Mandurah Homelessness & Street Presence Strategy 2021-2023

A place for everyone

Contents

1. Introduction

Homelessness in its many forms affects people of all ages across the City of Mandurah and according to local sector data obtained in March 2019 there are over 1600 people vulnerable to, or were already experiencing homelessness in the region (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017-18).

The aim of the Mandurah Homelessness and Street Present Strategy is to ensure there is "a place for everyone" in our region. This will be achieved by accelerating positive outcomes through collective impact, including strengthening the collaboration between stakeholders and the network of support services across Mandurah.

The strategy represents the combined efforts of local providers and the City of Mandurah to better understand and address homelessness within the region. Consultation with people with lived experience of homelessness formed a core part of the development of this strategy, alongside sector consultation and a review of available data. The Strategy was informed by the Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (WAAEH) and the Department of Communities' 10-year strategy 'All Paths Lead to Home', 2020 to 2030. Whilst facilitated by the City of Mandurah, it is acknowledged that the strategy was developed by the community sector, for the community of the region. This shared resolve to create a place for everyone will increase opportunities to work together to improve quality of life.

In September 2018 a reference group was established to provide guidance and strategic support, and sought further consideration of establishing an external Peel Homelessness and Street Present Network interagency group.

In March 2019 the City began hosting and facilitating a core group of service providers from the region who led the research, consultation and collaboration that underpins this plan. In 2020 the City and core group also undertook a targeted rough sleeper count with a number of volunteers, representing agencies and groups across Mandurah. This Street Count provided point-in-time data, useful in developing strategies, understanding advocacy and engaging broadly in community.

2. Understanding Homelessness

2.1. Definitions

Homelessness is experienced when a person does not have a home in which they have shelter, can exercise control over a physical area, can maintain privacy and enjoy social relations and have legal title through tenancy rights or ownership. It includes rough sleeping on the streets, parks, cars, squats, stays in supported accommodation for the homeless, 'couch surfing' (individuals and families staying temporarily with others), living in boarding and rooming houses without private facilities and security of tenure, and heavy reliance on short-term stays in motels, hotels and other forms of temporary lodging (The West Australian Strategy to End Homelessness 2019).

