged and Disability Services, Family and Children's Services, Built and Active Spaces, Parks and Environment Jay Church and Dagmar Smith, Anchor

Mark Reardon and Jeremy Martin, Salvocare Eastern Neal Taylor, Holy Fools Inc.

The Yarra Ranges Homelessness Protocol will be reviewed every two years with the next review due in June 2020. The protocol was revised in 2018. This third version of the protocol was updated in 2021 following a review of the Rapid Response Project and the introduction of the Community Outreach Officer role.

What is “homelessness”?

There are three identified categories of homelessness:

Primary homeless: People without conventional accommodation – living on the streets, in deserted buildings, in cars, under bridges, and in improvised dwellings.

Secondary homeless: People with no secure accommodation moving between various forms of temporary shelter, including friends, relatives, emergency accommodation and boarding houses.

Tertiary homeless: People living in single rooms in private boarding houses without their own bathroom or kitchen and without security of tenure. They are homeless because their accommodation does not satisfy the requisite conditions of the minimum community standard.

Sleeping rough is a term that can be used to describe someone who sleeps or beds down in the open air. This includes streets, doorways, parks, bus shelters, buildings and any place that is not a home.

At risk of homelessness is where a person is at risk of losing their accommodation. A person may be at risk of homelessness if they are experiencing one or more of a range of factors that can contribute to homelessness. These risk factors include financial stress, lack of housing affordability, inadequate housing conditions, relationship breakdown, family violence, mental health and other health issues, drug and alcohol issues, unemployment or under-employment, problem gambling, discrimination and lack of family and/or community support.

How does this Protocol support Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

One of the goals of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2017-2021) is that people have suitable, affordable and stable housing. Council continues to work with partners to advocate for more affordable and diverse housing options in Yarra Ranges as well as raise awareness and advocate for improved support and resources for people experiencing homelessness.

Where the Protocol applies

The Protocol applies to public places such as parks, open spaces and community facilities, which are accessible to the public and which are Council owned, controlled or managed. The Protocol does not apply to private property or property which is not accessible to the general public. The Protocol only applies within the Yarra Ranges Council municipality.

When will this Protocol be applied?

The Protocol will be applied when Council Officers:

- come into contact with a person who is at risk of homelessness, currently homeless or sleeping rough in a public space;
- receive information about a person believed to be sleeping rough and/or when
- Council receives information regarding found belongings or items which may belong to a person who is considered to be sleeping rough.

The Legal Status of the Protocol

The Protocol has been developed by Council to respond appropriately to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in public places. The Protocol does not override existing laws and statutory requirements.

Principles of the Protocol

The Protocol adheres to the following principles that are based on human rights:

- People who are homeless or/ or sleeping rough have the same entitlement as any member of the public to be in public places, participate in public activities and events.
- People who are homeless and/or sleeping rough have the same access to right of reply and appeals/complain mechanisms as all members of the public.
- People who are homeless and/or sleeping rough have diverse backgrounds and needs that should be considered in any response with sensitivity and respect.

Council's approach Council's approach to homelessness within Yarra Ranges is to:

1. Recognise that local health, support and accommodation services lead the management and coordination of assistance and service provision to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and
2. That Council provides a supporting role to these agencies. Provide the following supporting roles:
 - a. Provide information to homeless people about where they can access health and support services and accommodation;
 - b. Ensure that people needing assistance are referred to appropriate service providers as soon as possible;
 - c. Confidentially collect and share data to monitor and report on the extent of homelessness in Yarra Ranges; and
 - d. Ensure that programs and services are welcoming and inclusive of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Council Response

