

IMAP Implementation Committee

Briefing Paper

StreetCount 2018 Update

BACKGROUND

- 1) At the IMAP Implementation Committee meeting of 23 February 2018, the Committee resolved to undertake a joint rough sleeper StreetCount in June 2018 across member municipalities.
- 2) The intention of the joint StreetCount was to create a point in time baseline of the number and attributes of rough sleepers across the IMAP area, with the intention that data would be used to:
 - improve program and response planning to address homelessness
 - improve understanding of the transient nature of rough sleepers
 - support IMAP advocacy to the Victorian Government and Opposition.

DISCUSSION

- 3) The joint IMAP StreetCount was undertaken between 3am and 3pm on Tuesday 19 June 2018 surveying people sleeping rough in parks, streets and other areas. The overall process was managed by Launch Housing with the assistance of more than 400 volunteers, recruited from among Council staff, elected members and the service sector. Assistance was received from corporate donors, DHHS staff and Victorian Police. Each Council also provided a project leader who undertook significant work in their own areas liaising with Council's HR, Risk, Venues, GIS and Communications teams plus local agencies to implement the StreetCount within a short time frame.
- 4) The final cost of implementing StreetCount was \$190,000, with IMAP and Victorian Government contributions of \$50,000 each, a City of Melbourne contribution of \$70,000 and \$20,000 from the other four Councils.
- 5) A total of 392 people were counted sleeping rough across the five municipalities. This included Melbourne 279; Port Phillip 65; Yarra 29; Maribyrnong 16; Stonnington 3. Sector experts have informed that low counts in some areas could be attributed to the extreme cold and wet conditions just prior to and at the time, and possible uncertainty about the process among some rough sleeping groups who may not have encountered a point in time count previously. Notwithstanding those issues on the night (which occur in any point in time count), Inner Melbourne Councils now have baseline data around homelessness for the IMAP region which has not been available before.
- 6) StreetCount media and communications was managed by an appointed specialist who worked across the IMAP Councils and DHHS to manage media at the event and in releasing the figures two weeks later. Two media briefings were held: the first on the day of the count and the second on Wednesday 4 July when findings were released. A joint media release, video, series of infographics (*refer Attachment 8b*) and media messages were developed to jointly support this information release.
- 7) A total of 47 media items were collected (*refer Attachment 8a*) including coverage in major newspapers, TV, radio and online. The high media exposure saw the issue of homelessness in the IMAP areas elevated, with Council spokespeople delivering key messages for IMAP. Coverage highlighted the scope of the situation, as well as actions required at local and state level and was a first in highlighting the joint issues faced by inner city Councils.
- 8) The StreetCount activity was successful in bringing together many partners from across Councils, homelessness agencies and the private sector, demonstrating tremendous goodwill and highlighting the level of community concern around issues of homelessness.
- 9) As this count was the latest in a series of counts undertaken in the City of Melbourne municipality, the data provides some insight into how the issues of rough sleepers are trending. This will be further elaborated on in the presentation to the Committee.

NEXT STEPS

- 10) In considering the delivery of StreetCount, the IMAP Community Steering Group met on 9 August and acknowledged:
- a) that StreetCount 2018 has successfully provided initial data that will be vital in understanding how rough sleeping manifests and changes in inner Melbourne. This information will contribute to each municipality's understanding of homelessness locally and across inner Melbourne and forms a new baseline that will assist Councils in future collaborative programs and advocacy efforts.
 - b) the significant goodwill generated by this collaboration across Councils, the State Government agencies and service sector through joint work undertaken on this project
 - c) IMAP's aim for the project was achieved through a shared understanding, shared communications framework and shared methodology which has helped frame the relationship with our local networks
 - d) a greater understanding and sense of the issues around homelessness - increased empathy for people who find themselves in this situation, better knowledge of homelessness in each municipality and 'normalising' of this issue for staff and volunteers. This understanding will be reflected in Councils' social housing policies.
 - e) a continued interest in finding housing and service delivery solutions for people sleeping rough on Melbourne's streets.
 - f) that, due to staff support in assisting with StreetCount, Council's internal Organisation Development policies around managing and supporting staff volunteers, and taking a more active role in corporate community support could be reviewed.

Opportunities for improvement (given that this was the first StreetCount across five municipalities) are also being explored by the City of Melbourne on how a joint count could be delivered in future.

The IMAP Communities Steering Group proposed some recommendations going forward which are reflected below.

RECOMMENDATION

- 11) That the IMAP Implementation Committee resolves to:
- a) note the outcomes of the IMAP 2018 StreetCount
 - b) undertake further advocacy opportunities to discuss the StreetCount partnership and next steps through:
 - i) meetings with the Victorian Minister for Housing and Department of Health and Human Services officers on service coordination and funding support program delivery across a broader area of Inner Melbourne
 - ii) meetings with DELWP staff on affordable housing provisions and structural system issues
 - iii) joint IMAP correspondence with Federal Ministers and State Opposition leaders in the run up to elections advocating for broader delivery of Government funding to address affordable housing and homelessness support
 - c) acknowledge that a joint StreetCount is of value to the IMAP Councils in building a holistic understanding of rough sleeping in inner city Melbourne and that consideration be given to undertaking another joint count in 2020.