

Homelessness Taskforce Shoalhaven - Terms of Reference

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1. PURPOSE

To provide appropriate and considered strategic advice on homelessness and related issues that can be dealt with at Council level. The Taskforce will work with Council to address issues, develop options and assist with the identification of preferred solutions as part of Council's decision making process.

2. STATEMENT

Homelessness is a growing problem in all communities throughout Australia. On any given night in Australia 1 in 200 people are homeless. (Homelessness Australia). On census night in 2011 the Shoalhaven Local Government Area recorded 375 homeless people. Only about 6% of these are "rough sleepers" ie those in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out.

Of those who are homeless 56% are male and 25% are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Homelessness may be defined as: "when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
 - has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
 - does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations."
- (Australian Bureau of Statistics)

People become homeless for a number of reasons. This can be due to structural factors such as lack of income, lack of affordable housing or rental accommodation, cost of living pressures, discrimination, poverty or lack of superannuation funds in retirement. Or it could be due to system failures such as children exiting from the care system, discharge from prison, hospital, rehabilitation or other institution. This is compounded by individual circumstances such as domestic violence, addictions, traumatic events, mental illness or physical health and disability.

There are no short term solutions to the issue of homelessness in the Shoalhaven. Without the provision of increased Government funding to provide longer term temporary accommodation and fund services to provide an increased number of emergency beds for men, women and children the situation can only continue to degenerate. Long term solutions involve the construction of affordable housing.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1. Relationship to Council

The Homelessness Taskforce is a Section 355 & 377 Committee of Council (Local Government Act 1993).

It is a strategic advisory committee to advocate for and inform Council's decision making process related to homelessness in the Shoalhaven.

3.2. Role of the Taskforce

The role of the Homelessness Taskforce is:-

- Provide Council with strategic advice on homelessness and related issues that can be dealt with at a Local Government level.
- Work with Council to address issues, develop options and assist with the identification of preferred solutions as part of Council's decision making process
- Advise on the development and application of a Homelessness Strategic Plan
- Provide comment on relevant Council policies and strategies
- Advocate community views on homelessness issues

3.3. Membership

Membership of the Taskforce is open to members of the community with an interest in addressing issues of homelessness across the Shoalhaven.

The membership of the taskforce will comprise of:

- Representatives from community representatives being either Government/Non-Government agencies/organisations and community members.
- All Councillors be members of the taskforce.
- The General Manager or nominee.

The process for nomination to the taskforce will be as follows:

- An Expression of Interest will be advertised for membership of the taskforce. The Expression of Interest will be advertised locally via media and Council communication networks.
- Council will manage the application process.
- Appointment to the Homelessness Taskforce Shoalhaven can be for a maximum four (4) years with a set commencement and finish date and standing members may re-nominate for an additional term.
- Any individual, representatives of an organisation, service or agency, who agree to work within the purpose of the taskforce may nominate to become a member.
- Organisations, services, agencies or residents groups may only nominate one representative.
- The taskforce aims to include the voices of all stakeholders, and welcomes the participation of those who have a lived experience of homelessness.
- An interview panel will consist of a Council staff member, the Chair of the Homelessness Taskforce Shoalhaven and one (1) independent person will assess the applications and make recommendations for appointments to the taskforce and then Council.

3.4. Meetings

- The taskforce will meet on a quarterly basis and more frequently if required
- Agendas and minutes from previous meetings will be circulated to members at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting

- The Chair of the Taskforce will be appointed for a term of two (2) years and is open to all members of the Taskforce.
- A quorum will consist of eight (8) members of the Committee.

3.5. Voting

- Voting and Recommendations are made by consensus and all decisions must be stated precisely for the inclusion of the minutes.
- Where a consensus cannot be reached then the majority of 60% of those present can adopt a motion.
- Alternative views are to be minuted.

3.6. Code of Conduct

- Meetings be conducted in an informal manner, but still within Council's 'Code of Conduct' Policy which all members are required to observe.
- Taskforce members should act in a professional, responsible and respectful manner with the information they obtain as a member.
- Taskforce members must at all times respect other members when expressing their opinions and views. Members should feel free to express their opinions without fear of recrimination.

3.7. Confidentiality and Privacy

Members may have contact with confidential or personal information retained by Council. If so, members are required to maintain the security of any confidential or personal information and not access, use or remove any information, unless the member is authorised to do so.

3.8. Communication

- All issues must be clearly communicated including priorities, limitations and benefits to community.
- Members of the Taskforce are not permitted to speak to the media as representatives of the Taskforce unless approved by the chairperson.
- Where approval has been given by the Chairperson, views and opinions expressed are those of the Taskforce and not of Shoalhaven City Council.
- Where endorsement is required from Shoalhaven City Council, approval must be sought through the formal processes.

3.9. Council Staff Attendance

Shoalhaven City Council will provide administrative Council staff who are normally required to attend the meetings of the Advisory Committee to carry out the following tasks:

- Collate and distribute Business Papers.
- Organise meetings.
- Minute taking, storage and distribution of minutes and associated documents.
- Providing administrative support to the Community Development Team to distribute information between the Committee and the Community Development Team.
- Other staff at the relevant Group Directors' discretion or at the Advisory Committee's request can attend meetings as required. Staff have no voting privileges.

3.10. Expectation of Taskforce Members

Pecuniary Interest Returns may be required on appointment and annually as required by the Office of Local Government and Council.

3.11. Responsibility of Council

Council at its discretion may review and change the Terms of Reference, Role and Structure of the Taskforce.

4. REVIEW

After every Council election.