

Report to the Future Melbourne (People City) Committee

Agenda item 6.4

Coordination of grassroots initiatives for people sleeping rough

19 March 2019

Presenter: Eamonn Fennessy, Acting Director City Communities

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Future Melbourne Committee approval to work with grassroots initiatives and pop up operators to improve coordination and impact of their efforts to provide outreach goods and services to people sleeping rough and experiencing homelessness within the municipality.
2. Council's 2018-2019 Annual Plan Initiative, Major Initiative 2.2. This initiative has two streams, stream one is a good-giving campaign and stream two is coordination of grassroots initiatives for people sleeping rough. This paper relates to the delivery of stream two.
3. Grassroots initiatives and pop up operators were identified as a key stakeholder group. Engagement with a number of operators has revealed that many are unaware of the unintended impacts of their giving. These impacts include increasing amounts of abandoned goods in the city, and the entrenchment of homelessness by providing short term relief, such as food, clothing and other items but no referrals to appropriate support and housing.
4. Management is recommending the introduction of a sustainable and collaborative way of working with these grassroots initiatives to amplify their impact and ensure that their efforts are linked in with existing homelessness service providers to ensure maximum positive benefit.

Key issues

5. The direct delivery of goods and services on the street, if done in isolation from housing and other support services, means that the crucial, long-term support needed to help individuals to exit homelessness is not provided. While the individuals and groups who are delivering short-term relief to rough sleepers in the city are well-intentioned, their activities could be better coordinated for greater impact to deliver long-term benefits and not entrench homelessness.
6. A report on the coordination of grassroots initiatives for people sleeping rough has been prepared (Attachment 2).
7. The report's key recommendation is to implement an integrated coordination approach with grassroots initiatives and operators and service providers within the City of Melbourne.
8. An agreed way of working with all parties will enable us to better coordinate and schedule opportunities to deliver support and services to people sleeping rough in identified locations and maximise positive outcomes. It will also provide guidance on making contributions that are meaningful, effective, do not duplicate existing services as well as lessening any potential negative impact on the safety and amenity of the city.
9. CoM are well-positioned to undertake this coordination. We presently run the Homelessness Service Coordination Program, which streamlines services for rough sleepers, linking people to suitable support and ultimately aiming to get them off the streets and into permanent housing. This program is made up of specialists offering support services including: housing, health, mental health specialists, alcohol and other drugs, youth specific services and other relevant programs.

Recommendation from Management

10. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 10.1. Approves the implementation of an integrated coordination approach with grassroots initiatives and operations to amplify their impact and ensure that their efforts are linked in with existing homelessness service providers to ensure maximum positive benefit.
 - 10.2. Requests a further report from management on the status and impact of this approach at the end of Stage One.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 2 of 13)
2. Situational Analysis Report - Coordination of grassroots initiatives for people sleeping rough (Page 3 of 13)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. Legal advice was and will continue to be provided on Council's response to issues arising from rough sleepers and homelessness.

Finance

2. The coordinated approach will be delivered over three years with a total estimated cost of \$136,000 – \$336,000.
3. The total amount requested from Council is \$136,000. An additional \$200,000 will be sought through the (Lord Mayors Charitable Fund) Pathway Innovation Fund (via a proactive grant) to deliver engagement, training and education to grassroots operators. The City of Melbourne Social Investment branch will work with the Lord Mayors Charitable Fund to allocate funds prior to 30 June 2019.
4. If efforts to obtain \$200,000 from the Lord Mayors Charitable Fund is unsuccessful, these funds will be requested via a business case submitted for Council approval in July 2019. Without these funds stage two and three cannot progress.
5. The Cost summary is below (estimates only). The costs associated with the delivery of this project are subject to the annual budgeting processes.

Year	Costs	Additional notes
Year One 2018–19 (Stage one)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$31,000 to develop, design and print guidelines (in City of Melbourne's current budget), webpage design and development • \$200,000 through CoM's (Lord Mayors Charitable Fund) Pathway Innovation Fund (via a proactive grant). 	
Year Two 2019–20 (Stage two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$25,000 to carry out site assessment and commence monitoring and evaluation (operating budget) • \$200,000 to deliver engagement, training and education to grassroots operators (if unsuccessful in obtaining funding through CoM's (Lord Mayors Charitable Fund) Pathway Innovation Fund (via a proactive grant). • Additional funds may be requested for minor upgrades to facilities and infrastructure within identified sites. This will be sought through the Capital Works Panel as an Out of Cycle submission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage Two is conditional on successfully obtaining \$200,000 via the CoM's (Lord Mayors Charitable Fund) Pathway Innovation Fund (via a proactive grant). • If unsuccessful, \$200,000 will be requested via a business case submission for Council approval in July 2019 to enable the project to progress.
Year Three 2020–21 (Stage three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If State three is required, \$80,000 expenditure budget will be put through as part of the Council's budget bid process to develop registration system and conduct independent evaluation. 	

