

Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Ms Jay Church

Organisation Name:Anchor Inc - Rapid Response Pilot Project

Your position or role: Team Leader - Rapid Response Pilot Project Coordinator

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Drag the statements below to reorder them. In order of priority, please rank the themes you believe are most important for this inquiry into homelessness to consider::

Rough sleeping,Housing affordability,Family violence,Mental health,Services,Public housing,Indigenous people,Employment

What best describes your interest in our Inquiry? (select all that apply) :

Working in Homelessness services

Are there any additional themes we should consider?

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1: [5e6dbffc45b47-RRPP_Submission_\(002\).docx](#)

File2:

File3:

Signature:

Ms Jay Church



Rapid Response Pilot Project submission to: Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness

The Rapid Response Pilot Project (RRPP) provides an early intervention and assertive outreach response to young people, individuals and families sleeping rough in Yarra Ranges who are referred for support by the Yarra Ranges Council. The project was designed by Anchor Inc (lead agency) in partnership with Yarra Ranges Council (funder); and Salvation Army (service delivery partner) as a four year pilot project. The RRPP provides intensive case management and support to rough sleepers to improve health and housing outcomes; and reduce risks of adverse health outcomes associated with the experience of sleeping rough. Supporting improved outcomes has involved a collaborative effort linking with other services and health providers in a flexible and multidisciplinary approach.

The Changing Sacle and Nature of Homelessness

This submission focuses on the changing nature of homelessness that has been observed impacting increasing trends of young people, individuals and families sleeping rough in the Yarra Ranges. Our data indicates that people are increasingly sleeping rough in the Yarra Ranges because there are no other housing options available to them to remain connected with their community and supports. For young people this also includes remaining engaged in education and/or training and their future employment prospects. While it is widely understood that the causes of homelessness are complex what we have observed in our region is increased vulnerability and disadvantages that are amplified by geographical isolation, that coexists with a high prevalence of family violence.¹

Homelessness research indicates on any given night 1 100 people sleep rough throughout Victoria.² It has been observed people sleeping rough in the CBD has decreased³ by 15% through targeted programs in 2018. In contrast Anchor's Opening Doors intake data (SHIP) show a significant **increase of people from the Yarra Ranges sleeping rough of 26% between 2017-2019.***

*Data of young people, individuals and families has been collated from Anchor's Opening Doors program. The RRPP has demonstrated a cohort of hard to reach people sleeping rough in Yarra Ranges who do not access services but do engage through assetive outreach.

The RRPP data aligns with homelessness research to define three main groupings within the rough sleeping population across Yarra Ranges that includes young people, individuals and families:

- Recently homeless and sleeping rough
- Sleeping rough for an extended period of time
- At risk of chronic homelessness and rough sleeping

Increased risks for people sleeping rough in Yarra Ranges include:

- A severe shortage of emergency housing and resources across Yarra Ranges increases risk of rough sleeping continuing for extended periods and chronic rough sleeping and associated adverse health outcomes. The RRPP has identified over 60 locations where people sleep rough across Yarra Ranges which include urban, rural and bushland areas.
- Significant health risk for young people, individuals and families sleeping rough are the extreme weather conditions present within the region that include high bushfire risk areas and areas that drop below zero in the colder months. Sadly there has been people who have died from hypothermia who have been sleeping rough in Yarra Ranges

¹ Eastern Health - Health Promotion -Integrated Health Promotion Plan 2017 – 2021

² Victoria State Government (2018) Victoria's homelessness and rough sleeping action plan

³ The Hon Martin Foley MP Media Release (2018) <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/rough-sleeping-decreases-in-city-of-melbourne/>

Social, economic and policy factors that impact on homelessness and government policies that impact on service delivery

The drivers of an increased trend of rough sleepers in Yarra Ranges are attributed to:

- **Lack of emergency accommodation and resources**

Yarra Ranges has no crisis accommodation/refuge options for young people, individuals or families who are experiencing housing crisis, there are no state or federal funded programs that specifically fund work with rough sleepers in the Yarra Ranges, or additional targeted funding for rough sleepers to purchase emergency accommodation, particularly for single people.

- **Limited Medium-Long Term Housing and Alternative Affordable Housing options and ongoing intensive support.**

Risk of extended periods of rough sleeping/chronic homelessness are further increased by limited medium – long term housing, decline in housing stock and social housing development across Yarra Ranges. The private rental market is often not an affordable option for people on low incomes. Increasing costs of alternative housing options eg rooming houses and caravan parks in the Yarra Ranges area have also become beyond the means of most people on Newstart and Youth Allowance. Some rooming houses are barely affordable for people on Disability Support Pension, based on the affordability scale of 55% of income with a 10% variation for the inclusion of utilities in the cost of rent.

Often support to rough sleepers is brief intervention 6-12 weeks. This limits opportunities to structure support to the needs of individuals and families to address the underlying factors that led to their experience of homelessness, to sustain their housing and improve their overall health and wellbeing.

Solutions:

The success of programs targeting people sleeping rough in the CBD and inner suburbs of Melbourne demonstrates that with adequate resources, housing options and support reduces the risk of sleeping rough for extended periods of time that can lead to chronic homelessness and associated adverse health outcomes.

This evidence suggests with adequate resources rough sleeping could be reduced similarly in the Yarra Ranges region to achieve similar outcomes. There is emerging evidence from the Rapid Response Pilot Project that also supports this position.

To achieve these outcomes all regions in Victoria require resources and ongoing funding to reduce the numbers of people rough sleeping and associated adverse health outcomes which includes:

- Increased affordable appropriate and safe emergency accommodation/refuge, medium and long term housing to be evenly distributed to all regions of Victoria, including Housing First models to meet the needs of people sleeping rough.
- Funding for programs that can provide assertive outreach to people sleeping rough and continue support beyond brief intervention, to address the underlying issues that have led to the experience of homelessness and sleeping rough to sustain health and housing outcomes.
- Funding to assist building a local knowledge base of rough sleepers including resources to assist with 'street counts' and engage with hard to reach cohorts that don't access support from agencies.
- The provision of dedicated support packages for people who have been sleeping rough to access essential items, health services and treatment, and accommodation (both crisis and longer term housing brokerage).