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CITY COUNCIL

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# Glen Eira City Council

# Homelessness Statement of Commitment



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The *Glen Eira City Council Homelessness Statement of Commitment* was adopted by Glen Eira City Council at its ordinary Council meeting on Tuesday 9 June 2026.

#### Use of Artificial Intelligence

Glen Eira City Council used artificial intelligence tools to assist with drafting and editing this document. all content was reviewed, refined and approved by Council officers.

#### Cover image

Houses in Carnegie.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Glen Eira City Council acknowledges the Boon Wurrung/ Bunurong and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation as Traditional Owners and Custodians, and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to land and waterways. Council extends its respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Council honours the rich histories and cultures of First Nations peoples and recognises and values the important contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in enriching our community. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to a *Reconciliation Action Plan* which is underpinned by the principles of self-determination. We work towards improved outcomes and long-term generational change, and to consolidate Glen Eira as a culturally safe place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are committed to achieving equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to live healthy and prosperous lives and to improve life outcomes for current and future generations.

Glen Eira resides on country that always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

# OUR COMMITMENT TO PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness touches individuals, families and our whole community. This *Commitment* sets out the values that guide us, the role we can play in prevention, early intervention and response, and the way we will show up — with compassion, respect and a focus on keeping people safe, connected and supported.

## Understanding homelessness

Homelessness is broader and more complex than many people realise. It does not only refer to people sleeping in public places. Homelessness describes a range of situations where people do not have safe, secure or stable housing.

People may move between these situations over time, and homelessness is often hidden from view.

Homelessness is a growing reality for many people from all walks of life, including younger people, those who are employed, families with children and older people. For some people homelessness can be a brief experience, and for others it can be chronic or reoccurring. Homelessness is rarely a choice.

## HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness can include a range of situations, such as:



Living in **overcrowded or unsafe** housing.



**'Couch surfing'** or staying with family and friends.



Staying in **insecure accommodation** like a boarding or rooming house.



Staying in **crisis accommodation** like a refuge or in temporary housing.



Living out of a **car** or vehicle.



**'Rough sleeping'** in tents, swags or public spaces.

## What does ‘at risk of homelessness’ mean?

An increasing number of people are one crisis (like an injury or illness, relationship breakdown or financial shock) away from homelessness. People who currently have a safe, secure and stable place to call home may be considered at risk of homelessness if they are experiencing:

- housing stress or unaffordable rent
- family violence or relationship breakdown
- mental health challenges or ill health
- financial hardship, poverty or sudden loss of income
- insecure work, temporary visas or limited access to support systems.

While early support and connection to services can make a difference, there is no single pathway out of homelessness, and outcomes are not guaranteed. People experiencing homelessness retain autonomy and may choose whether or not to accept offers of accommodation or support. Access to housing and health services is shaped by availability, eligibility and individual circumstances, and compulsory intervention only applies in limited situations where there is a serious risk of harm.

## Who is most vulnerable?

Homelessness can affect anyone, but some people are particularly vulnerable due to structural and systemic factors, or are over-represented in homelessness data.

This includes:

- Women
- Older people aged over 55 years old
- Young people under 24 years old
- Those leaving state care or institutions (including correctional facilities or hospitals)
- People with a disability
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- People who identify as LGBTIQ+

Climate-related events such as extreme heat or flooding can further increase risk for people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, particularly older people, people with disability, and those with existing health conditions.

These vulnerabilities often overlap, increasing the risk of homelessness and making recovery more complex.

## A shared responsibility

Homelessness is shaped by broader social and economic systems, including housing supply and affordability, income security, health services and community supports. Preventing and responding to homelessness requires coordinated action across all levels of government, specialist services, community organisations and the broader community. This *Commitment* recognises homelessness as a shared responsibility and sets out our role in contributing to prevention, support and dignity within its remit.

This *Commitment* strongly aligns to our *Community Vision*, which is for a thriving and empowered community working together for an inclusive and sustainable future. Homelessness is everybody's business and a complex social challenge that cannot be solved alone.

Although just one player in a system of stakeholders, we are committed to continuing and strengthening our contribution where we can, and in ways that work for our community. We are at the forefront of community life, playing an important role in managing public environments and community services in ways that promote safety, dignity and inclusion for everyone.

As part of this shared responsibility, this *Commitment* includes practical guidance to support the community to respond safely, respectfully and appropriately when people experience or are at risk of homelessness.



## OUR ROLE: WHAT WE DO (AND WHAT WE DON'T)

Homelessness is a complex issue with social, economic and structural causes. Preventing and responding to homelessness requires coordinated action across all levels of government, specialist services, community organisations and the broader community. We have an important role to play — but it is defined and limited.

### **Our role includes:**

- Advocating to other levels of government on issues that affect housing security and homelessness.
- Working with local services to support coordinated responses and shared understanding of available support pathways.
- Delivering and funding community-based initiatives that contribute to wellbeing and prevention.
- Managing public spaces and facilities to ensure safety, amenity and inclusion.
- Building organisational and community understanding of our role and approach.

