

ITEM 3.2. CITY ACTION ON HOMELESSNESS**FILE NO:****MINUTE BY THE LORD MAYOR**To Council:**HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2007 - 2012**

Council adopted its ambitious Homelessness Strategy in August 2007, which outlines the services, programs and projects the City will be provide over the 5 year period to 2012.

Already, much of the Strategy is being implemented, including the ongoing delivery of the city's high quality existing homelessness services, such as the Homeless Persons Information Centre and the state-wide Brokerage Program, as well as several new initiatives and projects.

NEW HOMELESNESS PROJECTS

The City has started work on a number of new homelessness projects and services in the last twelve months.

The Commonwealth Government partially funded the City's development of an online training resource for people who volunteer for homelessness services. The web based kit was completed last year and officially launched in October. It is now being used by volunteers from a range of services. The Homeless Persons Legal Service has recommended the kit to all its volunteer lawyers as an introduction and orientation to homelessness issues and services.

City Staff have recently updated the City's Homelessness training and information program for police, originally developed in 2005. NSW Police have requested that the City extend this training program to cover all NSW Local Area commands, not just those in the inner city.

PUBLIC SPACE LIAISON OFFICER

A key initiative of the City's Homelessness Strategy was the creation of a Public Space Liaison Officer (PSLO) position to help improve the City's management of public spaces and ensure a compassionate and respectful response to street drinkers and homeless people.

Mike Fish, who has worked with the City's cleansing unit for many years, was appointed to the PSLO position in June last year. I have received positive feedback from residents, homeless people and service providers about Mike's hard work, compassion and willingness to think laterally to solve complex problems.

Mike's work has helped to reduce problems in areas where there has been conflict around the use of public space by homeless people. For example, Mike met with rough sleepers and representatives from St James Church and the Attorney General's Department to find a solution to amenity problems and anti-social behaviour near the Church and the Supreme Court building. Mike's simple solution of installing large bins where rough sleepers can store their belongings has improved the amenity of the area

dramatically, and I understand that regular rough sleepers are now taking pride in cleaning the area where they sleep, and that Police have not been called to the site since the bins were installed.

Mike has solved similar conflicts and problems in Haymarket, Surry Hills and Woolloomooloo.

I am pleased that the Public Space Liaison Officer is developing good working relationships with people who are homeless, and gained their active cooperation to help the City manage our public spaces.

HOMELESS VOICE

City staff have provided support to 'Homeless Voice', a new advocacy group run by and for homeless people.

Based in Woolloomooloo, Homeless Voice has helping to find solutions to problems that are common to all residents in Woolloomooloo. Homeless Voice is working with City staff, police, service providers, residents and other homeless people who live in this precinct, helping to improve safety and amenity. Group members have contributed to the Woolloomooloo Improvement Plan and the Woolloomooloo Safety Plan.

City staff have mentored Homeless Voice members, and Council has provided a small area of office space in the Mary McDonald Centre for this new group.

This important collaboration between the City and Homeless Voice is a significant development and one I look forward to hearing more about in the future.

COMPLEX NEEDS COORDINATION PROJECT

The City's Homelessness Strategy 2007-2012 sets an ambitious target to end chronic homelessness by 2017.

To help reach this target, one of the most important projects that the City has been working on over the past year, is researching and implementing the 'Complex Needs Coordination Project' to help inner Sydney's long term high need homeless people. The project was developed from a recommendation from the City's 'Vulnerable and Complex Forum' held in 2006.

Many of the chronically homeless are stuck in 'revolving door' situations, bouncing between health, mental health, welfare and homelessness services, and sometimes arrest and jail, all to little benefit to them and at some cost to Government and the community.

Despite the number of services trying to help this small number of chronically homeless people, there has been limited success because they have high levels of need and complex problems, and often have lived on the streets for long periods.

The Complex Needs Coordination Project provides housing with ongoing, coordinated, support. This 'Housing First' model has been successful overseas, with clients remaining in stable housing, and having improved health and wellbeing.

The City is working in partnership NSW Department of Community Services, as lead agencies, and Housing NSW will lease 30 properties to house clients.

Nine other agencies have signed the operating agreement for the project, including the Office of the Protective Commissioner, the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, health services, homelessness services, NSW Police and the Probation and Parole Service.

A number of people have already been accepted into the program, and some of them are already on their way to permanent housing. Under the terms of the agreement, and with improved coordination between service providers, they will continue to receive the support they need for as long as required.

I congratulate and thank Ann Hoban, Manager – Community Living, and Felicity Reynolds, Manager – Community Support and Access on all of these projects and the Homelessness Strategy. I am proud that the City is a leader in the provision of homelessness services.

I also thank Liz Giles, the City's Homelessness Project Coordinator, who has been the driving force in turning the 'Complex Needs Coordination Project' from a good idea into a reality, and coordinating multiple agencies and departments to ensure the success of this project which is permanently improving people's lives.

Felicity Reynolds, the City's Manager of Community Support and Access, has been working on homelessness strategy and projects since she began with the City in 2002. She will be leaving the City in early March to take up her new appointment as CEO of the Mercy Foundation. I thank Felicity for her excellent service to the City and wish her well.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) note these new initiatives, services and projects to address homelessness; and
- (B) congratulate our CEO and staff for their hard work and achievement.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE MP

Lord Mayor