

Aboriginal mobility data project

Final report



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The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness
for the Adelaide Zero Project (on behalf of the City of Adelaide)

Acknowledgements

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Kurna people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we conducted this research. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and future. We wish to make clear our commitment, in our work, to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Acknowledgement of Lived Experience

The authors wish to acknowledge the people with a lived experience of homelessness who shared their stories and experiences with us, we are greatly appreciative. We also wish to express our deepest sympathy to the unknown number of people who die on our streets of our community every year.

For further information

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The Australian Alliance for Social Enterprise

The Australian Alliance for Social Enterprise (TAASE) is a research concentration within the University of South Australia. The purpose of TAASE is to engage with people and communities, and to partner with the organisations which serve them, in order to produce research which enables evidence-led change for the social service sector and people in need of social support. TAASE works with marginalised communities and vulnerable people who are experts in their own lives. This work helps to ensure that decisions affecting people's lives draw on their stories, their strengths, and their capacity to realise their potential.

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) is an independent champion for preventing and ending homelessness in Australia. AAEH supports Australian communities to individually and collectively end homelessness. Specifically, we work with local communities at all levels to ensure everyone has access to safe and sustainable housing services and that any incidents of homelessness that do occur are rare, brief and a one-time thing. Our membership includes individuals and organisations who are social service and policy leaders from across Australia who share our commitment to the vision of preventing and ending homelessness. We provide a range of training and advisory supports and our contribution to this Report was on that basis.

Picture on front cover

Photo: Section of Adelaide Park Lands burnt by an encampment fire, taken by David Pearson Jan 2021.

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It is my belief that long-term, sustainable change for Aboriginal people can only be achieved through self-determination that is achieved by having Aboriginal people at the heart of decisions that concern them and their lives. It is about Aboriginal leadership and the three tenets of the Uluru Statement from the Heart: Voice, Treaty and Truth.

*– Dr Roger Thomas, Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement,
November 2020*

The system is not sophisticated enough for Aboriginal people...our research indicated that 15 Aboriginal people had over 800 interactions with Housing SA and yet they died in the Park Lands.

*– Aboriginal Homelessness Expert,
September 2020*

Terminology

This report respectfully uses the term Aboriginal rather than Indigenous to refer to people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both. We use the term Aboriginal recognising that Aboriginal people are the original and ongoing inhabitants of Australia. In using the term Aboriginal throughout this report we recognise Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as two distinct groups, comprised of many and diverse nations and communities, and that there are a number of people with Torres Strait Islander heritage living in South Australia. The term Aboriginal is used with full recognition of the complexity and diversity among the nations and communities of South Australia (and Australia), each of which has their own traditional, long standing, beliefs and practices.

Acronyms

AAEH	Australian Alliance to End Homelessness
AARD	Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division ()
AMCEF	Aboriginal Mobility Cultural Engagement Framework
AMCoP	Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice
AMG	Aboriginal Managers Group
AML	Aboriginal Mobility List
AZP	Adelaide Zero Project
AWG	Aboriginal Workers Group
BNL	By-Name list
CALHN	Central Adelaide Local Health Network
CCP	Coordinated Care Panel
CEF	Cultural Engagement Framework
CEP	Cultural Engagement Protocol
HA	Housing Allocations (Meeting) (Adelaide Zero Project)
ICCoP	Inner City Community of Practice
IDN	Indigenous Data Network
IGH	Institute of Global Homelessness
SAHA	South Australian Housing Authority
SPDAT	Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool
TAASE	The Australian Alliance for Social Enterprise (University of South Australia)
VI-SPDAT	Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool

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Executive Summary

Each day and every night Aboriginal people gather in the Park Lands of the City of Adelaide. Some gather to spend time with friends and family, some gather to drink, some seek support while others do not. Some people already have housing, some seek housing and others do not. Some people come to the Park Lands from the greater Adelaide region, others come to the Park Lands as a meeting place from further afield, with a well-known ebb and flow of people from the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (APY), otherwise described as remote visitation or Aboriginal mobility. On the whole though, not enough is known about these diverse and constantly changing groups of people. Not enough is known about their needs and not enough is done to coordinate efforts to meet those needs.

What is known, however, is that the status quo is unacceptable to almost all stakeholders and without focused action we will see more of what has already occurred: Aboriginal leaders and sector workers, outreach services and South Australia Police frustrated with the little they can do but ‘manage’ the symptoms of broader problems; homelessness service providers frustrated with a lack of appropriate housing options; and residents and ratepayers frustrated by witnessing highly vulnerable people with unmet needs and frequent incidents of anti-social or illegal behaviour. Without changes what we will see is continued severe health and safety consequences for Aboriginal people gathering in the Park Lands. Tragically, this includes a significant but unknown number of Aboriginal people dying prematurely in the heart of the City of Adelaide.

This project was commissioned by the South Australian Premier, through the Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement, and funded by the City of Adelaide, through the Adelaide Zero Project, to understand how to better address the aforementioned issues.

At its core this project has found that there are three pathways that need to be improved or created to better understand and meet the needs of a highly vulnerable group of Australians (see Figure 1, later in this report):

- The **Housing First pathway** that has been created through the Adelaide Zero Project needs to be improved through a range of measures to provide a more culturally appropriate response to the housing and support needs of Aboriginal people sleeping rough.
- A **Support First pathway** needs to be created to better coordinate the non-housing needs of people gathering and sometimes sleeping in the Park Lands. Elements of this pathway currently exist, but are disjointed, underfunded and ad hoc. A systemic, coordinated and proactive approach is needed.
- A **Cultural Engagement pathway** needs to be created to recognise that many Aboriginal people visiting the Park Lands are just going about their everyday lives, and are not in need of support or housing, but where coordinated cultural engagement strategies for welcoming, supporting and setting expectations for visitors on Kaurna land would be broadly beneficial.

To enable improvement or creation of these pathways this report sets out a number of recommendations relating to new tools, new data collection efforts, new service coordination mechanisms and new services (informed by the data). These elements sit together as a framework – a Cultural Engagement Framework – that we think could and should be the basis for an improved services system for Aboriginal people visiting Adelaide’s Park Lands. The framework, and report recommendations, are based on the findings of a rapid review research project, which has included consultation and engagement with key stakeholders and groups. The project was undertaken at a time of significant change in the homelessness sector and with constraints in terms of the extent stakeholder engagement given the project timeline and COVID-19 related restrictions.

