

## Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

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**Organisation Name:**City of Kingston

**Your position or role:** Principal Strategic Planner

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

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

Other (please describe)

Local Government

**Are there any additional themes we should consider?**

### YOUR SUBMISSION

**Submission:**

**Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:**

### FILE ATTACHMENTS

**File1:** [5e8157d37734f-Homelessness Enquiry Submission - City of Kingston.pdf](#)

**File2:**

**File3:**

**Signature:**

Bianca Coughlan



# Kingston City Council Officers Response

## Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria

January 2020

<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lpic-lc/inquiries/inquiry/976>

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## Introduction

The City of Kingston is located in the middle and outer suburbs of Melbourne, approximately 20km south of the Melbourne CBD, surrounded by the suburbs of Bayside, Monash, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong and Frankston.

Kingston is a diverse community with a current estimated resident population of 163,430 spanning a wide range of ages, household types and cultures. Our community is constantly growing and by 2036 the population is expected to reach 185,000 living in an anticipated 77,300 dwellings.

The City encompasses a total land area of 91 km<sup>2</sup> of residential and industrial areas which includes substantial areas of open space.

The Kingston community confronts the same challenges as most others across the Melbourne metropolitan region: escalating housing costs relative to incomes resulting in increased levels of rental stress, mortgage stress, displacement and homelessness.

Kingston City Council is committed to increasing the availability of affordable housing within its municipality and has actively participated in affordable housing discussions at a metropolitan level through various forums, including the City of Melbourne's Inter Council Forum on Affordable Housing.

Kingston City Council has prepared a response to the Parliamentary Inquiry terms of reference to:

1. Provide an independent analysis of the changing scale and nature of homelessness across Victoria;
2. Investigate the many social, economic and policy factors that impact on homelessness; and
3. Identify policies and practices from all levels of government that have a bearing on delivering services to the homeless.

This response has been drafted by Council officers based on evidence of the extent and complexities of housing issues within this municipality; experiences of people who have been homeless within the municipality; and anecdotal evidence of the registered housing agencies and homeless support services operating in this area.

## Definitions

### Homelessness

For the purpose of this submission we define homeless persons as 'those recorded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) across homeless operational groups'. Operational groups include persons living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out, as well as those in supported accommodation; temporarily staying with other households; living in boarding houses; persons in temporary lodgings; and persons living in severely crowded dwellings (ABS, 2018).

Based on this definition, there were approximately 444 persons recorded across homeless operational groups in Kingston on Census night in 2016.

## Affordable housing

Kingston uses a specific definition of affordable housing that is commonly used in Australia that is 'housing that is available to very low and low-income households, to rent or own for less than 30 per cent of the household's income'<sup>1</sup>. This definition is referred to as the '30:40 rule' as very low and low-income households are the lowest 40 per cent of households based on income.

## Social housing

We define social housing as a subset of affordable housing. It typically refers to housing that is owned by government or a not-for-profit organisation (Housing Associations or Housing Providers which are collectively referred to as 'Registered Housing Agencies') and made available at affordable rents for eligible households. Social housing is an umbrella term that includes both public housing and community housing. Its provision usually involves some degree of subsidy.

## Complexities of homelessness in Kingston

The following complexities are based on the experiences or observations of Council staff in their day to day work.

### Private rental housing

Homelessness is rising in areas with a shortage of affordable private rental housing and higher median rents. This rise is most acute in capital city areas, specifically, Sydney, Hobart and Melbourne. The area supply of affordable private rental housing is statistically significantly associated with the variation in homelessness rates nationally, in capital cities and regional areas. Overcrowding accounts for a large part of this variation across areas after controlling for other area-based attributes.

### Mental health

Mental health is intrinsically interwoven within the homelessness landscape and is a necessary factor in addressing homelessness on both broad and individualised planning levels. There is a large diversity of mental health issues in the area of homelessness. For example, people experiencing homelessness for the first time due to family violence or eviction from private rental will usually experience poor mental health as their journey of homelessness unfolds.

