

HOMELESSNESS POLICY



COUNCIL'S ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY IS VARIED. AS LEADER; ADVOCATE; PROVIDER AND COLLABORATOR COUNCIL DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING IN PARTNERSHIP:

EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY



10,000
Homelessness Support Services & Food Services brochures distributed

4 Events held during Youth Homelessness Matters & Antipoverty Weeks

5 submissions to State and Federal Government

DELIVERED FREE
'Trauma informed real estate training' to 12 Murwillumbah real estate agents in 2016



30

Horizon Housing in partnership with Tweed Shire Council and Federal Government delivered **22 affordable rental properties and 30 affordable houses** to the market in Bray Park.



2016
1,170

visits to the Council's homelessness webpage

2017
1,583

FACILITATION AND COORDINATION



22

Tweed Shire Housing and Homelessness (TSHHN) monthly meetings with 127 active members across 50+ agencies

Facilitated and supported the development and implementation of the TSHHN Strategic Plan 2014-2019



Smooth transition and relocation of food services to Tweed Heads from Coolangatta for period of Commonwealth Games 2018. Establishment of pop up outreach service in Tweed Heads for period of Commonwealth Games



From June 2017, working in partnership with the newly established NSW Government Family and Community Services (FACS) Mobile Housing Outreach service to target support for the rough sleeper population in Tweed Shire.

COUNCIL SERVICES



41

Council staff trained in Demystifying Homelessness training over 4 sessions

Weekly informal capacity building sessions with staff regarding homelessness concerns and supports available



Council staff participated in the Homelessness Sleepout event with St Vincent de Paul – Fred's Place

Developed Tweed Shire Responding to Housing Needs: Context and Options paper to map Affordable Housing issues



Secondary dwellings brochure developed and distributed at Tweed Shire Council's 'Living for the Future' Home Expo event in Tweed Heads in September 2016, attended by over 1,000 people.

Internal social and affordable housing spatial mapping established

Initiated TSHHN data sub-group

INTRODUCTION:

Tweed Shire Council was one of the first local governments in New South Wales to introduce a Homelessness Policy demonstrating its commitment to such a significant social issue impacting our country, and more importantly our local community. In 2011 there were 308 persons experiencing homelessness, in 2016 we have seen an increase with now 444 persons identified as experiencing homelessness (ABS). It is worth noting here the adopted definitions for homelessness:

- **Primary homelessness:** includes people without conventional accommodation such as living on the streets, sleeping in cars, in deserted buildings, improvised or substandard dwellings, under bridges, in parks etc.;
- **Secondary homelessness:** includes people moving frequently between various forms of temporary shelter including staying with friends and relatives, couch surfing, in emergency accommodation, youth refuges, hostels and boarding houses on a short term basis (12 weeks or less);
- **Tertiary homelessness:** includes people living in boarding houses (or similar) on a medium to long term basis (13 weeks or longer). Residents do not have separate bedrooms and living rooms; they do not have kitchen and bathroom facilities of their own; their accommodation is not self-contained; and they do not have security of tenure provided by a lease.

Council work in partnership with the housing and homelessness sector and other tiers of government committed to a collaborative and collective impact approach with the aim to shift the trajectory for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness. This review highlights some of the work that has been achieved since the inception of this policy.

COUNCIL'S VISION:

Living and Loving the Tweed.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

Council is committed to preventing and reducing homelessness and ensuring homeless people are treated respectfully and appropriately and are not discriminated against on the basis of their homeless status.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Council has a responsibility to meet commitments under state and federal legislation to follow standards and guidelines for universal access and social inclusion in its provision of services, facilities, programs, planning and regulatory processes. This policy sets out Council's commitment to act within its responsibilities and work with other agencies to prevent and reduce homelessness in Tweed Shire.

WHAT IS COUNCIL'S ROLE (CSP 2017-2027):

Leader – Council shows strong, transparent and visionary leadership promoting unity to make our Tweed community even better tomorrow than it is today.

Provider – Council delivers over 50 different services to the Tweed community.

Advocate – Council gives voice to the community by lobbying and advocating to achieve benefits and best possible outcomes for the Tweed.

Collaborator – Council works together with a range of stakeholders to bring outcomes for the community to fruition.