In discussing project findings, it must be noted here that there are diverse views on what the actual Aboriginal homelessness/Aboriginal mobility ‘problem’ is. This said, there is clear consensus that there are

groups of Aboriginal people who sleep out in Adelaide's Park Lands: these groups are highly vulnerable and many people within them are in need of culturally appropriate, coordinated service responses. The services currently offered to people in the Park Lands are provided by a broad range of (mostly government funded) agencies and, accordingly, no one agency, part or level of government can address the issues alone. It is only through each agency taking responsibility for their part of the complex challenges in the Park Lands that culturally appropriate responses can be meaningfully and sustainably provided.

It is also important to note here that the issue of Aboriginal mobility is a complex one and therefore any response to Aboriginal mobility needs to recognise that complexity. As such, a combination of systemic and service responses is recommended in the framework. Systemic responses are what is required to create change in the way service systems operate to better address the root causes of the problems being manifest in the Park Lands, with program responses designed to support broader systemic efforts and meet immediate needs.

To facilitate the required systems change, the data driven and service coordination approaches that the Adelaide Zero Project (AZP) has pioneered offer a model that can be built upon to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people in the Park Lands; for those among the groups who are seeking housing and for those who only seek support. Strengthening the Housing First pathway offered through the Adelaide Zero Project is one way forward. However, this must be advanced alongside building the Service First and Cultural Engagement pathways described above. And, in line with the clear lessons from the Adelaide Zero Project to date, robust and real time data must drive all decision making and continuous improvement of the pathways proposed.

A range of options is set out in this report in relation to the structure, governance and coordination of each of the pathways described. Government investment will be needed to activate the pathways and the overall Cultural Engagement Framework. Such investment is needed immediately and in an ongoing way. This investment must recognise, support and build Aboriginal community capacity and cultural capability in addressing the issues associated with Aboriginal mobility. It should also explicitly build a stronger and larger Aboriginal health and human services workforce.

There are no silver bullets or single program responses that can be rolled out here. There is, however, clear need and appetite for investment in Aboriginal community-led responses and organisations to ensure the principle of 'nothing about us without us' is upheld. Such approaches will help to break down some of the racism many people in the Park Lands feel and experience every day, so that everyone shares in community wellbeing and inclusion. Pleasingly, as was clear from the consultations undertaken for this project, there is significant desire on the part of the staff of government agencies and community service organisations to walk alongside Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in the task of meeting the needs associated with Aboriginal mobility.

The authors of this report are sincerely grateful to Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement Roger Thomas and Ms Olive Bennell, Head of Homelessness Services Anglicare SA, the co-chairs of the Senior Aboriginal Homelessness Reference Group (SAHRG) that led the development of this project, as well as to everyone who was able to take the time to share their insights with us during what has been a difficult period. This report sets out, frankly, what is and isn't working. The descriptions of what isn't working should not be taken as criticism of staff, service providers or agencies (whether government or non-government) who are clearly doing their best to deal with complex issues in a challenging environment. We hope that the report is a helpful contribution to the ongoing efforts of many to improve understanding of and responses for Aboriginal people sleeping out in the Park Lands of the City of Adelaide, and contexts/places beyond.

Summary of finding and recommendations

The below sets out the key findings and recommendations as well as the range of specific systemic and service level recommendations for strengthening and creating the various pathways outlined in the proposed Cultural Engagement Framework. Further information about each of the findings and recommendations is provided in later sections of this report.

Findings			
1) Self-determination and consultation key		6) A national issue with a local response	
2) No clear understanding of the problem		7) System-level service coordination needed	
3) Too little known		8) Greater access to culturally appropriate housing	
4) Recognise complexity in responses		9) Further alcohol restrictions, not the solution	
5) Government collaboration and investment essential		10) Recognise current Park Lands use	
Key recommendations			
1) Adopt a Cultural Engagement Framework		2) Drive implementation through an action plan	
Systemic recommendations	Who	Service recommendations	Who
1) Develop a Cultural Engagement Protocol	Various	1) Urgently improve Park Lands amenity	City of Adelaide
2) Establish an Aboriginal Mobility List	Various	2) Increase the return to country service budget and introduce fees	SA Government
3) Over time, alliances should establish a state-wide Aboriginal Mobility List	SA Housing Authority/alliances	3) Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia review to consider integration options	Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia
4) Consider the Inner City Service Coordination Network report	Various	4) Consider decriminalising public drunkenness	SA Government
5) Fund an Aboriginal Mobility Coordinator	AARD/City of Adelaide	5) Fund more Aboriginal health workers	Central Adelaide Local Health Network
6) Utilise the Care Coordination Group	Various	6) Hold an arts and mobility forum	AARD/Arts SA
Systemic recommendations	Who	Service recommendations	Who
7) Create an Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice	Various	7) Pursue tenancy reform to support more culturally appropriate housing	SA Government

8) Use data to improve coordination with remote health services	Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice/Data and Evaluation Working Group	8) Invest in safe spaces and transitional accommodation options	SA Government
9) Consideration of data ownership required	Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice	9) Support small scale innovations to enable more culturally appropriate housing	SA Housing Authority
10) Improve data practices on deaths and consent	Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice	10) Use data to inform <i>Aboriginal Housing Strategy</i> investments	SA Housing Authority
11) Document an Outreach Coordination Framework	Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice and Inner City Community of Practice	11) Grow the Aboriginal Controlled community housing sector	SA Housing Authority
12) Establish a Cultural Engagement Outreach Coordinator and fund	Various	12) Enhance flexibility and service coordination with Aboriginal hostels	Various
13) Create an Aboriginal Mobility and Homelessness Workforce Group	Various	13) Trial allowing sleeping out in the Park Lands	City of Adelaide
14) Enable coordinated and shared training	Various		
15) Establish an Aboriginal mobility research scholarship	SA Housing Authority		

Introduction

Indigenous populations across the world are increasingly becoming urbanised (ABS 2017; Synder and Wilson 2015) and this is associated with increasing mobility between urban, regional and rural areas, and within such areas. Mobility has two facets, that which arises out of cultural and social organisation and that which can be seen as 'itinerant' (Birdsall-Jones and Shaw 2008). Indigenous mobility often results in what the non-Indigenous worldview would see as homelessness. Research indicates that such mobility raises a number of issues impacting on individual, family and community wellbeing, creating challenges for adequate service provision and access (Synder and Wilson 2015).

Aboriginal people sleeping in the Park Lands of the inner city of Adelaide has been identified as a 'problem' for quite some time. A number of suggestions about how to provide a better service response to Aboriginal visitors to Adelaide who sleep out or sleep rough have been made, however, there is limited knowledge across the sector about which community groups are represented among the remote visitors, their reasons for traveling to Adelaide, as well as their immediate and long-term needs. Without such information it is difficult to provide solutions that respect the rights of all in the community, both at a point in time and over time.