This strategy recognises that homelessness exists in various forms and is defined and experienced in many different ways. For the purpose of developing this plan the Mackenzie and Chamberlain cultural definition of homelessness was used, as adopted by the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (Homelessness Australia, 2001) in 2001. This definition uses three categories for homelessness:
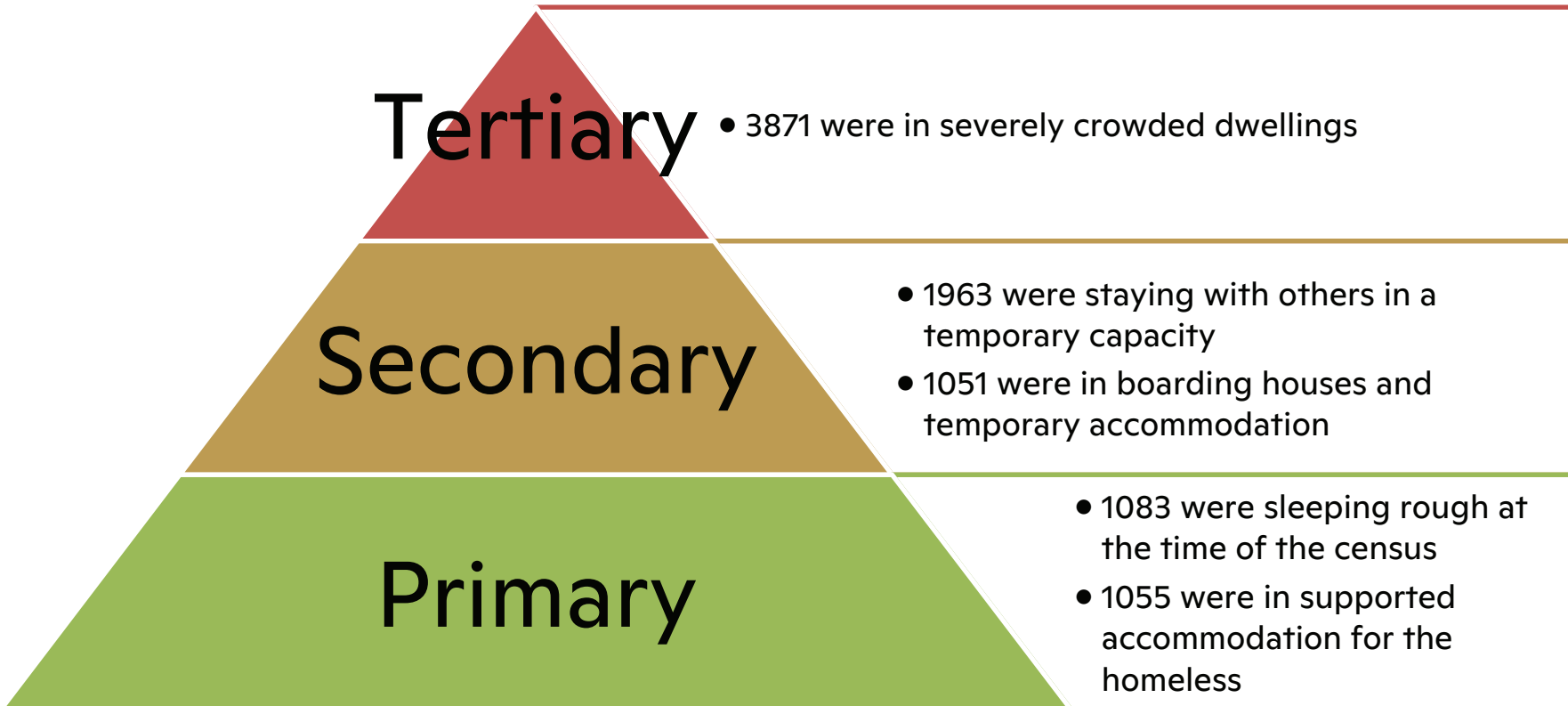
- Primary homelessness is experienced by people without conventional accommodation (e.g. sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings)
- Secondary homelessness is experienced by people who frequently move from one temporary shelter to another (e.g. emergency accommodation, youth refuges, 'couch surfing')
- Tertiary homelessness is experienced by people staying in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards (e.g. boarding houses and caravan parks)

2.2. Western Australian context

Homelessness is a national social issue and continues to present a range of challenges for the whole community of Western Australia. Due to difficulty in accessing this cohort for the purposes of census data collection, figures gathered are assumed to under represent the issue. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) more than 116,000 people were experiencing homelessness in Australia on Census night in 2016, with 9206 people rough sleeping in Western Australia. This is widely considered a point-in-time figure (Homelessness Australia, 2016). In Western Australia, the rate of primary homelessness (i.e. sleeping rough) is higher at 4.4 per 10,000 of the population than in Australia overall (3.5 per 10,000) (Homelessness Australia, 2016). Aboriginal people comprised 29.1% of the homeless population on census night.

However, it is important to note that homelessness is rarely the primary challenge faced by people in this situation. There are many contributing risk factors to homelessness that can include mental illness, domestic and family violence, financial stress, relationship/family breakdown and inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions.

People most at risk of homelessness include young people, women and children impacted by family and domestic violence, Aboriginal people, older people and veterans, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and persons with a disability.

Western Australian breakdown of homelessness (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017-18):

Tertiary
- 3871 were in severely crowded dwellings

Secondary
- 1963 were staying with others in a temporary capacity
- 1051 were in boarding houses and temporary accommodation

Primary
- 1083 were sleeping rough at the time of the census
- 1055 were in supported accommodation for the homeless

2.3. Mandurah context

The City of Mandurah has a population of approximately 85,000 which is expected to grow upward of 120,000 people by 2036. Mandurah's ranking has dropped seven points in the state SEIFA index, a measure of socio-economic disadvantage; the lower the score the higher the levels of disadvantage. The following tables provide a comparison of the 2016 score for the local government areas of Mandurah, Kwinana and Rockingham (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Local Government Area	SEIFA SCORE (2016)	WA State Ranking
Mandurah (C)	958	52
Kwinana (C)	960	55
Rockingham (C)	986	80