People experiencing homelessness often carry these psychological effects with them even after their period of homelessness ends. At the other end of the scale, someone who has lived with a significant psychiatric illness for most of their lives may attribute the acute stages of their illness as the reason for their long-term chronic homelessness. These two scenarios highlight that access to both community mental health services and psychiatric services are vital to a person overcoming their situational homelessness or addressing chronic homelessness.

### National Disability Insurance Scheme

In recent years the transitioning of community mental health outreach services to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has been a factor for people experiencing homelessness. Participants in programs like Personal Helpers and Mentors services (PHaMs) and Partners in Recovery (PIR) were completely cut off in the Southern Metropolitan Region during the rollout of the NDIS which is still having a significant impact on the capacity of many clients being able to address their homelessness with appropriate support.

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<sup>1</sup> There is some debate as to whether the 30% should be applied to gross income, net income (i.e. after tax), or equivalised income. The former is the easiest to measure using Census data, although doing so ignores the differential impact of income taxes on different household types with similar gross incomes.

Misconceptions about what the NDIS can do for people experiencing homelessness with a disability keep many people on a plateau without housing whilst waiting for a perceived solution through this new funding model. There is still much confusion amongst this cohort, even 2 years on, around what the NDIS is and what services it will provide.

### Women

Family violence and age-related issues has resulted in more women experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness recently. A growing number of single women reaching retirement age do not have enough superannuation and lack assets to secure long term affordable housing on their own. The service system struggles to find appropriate housing for them and often crisis accommodation waitlists are long.

### People sleeping out

A much smaller, yet consistent cohort that presents in the middle south is single adults with significant mental health issues who refuse accommodation options, preferring to live outdoors away from people, usually in local parks in suburban areas, especially at acute stages of their illness. Victorian Police, Local Laws and Mental Health Crisis Assessment Teams do not have jurisdiction to move people on if they are not setting up physical camps and are not a risk to themselves or the community.

We have a small cohort in the Kingston region that live this nomadic lifestyle which does have an impact on local residents and the surrounding community. Residents are concerned, fearful and must deal with disruptive nights of shouting and swearing that manifests periodically from the psychiatric condition of the person/s sleeping out in the neighbourhood.

Kingston Council work collaboratively with the local community to try to address this issue which comes to a head from time to time, however, there are no realistic options for this cohort to resolve their fear of living indoors and engaging with services.

### Planning policies

At present there is a disconnect between planning policies and the equitable distribution of housing to ensure it is diverse, adaptable and affordable for a range of households and their transition throughout different stages of their life.

While unprecedented building activity has occurred over the past 10 years in Kingston this has mainly occurred in major activity centres reflecting the available land supply opportunities for medium to high density development. This has increased the total number of dwellings but there has been a substantial decline in the number of detached dwellings.

With the large number of single person households in housing stress this suggests that there is likely to be unmet demand for small and more affordable dwellings better suited to the needs of these households. Demand from these smaller households is likely to require both apartments as well as medium density dwellings. Whilst it is often the case that smaller dwellings are located in and around activity centres, there may well be demand for this type of supply in lower density suburban locations.

Further to this, the current Victorian Planning Framework does not provide a planning mechanism that would enable councils to require developers to provide affordable housing under an inclusionary zoning requirement. This leaves councils having to negotiate provision of affordable housing in new developments instead of having a mandatory tool to rely on.

## Scale of the housing issue in Kingston

### Evidence of housing shortfall across all spectrums

Within Kingston, in **2016 the demand for social and affordable housing was estimated as 6,222 dwellings**. This estimate includes demand from homeless households, very low, low and moderate-income households that are renting and experience housing stress, and the 1,259 households already in social housing (SGS, 2019) .