The need for culturally appropriate service responses has been identified in both service reviews conducted by the Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH) on behalf of the Adelaide Zero Project, first with Dame Louise Casey and Dr Nonie Brennan's review (Casey and Brennan 2019) and second with the review undertaken by Dr Nonie Brennan as part of the Thinkers in Residence program (Rowley et al. 2020). In her report Dr Brennan outlined how Aboriginal people are over-represented as actively homeless on the By-Name List and 'Adelaide needs an urgent response to eradicate barriers that exist throughout the housing and homelessness system which impact on the outcomes for Aboriginal people' (Rowley et al. 2020, 8). Further, she stated 'Adelaide has a transient population of people from remote Aboriginal communities who stay in the inner-city on a temporary basis', and, 'Thinking about housing in a non-traditional sense has the opportunity to create sustainable housing outcomes for all people on the By-Name List, including those who identify as Aboriginal...[by] developing culturally appropriate responses to Aboriginal mobility' (p. 9). Casey and Brennan's report (2019, 4 & 9) also raised these points, identifying that 'urgent integration of culturally appropriate responses for Aboriginal people sleeping rough' are needed and 'as part of AZP urgent work is required to better integrate a culturally appropriate response for Aboriginal people who are sleeping rough, as well as meet the cultural needs of those who are vulnerable visitors to the inner city Park Lands.'

Such realities and expert observations provide a clear mandate for refocused attention and action on remote visitors, homelessness and mobility. Moreover, there is a further mandate for this work given the ongoing commitment of the City of Adelaide, who funded this work, as well as the high level support of the Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement.

Project method

As noted, this project set out to see what advances could be made in addressing Aboriginal people visiting and sleeping out in the Adelaide Park Lands. To understand the issues and provide insight into developing culturally appropriate responses to this group consultation and engagement was conducted through a series of workshops and one on one interviews with a broad range of service providers and their staff. As part of the series of workshops we held a workshop specifically with the small number of front line Aboriginal workers in the homelessness and interfacing sectors, which was illuminating in terms of the specific concerns they hold and challenges they face.

Aboriginal mobility and rough sleeping homelessness

Defining Indigenous homelessness

Internationally there is no standard definition of homelessness and definitions reflect differing interests and varying purposes. As outlined in Murphy and Tobin (2013), based on the work of Burt et al. (2001):

From the perspective of immediate action, definitions identify who is eligible to receive whatever assistance is available specifically for homeless people. From a research perspective, definitions identify who should be counted and described. And from a policy perspective, definitions identify who should be planned for and what policies will be most relevant to the type of assistance needed.

In Australia definitions of homelessness tend to relate to data collection processes and two main definitions are used: that of the Australian Bureau of Statistics and also the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, which relates to people who access and utilise homelessness services. Both these data collections provide estimates of the number of people homeless and the circumstances of their homelessness.

Globally homelessness is disproportionately experienced by Indigenous peoples and this reality is no different for Australia (Allen and Clarke Policy and Regulatory Specialists Ltd 2018; Anderson and Collins 2014). While Aboriginal people are over-represented in urban homelessness as measured by conventional definitions of homelessness, defining 'homelessness' in Indigenous populations poses difficulties because of the cultural meanings of 'house', 'home', 'place' (i.e., the concept of 'usual place of residence' per the Census is challenging) and the term 'homelessness' itself (Memmott 2015; Zufferey and Parkes 2019).

In Canada there is a specific definition of homelessness for Indigenous communities (Thistle 2017, 6):

Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships (Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012).

This definition intersects with the four typologies of homelessness in the Canadian Definition of Homelessness: unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated and at risk of homelessness. The definition is further considered in line with 12 dimensions articulated by Indigenous people across Canada (presented in Table 1).

In considering this comprehensive definition, however, it is notable that in a recent meeting of Indigenous peoples in Canada there was still dispute over the relevance of the definitions outlined above and in Table 1. While some people felt these articulations to be informative and 'an important educational tool for non-Indigenous people to learn about the ways that Indigenous people experience homelessness', such articulations of Indigenous homelessness were not thought to be practical and expressed a need for a definition that is 'functional' for Indigenous communities (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2019, 18). Some participants at the meeting also took umbrage with the to the ideal of ending homelessness. This they felt again was a westernised approach and 'incompatible to an Indigenous worldview that encompasses a cycle for all things, rather than a linear or static end point.' (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2019, 4).

Table 1: Twelve dimensions of Indigenous homelessness articulated by Indigenous peoples across Canada

Type	Descriptor
Historical displacement homelessness	Indigenous communities and Nations made historically homeless after being displaced from pre-colonial Indigenous lands
Contemporary geographic separation homelessness	An Indigenous individual's or community's separation from Indigenous lands, after colonial control
Spiritual disconnection homelessness	An Indigenous individual's or community's separation from Indigenous world views or connection to the Creator or equivalent deity
Mental disruption and loss homelessness	Mental homelessness, described as an imbalance of mental faculties, experienced by Indigenous individuals and communities caused by colonization's entrenched social and economic marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples
Cultural disintegration and loss homelessness	Homelessness that totally dislocates or alienates Indigenous individuals and communities from their culture and from the relationship web of Indigenous society known as "All My Relations."
Overcrowding homelessness	The number of people per dwelling in urban and rural indigenous households that exceeds the national Canadian housing average, thus contributing to and creating unsafe, unhealthy and overcrowded living spaces, in turn causing homelessness
Relocation and mobility homelessness	Mobile Indigenous homeless people travelling over geographic distances between urban and rural spaces for access to work, health, education, recreation, legal and childcare services, to attend spiritual events and ceremonies, have access to affordable housing, and to see family, friends and community members.
Going home homelessness	An Indigenous individual or family who has grown up or lived outside their home community for a period of time, and on returning 'home' are often seen as outsiders, making them unable to secure a physical structure in which to live, due to federal, provincial, territorial or municipal bureaucratic barriers, uncooperative band or community councils, hostile community and kin members, lateral violence and cultural dislocation.
Nowhere to go homelessness	A complete lack of access to stable shelter, housing, accommodation, shelter services or relationships; literally having nowhere to go.
Escaping or evading harm Homelessness	Indigenous persons fleeing, leaving or vacating unstable, unsafe, unhealthy or overcrowded households or homes to obtain a measure of safety or to survive. Young people, women, and LGBTQ2S people are particularly vulnerable.
Emergency crisis homelessness	Natural disasters, large-scale environmental manipulation and acts of human mischief and destruction, along with bureaucratic red tape, combining to cause Indigenous people to lose their homes because the system is not ready or willing to cope with an immediate demand for housing
Climate refugee homelessness	Indigenous peoples whose lifestyle, subsistence patterns and food sources, relationship to animals, and connection to land and water have been greatly altered by drastic and cumulative weather shifts due to climate change. These shifts have made individuals and entire Indigenous communities homeless.