ABS 2016 data indicated that 200 people were experiencing homelessness in Mandurah (according to the ABS definition which includes rough sleeping, overcrowding and insecure tenure). Local data collected in March 2019 suggests up to 70 people are street present at any one time in and around Mandurah's central areas (City of Mandurah, 2019). However, on 17 March 2020 a rough sleeper count was conducted in partnership with the City of Perth. On this night 84 rough sleepers were sighted in a 5km radius of the central business district of Mandurah (Appendix 1). A second count was conducted on 27 October 2020, in this instance 53 rough sleepers were counted in Mandurah (Figure 1: Rough Sleeper Count). This data further demonstrates the significant disparity between ABS data and local knowledge of the significance of this issue (Western Australian Local Government Association, 2020).
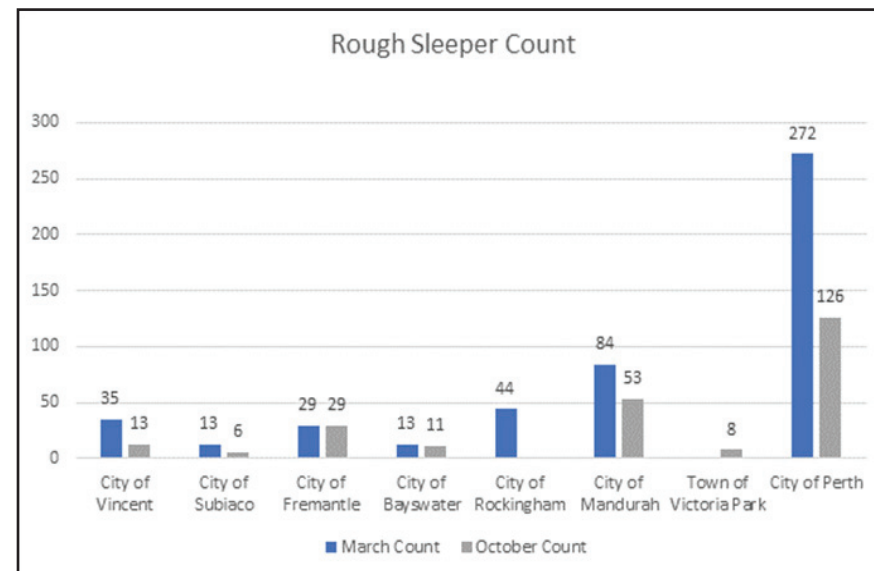

Figure 1.

Additional local sector data suggests that there are over 1600 people vulnerable to or already experiencing homelessness (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017-18). The high level of people rough sleeping coupled with the 2019 data collected from the local service sector demonstrates the entrenched nature of homelessness in our community. The graph (above) shows the comparative data from the rough sleeper counts from participating Local Government Areas (Western Australian Local Government Association, 2020).

Mandurah Rangers, local WA Police and day time security patrols strive to treat every individual with dignity and respect, especially given the challenges faced by many vulnerable people. At times a more direct response is required with street present people due to disruptive behavior. This is particularly prevalent in the Mandurah Central Business District area where there is a noticeable street presence of vulnerable people and associated vagrancy. This has reportedly had an impact on local business and tourism-based industry.

3. Our Response

3.1. Collaboration From the Start

Knowing that collaboration is the only way to effectively tackle a complex issue like homelessness, this strategy was born out of a collaborative approach. Since early 2019 a core group of nine agencies was supported by over 90 members and 50 organisations, each playing a role in either responding to requests for information or helping coordinate consultation of people with lived experience of homelessness.

The network established that its core function would be:

"To create a collaborative, overarching framework which will enable the network to increase communication and resource delivery, with a clear focus on the client."