PRINCIPLES (in brief):

The policy covers all Council services, in particular: access to Council services and facilities; interacting with homeless people in public places; Council's regulatory activities; strategic land use planning and community development. Council commits to the following:

- Homeless people behaving lawfully have the same entitlement as any member of the public to public places, access public services and facilities, participate in public activities or events, and carry and store their own belongings.
- Council officers receive sufficient information and training to enable them to assist homeless people, and help them make contact with appropriate services.
- The policy does not override existing laws, statutory requirements or regulations.
- Homeless people have the same access to a right of reply and appeals/complaints mechanisms as all members of the public.
- Council is committed to ensuring homeless people are treated respectfully and appropriately, regardless of their diverse backgrounds and needs, and are not discriminated against on the basis of their homelessness status.

HOMELESSNESS POLICY – HOW DID WE GO?

EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

- Distributed 10,000 Homelessness Support Services and Food Services brochures and wallet cards to approximately 40 services including schools, libraries, community, government agencies and cultural services.
- Four events held during Youth Homelessness Matters Day & Anti-Poverty Week.
- Two Northern Rivers Housing Forum events.
- Five submissions to State and Federal government regarding Homelessness and Affordable Housing.
- Delivered free 'Trauma Informed Real Estate Training' to 12 Murwillumbah real estate agents in 2016.
- Horizon Housing, in partnership with Tweed Shire Council and Federal Government, delivered 22 affordable rental properties and 30 affordable houses to the market in Bray Park.
- Since 2011 an increase of 359 dwellings to 1,888 dwellings across Tweed Shire for persons living in caravans, cabins or houseboats (ABS 2016). In May 2018 there were 3,603 residents living in 24 Residential Land Lease Communities (Fair Trading 2018).
- Provided input in to the Northern NSW District Homelessness Implementation Group (DHIG) chaired by FACS, particularly pertaining to crisis and short term accommodation demand.
- Council homelessness webpage received 1,170 visits in 2016 and 1,583 visits on webpage in 2017.
- Increased awareness on homelessness issues following March 2017 flood event. Council working with key partners and State Government to address housing impacts.
- Increased stakeholder and community awareness of NSW Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places.

'It's definitely given me a better understanding of causes and the processes that are needed'

'Having the contacts for referral and just looking at the situation from the other side'

'Helped me to better understand what situation could be happening to affect the tenancies'

Murwillumbah Real Estate Agents.

FACILITATION AND COORDINATION

- Facilitated 22 Tweed Shire Housing and Homelessness (TSHHN) monthly meetings with 127 active members.
- Facilitated and supported the development and implementation of the TSHHN Strategic Plan 2014-2019.
- Participation in eight Northern Rivers Housing Forum Steering Group meetings with 45 active members.
- Participated in the development of the Homelessness NSW Summit program in 2017 hosted by Northern Rivers region.
- Quarterly review of Council's homelessness webpage information and updated as required.
- Two new Opportunity Shops established in Tweed Heads area distributing clothes free to homeless persons. Distribution of materials and clothes at events.
- Council participation in Affordable Housing Summit in Byron Bay in February 2017 and National Affordable Housing Summit in Melbourne in August 2017. Increased collaboration with neighbouring Councils in Northern Rivers.
- Smooth transition and relocation of food services to Tweed Heads from Coolangatta for period of Commonwealth Games 2018 (Jan-May 2018). Establishment of pop up outreach service in Tweed Heads for period of Commonwealth Games.
- From June 2017, working in partnership with the newly established NSW Government Family and Community Services (FACS) Mobile Housing Outreach service to target support for the rough sleeper population in Tweed Shire.

Council lends a hand to displaced service during Commonwealth Games – 'I think they've (Council) really made an effort to help me (You Have a Friend Outreach Food Service). Tweed Shire Council is in regular contact with service providers. A collaborative approach has been adopted by both Councils and the service providers to ensure a smooth transition for the providers, and most importantly for those seeking the service' Tweed Daily News, 14 January 2018.

COUNCIL SERVICES AND COMPLIANCE

- Four internal 'Demystifying Homelessness' training sessions with 41 Council staff across Compliance, Parks and Recreation, Water, Community Services and Customer Experience teams, including Richmond Tweed Regional Library staff.
- Weekly informal capacity building sessions with staff regarding homelessness concerns and supports available.
- NSW Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places principles enacted by Council staff.
- Council staff and Tweed Shire Youth Council members participated in the Homelessness Sleepout event at Fred's Place in 2016.
- Established an ongoing collaborative relationship with Tweed-Byron Police District on homelessness matters.
- Murwillumbah showgrounds made available for short term (up to one week) as an affordable camping option.