Source: Thistle 2017, 10-12.

In Australia Memmott et al. advanced understandings around Aboriginal homelessness significantly from the early 2000s, using the term 'public place dwellers' to describe Aboriginal people transient in urban areas. Their comprehensive review of existing literature and empirical research (Memmott et al. 2003a,

2003b) classified Aboriginal people 'living' in public spaces into several categories to assist understandings around why people congregate in urban spaces:

- short term, intermittent and temporary – people who experience 'temporary, intermittent and often cyclical patterns of homelessness due to transient and mobile lifestyles, living in temporary arrangements without secure tenure (e.g. staying with friends or relatives, living in squats, improvised dwellings or boarding houses and at times moving into parks and public places). These people do not have a strong sense of attachment to the urban public space and intend to return home.'
- medium term, voluntary – living in a public space becomes the norm and while they have a place of residence in a home community they do not know if and when they will return.
- long term, voluntary – people who live permanently a public place dwelling lifestyle. These people are isolated from their communities having severed ties.
- reluctant, necessitated by circumstances – this category covers two circumstances: those individuals who need to be in an urban area for access to services or supports like a hospital but have no access to stable accommodation; or they wish to return home but lack the means to get home (Memmott et al. 2003a, 2003b).

Notably, they also warned that such categorisation may influence and restrict the responses considered necessary to 'manage' such mobility and homelessness (from the non-Indigenous worldview).

In addition to those people categorised as 'public place dwellers' are those Aboriginal people who are *at risk of homelessness* who Memmott et al. identified as:

- living in insecure housing or substandard housing or crowded housing.
- 'dysfunctional mobile persons' who are in a state of 'continual or intermittent residential mobility including temporary residents (e.g., crisis accommodation) that is the result of personal and/or social problems (e.g., violence, alcohol, substance abuse, lack of safety or security in a social sense, personality or 'identity crisis', lack of emotional support and security.
- women and children escaping unsafe and unstable family circumstances.

The final identified category encompassed spiritual forms of homelessness; homelessness occurring because of:

- separation from traditional lands;
- separation from family and kinship groups; and/or,
- a crisis of personal identity wherein one's understanding or knowledge of how one relates to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused. (Memmott et al. 2003).

Such categorisations of 'homelessness' and mobility must all be considered in the context of the history of settlement and its impact on Australia's First Nations Peoples. This fact is clearly articulated in terms of the Adelaide Park Lands by Browne-Yung et al. (2016: 7).

The importance of connections to cultural identity as part of the shared habitus of Aboriginal people was revealed in the significance of the city squares and Park Lands as Aboriginal places. The Adelaide Park Lands and city squares were created upon the Kurna land of the Tandanyunga (place of the Red Kangaroo Dreaming) and hold special cultural significance for Aboriginal people (Hall 2004). From post-colonisation to the present day the public squares, Park Lands and adjacent cemetery have been frequented as meeting places to 'yarn' and to experience a connection with dispossessed land for Aboriginal people (Hall 2004): 'The Park Lands, I believe that's Aboriginal land. And they should be handed back over so we can build our housing on it...'

Experiences of Aboriginal people in urban parks

As noted above there are few studies that capture the experiences of Aboriginal people who 'reside' in city parks. Appendix 3 sets out one case study of the feedback received through the consultation for this report. One recent example of such work is that of Martin et al. (2019) in Western Australia. To provide better outcomes for park dwelling Aboriginal people, Martin and colleagues conducted a participatory research project that gave voice to the people in parks – in Perth and in Fremantle. The areas studied have historical and current significance for the traditional custodians of these lands, the Noongar people.

This study identified not only the lack of voice of the Aboriginal people but also the lack of voice of the service providers with government:

Although there was general consensus among service providers about the reasons for people being in both the Perth and Fremantle parks, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies reported that their knowledge was not considered credible evidence by policy makers and funders. Furthermore, these agencies asserted that academic research stood a greater chance of being categorized as legitimate. (p. 162).

Methodologically data was collected by teams of 2-3 outreach workers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and the interview schedule was co-designed. The topics covered were: how people came to be in the parks, housing and homelessness, safety, health and wellbeing, how time was spent while in the parks and messages for other people about life in the parks. Opinions were also sought about their knowledge and experiences of a particular service that was being evaluated at the time of the study. The interview approach was described by the researchers as conversational, relying on 'yarning'. Participants were offered gift vouchers. Both the academic researchers and the outreach workers analysed and interpreted the data collected.

Overall, the study concluded:

Participants experienced disconnection from kin and country, serious risk to personal safety, homelessness, and problematic health; all related to, and intersecting with, time spent in the parks. The participants' narratives highlight the enduring impacts of colonization, dispossession, and racism. These lived experiences are situated within contexts of rising moral panic from politicians, residents and mass media, and siloed policy and service delivery responses.

Such observations have strong resonance with the findings in this research, as will be shown throughout the rest of this report and in the recommendations developed.

Addressing the prevalence of vulnerable Aboriginal people in public spaces in the city

In Australia explorations of how to respond from a national perspective reaches back to at least to the start of this century with Memmott and colleagues conducting a *National Analysis of Strategies Used to Respond to Indigenous Itinerants and Public Place Dwellers* for the Commonwealth's *National Homelessness Strategy* in 2003 (Memmott et al. 2003a). In this study they reviewed a wide range of strategies and responses targeted specifically at Aboriginal people:

- combined legislative and police approaches.
- patrols and outreach services.
- diversionary strategies.
- addressing anti-social behaviour.
- philosophies and methods of client interaction and social development.
- alcohol strategies.
- regional strategies.
- accommodation options.

- dedicated service centres and gathering places.
- the physical design of public spaces.
- education strategies.
- Phone-in Services.
- Skills and Training for those Working with Indigenous Public Place Dwellers.
- Partnerships.
- Holistic Approaches.

