



# HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN

**Cumberland City Council**

2024 – 2027

## Introduction

The most recent data from the 2021 Census of Population and Housing data (Australian Bureau of Statistics) indicated a high number (2,220) of persons who were classified as homeless in Cumberland. The data indicated that the Cumberland Local Government Area (LGA) had the fourth highest number of homeless persons by LGA in NSW after the City of Sydney (-3,598), Canterbury-Bankstown (2,695) and Inner West (2,551).

In response to this issue previously, Council undertook research and collaborated with stakeholders, and the outcomes of this work was documented in *The State of Homelessness in Cumberland Research Report*, October 2018.

Since the preparation of the report, a range of actions have been progressed, and new challenges presented during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a follow up on the report, reflection on recent events and confirmation of future actions, Cumberland City Council hosted the Homelessness Sector Forum in May of 2022.

The Forum included representatives from Local, State and Federal Governments, not-for-profit organisations, prominent businesses, and community leaders. The aim was to establish partnerships, collaborate, and workshop ideas and discuss practical solutions to manage and respond to homelessness.

This *Cumberland Homelessness Action Plan* (the 'Action Plan') works towards addressing homelessness issues in the Cumberland LGA through a range of collaborative actions that will be implemented by the homelessness and housing sector. These include the following:



Engage and respond to local issues to improve outreach, being aware of the unique and diverse needs of those at risk of homelessness across Cumberland.



Build understanding on the narrative around homelessness and advocate for improved responses in this area.



Advocate to increase the supply of affordable housing in the Cumberland LGA and collaborate with Housing providers to address demand.



Address the barriers to support services and housing faced by people seeking asylum.

# Table of Contents

<b>Methodology</b> .....	4
Action Plan Overview .....	4
Key Stakeholders .....	4
Principles.....	5
Roles and Responsibilities.....	6
Council’s Commitment and Role.....	6
Sector Involvement.....	6
Factors for success and challenges .....	6
Government Initiatives.....	6
Federal Government.....	6
NSW State Government.....	7
<b>Action Plan</b> .....	9
Priority areas and actions .....	9
Priority Area 1.....	10
Priority Area 2.....	12
Priority Area 3.....	13
Priority Area 4.....	14
For further information .....	15
Next steps.....	15

# Methodology

## Action Plan Overview

The actions and guiding principles included in this Action Plan are based on ideas and initiatives identified at the Cumberland Homelessness Sector Forum and *The State of Homelessness in Cumberland Research Report*.

The report highlighted significant issues related to the following:

- A lack of crisis and short-term accommodation, and social and affordable housing
- Gaps in specific homelessness services (most notably outreach services)
- Funding shortages and capacity issues for services
- Barriers to accessing services for people experiencing homelessness and key at risk groups (including people seeking asylum)
- The need for greater sector coordination and capacity building.

Following the Forum, a draft Action Plan was compiled and circulated to the Cumberland City Council Homelessness Advisory Committee for review and comment. Feedback received informed refinement and development of the Action Plan.

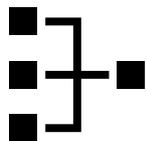
## Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders that will be involved in its implementation include:

- Local Governments (Cumberland City Council and neighbouring Councils).
- Community organisations and service providers, including specialist homelessness services and other support services.
- State Government agencies (including Police, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Health).
- Community housing providers.
- Peak bodies and advocacy groups.
- Universities and research institutes.
- Community groups and individual community members (including people experiencing, at risk or with lived experience of homelessness).

## Principles

The following principles that will underpin this Action Plan were informed by the workshops at the Homelessness Sector Forum and Council's research:



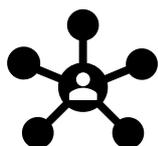
### **Systemic Response**

Focus on a systemic response to homelessness and take an early intervention and prevention approach, rather than a crisis response approach, whenever possible.



### **Informed by Lived Experience**

Consider the views and perspectives of people who are or have experienced homelessness in the design and implementation of each action. Involve people with lived experience of homelessness in action design and implementation where possible.



### **Client-Centred**

Adopt a client-centred, culturally appropriate and trauma informed approach in the design and implementation of actions.



### **Quality and Outcomes Focused**

Focus on the delivery of high-quality outputs and achieving positive, sustainable outcomes.



### **Multidisciplinary and Coordinated**

Work collaboratively and utilise multidisciplinary partnerships and approaches to achieve quality outcomes.



### **Respectful**

Adopt a considered and respectful approach that seeks to empower and retain or restore dignity for people experiencing homelessness, increases understanding and reduces stigma around homelessness.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Council's Commitment and Role

Cumberland City Council is committed to working with the sector to address homelessness in the Cumberland LGA. This has been demonstrated by Council undertaking research into homelessness, endorsement of *The State of Homelessness in Cumberland Research Report* recommendations, hosting the Homelessness Sector Forum and Homelessness Advisory Committee, coordinating the development of this Plan and Council's commitment to lead and participate in several actions.