There are approximately 3,429 households on the Victorian Housing Register in the South Division which covers both Bayside-Peninsula (Cheltenham) and Bayside-Peninsula (Frankston). **There are currently 1,485 social (including public) housing dwellings available in Kingston which houses only 2 per cent of households.** (Source: Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), *Housing Assistance Delivery Data 2017 – 18.*)

Table 1: Number and type of households in Kingston

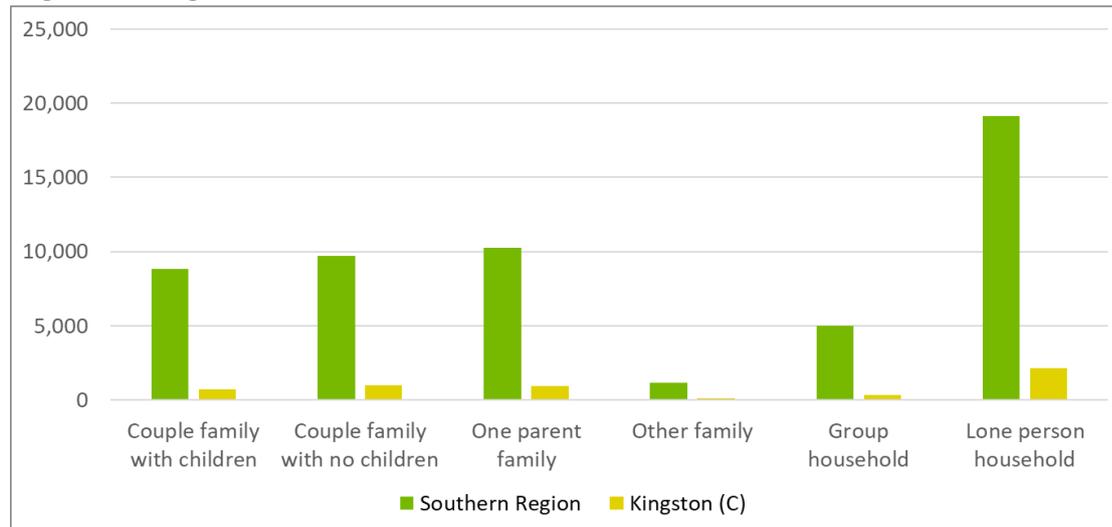
Household type	No. of households
Homeless households - Improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out	444
Very low-income households	2,359
Low income households	1,873
Moderate income households	946
Social housing households	1,259
Total	6,881
All households	63,076

Source: SGS 2018, using Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016. (*Kingston Social and Affordable Housing Discussion Paper, 2019*)

The *Kingston Social and Affordable Housing Discussion Paper (2019)* concludes there is little doubt of the urgent need for intervention to assist households in Kingston affected by the lack of affordable accommodation.

A report *Kingston City Council – Housing Affordability Report 2018* prepared by .id provides further narrative about the households experiencing rental stress. The lone person households experiencing rental stress within Kingston tend to be elderly persons over the age of 65 that have lived in the same address for more than 5 years. The report notes that this rate of rental stress is in excess of the Melbourne average for this group as well as for older couples. This is followed by couples aged 65 and over, and then singles aged 15 – 24 years and one parent families.

Chart 1: Households experiencing moderate & severe rental stress by family composition Southern Region and Kingston



Source: ABS Census 2016, VIF 2016.

Further supply analysis was prepared in the Kingston discussion paper to test the potential supply of housing from redevelopment of Council owned land and voluntary uplift mechanisms. The analysis indicated the voluntary uplift mechanisms for planning permit applications would only derive 300 dwellings over a 20-year period. **Even if Council was to include direct investment into the current social housing supply using Council owned land, the estimated dwelling supply increase over a 20-year period would only fulfil the required supply by 25%** (SGS Economics, 2019).

### Anecdotal evidence of numbers of people seeking assistance

Anecdotal evidence from a Registered Housing Agency, suggests they have experienced an overall increase in clients in Kingston from 2015 – 17, noting a higher proportion of women. The highest number fall into the client age cohort of 35 – 44 years.

Anecdotal evidence from Kingston's Community Connections Program (CCP) has seen an increase in people experiencing primary homelessness and sleeping out since 2017 to date. These are mainly men between 30 and 60 years old. There has been a noticeable increase in single women (some with children) in the same age group, usually sleeping in cars or couch surfing.