From this study, they concluded that:

Above all, those designing response strategies for Indigenous homelessness and public place dwelling situations should be guided by local analysis and a thorough consultation with all stakeholder groups. ...Finding an approach to Indigenous public place dwelling that respects the human rights of all those who use public places necessitates a careful balance between the reactive and proactive approaches. Too often in the past, some local authorities and police have emphasised the reactive approach and ignored the proactive approach. The end result needs to be a 'win-win', not a 'lose-lose' (2003a, 71).

There are lessons in Memmott's work for understanding Aboriginal people 'living' in Adelaide's Park Lands. We see from such work a multifaceted approach is required, including short and long term actions to address people's immediate needs and broader/systemic issues. Moreover, as Memmott indicates, in any approach it must be acknowledged that Aboriginal people may not necessarily be looking for a home in the urban area in a 'conventional' non-Indigenous worldview sense:

For those who have abandoned mainstream housing options and connected themselves and their daily activities to certain public spaces, the condition of being homelessness is about having no control over, or legitimacy in, the places they have chosen to call home. Approaches, which fail to recognise that these public place dwellers do not want to be readily reintegrated into the mainstream, can have little real success in improving their quality of life. (Memmott et al. 2003a, iii).

Approaches such as 'reactive policing' – moving people on from sleeping rough, usually as a direct response to 'sustained objections by residents, businesses, and politicians about the perceived disruptive behaviours and impact on community and business' (Martin et al. 2019, 159) – while often the default response to Aboriginal homelessness does not deal with the complexity of issues at play. Nor does it recognise cultural norms and practices. It also often compounds the issues that rough sleepers face – poor health, social exclusion and racism, with impacts on social and cultural wellbeing.

In Adelaide efforts to support Aboriginal mobility and reduce Aboriginal homelessness in public places has generally been through program responses. Beck and Shard (2010) acknowledge these approaches have not necessarily been successful in 'addressing the complexities and sensitivities surrounding this population' and therefore appropriately addressing the needs of groups of Aboriginal people 'living' in public places. The establishment of an *Aboriginal Community Leadership and Engagement Strategy* over a decade ago was hoped to influence greater progress by connecting service providers to Aboriginal community leaders, advisors or person of cultural authority and influences. The key elements of the Strategy as outlined by Beck and Shard (2010, p 26) were:

- to improve profiling of individuals and their circumstances to enable a more holistic, personalised service response;
- collaborative case management;
- development of protocols for language groups, to be developed by people from the language groups themselves; and,
- development of information sharing protocols and client consent to be obtained.

Clearly, however, such efforts have not resulted in the desired outcomes, raising questions about why, how we can do better, what we know about what people want, who is accountable and how outcomes can be sustained that ensure cultural respect and support positive life and wellbeing outcomes.

Key findings

The research undertaken for this project resulted in a significant insights and findings which we have grouped together under the following themes. The recommendations outlined in this report are drawn from these findings, woven together with consideration of the academic and practice evidence considered.

Self-determination and consultation key

The loudest message heard in this project is that Aboriginal people, workers in the sector and Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations need to be central to any efforts to better meet the needs of mobile/visiting Aboriginal populations. The challenge recognised here is that this requires capacity and resources and that there needs to be support for Aboriginal people and organisations to participate in policy conversations, service coordination and cultural outreach. Such opportunities are often not present or obvious.

Additionally, there also needs to be greater support for Aboriginal workers in the sector, and for bolstered efforts to grow the Aboriginal workforce in the homelessness and housing sectors in particular. Alongside this, attention must be given to increasing partnerships and connections between Aboriginal workers within the housing and homelessness sectors (as the workers/agencies/sectors often supporting people gathering and/or sleeping in the Park Lands), other sectors supporting their social and cultural needs (i.e. the health, mental health, drug and alcohol services, for example) and the sectors 'dealing' with community concerns about people in the Park Lands such as justice, corrections and local government.

No clear understanding of the problem

There are diverse views on what the actual problem is. All stakeholders agreed that there are frequently groups of Aboriginal people who sleep out in the Adelaide Park Lands who are highly vulnerable and need culturally appropriate, coordinated government services – of which housing and homelessness services form only a part (albeit a significant part).

Too little known

There is simply not enough known about the needs of Aboriginal people visiting or sleeping rough in the Park Lands. As such more and better data collection efforts are required on the needs of people gathering in the Park Lands particularly in the context of personal and cultural safety. The pre-screening/common assessment tool used by the Adelaide Zero Project (the VI-SPDAT; Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool) provides a way to do this, but improvements to ensure its use is culturally appropriate are required.

Importantly, data collected on the needs of Aboriginal people who are visiting Adelaide/mobile needs to be collected in a dynamic way, i.e., there shouldn't just be a round of reforms and efforts now, based on what a one off deep dive into the data tells us, but rather an ongoing effort to continue to respond to the changing needs of Aboriginal people visiting the City of Adelaide. We know the group changes in size and composition, frequently, seasonally and around the time of significant cultural events. System and service responses need to understand such changes dynamically and be able to respond flexibly and quickly, and preferably in advance where data and evidence suggests emerging/changing needs.

Recognise complexity in responses

Aboriginal mobility and homelessness are complex social problems, which have no simple linear solution. There are no silver bullets or single program responses that will solve the many problems that drive the service needs of mobile Aboriginal groups. Given the many reasons for mobility and the often complex needs of people gathering and sleeping out in the Park Lands (health-related needs for example), systemic and service responses need to be developed to recognise and match complexity. (These two categories of response are used to group the recommendations developed from this research).

Government collaboration and investment essential

There was broad recognition that no one agency, part or level of government can address the issues alone. It is only through each agency taking responsibility for their part of the challenges being experienced in the Park Lands that positive and sustainable changes can be made.

There is also recognition that new government investment is needed in both service coordination and the services responses/capacities required (i.e. the service offerings needed and ability to meet fluctuation in demands). Investments in these service requirements must be driven by data about exactly what people's needs are and how effective any current and future interventions are in addressing those needs, both at a point in time and over time.

A national issue, with a local focus

The issue of Aboriginal mobility is not just something that affects the City of Adelaide. It is genuinely a state-wide issue. It is also a national (cross-borders) issue. That said, there seemed to be a recognition that given the complexity of Aboriginal mobility/homelessness, the impending development of a *South Australian Aboriginal Housing Strategy* and the evolving nature of the state-wide homelessness alliances being established by the SA Housing Authority, the focus of activity around mobility should initially be on the inner city. This focus can be expanded over time.