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| <p>Council staff will respond to a person who is, or appears to be homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they request assistance; • they appear distressed or in need of assistance; • their circumstances or behaviour threatens their own safety or the safety of others; • their behaviour is likely to result in damage to property or to the environment; • their safety is threatened by others; • they appear to be under the age of 16. | |
| <p>Emergency?</p> | <p>If the person is a danger to themselves or others and/or is suspected of committing an offence and/or is engaged in any illegal activity, the matter should immediately be reported to Victoria Police on 000.</p> <p>Do not approach the person if you do not feel safe to do so.</p> <p>If you are working alone, please refer to the Working in Isolation Policy on the Zoo.</p> |
| <p>Collect details?</p> | <p>Council staff will only request personal information for the purpose of assisting with referral to appropriate services and with the permission of the person (e.g. name, age, gender, phone number and location/address).</p> |
| <p>Under 16?</p> | <p>If the person is homeless and under 16 years old, contact Council's Coordinator Youth Development (9294 6375) in the first instance or Executive Officer Community Youth Development (9294 6464). The Coordinator and Executive Officer can assist and advise regarding duty of care, support, referral and reporting requirements.</p> |
| <p>Information and Referral</p> | <p>Persons requiring housing assistance can call 1800 825 955 that will direct to the nearest Opening Doors (housing) service. The number is available 24/7.</p> <p>Council staff can provide access to a phone, or with their permission, make calls on their behalf for the purpose of referring them to appropriate services.</p> <p>If the person does not wish to make a call, the Council staff can provide the client with a copy of the last two pages of this document which lists local service providers and/or refer the client to the Council's Community Services Directory.</p> |
| <p>Site Visit/Outreach</p> | <p>Council has a Partnership Agreement with Anchor to deliver the Rapid Response Model. Council staff are encouraged to fill in the Homelessness Smartform on the Zoo. An appointed Council staff member will team up with a staff member from Anchor to visit the homeless person. If deemed appropriate, Anchor will provide intensive support to the client as part of the Rapid Response Model.</p> |

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| <p>Reporting</p> | <p>The Homelessness Smartform on the Zoo should be completed by Council Officers who have contact with someone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. The purpose of the form is to capture broad data relating to prevalence of homelessness in Yarra Ranges. It will also issue an alert so Council can organise an outreach visit.</p> <p>If a resident calls with concerns over someone who is sleeping rough on Council land i.e. park, reserve, then the Customer Experience Team can also raise a LSCSRS- Community Safety Rough Sleeper pathway request.</p> <p>For staff engaging and referring people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, please keep a record and file in ECM under the Homelessness topic. Speak to your supervisor and/or Coordinator Health Promotion (P: 9294 670) if unsure.</p> |
| <p>Homeless or camping?</p> | <p>While respecting the person’s privacy, Officers will ask questions to determine if the person/s is camping or homeless if unclear.</p> <p>If they are camping, Officers will they will follow procedures under the relevant Local Law. If they are homeless, they will attempt to link them to relevant agencies (as above).</p> <p>If the person/s is deemed to be camping, staff will create a Pathway Customer Request under the Local Laws – Camping category.</p> |
| <p>Personal belongings left behind?</p> | <p>If the person is reporting that personal belongings have been left behind on a Council-managed reserve or facility, staff will complete a General Complaint form in ECM and send it to the Parks and Bushlands (P&B) or Safer Communities (via Community Safety Officers).</p> <p>P&B/Safer Communities staff will leave a note in a zip lock bag that provides service information if personal belongings are left behind by someone who is sleeping rough (see last two pages of this document).</p> <p>If personal belongings are creating a safety hazard, P&B/Safer Communities staff may remove the belongings and store them for 14 days. Owners of belongings can contact Council to retrieve belongings.</p> <p>Staff will send an alert to Customer Experience if a notice has been issued with name of contact person.</p> |
| <p>Rooming House?</p> | <p>If the person reveals that they (or others) currently reside in a rooming house within Yarra Ranges, and they are concerned about the living conditions or overcrowding, staff may create a Pathway Customer Request under the <i>Health Services Premises – Prescribed Accommodation</i> category for an Environmental Health Officer to investigate. The Environmental Health Officer may refer the matter to the EO, Development Compliance and Prosecutions, who will follow the DHHS “Private Rooming House Closure Protocol”.</p> |

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| | <p>If the person (or others) wish to leave the rooming house, staff may suggest that they call contact Anchor (P: 9760 6400) or Uniting Care Harrison (P: 9871 8700) for further advice.</p> <p>Any member of staff or the public can check on the Consumer Affairs website www.consumer.vic.gov.au to find a rooming house or check if it is registered with Council. If it is not registered, staff will create a Pathway Customer Request as above.</p> |
| What if the person doesn't want help? | <p>A person may choose not to accept support and they have a right to do so, if they are NOT in danger to themselves or others.</p> |
| Debrief and Further Support | <p>Council Officers are encouraged to debrief with their Supervisor and can access support via EAP if required.</p> <p>If there are any other concerns contact the Coordinator Health Promotion (9294 6470) for support or advice.</p> |

The Role of the Community Partnerships and Wellbeing Unit

Council's Community Partnerships and Wellbeing team will:

- Nominate a team member (Coordinator Health Promotion) for Council staff to contact for additional advice or support, and to coordinate an appropriate response in complex situations.
- Maintain and distribute a list of local services providing homelessness assistance and other information to assist Council staff responding to the needs of homeless people.
- Invite organisations in Yarra Ranges that provide homelessness assistance to meet with appropriate Council Officers once a year to discuss their experiences, interventions and issues arising out of their support for homeless people.

