

Homeless Brokerage Program – City of Melbourne

With increasing number of heatwaves, the vulnerability of the homeless was becoming more pertinent and needed a response. So in 2014-15, City of Melbourne established the Heatwave and Homelessness Action Plan, as the homeless were identified as vulnerable to heatwaves within the city.



The Plan includes a number of actions where City of Melbourne support homelessness service providers to assist their clients to manage the heat. Working with homelessness service providers is the most effective way to reach the homeless as they have the know-how and networks to access those most in need.

Understanding your objectives

The City of Melbourne aims to be a welcoming, inclusive, connected and engaging city. They see working to improve the lives of homeless as part of meeting this objective.

City of Melbourne, acknowledging the role that many stakeholders have in assisting the homeless, have committed to five key objectives where they can take leadership on the issue of homelessness.

These include:

- Know our city – research, consult, refresh and share knowledge of homelessness in Melbourne.
- Be inclusive – respect, hear, welcome and include those who are homeless in our services, activities and events.
- Develop skills – provide opportunities to enhance personal resilience, develop skills and strengthen social inclusion to avoid long term hardship.
- Create pathways – work with partners to courageously advocate for change and create sustainable pathways out of homelessness.
- Health and wellbeing – foster partnerships with health and wellbeing services to ensure improved health outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

Understanding climate change interactions

Climate change – particularly extreme weather events – does and will affect City of Melbourne’s ability to achieve these objectives, particularly improving health outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

Flooding and heatwaves can affect homeless in the City of Melbourne, however, the heatwave events in 2009 and 2014, increased the priority of responding to heatwaves.

Heatwaves affect peoples' health, as shown in the statistics of 621 heat-related presentations to emergency departments during the week of the January 2014 heatwave, higher than the number expected of 105.

The hedge – project overview

The Heatwaves and Homelessness Strategy was released in 2014-15, and included an action to implement the Brokerage Program.

This program included actions such as:

- Providing free swim and locker passes and/or movie passes to homeless.
- Working with service providers to extend operating hours on hot days.
- Co-health rooming house program – to provide rooming house residents and operators knowledge on how to manage the heat.
- Summer Sense communications pack - sent out to service providers including resources about how to manage heat including a cool spaces and water fountain maps of the city.

CoM originally established an MOU with six homelessness service providers and have since increased this networks substantially.

The feedback from service providers on the City of Melbourne program has been very positive. One service provider, Launch Housing is very appreciative of the Summer Sense communications pack. It is in a form that is *'targeted at worker level and the information is useable.'* For some organisations, if City of Melbourne didn't send them the information, they wouldn't get it at all.

Receiving the pool or movie passes can also just make clients feel worth it. Service provider *"Someone caring that they're finding it hot outside and someone wanting to make a difference."*

"If you have a good meal and are made to feel welcome, things will get better"
Participant - Café Meals Program 2010

Meeting adaptation principles

How does the action meet the principles of:

- Reversible and flexible
- Maintains future options
- Builds in safety margins
- Reduce the decision time horizons
- Delivers benefit under multiple futures
- No regrets action - beneficial even without climate change but also assist with climate change.

This program is a no regrets action in relation to climate change. The business case probably positive even without climate change, however, understanding that heatwaves were likely going to get more frequent and intense in future, further enhanced the benefits of undertaking an action like this.

The action is flexible as the program can be restructured to target a different climate variable or issue. It is also reversible, however, there may be some cost associated with reversing the action due to the many stakeholders that now rely on the information provided by City of Melbourne.

The action does not necessarily build in safety margins, or reduce the decision time horizons.

This action is particularly useful as it has built City of Melbourne's networks with homelessness service providers substantially, thereby delivering benefits under multiple futures. A key component that also makes it a no regrets action.