System-level service coordination need

There is a need for better coordination of services provided or needed to support people sleeping out in the Park Lands. Such services must include culturally appropriate outreach, alongside housing and health services, the provision of basic public amenities (like gardening, rubbish collection) and other services/responses as expressed by people visiting in the Park Lands. There are many services that are trying to do their best in a service system that is at best uncoordinated and at worst broken. This is having an impact on the effectiveness of the services, and in some cases is having consequences in terms of workload, safety, staff morale, burnout and turnover, including for the Aboriginal Sobriety Group's Mobile Assistance Patrol (transport service), the City of Adelaide's Park Lands workers, the Street to Home outreach workers, South Australia Police, the Central Adelaide Health Network Hospital Avoidance Team, the Sobering Up Unit and others.

Greater access to culturally appropriate housing

There is no doubt that one of the biggest contributors to Aboriginal people sleeping rough in the Park Lands is a lack of access to culturally appropriate housing. There is a need for a range of different housing and shelter options for Aboriginal people visiting Adelaide generally, and for people sleeping in the Park Lands in particular. Not enough is currently known about the precise housing needs of every person, particularly what is working and what is needed. We know there are many people that are seeking housing and support but can't access it. We also know that there are many who have access to housing but have struggled to sustain it. And, finally we know there are people sleeping in the Park Lands who do not want housing but need access to culturally appropriate temporary shelter or shelter-like services whilst visiting – and can't access it. Overcrowding in existing tenancies is the biggest issue that leads to Aboriginal people being evicted and then sleeping rough. The SA Housing Authority have recently established a Wali Wiru team to support the success of remote visitor tenancies and this team is widely respected and felt to be doing a good job in what are seen as trying circumstances, mostly because they simply don't have access to housing, shelter or transitional accommodation that is culturally appropriate.

Further alcohol restrictions, not the solution

It is generally recognised that one of the many reasons that Aboriginal people visit the Adelaide Park Lands is because the alcohol regulations are not as restrictive as in other places, particularly as is the case now in many communities in the Northern Territory. The Liquor Licencing Commission and South Australia Police do their best to manage this situation, but the reality is we are never going to make the alcohol restrictions

in South Australia as strict as they are in the Northern Territory. It is accepted by most stakeholders that heavy handed and/or discriminatory alcohol restrictions do not address the issues people staying in the Park Lands have. Such restrictions just move drinking related issues to other locations. Hence the need for a more systemic and proactive response.

Recognise current Park Lands use

Most stakeholders consulted agree that there needs to be an acceptance that varying levels of visiting and sleeping out in the Park Lands exists and this has been a part of Aboriginal culture for many generations. The challenge of mobility is more specifically what behaviours and environmental use is acceptable to different stakeholders – including various Aboriginal cultural groups, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents and ratepayers in the City of Adelaide, as well as policy makers and frontline workers. The reality is there are groups of people who sleep in the Park Lands every night. To ‘stop’ this would need draconian and/or discriminatory action that would not have broad community support, nor meet the international obligations set out in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* – to which Australia is a signatory. There is therefore no agreement on what should be done; a situation that many stakeholders reminded us has been the case for some time. Hence there is a need for a level of acceptance of sleeping out and social and cultural uses of the Park Lands. Such uses of the Park Lands need to be supported through an agreed multiagency/multidisciplinary framework for meeting service needs and seeking to address the layers of systemic issues Aboriginal people face, in a long-term, evidence-driven way.

Recommendations

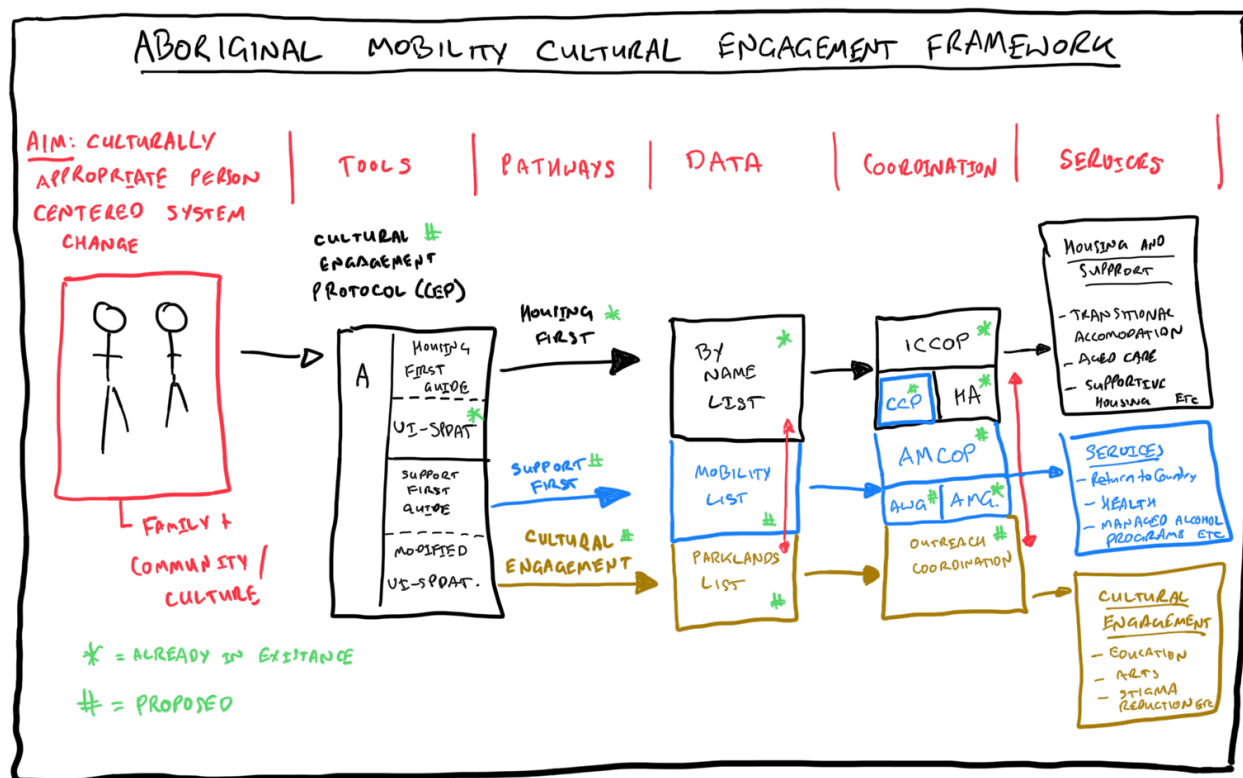
The following recommendations are drawn from conversations with key stakeholders and are a reflection on that expertise as expressed throughout the above findings, added to by the lessons drawn from the literature in the background section to this report.

