



Homelessness Strategy Review

Prepared February 2023

Councils are required under the *Local Government Act 1993* to inform the community of particular issues that potentially affect their way of life. North Sydney Council is committed both in principle and in practice, to engaging on matters affecting the North Sydney community.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this project-specific Community Engagement Strategy is to outline the ways stakeholders can be involved in the review of Council's *Homeless Strategy (2013)*, identifying best-practice methods for addressing this social issue.

1.1 Council's Community Engagement Protocol

This Engagement Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Council's *Community Engagement Protocol*. The Protocol is used to determine the level of 'level(s) of impact' applicable to this project/decision (proposal). Community engagement opportunities will be provided across a range of 'engagement' levels. This proposal has been determined as:

LEVEL OF IMPACT	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT
Low - LGA Wide	Inform/Consult

Council used the framework shown below in Table 1.1 to select the most appropriate 'level(s) of engagement' for this proposal to ensure an appropriate range of engagement 'levels' and methods are offered:

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Inform	Providing balanced and objective information to help the community understand problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions
Consult	Obtain public feedback on alternatives and/or decisions
Involve	Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered
Collaborate	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution

Table 1.1 Derived from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

2. Background

Although largely considered the responsibility of the Federal and State governments, local government can also play a significant role in addressing homelessness¹. Council has a long

¹ NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023

history of supporting people experiencing homelessness, or who at risk of becoming homeless, through assertive outreach and community development initiatives, as well as the provision of social and affordable housing stock.

The *Homelessness Strategy* is one of many Council plans and strategies, that supports the implementation of the *North Sydney Community Strategic Plan*. This Strategy was last updated in 2013 and Council has been consistently working to achieve the actions set out in this plan. The updated Strategy will provide opportunities to review Council's role in this service area, whilst identifying other initiatives, programs and policies to address and respond to homelessness within a best-practice framework. The updated Homelessness Strategy will reflect the current data related to homelessness in North Sydney.

3. Community Engagement Strategy

3.1 Who are our community stakeholders?

This Engagement Strategy identifies the following groups to engage with in the local community:

- local network interagency - Northern Sydney Homeless Network Interagency/Case Coordination Network
- specialist homelessness services/peak bodies - St George Community Housing (SGCH), Link Wentworth Housing, Mission Australia, Bridge Housing, Homelessness NSW, The Northern Centre, Phoenix House, Taldumande Youth Services
- government agencies, both state and federal, including NSW Police, Centrelink, NSW Health, NSW Department of Family and Community Services
- Council staff - particularly customer facing teams, including; rangers, library, customer service, parks and other outdoor staff
- people experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness
- other local services providers - community centres, boarding houses

3.2 Key Communication Messages

- Council plays a significant role in the community response to homelessness in North Sydney. Council addresses and responds to homelessness by providing direct support through assertive outreach programs and social housing that's affordable. Council also facilitates community development initiatives.
- 2021 ABS Census noted a decrease overall in people experiencing homelessness, with a total of 327 people reported being homeless in North Sydney. This is a decrease compared to 411 people in 2016. While community expectations and concerns relating to people experiencing homelessness has increased.
- Council periodically reviews its plans and strategies that support the goals of the *North Sydney Community Strategic Plan*. Council is updating the *Homeless Strategy*, which is a targeted and localised plan, considering the demographics and profile of the local homeless population.

- For the first phase of the Strategy, Council will gather up-to-date information on the local needs and issues that affect individuals who are experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of becoming homeless, within the North Sydney local government area (LGA). This information will guide how Council addresses the most urgent issues.
- Stakeholders will have two opportunities to participate in the review of the *Homeless Strategy*. The first phase will seek input from key stakeholders through various engagement methods including an opt-in survey. The second phase will involve public exhibition of the draft Strategy.

3.3 Timetable

Stakeholder engagement will occur at various times. The key project development phases are outlined in the following table:

Phase	Timing
1. Research and Scoping	February/March 2023
2. Consultation	March to early May 2023
3. Preparing the Draft Strategy/Public Exhibition	June/July 2023

3.3.1 Phase 1 - Research/Scoping

This phase will involve review of current literature and best-practice models for addressing and responding to homelessness in the North Sydney LGA. The review will consider previous plans and strategies prepared by Council, current service delivery and amenities access for people experiencing homeless, as well as academic literature on homelessness issues.

3.3.2 Phase 2 - Preliminary Engagement/Consultation

Between March and May 2023, Council will offer various methods by which stakeholders can participate in Phase 2, including face-to-face and online, allowing the community to participate at times that best suit their needs and commitments. At the end of Phase 2 a summary of consultations outcomes (raw data) will be produced and distributed to participants and key stakeholders as well as posted on Council's website.

Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
Webpage	All	Inform/Consult	Provide information about the project and direct people to how they can have their say
Media Release	All	Inform	
Advertisements	All		
Social Media (Facebook/Twitter)	All		
Fact Sheet	All		
Direct notification	Community Centres and specialist housing services		
e-Newsletters	Existing subscribers: North Sydney E-news,		

Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
	Precinct E-news and Business e-news		
Focus Groups	General community, Mayor and Councillors, Precincts, Service providers, People with lived experience of homelessness	Consult	Collect feedback. Participant numbers will be limited
One-on-one interviews	People with lived experience of homelessness		Collect feedback in a private and sensitive manner
Survey	Service providers, People with lived experience of homelessness, Broader community		Alternative to face-to-face interactions. The survey will be conducted online, with a hard copy option also made available.

Note: In accordance with Council's Community Engagement Framework described on page 1, the 'level of engagement' per engagement method is indicated.

3.3.3 Phase 3 - Public Exhibition

Using the quantitative data of Phase 1 and qualitative information gathered in Phase 2, the draft Strategy will be prepared. This phase involves finalising the Strategy, including reporting the draft Strategy to Council seeking endorsement to publicly exhibit (for a minimum of 42 days) and post-exhibition reporting back to Council, inclusive of the summary of submissions received. This phase will occur in mid-2023. To do this we will undertake the following activities. Not listed in priority order.

Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
Webpage	All	Inform	Provide information about the project and direct people to how they can have a say i.e. promote the Phase 2 consultation opportunities.
Social Media (Facebook/Twitter)			
e-Newsletters			
Information display (various locations)			
Direct letter	Key stakeholders per Phase 1		
Existing e-newsletters	Subscribers of Council's various newsletters including North Sydney E-news, Business E-news and Precincts E-news		
Precinct System	All active Precinct Committees	Inform/Consult	Encourage Precinct Committees to promote consultation opportunity to members/invite to make a submission.

Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
Submissions	All	Consult	Feedback accepted by email or posted letter as well as via online form. ²

Note: In accordance with Council's Community Engagement Framework described on page 1, the 'level of engagement' per engagement method is indicated.

4. Opportunity Cost/Rationale

Engaging the community in this proposal may entail financial costs to Council to achieve a high-quality engagement process. If the process is robust, community ownership of the decisions made will ensure efficient outcomes. Insufficient or poor-quality engagement can result in poor long-term decisions requiring further resources to rectify. The aim of a high-quality community engagement process is to make sustainable decisions. The engagement process will help Council staff and/or Councillors to understand the related recommendations rationale.

5. Further Information

For further information contact Council's Access and Inclusion Coordinator, Community & Library Services Division:

Phone: 9936 8100
Email: yoursay@northsydney.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au

² For more information about how to make a written submission refer to Council's [Information Sheet: Making a Written Submission to Council](#).