## Services operating in Kingston

### Housing agencies and community support services

Within the City of Kingston, there are nine active Registered Housing Agencies who currently own and manage properties. These organisations are diverse both in size and scale. Some of the organisations are gender and cohort specific. Table 2 provides an overview of all active agencies in Kingston.

Table 2: Registered Housing Agencies operating in the City of Kingston

Agency	Agency Type
Housing First	Housing Association
Common Equity Housing Limited	Housing Association
Community Housing Limited	Housing Association
Housing Choices Australia	Housing Association
Women's Housing Limited	Housing Association
Women's Property Initiatives	Housing Provider
South East Housing Limited	Housing Provider
Launch Housing	Housing Provider

Source: City of Kingston, 2019

There are a range of support services operating in Kingston predominantly providing emergency relief, food parcels and community meal programs. These are detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Community support services in Kingston

Name of Service	Service Type	Suburb
Pantry 5000 (Longbeach Anglican Parish)	Food parcels	Carrum
Chelsea Community Support Services (ChelCSS)	Emergency relief, food parcels etc.	Chelsea
Mentone Community Advisory Bureau	Emergency relief	Mentone
Make A Difference Dingley Village Inc.	Emergency relief	Dingley Village
Bayside Community Information and Support Service (BayCISS)	Emergency relief, food parcels etc.	Hampton East
Destiny Care (Destiny Church)	Food hampers, community lunch	Dingley Village
Kingston City Church Emergency Resources	Food parcels	Clarinda
Salvation Army Kingston Gardens	Food Parcels Wednesday & Friday 10am - 3pm	Dingley Village
Chelsea Careworks (Chelsea Community Church of Christ)	Food parcels, community breakfast, morning tea	Chelsea
Bayside Community Care (Bayside Church)	Food parcels, Matt's Place community lunch	Cheltenham

Source: City of Kingston, 2019

## Other programs and services

### Community Connections Program

A Community Connections Program (CCP) services the municipalities of Kingston and Bayside to provide a pathway for assistance to people who are homeless. There is evidence of people presenting for assistance at various local council facilities, parks and other locations. CCP provides a pathway into housing support to people experiencing primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness.

CCP targets people experiencing homelessness who have complex presentations and need advocacy to access Specialist Homelessness Services as well as appropriate health and support services. CCP workers conduct assertive outreach to people sleeping rough within the municipalities of Kingston and Bayside and offer assessment, linkage to housing and support services, linkage to a range of health services and some emergency relief.

### Other programs

- The local Homelessness Entry Point provides assessment and referral to Specialist Homelessness Services.
- Local Community Information Support Services provide information and referral to counselling and community services and some emergency relief.
- The pathway to most disability services, including psycho-social services, is via the NDIS which takes several months to get through the process. Many people are missing out on these services as they do not have the capacity to go through the process themselves and do not have a worker to help them to navigate this. Homeless people often miss out on these types of services since the introduction of the NDIS.
- The pathway to immediate mental health and psychiatric response services is via the regional mental health triage service.

## Anecdotal impacts of homelessness on services in Kingston

### City of Kingston Community Connections Program

- CCP has had to **shift core business** to focus mainly on people experiencing primary homelessness due to the amount of people sleeping out in the area who are falling through the gaps of Specialist Homelessness Services.
- **Homelessness entry points are not able to meet the need of requests for crisis accommodation and resort to creating networks with private rooming house operators** who notify the entry point of vacancies daily. Many people refuse to consider rooming house accommodation if they have had bad experiences with standover landlords and violent co-tenants.

A vast majority of the people sleeping rough that Kingston Bayside CCP approach are too fearful to try another rooming house. They often state that their last stay at a rooming house had made their situation worse, resulting in greater poverty, physical disability and psychological stress than they had prior to their rooming house residencies.

- Lack of growth in public housing along with lack of housing exits for people in transitional housing properties has meant that **transitional housing is often neither explored nor discussed with people experiencing homelessness** at the local entry point.
- **Crisis accommodation vacancies are in such demand that there is competition for them.** This means that someone sleeping rough may have to wait several weeks for an offer, during which time they need to keep in daily contact with the agency. This is very difficult to do for the person experiencing homelessness due to their transiency as well as their sense of hopelessness as they consistently hear there is no vacancy for them. Agencies trying to keep in contact with this client group have to put in extra resources to locate clients who have eventually been offered a place but are difficult to find. Many clients

have complex mental health issues which also makes it difficult for them to keep a track of when they need to contact or present at services.