Key recommendations

Adopt a Cultural Engagement Framework

The following Aboriginal Mobility Cultural Engagement Framework (AMCEF) (Figure 1) should be adopted to support the culturally appropriate person-centred system change required to make meaningful progress in addressing the multiple issues being seen and experienced in the Park Lands as a result of Aboriginal mobility.

Figure 1: Aboriginal Mobility Cultural Engagement Framework (AMCEF)



Source: Authors in collaboration with stakeholders, December 2020.

Drive implementation through an action plan

In considering this report, it is recommended that the City of Adelaide and the State Government, through the Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division, lead a collaborative, whole-of-government effort to develop a joint Aboriginal Mobility and Park Lands Action Plan. Such a plan should consider the following recommendations, agree actions, next steps and implement the above Cultural Engagement Framework.

Systemic recommendations

Develop a Cultural Engagement Protocol

A Cultural Engagement Protocol needs to be developed to improve the data collected in relation to Aboriginal mobility in the inner city, which over time could be expanded for use in other areas. The Cultural Engagement Protocol could be used by any government agency or service provider, including outreach

services, and would start with a simple question, what do you need to be safe and well? The information garnered in the Cultural Engagement Protocol (within the Cultural Engagement Framework) would enable decisions to be made about what level of engagement or service response is needed, if any. It would apply to people with different needs in the following ways:

- For those seeking housing – there needs to be a Housing First guide (as part of the cultural engagement protocol) to ensure the VI-SPDAT is used in a culturally appropriate way.
- For those in need of services – a Support First guide and a modified/cut down VI-SPDAT needs to be developed to enable the collection of information on the needs of this group systematically and in real time. Something that does not currently occur.
- For those not in need of services or housing – there may be a need for some level of cultural engagement. What this looks like and what level of data collection should occur for this pathway requires to be the subject of further consultation and design directed by Aboriginal people.

Further information about the VI-SPDAT or Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool and how it is used to collect (limited) data specific to remote visitors is provided in Appendix 2, alongside useful information about efforts in Canada to improve the cultural appropriateness of the tool.

Establish an Aboriginal Mobility List

An Aboriginal Mobility List should be created to enable triage of services to those most vulnerable; to improve service coordination; and to drive service integration and system planning. Just as the By-Name List does for those people sleeping rough in the inner city seeking housing, the mobility list should be founded on a similar tool suited to capturing the needs of those who don't seek housing, but who require other supports. An Aboriginal Mobility List can relatively easily be nested within the Adelaide Zero Project's By-Name List, and utilise its existing data infrastructure, consent policies and data quality assurance processes. The benefits of establishing an Aboriginal Mobility List are that rather than having responses driven by either no data or static, aggregated and often nameless data, responses can be informed by comprehensive, real time, individual, family and/or community-level data that can be used for improved problem solving, service integration and system planning/advocacy.

Over time, alliances should establish a state-wide Aboriginal Mobility List

Establishing a list focused not just on the inner city, as is the case for the Adelaide Zero Project currently, but state-wide is both possible and desirable, but it will take time, commitment and resources. It is recommended that an Aboriginal Mobility List be created for the City of Adelaide to start with, and over time, as it demonstrates its value and utility, and as the new homelessness alliances are formed (as part of the current homelessness sector reform process), stakeholders can consider how the list can be expanded through the alliances for state-wide and cross-border (i.e., Aboriginal community-wide) reach and relevance.

Consider the Inner City Service Coordination Network report

In order to better meet the housing needs of Aboriginal people sleeping out in the Park Lands, the structures created through the Adelaide Zero Project need to be maintained throughout the period of transition to the new homelessness alliances (including through the alliances mobilisation phase). Further recommendations on this can be found in the Inner City Service Coordination Network Feasibility Study report (Pearson et al. 2021).

Fund an Aboriginal Mobility Coordinator

The Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division and the City of Adelaide should jointly fund a full time Aboriginal Mobility Coordinator to help lead the development of the Cultural Engagement Protocol and the Aboriginal Mobility List.

Utilise the Care Coordination Group

Currently the Adelaide Zero Project has a Care Coordination Group whose role is to coordinate support for those on the By-Name List through case conferencing. The group currently meets fortnightly. It is recommended that this same group, which includes representatives of agencies from across government, meet weekly with a dedicated section on their targeted meeting agenda to case conference the support needs of Aboriginal people who are sleeping out, are seeking housing (and on the By-Name List), and those who are just seeking services (and on the Aboriginal Mobility List).

Create an Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice

From time to time the Park Lands Group has met to coordinate responses to issues of concern in the Park Lands, largely as a result of Aboriginal mobility issues. This forum has largely been reactive, with the frequency of meetings and intensity of their focus waxing and waning over time.

Modelled on the Adelaide Zero Project's Inner City Committee of Practice, we propose that the Park Lands Group should be transitioned to an Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice with representation from a broad cross section of stakeholders, including the Aboriginal Mobility Coordinator. The Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice should be primarily responsible for troubleshooting and addressing individual, family and community issues related to mobility, as well as the system challenges raised in and by the Adelaide Zero Project's Coordinated Care Group. The Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice should be chaired by a senior Aboriginal public servant or community sector leader (or both, in a co-chairing arrangement).

Use data to improve coordination with remote health services

A lack of access to healthcare in remote Aboriginal communities is often a driver of Aboriginal mobility, and that of supporting family and community members. Some of these needs are well understood, such as the need for dialysis in Adelaide, while others are not. The proposed Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice and the Adelaide Zero Project's Data and Evaluation Working Group should analyse the data from the By-Name List and the Aboriginal Mobility List once established, to better understand and advocate for identified health-related needs to be better met. These findings should be used to improve coordination and planning with remote health services in a targeted way.

Consideration of data ownership required

Further consideration must be given to the governance of data within the confines of the Cultural Engagement Framework to ensure cultural ownership. This was identified as an issue throughout the consultations for this project, but sufficient consideration of options was beyond the scope of this project. Consideration of this important governance process should be led by Aboriginal members of the proposed Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice.

Improve data practices on deaths and consent

The Adelaide Zero Project needs to review its consent and data management practices to improve their cultural appropriateness. In relation to data management specifically, a mechanism should be put in place to remove the names of deceased Aboriginal persons from the Advance to Zero Database where the Adelaide Zero Project By-Name List is housed. Front line Aboriginal workers must be consulted and involved in this process, with respect for cultural obligations and sensitivities.