"The group has assumed the role of working collaboratively to assist people experiencing homelessness and unable to find a regular roof over their head, especially:

- *young people who may be intermittently homeless*
- *street present people*
- *people displaying anti-social behaviours, especially in the City Centre"*

The Core Project Team is made up of services funded specifically to work with people experiencing homelessness in Mandurah and Peel. In addition to this team, the coordination approach involved breaking down the larger network into smaller working groups based on priorities. These working groups focused on the areas of 'Housing and Accommodation', 'Support Systems', 'Safety and Security', 'Systemic Change' and 'Advocacy'.

The local service providers which make up the Core Project Team are those currently providing support to people experiencing homelessness:

■ Anglicare WA	■ Mandurah Street Chaplains	■ Red Cross
■ Calvary Youth Services	■ Peel Connect	■ Vinnies WA
■ City of Mandurah	■ Peel Youth Services	■ WestAus Crisis

3.2. Lived Experience Consultations

A range of 45 narratives from people with lived experience of homelessness was collected with the help of community service providers. With professional support of agencies, this consultation occurred in a way that was both respectful and based on existing relationships.

Engagement with people of all ages took place, each had a unique story highlighting the long researched impacts of homelessness. The discussions brought to light the complexity of contributing factors that can lead to homelessness and the challenges faced by people caught in a cycle of disadvantage. The consultations supported a greater understanding of the compounding psycho-social impact of homelessness when there is a lack of local mental health services and difficulty finding crisis accommodation. At times homelessness can be the result of family dynamics or changing family circumstances; often people with children felt they faced extra pressure, rather than increased support, which frequently results in children being removed from the parents' care.

Compounding the financial, social and health impacts was the reported stigma and judgment faced by other members of the community, often contributing to a heightened sense of shame and helplessness in some instances. The findings of the 45 lived experiences were used as a guide in the development of this strategy.

3.3. What Has Been Done to Date?

The Peel Homelessness and Street Present Network have been active in its attempts to reduce homelessness and have implemented numerous responses to the issue:

1. The establishment of a Core Project Team and four supporting reference groups. Recognising the critical nature of collaboration from the start, the City's role was to facilitate and provide strategic support, rather than to lead.
2. A Homelessness and Street Present Network Group was formed with over 50 agencies represented. This group meets less regularly and is supported strategically by the Core Project Team.
3. A multi-agency Street Present Intervention Team was formed that reviews the individual circumstances of the local street present people.
4. Support for the Peel Community Kitchen to be relocated and significantly upgraded.
5. Endorsement and advocacy of a homeless and street present assertive outreach trial project.
6. Establishment of a Homelessness Shower Service.

The State Government have also delivered a new therapeutic woman's refuge, with a second stage currently under construction in Mandurah. This will provide a vital accommodation option for vulnerable woman and children experiencing family domestic violence.

4. The Strategy

The strategy is informed by the Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (WAAEH), the Western Australian Strategy to End Homelessness and the Department of Communities' 10-year strategy on homelessness 'All Paths Lead to Home'.

Not unlike the State direction, the strategy identifies the multiple strengths and skillsets which local sector members and organisations possess, calling for collaboration as a means to end homelessness in Mandurah. The co-design process of the 'No Wrong Door' approach was considered in the development of the strategy. This process outlines the importance of including lived experience input from a diverse set of community members experiencing homelessness, as a starting point in the formation of this document.

4.1. Vision and Objectives

Simply put, the vision is to ensure there is "a place for everyone".

We achieve this vision through four objectives:

- **ACCESSIBLE ACCOMMODATION** - Increase the stock and variety of accommodation options

- **EFFECTIVE SUPPORT SYSTEMS** - Deliver streamlined, collaborative and consumer-led support services and programs

- **MEANINGFUL SYSTEMIC CHANGE** - Ensure that sector activity and policy, support an end to homelessness

- **ENSURING SAFETY AND SECURITY** - Maintain the dignity and safety of street present people and providers

- Increase the stock and variety of accommodation options

- Deliver streamlined, collaborative and consumer-led support services and programs