### **Our role does not include:**

- Delivering specialist homelessness, housing or case management services.
- Managing individual housing allocations or eligibility.
- Replacing Victorian or Australian Government responsibilities for housing and support systems.
- Using fines or enforcement in response to homelessness itself. We may take compliance action in limited circumstances to manage safety risks or significant impacts in shared spaces.



## OUR COMMITMENT IN PRACTICE

Our commitment to preventing and responding to homelessness is reflected in how we advocate, partner, provide, educate and, where required, enforce within our existing roles and responsibilities, including early intervention and prevention. This includes contributing to housing security through our policy, planning and service functions, and supporting community members to access information, services and support before issues escalate.

Our approach recognises homelessness as a complex social issue shaped by structural factors such as housing affordability, health, family violence and cost of living pressures, and affirms that our role is to contribute alongside others, not to replace specialist systems.



### Advocate

We consistently advocate for structural reforms and investment to prevent and reduce homelessness.

This includes long-standing advocacy to the Victorian and Australian Governments for increased social and affordable housing supply, improved access to mental health and community services, and policy responses to housing stress and cost of living pressures. We have raised homelessness and housing affordability through formal advocacy channels including Municipal Association of Victoria and Australian Local Government Association motions, submissions and intergovernmental forums, recognising these as issues beyond the capacity of local government to resolve alone. These advocacy efforts aim to address the structural drivers of homelessness, including housing supply, affordability and access to support.

Advocacy is also embedded in our strategic planning and policy positions, including support for housing diversity and improved social and affordable housing outcomes through land use planning and housing strategy implementation. We use local data, community engagement insights and lived experience to inform advocacy priorities and work alongside neighbouring councils and peak bodies to amplify shared concerns.

## Partner

We work in partnership with specialist homelessness, housing, legal, health and community services that are best placed to provide direct and ongoing support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

This includes maintaining strong relationships with local and regional service providers such as Better Health Network, Launch Housing, Victoria Police and other specialist homelessness services, community legal centres, family violence services, youth services, mental health providers and multicultural organisations.

Through these partnerships, we support coordinated responses by sharing information about available services and supporting awareness of appropriate pathways, early support and intervention where it can reduce the risk of homelessness.

We also play a convening role, bringing together services that intersect with homelessness — including housing, health, justice, family violence, ageing, disability and youth — to strengthen collaboration, reduce duplication and improve local system navigation.

## Provide

Within our remit, we deliver services and fund community organisations that support people to meet basic needs, stay connected and reduce the risk of housing instability and homelessness.

We administer community grants that support not-for-profit organisations delivering assistance to people experiencing vulnerability and housing stress. This includes funding organisations such as Peninsula Community Legal Centre and Community Information and Support Victoria member agencies, which provide legal assistance, financial counselling, tenancy advice, advocacy and information that can prevent homelessness or resolve issues early and avoid housing loss.

We also provide access to inclusive, low-barrier community spaces such as libraries, leisure facilities, community centres and neighbourhood venues, which offer safety, dignity, connection and access to information. Libraries and community hubs in particular function as important places of respite, learning and social connection for people experiencing disadvantage.

Our broader services also contribute to homelessness prevention by supporting people to stay housed and navigate challenges before they escalate, including seniors support (such as low-cost independent living units for financially disadvantaged older people), youth services, and community support programs that address isolation, financial hardship and wellbeing risks. We provide information about local services and support pathways, helping people understand what support is available, recognising that access to housing and support depends on availability and eligibility, and that early connection to support can help prevent issues from escalating. Together, these services help address isolation, financial hardship and wellbeing risks that can contribute to housing insecurity.

## **Educate**

We build understanding across the organisation and the community to ensure responses to homelessness are informed, consistent and grounded in dignity and respect.

Internally, this includes supporting staff through training, internal guidance and clear role definition so that responses to homelessness and rough sleeping are trauma-informed, human rights-based and aligned with our values. Education supports staff across regulatory, customer service and community-facing roles to respond safely and appropriately, while understanding the limits of our responsibilities.

Externally, we play a role in community education and awareness raising through communications, engagement and public information. This includes promoting understanding of homelessness as a systemic issue, reducing stigma and supporting respectful use of public spaces. Education is also embedded in our broader health, wellbeing, equity and inclusion work, recognising housing security as a key social determinant of health.

## **Enforce (where required)**

We have statutory responsibilities to manage public spaces and facilities and to uphold local laws to ensure safety, access and amenity for everyone. This includes considering the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness, other members of the community, and occupants of public buildings and facilities.

Our regulatory functions may relate to matters such as public health, amenity, use of public land, access to buildings and community safety. These responsibilities exist to manage shared spaces and reduce risks, not to respond to homelessness itself. Enforcement is not a response to homelessness and is never used as a substitute for housing, health or support services.

Where enforcement action is required, it is applied proportionately, consistently and in accordance with legislation, and only as a last resort where there are genuine safety risks or significant amenity impacts that cannot be resolved through engagement or support-based responses. Our approach prioritises safety, dignity and wellbeing for all, and seeks to avoid actions that criminalise homelessness or exacerbate vulnerability.

