

Appendix A – Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places



The Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places (the Protocol) assists and guides government, non-government organisations, and private businesses to interact and engage with people experiencing homelessness, so they are treated respectfully, with dignity, and do not face discrimination.

The Protocol also encourages government and non-government organisations to provide a response or deliver support to people experiencing homelessness if they need or request it.

The Protocol does not override existing laws or regulations, or the enforcement of those laws or regulations. The Protocol does not prevent government or non-government organisations from taking appropriate action where health or safety is at risk.

A person experiencing homelessness should only be approached if:

- The person requests assistance
- The person appears to be distressed or in need of assistance
- The person's behaviour threatens their safety or the safety and security of people around them
- The person's behaviour is likely to result, or has resulted in, damage to property, or negatively impacts the conservation of nature or objects, places or features of cultural value, including Aboriginal cultural heritage
- The person is sheltering in areas that may place their or others' health or safety at risk (for example during extreme weather conditions, natural disasters, or by sheltering in unsafe buildings)
- The person is a child or young person (with or without an adult) who appears to be under 18 years and at risk of harm; or under 16 years experiencing homelessness
- The person is a child or young person up to the age of 18 experiencing homelessness who is known to be a child in care (i.e. a child or young person under the Parental Responsibility of the Minister or Care Responsibility of the Secretary including shared care where Parental Responsibility for residency rests with the Minister)
- A staff/worker is seeking to engage with the person for the purpose of sharing information.

Where an approach is made under the circumstances outlined above:

- All approaches should be positive, empathetic, and respect the person and their circumstances. Interactions should be trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate behaviour and language should be used.
- The person experiencing homelessness may feel threatened on approach. To reduce this perceived risk, staff/workers must identify who is most appropriate to engage. Things to consider include:
 - the person's culture, religion, gender and age
 - the number of staff/workers that approach the person.
- If there is no risk, concern, breach or unlawful behaviour, respect a person's choice not to engage.
- All staff and contract workers should understand their own organisation's policies and procedures, as well as the Protocol, to ensure all interactions are appropriate.

If a person consents to assistance, staff/workers should provide:

- Appropriate support or services directly
- Advice, information, or assistance to connect to available, appropriate and, where possible, local supports or services; or
- A relevant contact point that the person can call or go to for further advice or help if they choose to in the future.

Additional support or assistance may be required during extreme weather conditions and natural disasters.