ACCESIBLE ACCOMMODATION

EFFECTIVE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

A place for everyone

ENSURING SAFETY AND SECURITY

MEANINGFUL SYSTEMIC CHANGE

- Maintain the dignity and safety of street present people and providers

- Ensure the sector activity and policy support an end to homelessness
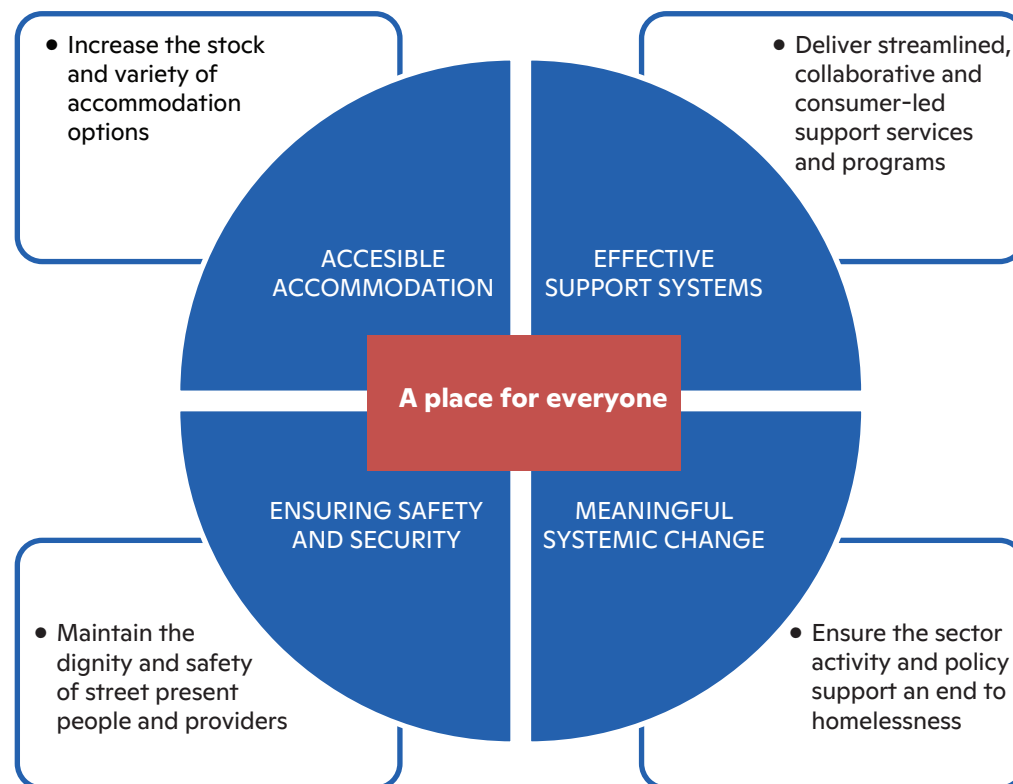
Objective 1: Accessible Accommodation: Increase the stock and variety of accommodation options

Strategy	Performance Measures	Who	Priority Actions	2021	2022	2023
1.1. Identify and reduce barriers for people to access existing housing options	• # of people applying for housing vs # of people successful (why the difference?)	Homeless and Street Present Network and Housing Working Group	• Advocate to address barriers to affordability accessing housing (Newstart, NRAS etc.) including raising the rate WACOSS • Reduce barriers and increase incentive to move out of social housing (specific programs) • Capacity building opportunities/building confidence	✓ ✓	✓	
1.2. Increase range of suitable accommodation options	• # of suitable options in the region	Homeless and Street Present Network and Housing Working Group	• Audit of current stock (state and social) • Investigate 'Tiny Homes' and micro housing • Granny-flat opportunities in existing domestic properties • Advocating for Common Ground in Mandurah	✓	✓	✓
1.3. Develop funding models and partnerships to deliver stock	• Partnerships and programs established	Homeless and Street Present Network and Housing Working Group	• Develop social enterprise models • Identify ongoing funding sources • Develop partnerships with key stakeholders • Link to economic development initiatives to deliver innovative housing options • Stronger alignments to WA Homeless Strategy including the Housing First model	✓	✓	✓
1.4. Advocacy for crisis accommodation	• Crisis accommodation available	Homeless and Street Present Network and Housing Working Group	• Identify low threshold opportunities • Capacity to address alcohol and drug issues • Capacity to house diverse cohorts	✓	✓	✓