Council is also interested in working collaboratively with neighbouring Councils and other levels of government to address homelessness in the broader Western Sydney region and beyond.

### Sector Involvement

Council is just one sector stakeholder and will be one of many participants involved in the finalisation and implementation of this Plan. Implementation of the actions will require a commitment from the sector and a proactive, multidisciplinary, collaborative, and coordinated approach.

### Factors for Success and Challenges

A key factor in the success of this Plan (and more broadly in addressing homelessness) is sector support. By involving the sector in the construction of the Plan, and circulating the Plan for feedback prior to finalisation, Council aims to facilitate development of a plan that is relevant, achievable, and supported by the sector.

Sector commitment and involvement in the implementation of the Plan is also critical. There are a number of ways organisations can be involved. These include being part of the Plan's Governance Group and / or nominating to lead or be a participant in the implementation of one or more actions.

A key challenge will be those factors which are not within sector control. Most notable is the influence that action or inaction of all levels of government have on outcomes in relation to housing and homelessness. This Plan includes actions relating to advocating to government however, the results of this advocacy cannot be guaranteed.

## Government Initiatives

### Federal Government

Across Australia, Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) agencies provide services aimed at prevention and early intervention, crisis, and post crisis assistance to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The agencies receive government funding to deliver accommodation-related and personal services. They vary in size and in the types of assistance provided.

While state and territory governments have primary responsibility for housing and homelessness, in the 2022-23 budget, the Australian Government is bringing states and territories, the Australian Local Government Association, investors, and representatives from the construction sector together under a new national Housing Accord. The Accord will:

- Set a target to build one million new, well-located homes over five years from 2024.
- Provide \$350 million in additional funding for 10,000 new affordable homes, with states and territories providing an additional 10,000 affordable homes, increasing the dwellings that can be delivered under the Accord to 20,000.
- Require states and territories to expedite zoning, planning and land release for social and affordable housing.

- Provide financing options through the Housing Australia Future Fund to facilitate institutional investment in social and affordable housing.
- Work with local governments to deliver planning reforms and free up landholdings.
- Call on institutional investors to leverage investment that delivers for their members' interests and for the national interest.
- Work with the construction sector peak bodies to support high energy efficiency rating construction, the training of more apprentices under an extended Australian Skills Guarantee and work to make housing more responsive to demand.

Beyond the Accord, the Government will develop a National Housing and Homelessness Plan to set out other actions and longer-term reforms. The Plan will be developed in close consultation with the states and territories and other stakeholders. To provide independent advice on housing, the Government will set up a National Housing Supply and Affordability Council.

## NSW Government

The NSW Government has indicated that is working to improve the way they prevent and respond to homelessness so that people are supported to live safer, more stable, and happier lives. The NSW Government has documented a zero-street homelessness target and have signed an agreement with the Institute of Global Homelessness, along with other partners, to halve the number of people sleeping rough across NSW by 2025.

The NSW Government priority has the aim of helping people experiencing street homelessness to find secure and stable housing and thus improve their health and wellbeing, and educational and economic outcomes.

The NSW Government and the End Street Sleeping collaboration have also been piloting a real-time, by-name street homelessness database to help coordinate services for people experiencing street homelessness.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) Housing team is working with partners from Corrections, Health, Councils, and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) to support people off the street through initiatives such as the Together Home and Assertive Outreach programs.

Together Home is a \$122.1 million project from the NSW Government that aims to support people who are street sleeping across NSW into stable accommodation, linked to wrap around support. Together Home will support over 1,000 people with a history of rough sleeping, into long-term housing with intensive case management and wrap around supports over two years.

Assertive outreach is an evidence-based practice designed to combat street homelessness with patrols taking place in over 50 Local Government Areas. Housing staff, specialist caseworkers and health professionals conduct patrols, proactively engage with people experiencing street homelessness, and provide a pathway to stable long-term housing.

Recognising the complex nature of homelessness, the NSW Government prioritises prevention and early intervention to help people avoid sleeping rough. This includes:

- Helping Domestic Violence victims stay safely in their homes.
- Expanding supports for people in Social Housing.
- New supports for people leaving prison.
- Collaborating with government agencies to recognise the signs of risks of homelessness and refer people at risk of homelessness to services and supports.

Over four years from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026, the NSW Government is seeking to establish and commence operation of new core and cluster refuges for women and children escaping domestic and family violence (DFV). The new refuges will be designed and operated based on the core and cluster model, which allows for independent living and privacy while also providing access to support.