## HOW WE RESPOND IN PUBLIC SPACES

We understand that some people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping may spend time in public spaces, and that community members may have questions or concerns when they see this.

This section focuses on public spaces, where Council has a defined role. Responses in private settings, including private buildings or residences, sit primarily with property owners, emergency services or specialist support providers.

**Our approach in public spaces is guided by care, respect and safety.**



When our staff become aware of someone sleeping rough, the focus is on engaging respectfully, checking on wellbeing where appropriate, and responding in a way that recognises the person's dignity and circumstances.

During extreme weather events, such as heatwaves or severe storms, Council's focus in public spaces is on wellbeing checks, safety and appropriate referral, consistent with our role and responsibilities.

We do not treat homelessness as a nuisance or a behaviour to be punished. Responses are proportionate and seek to balance the needs of people experiencing homelessness with the shared use of public spaces by the wider community.

We also recognise that staff across different roles may encounter homelessness in public spaces. Staff are supported to respond consistently, within clear boundaries, and in line with our responsibilities and values.

We maintain internal operational guidance to support staff in responding to rough sleeping in a manner that prioritises safety, dignity and wellbeing, consistent with a human rights-based approach.

## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT PEOPLE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

### Community protocol for safe, respectful and appropriate responses

Homelessness is a shared community issue, and many people want to help when they see someone who may be sleeping rough or experiencing hardship. There are simple, practical ways community members can respond safely and respectfully.

### If someone appears to need urgent support

If you are concerned about a person's immediate safety or wellbeing — for example, if they appear unwell, distressed, injured or at risk — contact emergency services by calling 000. If the situation is not urgent but you are worried about someone's welfare, you can request a welfare check through Victoria Police.

### If you see someone sleeping rough

Seeing someone sleeping rough can be confronting, and it is natural to want to help. Rough sleeping is not illegal, and people experiencing homelessness have the same rights as anyone else to dignity and respect.

Homelessness, and particularly rough sleeping, is often a very isolating experience. Simple actions like making eye-contact and giving a nod or smile of acknowledgement can go a long way in making people feel seen and respected.

If the situation is appropriate, and you feel safe and comfortable to do so, a simple, respectful check in — such as asking if they are okay — can be helpful. People may choose whether or not to engage, and that choice should be respected.

### If someone asks you for help or information

If a person asks what support is available, you can help by pointing them toward services that specialise in housing, health and social support. You do not need to have all the answers — simply helping someone connect with the right service can make a difference.

If you are unsure what support is available, you can share information about local services, such as:

- **Ask Izzy** for local community services, allowing people seeking support to search for the kind of support needed (like food relief or housing support). [www.askizzy.org.au](http://www.askizzy.org.au)
- **Glen Eira Community Information and Support Victoria** for local advice and referrals to services such as community legal centres, financial counselling services, housing support services and community health organisations.  
**03 9571 7644**

Council can also receive reports about concerns in public spaces so they can be responded to appropriately. Reports should focus on location and safety concerns, not personal details.

### Supporting dignity and inclusion

Small actions matter. Treating people with respect, avoiding assumptions, and recognising homelessness as a complex social issue, not a personal failure, helps create a safer and more inclusive community for everyone. If you are unsure what to do, it is okay to pause, seek advice, or contact us for guidance on **03 9524 3333**.



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### National Relay Service

A phone solution for people who have a hearing or speech impairment. Internet relay users connect to NRS then ask for 03 9524 3333.

TTY dial 13 36 77 or Speak and Listen dial 1300 555 727 then ask for 03 9524 3333. <https://internet-relay.nrscall.gov.au>

### Social media

#### Glen Eira City Council:

[www.facebook.com/GlenEiraCityCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/GlenEiraCityCouncil)

#### @cityofgleneira:

[www.instagram.com/cityofgleneira](http://www.instagram.com/cityofgleneira)

#### LinkedIn:

[www.linkedin.com/company/glen-eira-city-council](http://www.linkedin.com/company/glen-eira-city-council)

#### Glen Eira arts, gallery and events:

[www.facebook.com/gleneiraarts](http://www.facebook.com/gleneiraarts)  
[www.instagram.com/gleneiraarts](http://www.instagram.com/gleneiraarts)

#### Glen Eira Leisure:

[www.facebook.com/GESAConline](http://www.facebook.com/GESAConline)  
[www.instagram.com/gleneiraleisure](http://www.instagram.com/gleneiraleisure)

#### Glen Eira Libraries and Learning Centres:

[www.facebook.com/GlenEiraLibraries](http://www.facebook.com/GlenEiraLibraries)  
[www.instagram.com/gleneiralibraries](http://www.instagram.com/gleneiralibraries)

#### Glen Eira sustainable living:

[www.facebook.com/sustainablelivinggleneira](http://www.facebook.com/sustainablelivinggleneira)

#### Glen Eira Youth Services:

[www.facebook.com/GlenEiraYouthServices](http://www.facebook.com/GlenEiraYouthServices)  
[www.instagram.com/gleneirayouthservices](http://www.instagram.com/gleneirayouthservices)