Objective 2: Effective Support Systems: Deliver streamlined, collaborative and consumer-led support services and programs

Strategy	Performance Measures	Who	Priority Actions	2021	2022	2023
2.1. Ensuring ongoing engagement with homeless people in the development, delivery and evaluation of this strategy	• # of reference group meetings • Composition of reference group • # of recommendations from reference group actioned	Homeless and Street Present Network and Core Project Team	• Establish reference group to work with people with lived experience of homelessness • Reference group to provide input on key initiatives the strategy will be implementing • Obtain lived experience stories from street present people on an on-going basis • Utilise case studies from organisations for reporting, to collect qualitative data	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓
2.2. Broaden access to and options for mental health services	• Increase in referrals • Increase engagement with MH services • Increase resourcing for MH providers	Homeless and Street Present Network and Core Project Team	• Define and map specific mental health services with appropriate referral pathways • Advocate for more resourcing for existing services • Reduce wait-time for access to crisis support for MH • Build mentoring/outreach as a referral and support for people that are street present • Reduce the barriers for applying for NDIS funding • Advocate for specialist psychiatry services	✓	✓	✓
2.3. Broaden access to and options for alcohol and drug services	• Increase in referrals • Increase engagement with AOD services • Increase resourcing for AOD providers	Homeless and Street Present Network and Core Project Team	• Advocate for more resourcing for existing services • Build mentoring/outreach as a referral and support for people that are street present • Develop clinical services for addiction in Mandurah • Advocate for more services to reduce waiting times	✓	✓	✓

2.4. Implement assertive outreach	• # of people supported • # of referrals to service providers • Reduce incidents involving street present people	City of Mandurah, Lead Agency and WA Police	• City of Mandurah to contract for services to implement street level case management dependent on external funding		✓	✓
2.5. Build capability and life skills	• # programs on offer • Participation in programs • # of people volunteering and job active post program • % of people returning to street present (six-monthly)	Homeless Service Providers	• Develop and identify various capacity building programs • Housing readiness programs • Life skills programs	✓	✓	✓
2.6. Provide transition and after care service to sustain success	• # of people commencing transition programs • # of people completing transition programs • Participant outcomes • % of people returning to street present (six-monthly)	Homeless Service Providers	• Develop and identify various transition and aftercare programs (12-month program) • Develop case studies	✓	✓	✓
2.7. Broaden access to health care services	• Increase engagement with GP services • Increase engagement with allied health services	Homeless and Street Present Network and Core Project Team	• Investigate street doctor outreach through GP Down South bus or Homeless Healthcare • Liaise with WAPHA regarding GP outreach services • Investigate alternative outreach allied health services • Investigate university internship students to support an outreach program		✓	✓

Objective 3: Meaningful Systemic Change: Ensure the sector activity and policy support an end to homelessness

Strategy	Performance Measures	Who	Priority Actions	2021	2022	2023
3.1. Build collaboration between providers to optimise service delivery	• Increase in number of street present people accessing coordinated service delivery • Client feedback of an easier transition through services • # of client outcomes as a result of collaboration	Core Project Team	• Map the linkage between services to identify duplication and referral pathway • Develop an assertive outreach program to provide broader case management and cross agency linkages • Develop the 'No Wrong Door' (low threshold) model in Mandurah (what should interagency collaboration look like and how would it work?) • Build consistent client feedback questions across services • Build a model for data sharing among organisations • Stronger integration and alignment with 100% volunteer organisations (capability, supporting nimble responses, ensuring trauma informed support) • Reduce barriers between alcohol and drug and mental health support	✓	✓	✓
3.2. Support systemic advocacy to improve social determinants and efficient service delivery	• Services located in Mandurah • # of broader campaigns participated in	Core Project Team	• Participate in WACOSS campaign • Liquor licensing laws (bottle shop approvals) • Contribute to the development of boundaries that remove Mandurah as a service centre • Identify forums where advocacy would be appropriate and effective	✓	✓	✓
3.3. Build partnerships and profile to maintain awareness, commitment and funding	• # of forums represented by the network	Core Project Team	• Ensure there is representation from the network on broader forums and consultations		✓	✓
3.4. Reduce stigma of homeless people in the wider community	• Delivery on communications strategy • Community sentiment towards homelessness	Core Project Team	• Develop a media and communication strategy • Look to partner with existing strategies • Explore events that bring community and homeless together with targeted themes	✓	✓	✓
3.5. Report on progress of this strategy each year	• Annual performance report completed	Core Project Team	• Developing KPI and evaluation process to create consistency of reporting	✓	✓	✓