In October 2021, the NSW Government announced new funding of \$484.3 million over four years for housing and supports for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. The announcement includes:

- \$426.6 million to expand core and cluster to deliver and operate new women's refuges that support women and children escaping DFV,
- \$52.5 million to deliver around 200 new social and affordable homes for women escaping DFV through the Community Housing Innovation Fund (CHIF), and
- \$5.2 million for specialist supports for 3,200 accompanied children and young people in homelessness services.

The Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) program is the primary NSW Government response to homelessness. The program funds and supports NGOs to deliver a range of services, programs, and initiatives to support people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, across NSW. This includes young people, families, single men, and women, with or without children, including those escaping domestic and family violence. In 2020-21, SHS in NSW assisted more than 28,000 people who were experiencing DFV.

# Action Plan

## Priority Areas and Actions

This Plan includes the following five priority areas:



Engage and respond to local issues to improve outreach, being aware of the unique and diverse needs of those at risk of homelessness across Cumberland.



Build understanding on the narrative around homelessness and advocate for improved responses in this area.



Advocate to increase the supply of affordable housing in the Cumberland LGA and collaborate with Housing providers to address demand.



Address the barriers to support services and housing faced by people seeking asylum.

Associated with each priority area are a set of actions to be implemented by the sector. Timeframes, desired outcomes, lead organisations and participants are also identified for each action.

Priority areas and actions are outlined in the following pages.

## Priority Area 1

### Engage and respond to local issues in order to improve outreach, being aware of the unique and diverse needs of those at risk of homelessness across Cumberland.

This priority area seeks to deliver specialist outreach services that can assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness 'in place'. Services and workers will be capable and equipped to respond to immediate needs and connect people to a range of services, housing, and ongoing support. The service design will be informed by research into leading practice assertive outreach models.

NO.	Actions	Timeframe	Desired outcome
1.1	Map existing outreach services in and around the Cumberland LGA and identify key gaps and opportunities.	Year 1	Service mapping of existing outreach services and gap analysis completed.
1.2	Develop and implement a process for coordinated outreach in the LGA, promoting greater collaboration between services.	Year 1	An evidence-based model for assertive outreach in the Cumberland LGA is developed and ready to roll-out.  Increased collaboration between services.
1.3	Review and expand outreach service offerings to provide a range of options for people experiencing homelessness.	Years 1 - 3	People experiencing homelessness in the area have access to a variety of services and choice in the services they access.
1.4	Identify hotspots within the LGA where homelessness is most prevalent.	Year 1	Service mapping of homelessness hotspot locations.
1.5	Explore options for small scale community infrastructure and capacity building.	Years 1 - 3	Creating an accessible and inclusive space for those who are at risk or homeless.
1.6	Creation of Cumberland Homelessness Interagency.	Years 1 – 3	To form the Cumberland Homelessness Interagency workgroup with a focus on fostering relationships amongst Government, industry, academia, and community.

NO.	Actions	Timeframe	Desired outcome
1.7	Ongoing support and community liaison.	Years 1 - 3	Work towards a proactive approach to addressing community enquiries and ensure that all requests are appropriately resolved.

## Priority Area 2

### Build understanding on the narrative around homelessness and advocate for improved responses in this area.

This priority area aims to build information and understanding of the nature and extent of homelessness in Cumberland. It also aims to remove the stigma associated with homelessness and increase community understanding of the key causes of homelessness and the factors that place a person at risk. It is also concerned with increasing understanding within the real estate sector and educating agents so they can better support people, including key at risk groups, into long-term tenancies.

NO.	Actions	Timeframe	Desired outcome
2.1	Undertake data collection through a homelessness street count and / or registry week.	Year 1	Improved data available and increased understanding of the extent of homelessness in the Cumberland LGA.
2.2	Undertake engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness to collect perspectives, stories, input and information on causes, challenges, issues, and barriers.  NOTE: research to be shared to inform other actions within this Plan.	Years 1 & 2	Improved information and understanding of the issue of homelessness in the Cumberland LGA.  People experiencing homelessness have a 'voice' and input into decisions that impact them.
2.3	Design and implement a community awareness and education program to address stigma and increase understanding of homelessness and the key causes.	Years 1 & 2	Increased community understanding and reduced stigma around homelessness.
2.4	Explore training options for the real estate industry on supporting people into long-term tenancies and better supporting key cohorts at risk of homelessness into tenancies.	Years 1 & 2	Greater understanding and changes in approach of real estate industry. People have access to longer-term, more secure tenancies (including at risk groups).
2.5	Design and implement a community awareness campaign to promote the importance of affordable housing and address misconceptions.	Years 1 & 2	Increased community understanding of the importance and role of affordable housing.
2.6	Continue to advocate at all levels of government for improved responses to homelessness.	Years 1 - 3	Improvements in responses towards homelessness.

