

7 May 2026

The Hon. Nick Staikos
Minister for Housing and Building
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
By email: minister.housing@dffh.vic.gov.au

Dear Minister Staikos

Subject: Increased Resources for Agencies Supporting Homelessness

Homelessness is escalating at a pace that exceeds the capacity of local support agencies, while housing supply remains insufficient to meet demand. This widening gap requires increased and sustained resourcing from the Victorian State Government to enable both immediate responses and longer-term outcomes.

Victorian local governments are at the forefront of these impacts. Across Knox, local agencies are increasingly unable to accommodate demand, resulting in growing community concern and increased pressure on council resources. Council responses extend beyond advocacy and referral, including site clean-ups, responding to community concerns, and working alongside partner services such as Victoria Police where behaviours of people sleeping rough impact local amenity or perceived safety.

Local Government also plays a critical role in community education—reinforcing the need for empathy and recognition of the rights of people experiencing homelessness, while balancing community expectations around amenity and perceived safety. Ongoing communication about the drivers of homelessness, including housing demand and limited supply, remains essential.

Knox City Council works daily with local agencies and networks to connect people experiencing homelessness with services and essential supplies. However, there is currently no dedicated homelessness outreach service operating within the Knox LGA, significantly limiting the ability to engage people sleeping rough in a timely and consistent way. Compounding this issue, housing and support agencies report extensive waitlists, resulting in delays of weeks and months, rather than days, before outreach or support can be offered. In many cases, individuals relocate before contact can be made, and the ability and desire to attend support agencies outside their LGA is further entrenching their vulnerability.

As the number of people visibly rough sleeping continues to grow, the capacity to effectively triage and provide support is increasingly constrained. While long-term housing solutions remain a critical focus for Government, the ability to respond to immediate need is compromised by the growing mismatch between demand and available services.

Local impact of rough sleeping

Knox is experiencing escalating social vulnerability, with rising homelessness outpacing support services and placing increasing pressure on communities, Council and emergency systems. Increased resources for homelessness agencies would enable more timely outreach, reduce the social and safety impacts associated with prolonged rough sleeping, and ease flow on pressure on hospitals, mental health services, and police. We know that proactive outreach is the most effective way of providing support, and cost effective, targeting immediate needs, with this approach acknowledging there is a person on the receiving end of this critical support.

Despite increased recognition of homelessness pressures, agencies consistently report that demand far exceeds current funding thresholds and therefore capacity. Delays in outreach response can extend for several weeks, reducing effectiveness and continuity of care.

The scale of homelessness in Knox continues to grow significantly. While there are several notifications, we are aware there are many more without home but not easily identified as they may be sleeping in vehicles or couch surfing. Rough sleeping notifications in the past three years have increased three-fold and early indicators suggest this trend will continue into 2026.

Year	Rough Sleeping Notifications
2023	64 people
2024	125 people
2025	215 people

Why Homelessness outreach is needed

Outreach services are a critical component of effective homelessness responses, particularly for people sleeping rough who may not engage with traditional service pathways. Increased funding for support agencies would enable proactive outreach, early intervention, and coordinated support, leading to improved outcomes for individuals while reducing reliance on crisis services. Timely outreach helps prevent prolonged rough sleeping, minimises harm, and supports pathways into accommodation, health care, and social supports, benefiting both individuals and the wider community.

For many years, The Salvation Army (TSA) has provided assertive outreach support to individuals identified as sleeping rough within the Knox Local Government Area (LGA). In November 2025, it was identified TSA have never been funded to deliver this service within Knox LGA but had always done so and intended to continue to support outreach services.

Without warning in mid-March, TSA advised they are no longer able to continue providing outreach support in Knox. After seeking clarification from the DFFH they have confirmed no agencies are funded to deliver outreach services to people sleeping rough within the Knox LGA.

This presents a significant challenge moving forward, with rough sleeping notifications continuing to increase. Our immediate attention has been focused on exploring options for how Council may respond to existing and future reports of rough sleeping in a way that upholds the safety and wellbeing of individuals as well as the broader community, but no long-term solution has yet to be identified. The outreach services will further burden Knox resources, with cost implications to address this newly created gap.

Our request

We call on the Victorian Government to:

1. Increase current funding provided to agencies supporting homelessness to include Knox City Council, with a specific focus on establishing dedicated outreach capacity and reducing wait times for support and housing pathways.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the critical importance of homelessness outreach and share further insights into its local impact, to ensure that people experiencing homelessness in Knox do not continue to fall through service gaps and are able to access the timely support and interventions they need.

Yours sincerely



Cr Paige Kennett
Mayor

Enquiries: Gail Power, Manager Community Access and Support - ph 9298 8302
Document: D26-116800



The Hon. Nick Staikos MP

Minister for Housing and Building
Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop

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Cr Paige Kennett
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Dear Cr Kennett,

Thank you for your letter of 7 May 2026 regarding assertive outreach in Knox City Council.

I am pleased to confirm that the 2026-27 Victorian State Budget provided \$25.8 million over four years for an expansion of assertive outreach teams and additional emergency accommodation to rapidly accommodate people sleeping rough as part of a coordinated approach. This investment will deliver new funding to expand coverage across all Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (department) Areas and implements a statewide model for assertive outreach.

As you are aware, assertive outreach is an active and persistent approach by workers to find and engage people sleeping rough where they stay. The process establishes relationships of trust to encourage re-engagement with support services, assisting their transition from homelessness to stable housing and social reconnection.

Existing funding for assertive outreach services was allocated to areas which were identified as having the highest incidence of rough sleeping throughout the state. This new initiative will expand funding to remaining department areas and support the delivery of a statewide model of assertive outreach.

The strength of community support for this initiative since it was announced on Budget Day has been heartening across specialist homelessness services, local councils and the broader social services system. The process of determining specific locations for the additional assertive outreach teams is underway and more details will be confirmed shortly.

We know that many people are doing it tough and acknowledge that assertive outreach has played a critical function in bridging the gap for people that may otherwise fall through the gaps in the City of Knox. Please be assured that my department in partnerships with specialist homelessness agencies continue to use all levers in our control to house as many people as quickly as possible.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Mark Stracey, Executive Director, Homelessness and Housing Support Branch at Mark.Stracey@homes.vic.gov.au.

I trust this information has been of assistance and thank you again for taking the time to write about this matter.

Yours sincerely,



The Hon. Nick Staikos MP
Minister for Housing and Building
Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop

11/6/2026