Objective 4: Ensuring Safety and Security: Maintain the dignity and safety of street present people and providers

Strategy	Performance Measures	Who	Priority Actions	2021	2022	2023
4.1 Provide safe spaces for street present people to gather	• Number of spaces and places available for use • Utilisation of spaces and places in use	Anglicare WA Vinnies WA	• Night café (research various models including Uniting Care West, Rockingham Salvation Army) • Investigate extending Passages open hours • Develop a protocol for how spaces and people are cared for • Maintain assumption of positive intent (rather than feeding stigma) • Investigate a 'peer to peer' model • Explore a social enterprise approach		✓	✓
4.2 Establish minimum standards for working with street present people	• # of services signed up to the minimum standards • % of volunteers trained	Vinnies WA	• Trauma informed training • Volunteer standards • Collaborate with service providers and front-line staff to develop agreed standards	✓	✓	✓
4.3 Identify options for portable shelters and safe storage	• # of lockers provided • # of swags provided	Core Project Team	• Identifying possible sites for lockers for safe storage of personal belongings • Develop a risk management plan for installation of lockers • Consultation with homeless people regarding storage • Investigate alternative for portable shelter, swags, pods etc.		✓	✓
4.4 Make optimal use of existing and underutilised spaces and buildings	• Number of spaces and places available for use • Utilisation of spaces and places in use	Core Project Team	• Research existing models • Explore options for use of buildings vacant in the evening • Develop a protocol for how spaces and people are cared for • Maintain assumption of positive intent (rather than feeding stigma)			✓
4.5 Use individualised intervention to support most at risk street present people	• # of people assisted and intervention used • Type of outcomes (short/long term)	The Street Present Support and Case Management Committee and WA Police	• Monthly meetings to work collaboratively to address the needs of street present people.	✓	✓	✓

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Acknowledgments

The City of Mandurah acknowledges the Bindjareb people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which Mandurah is situated and we pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We appreciate the collaboration and information provided by the Core Working Group and other stakeholders who have participated in the development of this strategy. The Core Project Team have worked above and beyond their existing commitments to develop this community-led strategy to end homelessness in Mandurah. The work completed by this group includes the lived experience stories which helped shape the direction of the strategy and its objectives. The Core Project Team were also integral to the delivery of the rough sleeper count on 17 March 2020, which gave us our first snapshot in 'real time' of the number of the most vulnerable community members who are experiencing homelessness.

The City of Mandurah is grateful for the support of the Peel Homelessness Network and the Core Project Team and the volunteers and services that help people experiencing homelessness in our community.

Special thanks go to the 30 volunteers who undertook the physical work required during the rough sleepers count for their goodwill and commitment.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with other local councils and we look forward to increased participation and collaboration to implement this strategic plan. Working together will better help us achieve the goal of ending homelessness in the Mandurah and Peel area.