Conflict of interest

6. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Occupational Health and Safety

7. In developing this proposal, OHS issues and opportunities have been considered. It is expected that by encouraging grassroots initiatives and operators to work collaboratively and cooperatively with homelessness agencies the CoM the risk to the health and safety of individual services users, grassroots operations staff and volunteers and the public is minimised.

Stakeholder consultation

8. Initial consultation and engagement with grassroots operators and homelessness agencies has taken place over the past 18 months. Further consultation will be required to develop the best practice guidelines, identification of suitable sites for grassroots initiatives and to develop an operations schedule and protocol.
9. Discussions have also taken place with other capital city councils including the Cities of Sydney, Perth and Brisbane. They are experiencing similar issues and are in the process of putting in place similar measures including developing a policy and guidelines and working with stakeholders to develop shared outcomes (Sydney) and establishing an accreditation system (Perth) to manage grassroots initiatives and operations.

Relation to Council policy

10. This proposal supports the Council's Homelessness Operating Protocol and Policy Operating Statement which states that Council, Victoria Police, Department of Health and Human Services, and the homeless sector partner to create an environment:
 - 10.1. That feels safe, friendly and accessible for people who live, work, study and social in the city.
 - 10.2. Where people who are homeless are connected to the services and support that they individually request or require and their welfare is protected.

Environmental sustainability

11. In developing this proposal, environmental sustainability issues and opportunities have been considered. It is expected that the volume of abandoned goods, excess food and rubbish left in parks and other public spaces will reduce.

COORDINATION OF GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES FOR PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH

Introduction

Entrenched poverty, homelessness, and rough sleeping are prevalent in major cities in Australia and throughout the world. The cities' authorities continue to grapple with the dilemma of how to best manage and respond to these major issues. Melbourne is no different, and it is acknowledged that homelessness and rough sleeping are endemic within the city and are unlikely to be resolved in the short term, as the number of people becoming impoverished, housing affordability issues and economic disparity continue to grow.

Since early 2016, there has been a significant increase in the number of people sleeping rough within parks, on streets and in other locations across the municipality of Melbourne. In the 2016 Australian Census, a total of 1725 people were recorded as homeless in the municipality of Melbourne. This increased from 926 in the 2011 census. The number of people rough sleeping in the Melbourne local government area, defined under the Australian Census category "persons living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out," increased by more than 170 per cent, from 130 in 2011 to 353 in 2016.

Response to this situation has been significant from across a range of sectors including government and specialist homelessness agencies, business and the community. Amongst this, we have seen a rapid increase in the number of informal, grassroots initiatives, and pop-up operators providing goods and services to people who are sleeping rough. This involves, for example, the provision of meals, clothing and bedding, haircuts, along with larger operations offering shower and laundry facilities. These groups provide either mobile support or 'drop in' services for people who are sleeping rough or experiencing homelessness and poverty.

Purpose

Delivery of goods and services on the street, if done in isolation from housing and other suitable services, means that the crucial, long-term support needed to exit homelessness is not linked up. While the individuals and groups who are delivering short-term relief to rough sleepers in the city are well-intentioned, the coordination of their efforts will bring even greater benefit to those most in need and can dramatically increase pathways out of homelessness.

The City of Melbourne sees an opportunity to introduce a sustainable and coordinated way of working with these grassroots initiatives to amplify impact and ensure that efforts are linked in with existing homelessness service providers.

A more structured approach to engagement will enable the City of Melbourne to coordinate and schedule opportunities to deliver support and services to people sleeping rough in identified locations. It will also provide these groups with guidance on how to ensure their contribution is meaningful, effective, does not duplicate existing services and does not negatively impact the safety and amenity of the city.

Rationale

In response to this situation, Council endorsed a major Annual Plan Initiative (API) in Annual Plan 2018-19: API 2.2 Major Initiative – “Work with partners to support pathways out of homelessness, including the creation of a campaign that encourages appropriate giving whilst discouraging inappropriate donations of goods and services”.

We want to harness the goodwill of the Melbourne community while ensuring that efforts to help are collaborative and are always aimed at enabling people to exit homelessness, rather than providing short-term relief.