### Community support services in Kingston

A series of telephone interviews with community support services was undertaken by Council Officers with the key points summarised below. These services provide emergency relief and food programs to community members in need.

- All services spoken with have experienced an **increase in demand from clients who are homeless**. A food parcel provider has seen an increase in the last eight years from one or two people to 15 to 20 homeless people on their books. A community information and support service has experienced an increase by 70% in homeless clients from 2016/17 of 1 per week to 2017/18 of 1.5 per day. And another community support service had 246 clients in 2018/19 who were homeless, which was 54% of all their clients, an increase from 2015 in which 37% of their clients were homeless.
- The **demographics and presenting issues of people who are homeless accessing community support services are varied**. Volunteers are noting an increase in people of all types who are homeless, but **a lot have mental health concerns**. A church minister has completed mental health first aid training to better support people attending her breakfast and food parcel service and will be putting her volunteers through this training too. Some clients are transient and passing by, while others have moved to Bayside from the CBD because they feel safer there. Middle aged men are 'falling through the gaps' because they do not meet the priority criteria for many housing services.
- All services experience pressure on their resources being provided and **have adapted how they work to better meet the needs of people who are homeless**. This includes writing a homelessness policy; providing more appropriate food; introducing a café card for hot meals from local cafes; supplying care packs for people sleeping rough; providing free washer, dryer and shower access during a free breakfast; and removing restrictions on medical assistance being provided. They are also experiencing an increase in need for food support at this time of year (early January) because lunch programs are closed.
- **Funding being received for services is not enough to last**. A church receives a grant to provide a free weekly hot breakfast in October and this is usually spent by April / May. They rely on donations for the rest of the year and the minister goes without pay when the service needs the money - *'the funding is not there'*.
- In addition to the resource / service pressure, **staff and volunteers are finding supporting people who are homeless challenging and stressful** due to their confidence and limited capacity to provide support. Excessive stresses are placed on the caseworker programs because volunteers refer clients on for increased support. Staff and volunteers also experience stress when unable to provide support to clients; for example:  
*'Launch Housing is stretched to the limit - where do we go when they can't help us?'*  
*'Personal encounters with people who have no physical wish to change their lives becomes very hard to know how to help them. They disappear, and you wonder what happened to them'*.

Services are recognising that worker and volunteer mental health is crucial and are providing relevant training for this, such as dealing with difficult people and mental health first aid.

## Policies and practices impacting on service provision

The following lists the range of policies and practices as reported by some services within Kingston as having an impact on the provision of their services to those experiencing homelessness.

- *'The biggest issue for homeless people is that they want to have a place to live and the community support services can't provide this.'*
- *'There is a lack of available and suitable accommodation options and people are moving through a cycle of services and waiting lists trying to get accommodation.'*
- Accommodation that is available such as rooming houses are not considered safe and people prefer to live in their car, friend's garages or on the street. When people have appropriate and secure housing, other issues such as finding a job and health can also be resolved.  
*'The Government needs to provide more low-cost housing'.*
- A lack of funding is a hinderance to meeting service demands. Services need to be very good at networking to draw in additional support.
- Mental health services are stretched.
- *'Newstart Allowance is not enough to live off.'*
- *'People don't stop being homeless or hungry over Christmas, all services should be open to keep supporting them.'*

## Experiences of people who are homeless

The following client experiences are based on the observations of Council staff in their day to day work.

### Single adults

Single adults experiencing homelessness in the Kingston area are more likely to fall through the gaps in the homelessness service system than families, and there has been a significant increase in this cohort in the municipality than ever before. Adults who are not partnered or have been estranged from their families have complex presentations and high needs. There is often difficulty in engaging with services due to poor health, low self-worth and a lack of understanding of what information they need to state to get a service.