We would especially like to acknowledge the hard work of the following agencies, who make up the Core Working Group:
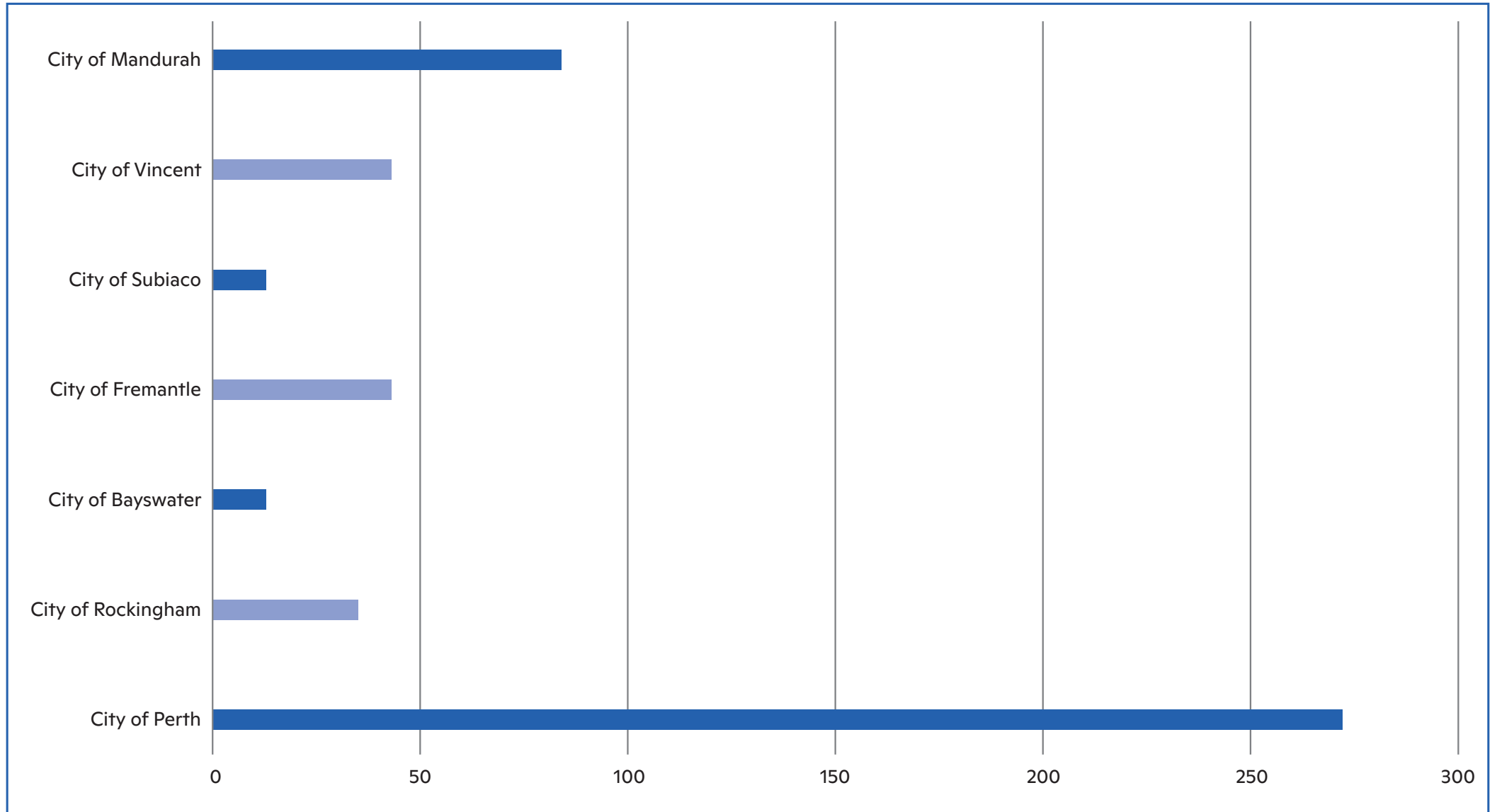
Core Project Team

Anglicare WA

CALVARY

CITY OF MANDURAH

Mandurah Street Chaplains

Vinnies good works

PeelConnect
Together anything is possible!

Peel Youth Services

WA
WestAus
Crisis & Welfare Services

Supported by

Aha! Consulting
When will you have your next Aha! moment?

Appendix 1 - Rough Sleeper Count Data[1]

[1]City of Perth: Rough Sleeper Count. Local Government Data March 2020

Anglicare WA

Calvary Youth Services

City of Mandurah

Mandurah Street Chaplains

Peel Connect

Peel Youth Services

Red Cross

Vinnies WA

West Aus. Crisis