

Support for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness in WA

Entrypoint Perth

1800 124 684

Mon – Fri:
9am – 7pm

Sat: 9am – 5pm

A free and voluntary assessment and referral service assisting people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to access accommodation and support options.

Crisis Care

1800 199 008

WA's after-hours response to reported concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing, as well as information and referrals for people experiencing crisis.

Important contact information

WA Police Force

131 444

Report all crime, suspicious activity and incidents as and when they occur.

Local Police Station

Your Local Police

For general administration enquiries or to discuss more general local issues that don't require immediate assistance.

Emergency (Police, Fire, Ambulance)

000

To report incidents where life or property is threatened

Crime Stoppers WA

1800 333 000

To report information about criminal or suspicious behaviour or activity that does not require police assistance. You can also use the **Eyes on the Street Reporting App** which can be downloaded on your mobile phone.

All Local Government staff, including Rangers and contract workers should always refer to their own organisation's policies and procedures relating to homelessness in the first instance. This resource is intended to provide further information and guidance of a more general nature only.



WA Rangers Association

Email: admin@warangers.asn.au

warangers.asn.au

Local Government Professionals WA

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Shelter WA Local Government Homelessness Knowledge Hub

A resource hub for local government to access and share policies, plans, procedures and case studies from across WA.

lghomelessnesshub.com.au

With thanks to the City of Vincent for assisting in the development and publication of this resource.



WA RANGERS INFORMATION GUIDE: HOMELESSNESS

WA local governments are increasingly being called on by the community to respond to homelessness.

Homelessness looks very different across metro, regional and remote areas of WA.

Homelessness can happen to anyone. It doesn't discriminate. Rangers are often the first point of contact for information about a local government's community support initiatives and the requirements of various State and Local Laws.

Whilst primary responsibility for homelessness generally rests with Federal and State agencies, Local Government has a crucial role to play in leading and contributing to strategies, planning and responses given the broad range of functions that they undertake, and their close relationship with local communities.

With the cost-of-living crisis and homelessness raising more media attention, there are often negative perceptions and stigmas associated with homelessness.

All situations involving people experiencing, or at risk of homelessness are best resolved using a coordinated and collaborative approach, where many stakeholders work together to provide wrap-around support and increase the likelihood of a positive outcome.

What is the role of local government in homelessness?

The Department of Communities established the Office of Homelessness in early 2022 to provide a dedicated focus on the stewardship, coordination, planning and practices relating to homelessness, as guided by All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020 – 2030.

In addition, the Department has also developed and launched a 10 Year Housing Strategy 2020 – 2030 to assist with planning additional housing supply and support the All Paths Lead to a Home strategy.

The Strategy outlines the role of local government as follows:

- Making information on local services and supports available and accessible.
- Ensuring Rangers and front-line staff are informed and supported to interact with people experiencing homelessness and where appropriate, refer them to local services.

- Working with Police to support and refer people experiencing homelessness to local services.
- Coordinating volunteer and charity groups through a place-based approach that better meets the needs of people experiencing homelessness.
- Utilising land and assets to create places that are inclusive and can support vulnerable people.

Local Government also plays an important role in raising awareness of homelessness in the community to challenge stigmas and through supporting assertive outreach services to ensure rough sleepers are better connected to appropriate support and accommodation services.

Homelessness is not a crime.

People experiencing homelessness have the same entitlement as any other member of the community to use public spaces and facilities, participate in public events, activities and services, carry with them and manage their own belongings, and require or decline support or assistance.

Many people experiencing homelessness have complex and co-existing needs that may relate to things such as culture, mental health, trauma, domestic violence, cognitive impairment or addictions.

When is a response or intervention appropriate?

- If the person requests assistance, or is distressed or in need of assistance.
- If the person's behaviour is threatening their own safety, or the safety of others.
- If the person's behaviour has resulted in damage to property or the environment, such as an accumulation of litter or waste.
- If the person is sheltering in a place that puts their own safety and health at risk, or that of others (ie. squatting in derelict or unsafe buildings or high-risk area without the consent of the owner).
- If the person is an unaccompanied child or young person who may be at risk of significant harm.

This language can also assist police and services to determine and prioritise a response.

Language matters when speaking with vulnerable individuals.

- Use 'Person First' language and try to avoid defining people by their circumstances or condition (ie. a person experiencing homelessness rather than a homeless person).
- Use non-verbal communication and body language to convey respect and kindness.
- Use words that require people to follow the rules.
- Not enforcing the rules with vulnerable individuals can be seen as condescending – don't assume that individuals experiencing homelessness are unable to understand boundaries.

Useful tips:

- Most business units within a Local Government will have a touch point with homelessness – get to know what other teams are doing.
- Ask your Supervisor or Community Development team about any local services and information resources, that may be available in your local government area.
- Have the information you need with you when you start an interaction.
- If there is no risk, concern, breach or unlawful behaviour, respect a person's choice not to engage.
- Your safety, and the safety of the person you are interacting with is paramount. Know the expectations and limitations of your role, and when and what issues should be escalated to Management.
- Keep a record of any police incident report numbers, so that you or your employer can follow up if needed to see what action was taken, and the outcomes of your report.
- Self-care is important. Be aware of your stress levels and look for warning signs that you may need to reach out for help or support. Most local governments offer free and confidential employee assistance programs and counselling.