Wait times for one-bedroom public housing for people under 55 years old is several years in the middle southern suburbs of Melbourne. It is slightly better for people over 55 years old at 1 to 3 years.

Single adults living on Centrelink income struggle as it is not enough to rent privately. The exception of this is boarding houses which the majority of people sleeping rough have already experienced and feel safer sleeping out. Boarding houses with shared facilities are considered tertiary homelessness as it is not expected that someone would live in that situation permanently due to privacy and safety reasons.

### Single parents

Eligibility for Parenting Payments changed in 2006 and the grandfathering of the previous arrangements would have expired in recent years. Now, when children reach school age the parent is transferred to NewStart Allowance (NSA) and receives some Family Tax Benefits. Landlords and rental agencies do not consider NSA to be a stable income as it can be cut off if the recipient doesn't attend an appointment and fails to notify the job agency. On top of this, the amount of money received on NSA is not enough to pay market rent anywhere in Melbourne, as evidenced in the *Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot, National Report (2019)*.

Families who are escaping family violence and do not meet the strict eligibility guidelines for a safe refuge or specialist support program often find themselves sleeping on a friend's lounge room floor or in their car. This is the same for families who have been evicted due to rental arrears who cannot

find an affordable option in the rental market. This has a devastating impact on children's physical and mental health, their sense of safety as well as their ability to cope at school.

### Mature families

AccessCare's CCP have assisted more elderly parents with adult children in the past 2 to 3 years as private rentals become less affordable in Kingston. Usually the parent is an ageing mother who has looked after her children who have complex conditions such as autism, anxiety and depression or a long term mental illness. As the mother has become frailer, often with deteriorating physical conditions, the adult children have become their carers doing the physical tasks while mum continues to manage the budget.

As both are usually receiving a pension, private landlords continue to raise the rent without regard to the stagnant incomes of the tenants or evict so they can renovate and ask for much higher rents. This leaves the household to try to find alternative rentals that are often too expensive in their local area.

The family usually have only 90 days to find an alternative rental and often cannot find anything affordable in the local area. Having to move to the outskirts of the suburbs means dislocation from life-long supports such as medical services and community connections, which has a significant impact on both their physical and mental health wellbeing.

## Issues of existing policies, practices or programs

The following issues are based on the experiences or observations of Council staff in their day to day work.

### Homelessness entry points

- **People presenting at the local homelessness entry point who have complex presentations are often not provided with an assessment and referral but just given a list of rooming houses** and discouraged from exploring crisis accommodation options due to the increasing demand and competition for beds.
- **Allocation to rooming houses often dislocates the client from their local area and support networks leaving them vulnerable and unsupported.** This usually leads to poor outcomes for the client.
- Disconnect between **transitional housing and social housing waitlists with lack of stock and restrictive periods of support result in unsuccessful tenancies or long-term tenancies in transitional housing without support.** This results in Transitional Housing Managers (THMs) struggling to meet their Key Performance Measures (KPMs) of vacancy rates in their transitional properties and places pressure on tenants to continue seeking private rental even if they are waiting for social housing. Support services cannot support clients throughout their THM tenancies due to their limited periods of funded support.

### Private rental

- **Lack of secure tenure.** The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) does not provide enough protection for tenants. Leases in Victoria are usually 12 months which then roll over to month by month arrangements. Landlords can issue a Notice to Vacate for no reason within 60 to 120 days, leaving long term tenants with a short time to find and relocate to alternative housing, often leading to a period of homelessness.  
The devastating impact of prioritising the complete control of all aspects of a property investment over a person's or family's sense of belonging, community and 'home' cannot be overstated. Secure, three to five-year leases would benefit both landlords and tenants.