The City of Melbourne supports the ‘Housing First’ approach which prioritises permanent and stable housing for people experiencing homelessness, and once secured other health and well-being issues can be addressed. Getting people into permanent housing with accompanying support services is the best way to reduce homelessness in the long term. It is important that all work undertaken by grassroots operators becomes part of the solution by helping enable long-term pathways out of homelessness and into secure, permanent housing.

Improving service coordination and collaboration between the City of Melbourne, grassroots initiatives and operators, and established homelessness agencies will increase people’s access to pathways out of homelessness, link people to suitable support and ultimately get them off the streets and into permanent housing.

It will also ensure that the safety of the operators, services users and public and the amenity of service delivery locations and public space is maintained. While delivered with the best of intentions, over the last few years the city has seen an increasing amount of donated items abandoned on our streets and in our parks that need to be removed by council officers and are ultimately sent to landfill.

The City of Melbourne is well-positioned to undertake this coordination. Council presently runs the Homelessness Service Coordination Program, which streamlines services for rough sleepers, linking people to suitable support and ultimately aiming to get them off the streets and into permanent housing. This program is made up of specialists offering support services including: housing, health, mental health specialists, alcohol and other drugs, youth specific services and other relevant programs.

This report provides a summary of the current state relating to the activities of grassroots operators and presents officer recommendations that will enhance the effectiveness of these operators, for consideration and endorsement.

The table below outlines the current situation and proposed action for the City of Melbourne. These issues and actions informed the Recommendations.

Current state	Proposed future action
Formal avenues to engage with the City of Melbourne about operating homelessness initiatives are unclear.	That CoM develops best practice guidelines and operating protocol to provide guidance on minimum standards and an agreed way of working.
Some grassroots operators and volunteers lack skills and qualifications in dealing with rough sleepers who sometimes have with multiple complex needs.	That CoM promotes and or offers support to grassroots operators through education and training

<p>Grassroots operations are mainly delivered by volunteers who are not required to comply with accepted safety screening processes such as working with children checks or police checks. There are currently no local or statewide standards or competencies identified for grassroots delivered homelessness initiatives.</p>	<p>That CoM develops best practice guidelines to provide guidance on minimum standards and child-safe practices.</p>
<p>Sites where grassroots initiatives are operating are often crowded or over saturated. Excess food, goods and rubbish left in public parks, roads, streets and on footpaths. Currently, Victoria Police, City of Melbourne staff, and Park Rangers conduct regular patrols of rough sleeping hot spots.</p>	<p>That CoM prescribes locations and use regulatory controls to encourage desired activity and/or updates and expand infrastructures to cater for these activities.</p>
<p>Groups that work within Melbourne’s CBD tend to operate at the following locations: Queen Victoria Market, Batman Park, Enterprize Park, Federation Square, Flinders Street Station and Southern Cross Station. A number of these sites are due to be re-developed in this financial year. The full or partial closure of these sites will mean rough sleepers and entrepreneurial charities currently using these spaces will need to find alternative locations.</p>	<p>That CoM work with grassroots operators affected by the re-development works to collaborate and determine alternative location/s that will meet their needs as well as the needs of people sleeping rough, and of the broader community.</p>
<p>Some residents, businesses and visitors have reported no longer feeling safe accessing various public spaces within the municipality due to the volume and behavior of people visiting these locations to access grassroots services.</p>	<p>That CoM develops and disseminates an operations schedule to ensure charity services are dispersed across different days and times of the week and different parts of the municipality. A homelessness agency is contracted to provide after-hours outreach services at locations where grassroots operators operate.</p>

Recommendations

Recommendation One: Implement an integrated coordination approach with grassroots initiatives and operators to improve outcomes for people sleeping rough and increase pathways out of homelessness.

This approach will improve service coordination and collaboration between grassroots initiatives and operators, established homelessness agencies and the City of Melbourne to increase people’s access to pathways out of homelessness and ensure the safety and amenity of service delivery locations is maintained.