### Priority Area 3

#### Address the barriers to support services and housing faced by community members ineligible for support due to visa status, including asylum seekers.

This priority area recognises the significant barriers to accessing housing and support services for people based on their visa status. Given Cumberland is home to a significant number of people seeking asylum, on spousal visas, visitor visas or student visas, assisting these groups to access support services has been identified as a key priority.

NO.	Actions	Timeframe	Desired outcome
3.1	Undertake coordinated sector advocacy to the State and Federal Governments for reform of existing policy that limits access to support services and housing for people on temporary or asylum-seeking visas.	Year 1	Advocacy leads to policy reform that improves access to services and housing for people on temporary or asylum-seeking visas.
3.2	Identify and promote initiatives improving access to affordable private rental housing for people on temporary or asylum-seeking visas.	Years 1 - 3	Improved access to housing and accommodation for various visa holders.
3.3	Identify and promote practical initiatives providing access to employment and income and reduce pressures associated with the cost of living for people on temporary or asylum-seeking visas.	Years 1 - 3	Improved access to employment, income and support for people on temporary or asylum-seeking visas.
3.4	Identify services supporting those at risk or homeless on bridging, partner or student visas.	Year 2	Improved outcomes for community members on visas ineligible for traditional support.

## Priority Area 4

### Advocate to increase the supply of affordable housing in the Cumberland LGA and collaborate with Housing providers to address demand.

This priority area recognises one of the key drivers to reduce homelessness is to deliver more affordable rental housing (including social or affordable housing), as well as fostering partnerships with the State, community and private housing sectors.

Affordable housing is housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of very low to moderate income households<sup>1</sup> and is usually considered affordable if it costs less than 30% of gross household income<sup>2</sup>. In this context, affordable housing refers to housing that has been developed with some assistance from the Government (Local, State or Commonwealth), including through planning incentives.

Utilising existing planning instruments and policies, advocating for policy shifts to enable more streamlined delivery of high-quality affordable housing, prioritising local affordable housing policies, and investment in affordable housing are all key to addressing this priority area. Delivering on this priority area is also reliant on leveraging the capacity and expertise of community housing providers.

NO.	Actions	Timeframe	Desired outcome
4.1	Continue to monitor Council assets with potential to be utilised by the Housing sector and support the sector to identify potential funding.	Years 1 - 3	Maintain partnerships with Housing providers.
4.2	Continue to progress the actions identified in the Cumberland Local Housing Strategy.	Years 1 - 3	Enhanced affordable housing outcomes achieved for Cumberland LGA.
4.3	With the guidance of the Planning Team, undertake coordinated sector advocacy to State Government for inclusionary zoning across NSW.	Year 1	Increased supply of affordable housing through inclusionary zoning policy.
4.4	With the guidance of the Planning Team, undertake coordinated sector advocacy to State and Federal Governments for capital investment in and further subsidies for social housing in the LGA.	Year 1	Increased investment and subsidies lead to an increased supply of social housing in the Cumberland LGA.

<sup>1</sup> NSW legislation, State Environmental Planning Policy (Affordable Rental Housing) 2009, defines very low-, low- and moderate-income households to be if a household:

(a) has a gross income that is less than 120 per cent of the median household income for the time being for the Greater Sydney (Greater Capital City Statistical Area) (according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics) and pays no more than 30 per cent of that gross income in rent, or

(b) is eligible to occupy rental accommodation under the National Rental Affordability Scheme and pays no more rent than that which would be charged if the household were to occupy rental accommodation under that scheme.

<sup>2</sup> Definition provided by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

NO.	Actions	Timeframe	Desired outcome
4.5	Council to explore the adoption of effective planning mechanisms and policies that increase the supply of affordable housing in the LGA.	Year 2	Increased supply of affordable housing in the LGA.
4.5	Promote and encourage investment in increased supply of affordable housing by the public, private and community sectors.	Years 1 - 3	Increased supply of affordable housing in the LGA.

### For Further Information

Council's Community Development Team

Ph: 02 8757 9000

E: [council@cumberland.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@cumberland.nsw.gov.au)

### Next Steps

Cumberland City Council's will contact organisations to join the Homelessness Interagency Committee to complete the Action Plan.



**CUMBERLAND  
CITY COUNCIL**

**Cumberland City Council**

16 Memorial Avenue, PO Box 42, Merrylands NSW 2160.

**T** 8757 9000 **W** [cumberland.nsw.gov.au](http://cumberland.nsw.gov.au) **E** [council@cumberland.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@cumberland.nsw.gov.au)

**f** Cumberland City Council Sydney **@** [cumberlandcitycouncil](https://www.instagram.com/cumberlandcitycouncil)