## Social housing

- There is a **large shortfall of social housing in the middle southern suburbs of Melbourne** to meet the demand. DHHS suggest that applicants broaden their waitlist areas to improve their chances of allocation, especially if they are waiting for one-bedroom properties with exemptions such as ground floor only. People want to remain connected with their community as this provides the anchors of a sense of support, belonging and hope during periods of homelessness and establishing a new home.
- There are several public housing estates in Bayside (Cheltenham South Wait List Area), some of which have a very bad reputation and have a large turnover of people. CCP workers have experienced parts of these **housing estates as unsafe for families and often unsafe for single people who are vulnerable**. As there are very few vacancies in the Cheltenham South Wait List Area the likelihood of a person experiencing homelessness under the age of 55 being offered a property in one of the estates is high.  
People who are tired of sleeping in the extreme elements and tired of the instability of being homeless often accept these housing offers only to find they do not feel safe in their own home and are at risk of violence, drug addiction and recidivism. People who have experienced long term homelessness prior to moving into an estate often find themselves homeless again within a year or two due to these risk factors.

## Mental health

- **Geographical boundaries create disconnection from supports** when people move to a new area for housing.
- The NDIS transition of mental health services has led to **clients being completely cut off from receiving services** as soon as their NDIS packages were approved.
- **NDIS packages being approved without support coordination**, leaving vulnerable people without the ability to coordinate supports themselves and, therefore, unable to access their packages. This has included clients who are blind, illiterate and non-English speaking who have relied on mental health services prior to their NDIS approval for social inclusion, psychological services and health management.

## Victorian Planning Framework

- The Victorian Planning Framework does not provide a planning mechanism that would enable councils to require developers to provide affordable housing under an inclusionary zoning requirement. This leaves councils having to negotiate provision of affordable housing in new developments instead of having a mandatory tool to rely on.

## Potential improvements

After considering all of the above, we see potential for improvements to be made for people who are homeless in Kingston through the following:

- Increased local, safe and affordable crisis and long-term housing options.
- Increased affordable housing and social housing stock in the middle south.
- Residential Tenancies Act amendments to provide long term leases to protect good tenants from eviction, and regulation around pricing tenants out of their property and the broader market.
- Increased substantial long-term rental subsidies for private market.
- More access to mental health outreach services for people without a diagnosis.
- More access to medical services such as GP or outreach nurses for people who have no fixed address.
- Increased funding to community support services.
- Better resourcing of homelessness entry points to ensure assessment and referrals are available within a reasonable timeframe for all clients presenting as homeless.
- Inclusionary zoning for affordable housing set by State government in the Victorian Planning Framework.

## Conclusion

Homelessness is a wide spread national issue that requires a coordinated approach at all levels of government. Research (SGS Economics, 2019) indicates that the current supply of housing in Kingston is grossly inadequate to meet demand. It is estimated that 9.86% of all households in Kingston need to be social and affordable dwellings to accommodate households who are homeless or in housing stress. Whereas the existing provision of social housing in the Victorian South division is makes up only 2% of households.

Intervention from Council alone will not be enough to prevent the housing shortfall from growing exponentially into the future. If Council was to include direct investment into the current social housing supply using Council owned land, the estimated dwelling supply increase over the next 20 years would only fulfil the required supply by 25% (SGS Economics, 2019).

All housing and community services working with people experiencing homelessness in Kingston have seen increases in attendance and demand by people who are homeless in recent years. They have adapted how they work to better meet the needs of clients, need increased funding and resources to provide a greater service and their staff and volunteers are experiencing stress from the challenging nature of working with homeless people with complex needs.

Kingston Council's Community Connections Program works with people experiencing homelessness face to face and believe poor homelessness entry points, insecure private rental contracts, a large shortfall of social housing, unsafe housing options and inadequate mental health service provision are the biggest issues they experience in their work. They have experienced changes in the demographics of the clients that they are supporting; with single people, single parents and mature families presenting with issues not experienced in the past. There are service gaps for people experiencing homelessness with complex needs who do not fit neatly into the eligibility criteria of specialist homelessness services.

This brief exploration into the research, experiences and observations of Council staff and the experiences of local community services illustrates the extreme complexity of the homelessness issue being experienced in Australia. The significant shortfall in affordable and social housing, complex needs of people who are homeless and struggles of services to meet client needs require an organised and comprehensive approach for meaningful change to occur.

## References

*Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot, National Report (2019),*  
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