The integrated coordination approach will comprise three stages:

Stage one: Collaboration, coordination and education
<p>1. Engage grassroots operators in the development of best practice guidelines. The guidelines will provide a framework to assist operators, businesses and residents understand the rules for good giving as well as improve best practice approaches to service delivery and support grassroots operators to work in a safe and responsible way. (See appendix 2)</p>
<p>2. Contract a homelessness agency for up to 24 months to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. develop a relationship with and keep a record of new and existing grassroots operators b. schedule and facilitate meetings with grassroots operators c. develop effective and integrated coordination between grassroots operators and homelessness services d. educate and train grassroots operators including staff and volunteers on working with people experiencing homelessness and people with complex issues.
<p>3. Develop web content to share information on local initiatives available for people sleeping rough.</p>
<p>4. Review the impacts of stage one to determine if it has made a sufficient impact on the level of cooperation and collaboration between grassroots operators and homelessness services on housing outcomes for people sleeping rough and on public safety and amenity in the municipality. Potential indicators of success could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number and proportion of grassroots operators engaged in the development of best practice guidelines in partnership with homelessness services b. Proportion of grassroots operators who have established partnerships with homelessness services c. Number and proportion of grassroots operators who have participated in education / training sessions d. Proportion of participants who reported improved knowledge of a) housing and health systems that lead to pathways out of homelessness and b) best practice approaches e. Number of housing applications and referrals to support services completed by homelessness agencies whilst visiting the identified sites.
<p>Timeframe: Stage one activity one can be completed within AP1 2.2 timeframe (2018-19). Activities two, three and four are to be delivered in the 2019–2020 financial year.</p>

Stage two. Enhanced service delivery
<p>1. Introduce a model to coordinate and schedule the work of grassroots initiatives and operations around identified locations. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Promote identified locations where grassroots operators are appropriate. Location/s to be identified utilising risk management and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles. Co-location with local homelessness agencies will also be explored. b. Undertake minor upgrades to facilities and infrastructure within identified locations including increasing the capacity and function of existing assets such as seating, rubbish bins, lighting and toilets. c. Contract a homelessness agency to work with grassroots operators and other homelessness agencies to develop an operations schedule which disperses charitable

services across different days and times of the week and deliver after-hours, assertive outreach services to people sleeping rough at sites where grassroots operators are located.

2. Review the impacts of stage two actions over a six month period to determine if it has made a sufficient impact on the level of cooperation and collaboration between grassroots operators and homelessness services and on public safety and amenity in the municipality. Potential indicators of success could include:
 - a. Number and proportion of grassroots operators engaged in identifying the locations.
 - b. Proportion of grassroots operators carrying out their work in the identified locations and in accordance with the operations schedule.
 - c. Reduction in the amount of rubbish and excess goods abandoned within the municipality.
 - d. Number of housing applications and referrals to support services completed at these locations.
 - e. Reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in the municipality.

Timeframe: Stage two activities one and two are to be delivered in the 2019–2020 financial year.

Stage three. Introduce a voluntary accreditation or registration system and an operating protocol
<p>1. Establish a process to ensure grassroots operators contributing to sustainable pathways out of homelessness, and are operating with an understanding of CoM’s guidelines, operating protocol and local laws:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Determine whether a voluntary accreditation or registration system is achievable b. Ensure minimal costs to grassroots operators.
<p>2. Develop an operating protocol which sets out an agreed way of working endorsed by CoM, grassroots operators and homelessness agencies.</p>
<p>3. Monitor compliance to voluntary accreditation or registration conditions, best practice guidelines and operating protocol.</p>
<p>4. Review the impacts of stage three activities one, two and three to determine if it has made a sufficient impact on the level of cooperation and collaboration between grassroots operators and homelessness services and on public safety and amenity in the municipality. Potential indicators of success could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number and proportion of grassroots operators who have achieved successful accreditation / registration b. Reduction in the amount of rubbish and excess goods abandoned within the municipality. c. Number of housing applications and referrals to support services completed d. Reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in the municipality.
<p>Timeframe: Stage three activities one, two, three and four are to be delivered in the 2020–2021 financial year.</p>

Recommendation two: That CoM advocate to the Victorian Government for a regulatory framework

Should the staged approach not improve the housing and support service outcomes for people sleeping rough, it is recommended that CoM advocate to the Victorian Government to set up a regulatory framework to manage the activities associated with grassroots initiatives and operators.

Budget breakdown

The staged coordination approach will be delivered over three years. The total cost to Council is approximately \$136,000. An additional \$200,000 will be sought through CoM’s (Lord Mayors Charitable Fund) Pathway Innovation Fund (via a proactive grant).

Cost summary (approximations only):

Year One (2018–19) \$31,000 for development, design and printing of guidelines (in City of Melbourne’s 2018-19 budget), plus an additional \$200,000 through CoM’s (Lord Mayors Charitable Fund) Pathway Innovation Fund (via a proactive grant) to deliver engagement, training and education to grassroots operators.

