

Protocol for Homeless People

FACT SHEET

July 2007



Agencies which have an operational presence in public places or which provide a service to assist homeless people have endorsed the Protocol:

- Department of Community Services
- Department of Housing
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- NSW Health
- NSW Police Force
- Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust
- Rail Corporation NSW
- State Transit Authority
- Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority
- Sydney Olympic Park Authority

Each agency covered by the Protocol is implementing it within its own business and will determine how it should be implemented by contract staff such as security officers.

Agencies will deal with complaints about the application of the Protocol through their existing complaints mechanism.

What is the Protocol?

The Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places (the Protocol) was introduced in 2000 to guide State Government officials about how to relate to homeless people in public places.

The New South Wales Government introduced the Protocol to help ensure that homeless people are treated appropriately and receive services if they need, or request them. It is an important element in the Government's strategy for preventing homelessness and responding effectively when it occurs.

The Protocol

The Protocol states that a homeless person should be left alone unless:

- they request assistance
- they appear to be distressed or in need of assistance
- their behaviour threatens their safety or the safety and security of people around them
- their behaviour is likely to result in damage to property or the environment.

If homeless people require assistance you can where possible:

- involve services directly
- provide advice or information on available services
- provide a contact point that the homeless person can either call or go to for further advice or help.

Underlying principles of the Protocol

The Protocol is based on the following principles:

- All people have a right to be in public places, at the same time respecting the right of local communities to live in a safe and peaceful environment
- All people have a right to participate in public activities or events
- People will not be harassed or moved on from public places unless there is a threat to general security, their personal safety or if they are causing a disturbance which constitutes a breach of the peace
- People who work in areas where their responsibilities are likely to bring them into contact with homeless people will receive sufficient information to enable them to assist homeless people if required, or help homeless people make contact with appropriate services if needed.

The Protocol has been endorsed by 10 NSW Government agencies whose staff come into contact with homeless people during the course of their business.

Where the Protocol applies

The Protocol applies only to public places such as parks and open spaces ordinarily accessible to the public. It does not apply to private property, or property which is not generally accessible to the public. It also does not prevent agencies from taking appropriate action where health or safety is at risk, or a breach of the peace, or unlawful behaviour has occurred.

Useful contact numbers

Useful contact telephone numbers which can be given to homeless people or which can be contacted for further advice or assistance are listed below:

Homeless Persons Information Centre 1800 234 566

9.00am to 10.00pm - 7 days a week

This is a telephone information service for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Inner-City Homelessness Outreach and Support Service (I-CHOSS) 1800 505 501

7.00am to 10.30pm Monday to Friday
9.00am to 5.00pm Saturday and Sunday

This is an outreach and support service for people who are homeless within the City of Sydney local government area.

Missionbeat 1300 306 461

9.00am to 11.00pm
Missionbeat patrols Inner Sydney streets, seeking those in distress and need.

NSW Department of Housing After Hours Temporary Accommodation Line 1800 152 152

4.30pm to 10.00pm Monday to Friday
10.00am to 10.00pm Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays

This is a statewide service that provides temporary accommodation outside normal office hours for homeless people.

Clients are offered one or a small number of nights accommodation and are required to visit a Department of Housing local office at the first available time to discuss long-term accommodation options.

24 hour services

NSW Department of Housing Housing Contact Centre 1800 629 212 (freecall)

Provides 24 hour/7 days a week contact service for the Department's clients statewide.

Department of Community Services Helpline 133 627

This service is available for reporting child abuse, neglect or risk of harm.

Domestic Violence Line 1800 656 463

This statewide freecall line provides telephone counselling, information and referrals.

Lifeline 131 114

This counselling service takes calls from people needing emotional support.

Rape Crisis Centre 9819 6565 9181 4349 (TTY)

This is a statewide telephone and online crisis, support and referral service for anyone who has experienced sexual violence.

Salvo Crisis Centre 9360 3000

Trained counsellors are available 24 hours a day for people facing a crisis in their lives.

Youth Emergency Accommodation Line 9318 1531

This is a recorded message and service helpline for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

For further information contact:

Homelessness Unit,
NSW Department of Housing
(02) 8753 8487

by post
NSW Department of Housing
Locked Bag 4001
Ashfield NSW 1800

or go to
www.housing.nsw.gov.au