'I was talking in general with some of our regulars and they have commented that the local rangers are "pretty good guys". It appears that the interactions between some of the homeless population and the council rangers seem to be improving' Anthony, Fred's Place.

'The Homelessness Policy has taken the complex issue out of the "too hard box" and provided Rangers with a framework to base compliance action. The resources created, support from Council and general understanding of the complexity to this issue has helped me face the challenge of creating an outcome for both the homeless and general public.

I encountered recently a female homeless person, who had fled from a domestic violence situation sleeping in her car. She was in tears as she thought it was my role to move her on and make her life even more difficult. I provided her with resources, made contact with Sylvia to link her in to supports. She has left the area and I am hopeful moved positively in to a better situation' Leigh, TSC Compliance.

'The Demystifying Homelessness training was something I found very beneficial and I worked with Sylvia to provide the training to the whole Customer Service team. The training prepared me with responses for customers who were reporting homelessness, enabling empathy to be demonstrated for all community members. The team although shocked by the stats and how easily life can change for some, were very thankful for their increased understanding as an outcome from the training' Tanya, TSC Customer Service.

LAND USE PLANNING

- Tweed Shire 'Responding to Housing Needs: Context and Options' paper established with Urbanista Consultant.
- Internal audit of Council land suitability for 'Tiny houses'.
- Council has written to State Government Minister for Planning, regarding state government land and suitability for affordable housing options.
- Working with State Government in development of 'Tweed Regional City Action Plan' as part of North Coast Regional Plan with one target area addressing 'great housing choice and lifestyle options'.
- Secondary dwellings brochure developed and distributed at Tweed Shire Council's 'Living for the Future' Home Expo event in Tweed Heads in September 2016, attended by over 1,000 people.

MONITORING AND RESEARCH

- Internal social and affordable housing spatial mapping established.
- Initiated TSHHN data sub-group.
- 2016 ABS Population and Housing, and Homelessness Census data released. Social atlas updated for social housing. Significant drop in people renting social housing from 3.1% in 2011, to 2.8% in 2016.
- Internal research on the 'Role of caravan parks and manufactured homes play in housing and homelessness in Tweed Shire'. Council's Building and Environment team have a strong relationship with Tweed Caravan Park owners and residents.

Source: All actions are delivered in partnership with external agencies, organisations, governments and community. This is a summary of actions achieved between 2016 and 2017.

REVIEW:

The review of the homelessness policy was expected 12 months after inception. Resourcing issues, the impact on community from the March 2017 flood, the recent Commonwealth Games, and the release of the Homelessness Census statistics has meant it has only been possible recently to establish a sound picture of the current homelessness context and population in Tweed Shire. This review gives a picture of the outcomes achieved in partnership with internal and external providers, during the 2016 and 2017 (calendar years) since the adoption of the policy in October 2015. The review process involved internal consultation with Customer Service, Communications, Rangers and Compliance, Building and Environmental Health, Community Development, Strategic Planning and Urban Design, Holiday Parks Coordinator, Sustainability Program and Economic Development. The findings of the review were also supported by the Tweed Shire Housing and Homelessness Network whom are key to its deliverables.



POLICY CHANGES AND NEXT STEPS:

This review will inform any changes to the policy and actions in to the future which include:

- Update Homelessness Policy in particular statistics and superseded documents.
- Revise actions and consider implementation in to the Community Development Strategy with clear roles, responsibilities and resources.
- Affordable Housing section will revert to the Affordable, Attainable and Appropriate Housing Policy.
- Align Homelessness Policy review process with Council's timeline for review of organisational policies.
- Clear monitoring and evaluation framework.

The review of this policy took a collaborative approach with internal teams across Community Development; Customer Service; Compliance – Rangers; Building Environment and Health; Economic Development; Holiday Parks; Strategic Planning and Urban Design and Council's Executive Leadership Team. We thank the Tweed Shire Housing and Homelessness Network for their input also.

If you would like to know more about this review and next steps, please contact Tweed Shire Council's Community Development Officer - Social Planning on 02 6670 2275.