Year Two (2019–20) \$25,000 for site assessment, monitoring and evaluation (operating budget). A further \$200,000 may be requested through the CoM budget bidding process if external funding in Year One is unsuccessful. Additional funds may also be requested for minor upgrades to facilities and infrastructure within the identified sites through the Capital Works Panel by way of an out of cycle submission.

Year Three (2020–21) \$80,000 for set up of registration system and independent evaluation (subject to future budgetary considerations)

Costs associated with the delivery of these works are subject to annual budgeting processes.

CoM activities and associated budget	Funding through CoM's (Lord Mayors Charitable Fund) Pathway Innovation Fund (via a proactive grant)
Stage one (2018–19 and 2019–2020)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project oversight (by existing CoM position) • Communications and engagement plan (staff time) • Webpage design and development \$1,000 • Design and printing of best practice guidelines \$10,000 • Development of best practice guidelines \$20,000 <p><i>CoM funding (in current budget):</i> \$31,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract a homelessness agency for up to 24 months to establish a relationship with and keep a record of new and existing grassroots operators operating within the municipality; develop and deliver education and training to charity staff and volunteers, \$200,000 (2019–2020 and 2020–2021). <p><i>External funding sought:</i> \$200,000</p>
Stage two (2019–2020)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project oversight (by existing CoM position) • Scope locations suitable for entrepreneurial charity work based on an agreed set of criteria \$20,000 • Minor upgrades to facilities and infrastructure (eg. lighting, street furniture, bins, fencing, etc) may be required within the identified sites. Funding for this will be determined once site assessments have been completed and will be sought through the Capital Works panel - out of cycle submission) • Program monitoring and evaluation \$5,000 <p><i>CoM funding required (subject to future budgetary considerations):</i> \$25,000 in operating budget If unsuccessful in gaining external funding in Stage One, an additional \$200,000 will be requested through CoM's budget bidding process to cover costs to deliver engagement, training and education to</p>	

<i>grassroots operators.</i>	
Stage three (2020–2021)	
<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project oversight • Development of a voluntary accreditation or registration system including on-line infrastructure (\$60,000) • Day to day management of accreditation or registration system • Development of operating protocol endorsed by CoM, grassroots operators and homelessness agencies • Monitoring compliance and enforcement by local laws • Stage three program monitoring and evaluation completed in house or by independent evaluator (\$20,000) <p><i>CoM funding required: \$80,000 (Subject to future budgetary consideration)</i></p>	
<p>Total CoM budget required if external funding is <u>successful</u>: \$136,000</p>	<p>Total external funding sought: \$200,000</p>
<p>Total CoM budget required if external funding is <u>unsuccessful</u>: \$336,000</p>	

Appendix One: Regulatory Framework

The City of Melbourne is responsible for two local laws:

- The Environment Local Law 2009, which includes laws governing waste management and disposal, burning of material in the open and open fires, the generation of noise; and the generation of offensive odours and fumes.
- The Activities Local Law 2009, aims to protect the amenity of public places for everyone, ensuring behaviour in public places is appropriate and by prohibiting persons from causing damage to public places or acting in a socially unacceptable manner. Under this local law, a permit is often required for the following activities:
 - vehicles in public places
 - placement of goods in a public place
 - causing an obstruction of pedestrian or vehicular traffic
 - placing furniture in a public place
 - water activities
 - waste containers in a public place
 - busking
 - soliciting/collecting for money or subscription or selling a raffle ticket
 - soliciting trade, or touting or spruiking
 - filming or conducting a special event
 - events in a park or open space
 - product or food giveaways, distribution or display of flyers or handbills.

Given that grassroots initiatives aimed at helping rough sleepers are volunteer based and provide services free of charge, a number of the activities fall outside of this local law and are not required to apply for permits.

Appendix Two: Best Practice Guidelines

The stage 1 guidelines / operating protocols are likely to include information on:

1. Voluntary accreditation or registration process (*if stage three proceeds*)
2. Definitions and local laws
3. General safety and amenity conditions:
 - a. Referral pathways and links with housing and homelessness service providers
 - b. Training for staff and volunteers
 - c. Safety screening process for staff and volunteers
 - d. Child safe reporting
 - e. Emergency and risk management planning
 - f. Incident reporting
 - g. Food handling
 - h. Recommended giving
 - i. Public liability
 - j. Safety on location
 - k. Noise management
 - l. Pedestrian access / crowd management
 - m. Cleanliness / Waste management
 - n. Vehicles, parking and access
 - o. Appropriate locations and times
 - p. Public interaction and etiquette
 - q. Expected behaviours
 - r. Complaints, dispute resolution and compliance