The Role of Team Leaders

Managers and Team Leaders will:

- Regularly remind staff of the existence of Homelessness Protocol.
- Ensure all new staff are made aware of the Homelessness Protocol as part of their induction process.
- Regularly discuss the Protocol and its application with their staff.
- Provide a debriefing option, via the Employee Assistance program or a similar provider.

References:

- Homelessness Protocol, Boroondara City Council, 2014
Eastern Metropolitan Region Homelessness Assistance Card, Department of Human Services, 2012
Sleeping Rough Protocol, Maroondah City Council, 2015
Victorian Protocol for people who are homeless in public places, 2006
Risk of Homelessness: Identifying and definitional attributes, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, <http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/401065>
Private Rooming House Closure Protocol, Department of Health and Human Services, State of Victoria, November 2016, <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/rooming-houses>

SERVICE DIRECTORY (HOMELESSNESS)
For internal use

| TYPE OF SERVICE | AGENCY | SERVICES PROVIDED | OPENING HOURS | CONTACT |
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| Housing Helpline | Open Doors | Access point for people at risk of or requiring emergency accommodation. | 24/7 | 1800 825 955 |
| Housing information, support and referral | Anchor All of Yarra Ranges except Hills area (see Uniting Harrison) | Housing information and referral, ongoing support Visits to people who are sleeping rough Weekly out-postings at HICCI (Healesville) the Yarra Centre (Yarra Junction), and Warburton | Mon – Thurs 9am – 5pm Friday 9am – 4pm. No appointment necessary. | Box Hill Institute Lakeside Campus Level 2, Building LA, 1 Jarlo Drive, Lilydale 9760 6400 |
| | Uniting Harrison Homelessness Services Hills area only: Belgrave, Kalorama, Monbulk, Olinda, Sassafras, Sherbrook, Tecoma, Upwey, The Patch, Emerald, Narre Warren East, Lysterfield East | Assistance to find long-term housing Information and advice with rent and bills Help getting and keeping a rental. Education, employment and training. | Monday – Friday 9.30- 1 Drop In and by appointment. | 291a Maroondah Hwy, Ringwood, 8870 4020 |
| | Aboriginal Housing Victoria | Long-term housing for indigenous people | Mon – Fri, 8.30 to 4.30 Emergency after hours available | 1800 248 842 Emergency after hours: 9403 2100 |
| | Open Arms | Crisis Accommodation support for Veterans | Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm | 1800 011 046 |
| | HAAG | Housing support for people over 50's | Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm | 1300 765 178 |

SERVICE DIRECTORY (HOMELESSNESS) For internal use

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| | Frontyard Youth Services | Support for people up to age 25 | Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm | Crisis line 9977 0000 |
| | St. Kilda Crisis Contact Centre, Salvation Army | Financial assistance for emergency housing. Food vouchers and other material aid. Information and referral. Short term intensive assistance to develop long term plans. Support from Centrelink and Legal Service on site. | Face-to-face service from 9:00am to 11:00pm (no appointment necessary) | 29 Grey Street, St Kilda 1800 627 727 9536 7777 24 hours, 7 days/week |
| Online information | Ask Izzy | The A to Z directory of support services | www.askizzy.org.au | |
| Emergency Relief | Community Information and Support (CIS) Yarra Ranges | Information service. Provide food vouchers and other ER to eligible clients Lilydale and surrounds | Mon, Wed, Friday, 10am – 3pm | 214 Main Street, Lilydale 9735 1311 |
| | Dandenong Ranges Emergency Relief Service (DRERS) | Food, clothing, referral, daily lunch, showers Dandenong Ranges and Foothills | Mon – Fri 9am – 12.30pm | Belgrave Community Hub, 1616-1624 Burwood Hwy, Belgrave 9754 7777 |
| | HICCI | Food, weekly dinner, community transport, no-interest loans Healesville and Yarra Glen | Mon – Fri 9am – 3.30pm | 231 Maroondah Hwy, Healesville 5911 6000 |
| | LinC Yarra Valley | Food, wellbeing and crisis support, budget help, community transport Upper Yarra | Mon, Tues, Thurs, Friday 10am – 1pm | 2442-2444 Warburton Highway, Yarra Junction 5967 2119 |
| | Redwood Community Centre | Youth & family support Advice and referral Food parcels | Mon, Tues, Thur, 10am to 6pm | 3505 Warburton Hwy, Warburton 5966 2320 |
| | Holy Fools | Visits to people sleeping rough Street lunches each Wednesday, 12 noon, Melba Park , Lilydale Blankets, clothing, and backpack beds | Monday – Friday 9am – 6pm, by appointment only. | Phone: 1300 133 889 |

