

Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Ms Robyn Kilpatrick

Organisation Name: Maroondah Winter Shelter Homelessness Advocacy Group

Your position or role: Facilitator

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

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

An advocacy body

Are there any additional themes we should consider?

We feel that it is hard to rank the priorities listed above as they are all interlinked. If you do not have enough affordable houses, you will have an increase in homelessness. Also you have not in the list of priorities youth and young people coming out of foster care, who are very vulnerable. As well you have people leaving the criminal justice system, that have no access to houses. You need services available to ensure you do not just put people in houses with out the necessary services in place to deal with the sometimes complex issues related to homelessness.

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

Thank you for undertaking this inquiry. It is imperative that we have more social housing so that all people feel they are treated with dignity and respect.

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1: [5e27fd280d507-Submission to Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria.docx](#)

File2: [5e27fd280dff7-Response from Winter Shelter Advocacy Group to Homelessness Inquiry.docx](#)

File3:

Signature:

Robyn L. Kilpatrick

Submission to Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

“A warm meal, a safe place to sleep and a welcoming smile” is motto for the Maroondah Winter Shelter that provided temporary accommodation to single males firstly in the winter of 2018 and again 2019. In 2019 the accommodation was extended until September 15th, having commenced on June 1st, 2019. For more details of the Maroondah Winter Shelter program, please read the submission prepared by Jenny Smith and Rosemary U’Ren, Venue Co-ordinators at North Ringwood Uniting Church and Maroondah Winter Shelter Homeless Advocacy Group Members.

The temporary nature of this accommodation provided the impetus for the Maroondah Winter Shelter Homelessness Advocacy Group. As many volunteers were concerned that some of the clients they had met in 2018, returned in 2019 still homeless.

Homelessness is an increasing problem in the Maroondah Local Government Area (LGA). One of the issues contributing to homelessness in Maroondah is the housing affordability crisis which has seen a shortage of affordable options for people on low incomes.

The demand for affordable or social housing properties is outstripping supply and this is increasing the number of homeless people in Maroondah LGA.

The 2016 Census found that a total of 425 people were homeless within Maroondah LGA, although the true number is thought to be higher as collecting accurate data on homelessness is difficult.

In Maroondah LGA homeless people are not just rough sleepers, but those who are the ‘hidden homeless’, people who live temporarily with others but who aren’t guaranteed permanent, private and secure housing. “Every individual and every family should have access to safe and secure housing — and a place to call home”. Dustin Halse MP, Member for Ringwood, October 19th, 2019

In 2018 Maroondah Council adopted its Affordable and Social Housing Policy aimed at helping to address affordable and social housing issues in the municipality. In preparing the document Maroondah Council found that the increasing price of private rental was a key contributing factor that has led to an increase in homelessness in suburbs, such as Ringwood and Croydon.

According to the Council for Homeless Persons (CHP), Victoria’s homelessness peak body, homelessness can be caused by poverty, lack of affordable housing, poor physical or mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, gambling, family and relationship breakdown or domestic violence and all of these causes are relevant in Maroondah, as stated by those seeking the support of the Maroondah Winter Shelter.

It is recognised that in 2018, the Victorian Government funded Wellways to deliver Pathways to Home, an assertive outreach support program for people who are rough sleeping in Maroondah, but Maroondah has very limited crisis accommodation.

On the majority of nights, Maroondah has no crisis accommodation. In Croydon there is SalvoCare Eastern ‘Gateways’ program that provides short-term crisis accommodation and intensive support to

all persons residing within the program, but that service has a waiting list and is not a long term housing option.

Our Advocacy Group has been told that there is no “votes in homelessness”, but it is imperative that people have secure housing to ensure the social cohesion of our community and that everyone has a fair go. Being homeless impacts on all aspects of your life that include mental and physical well-being and it is imperative that it is addressed cooperatively by all levels of government within Australia. We welcome this inquiry by the Victorian parliament.

We have international models such as in Finland, where the country applies the “Housing First” concept. Those affected by homelessness receive a place to live and the support they need to conquer the often complex issues that contributed to them being homeless in the first place.

We feel that the only way to solve the homelessness problem in Maroondah and elsewhere is:

- By building more social housing urgently, without delay. This needs to be implemented by the Victorian government in partnership with the Federal government;
- Introducing mandatory inclusionary zoning of at least 10 to 15% in all major developments in Victoria, would guarantee a steady supply of social housing. In South Australia it is currently 15% and ACT 20% (AHURI 17/03/2017);
- By increasing basic income that would enable people to have more housing options, whilst recognising income support is a Federal government responsibility, it needs to be part of any housing solution.

Prepared by Robyn Kilpatrick,

Facilitator, Maroondah Winter Shelter Homelessness Advocacy Group, with consultation with Members of the Advocacy Group

MAROONDAH WINTER SHELTER

RESPONSE FROM MAROONDAH WINTER SHELTER ADVOCACY GROUP TO THE INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS IN VICTORIA

Maroondah Winter Shelter program has provided accommodation for homeless men in the Ringwood/Croydon area for the last two years from June to mid-September. Local churches and volunteers have hosted up to 12 men each evening, in the age range of 20 years and upwards. These guests have been referred to the shelter via Uniting Wesley in Ringwood. The 2019 shelter offered accommodation to in excess of 30 men.

Accommodation was provided by a different church for each of the seven nights of the week. Volunteers from within each church and the wider community provided an evening meal, bed and bedding, breakfast and a take-away lunch. Guests are picked up in Ringwood to be taken to each venue, or sometimes they make their own way.

As well as this practical help, volunteers have been able to offer friendship, encouragement, respect and honour to our guests. Hair cuts, help with car repairs, dental hygiene, vaccinations and other useful daily advice/help has also been given when required.

During the period of the shelter in 2019 it was very much felt that our clients would benefit greatly having a safe place to go to during the day. The alternative often means using the local libraries and shopping centres which is often not appreciated by management. To this end, a day shelter was set up with the collaboration of the management of Eastland Shopping Centre using a vacant shop. The day shelter was available from 1.30 to 5.00 p.m. each week day during the course of the shelter. It was well used and very much appreciated.

It was noticed over the course of the Winter Shelter program that for many of the guests their physical condition, confidence and demeanour improved notably. Our guests noted that having a safe, warm environment with access to a shower, adequate sleep and good food enabled them to more confidently tackle the tasks of looking for work and accommodation. For some, there was success on these counts, but of course, others were not so successful. This was evidenced in the fact some guests from 2018 returned to the shelter again in 2019.

Following the conclusion of Winter Shelter this year, a number of volunteers were concerned about on-going needs for our guests and their futures. Thus an Advocacy Group was formed to address the situation of all homeless people, particularly in the Maroondah area. At present, there is very limited crisis accommodation available in the catchment area. We have been writing letters and emails to local, state and federal politicians lobbying for a voice for homeless people.

The volunteers involved feel strongly that the program is extremely necessary and has been beneficial in some small way to the health and well-being of our guests. Most want to return to volunteer in 2020 and even a couple of the guests who are now "on their feet" have offered to be involved.

Whilst this program has been successful it is only a stop gap measure. It is obvious that more appropriate, long-term supported accommodation is required to tackle this great need in our community.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission as part of the overall inquiry into homelessness in Victoria.

Jenny Smith and Rosemary U'Ren,
Venue Co-ordinators at North Ringwood Uniting Church,
Maroondah Winter Shelter Homeless Advocacy Group Members.