YARRA RANGES SERVICE DIRECTORY (HOMELESSNESS)

For internal use

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| Health | Nurse on Call | Receive expert health advise from registered nurses | 24/7 | 1300 60 60 24 |
| | Inspiro | Community Health Service. Provide counselling, dental, physio, eye clinic, No Interest Loans | Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm | 9028 0155 17 Clarke Street, Lilydale 1616-1624 Burwood Hwy, Belgrave |
| Legal | Eastern Community Legal Centre | Free legal advice and referral. Outreach available in Lilydale, Yarra Junction, Monbulk | Tuesday Wednesday Thursday 9.00am – 5.00pm | 110 River Road, Healesville 5962 1665 1300 797 088 |
| Indigenous Support | Oonah | Information, services and programs | Monday-Friday | Badger Creek Road, Healesville 5962 2940 |
| | Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Centre | Individual and family support | Monday-Friday | 289 Swansea Road, Lilydale 9212 0200 |
| Culturally and Linguistically Diverse | Migrant Information Centre | Assisting migrants and refugees to access the services they need | Monday-Friday 9-5 | 27 Bank Street, Box Hill 9285 4888 |
| Alcohol & Drug treatment | SURe | Drug and alcohol counseling and mental health support. | Monday-Friday 9-5 | 1800 007 873 After hours 1800 888 236 |
| Mental Health treatment | Stepped Care | Mental health support services at various locations | | 1800 378 3777 |
| | Suicide Call back service | Phone and online crisis counseling | 24/7 | 1300 659 467 |
| Family violence | Safe Steps | Support and emergency accommodation | 24/7 | 1800 015 188 |
| Sexual assault | Sexual Assault crisis line | Crisis care response, information, advice and referral | 24/7 | 1800 806 292 |
| Pets | Pets of the homeless | Food, vet care and other support, incl. foster care | Available by email only | hello@petsofthehomeless.org.au |
| Youth | No Wrong Door | Youth services in Yarra Ranges, Maroondah and Knox | | http://www.nowrongdoor.com.au/ |
| | Headspace | Youth service | Monday – Thu 9am – 5pm | 9801 6088 |
| Meals | | A list of community meals can be obtained from CIS Yarra Ranges | Mon, Wed, Friday, 10am – 3pm | 214 Main Street, Lilydale 9735 1311 |

Client hand-out

Hello

If you need help with finding somewhere to stay or require other assistance, please call one of the services listed below.

We also need to keep everyone else safe

If you have left your belongings behind, we might have moved them for safety reasons. If we have, we will store them in a secure place for up to 14 days. Please visit or contact us on 1300 368 333 to claim your belongings.

Date of this notice: _____

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| Housing Helpline | Call any time to talk to a housing worker | Free call 1800 825 955 |
| Anchor | Housing intake and support | Level 2, Building LA 1 Jarlo Drive, Lilydale 9760 6400 |
| Uniting Harrison | Support, crisis accommodation | 291a Maroondah Hwy, Ringwood, 8870 4020 |
| Salvocare Eastern | Assessment, advocacy , information, practical assistance, referral | 31-33 Ellingworth Parade Box Hill 9890 7144 |
| Ask Izzy | The A to Z directory of support services | www.askizzy.org.au |
| No Wrong Door | Youth services in Yarra Ranges, Maroondah and Knox | www.nowrongdoor.com.au/ |
| Nurse on Call | Receive expert health advise from registered nurses | 24/7 1300 60 60 24 |
| Inspiro | Counselling, dental, physio, eye clinic, No Interest Loans | 17 Clarke Street, Lilydale, 1616-1624 Burwood Hwy, Belgrave 9028 0155 |
| Eastern Community Legal Centre | Free legal advice and referral. Outreach at different localities | 110 River Road, Healesville 5962 1665 1300 797 088 |

Yarra Ranges Council – Homelessness Protocol

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