Document an Outreach Coordination Framework

Significant efforts have been made to improve the coordination of outreach services in recent times. Such efforts must be better documented in an agreed framework and shared broadly among inner city services interfacing with Aboriginal people who are rough sleeping or sleeping out. The framework should be 'owned' by the Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice and the Adelaide Zero Project Inner City Community of Practice and reviewed regularly. This recommendation is the same proposal as put forward in the Inner-City Services Network report (Pearson 2021, recommendation 11, finding 21). This framework should consider how to:

- support Aboriginal people's desires for engagement in language. Groups of staff from various agencies coordinating their outreach and doing it at the same time ensures a greater chance of engagement in language, as well as a range of other benefits.
- minimise risks to staff engaging in outreach in the Park Lands is important, and cannot be compromised. At the same time risk should not be a barrier to the provision of services for highly vulnerable people. Coordinated outreach is important to bridge these competing priorities, because it enables a sharing and minimisation of risk through multi-service and multi-disciplinary outreach.
- maximise the use of the proposed higher amenity locations in the Park Lands as a consistent and logical place for joint outreach, including the delivery of clinical outreach.
- influence the alliance models, especially the Southern Metro Alliance (which covers the City of Adelaide), to ensure that outreach is the dominant mode of service delivery aimed at supporting Aboriginal people in the Park Lands. This approach will ensure people are met where they are at, rather than expecting people to navigate the system and service locations (i.e., visiting physical premises).

Establish a Cultural Engagement Outreach Coordinator and fund

The Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division and/or the SA Housing Authority should hire an Aboriginal Cultural Engagement Outreach Coordinator to support the operational roll out of elements of the Cultural Engagement Framework. This person should be based out of one of the existing outreach services to support maximum operational coordination. Key functions of the role should be to support the creation of the cultural engagement pathway and support the culturally appropriate development, implementation and operations of the outreach coordination framework.

Creating the cultural engagement pathway could potentially involve the Cultural Engagement Outreach Coordinator bringing together Kurna Elders to set expectations of behaviour on Kurna Land or engaging groups like the Iwiri Aboriginal Corporation to engage with people from the APY Lands, for example. A diversity of cultural engagement responses will be needed to match the diversity of the cultural groups visiting the Park Lands.

A Cultural Engagement Outreach Fund should be established to enable the Cultural Engagement Outreach Coordinator to trial such approaches, but importantly to remunerate Kurna Elders or organisations like the Iwiri Aboriginal Corporation for their time. Such a fund could be established with relatively modest contributions from any or all of the following agencies: SA Housing Authority, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division, Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia, Central Adelaide Local Health Network and the City of Adelaide.

Create an Aboriginal Mobility and Homelessness Workforce Group

Focussed consideration must be given to Aboriginal workforce capacity in the further development, implementation and sustainment of the Cultural Engagement Framework response as evolved from this project.

Our engagement with the relatively small number of Aboriginal workers interfacing with the Aboriginal mobility issue in the Park Lands specifically, and homelessness generally, identified a range of difficulties they face every day in working with highly vulnerable Aboriginal people. These difficulties were exacerbated when the cultural context in which this work was occurring was not understood or sufficiently supported by their employers, or both.

It is recommended that an Aboriginal Mobility and Homelessness Workforce Group (of Aboriginal workers only) be created to provide a space for peer-to-peer support, sharing of best practice, and to develop advice and recommendations on ways to grow and better support the Aboriginal workforce within the housing, homelessness and other related sectors.

Enable coordinated and shared training

Training was consistently raised by workers as something they wanted and needed in relation to the use of the VI-SPDAT generally, but also using it in a culturally appropriate way. The Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice should establish and maintain a training register, including but not limited to, agencies and staff that have been trained in the use of the VI-SPDAT and the Cultural Engagement Protocol once developed. Key agencies involved in inner city service provision should also consider how they can strengthen access to training for their staff in relation to the VI-SPDAT specifically, but also the intent of the various service coordination forums and the overall system change approach being attempted through the Adelaide Zero Project and the Aboriginal Mobility Cultural Engagement Framework.

Establish an Aboriginal mobility research scholarship

There is a lack of understanding and focus on the issues of Aboriginal mobility as well as a need to better support the career development of Aboriginal students and workers with an interest in these matters. The SA Housing Authority and one or more of the state's universities should provide a scholarship or scholarships for Aboriginal students to do a PhD or postgraduate research on the issue of Aboriginal mobility and rough sleeping homelessness.

Service recommendations

Urgently improve Park Lands amenity

The City of Adelaide needs to urgently improve the basic amenities available in the places where Aboriginal people regularly congregate in the Park Lands to ensure they are both safe and sanitary. Such basic amenities should include: toilets, running water, bins, watered grass, access to electricity and fire pits. These are all amenities that are available to other users of the Park Lands and in the case of fire pits in the city for other, generally, non-Aboriginal uses. (The image on the front page of this report serves as a reminder of the importance of fire pits, to minimise the risk of bushfire in the Park Lands, particularly in the warmer months in Adelaide).

Increase the return to country service budget and introduce fees

The State Government should increase the return to country service's budget, but also consider introducing a user pays component/contribution towards service costs. This could be enacted by using the Centrepay deductions option available through Centrelink, as is done in the Northern Territory. The increase in budget should also enable the return to country service to provide additional outreach to non-homelessness specific services such as health, child protection and corrections.

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia review should consider integration options

The review currently being undertaken by Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia should consider how the Sobering Up Unit can be better integrated with temporary and permanent housing options and how the Aboriginal Sobriety Group's Mobile Assistance Patrol service can be supported to broaden the focus of its transport service to provide more outreach and better integrate its service into the wider service system.

Consider decriminalising public drunkenness

The New South Wales Government recently announced a \$16m investment to commence implementation of a health-based approach to public intoxication. This funding includes expanding Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations capacity to provide a culturally safe response to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The South Australian Government should consider a similar response.

Fund more Aboriginal health workers

There was a consistent view that there is a need for more Aboriginal health workers conducting outreach in the Park Lands and that the coordination of this outreach would be significantly improved if the workers

were still employed by the Central Adelaide Health Network but seconded to a relevant inner city service provider conducting outreach.

Hold an arts and mobility forum

An arts, culture and Aboriginal mobility forum should be convened to ensure a proactive response to managing the service needs and issues (perceived and real) that arise from larger groups of Aboriginal people from remote communities visiting Adelaide for arts and cultural events. The Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division and/or Arts SA should support the chair(s) of the Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice to host this event.

Pursue tenancy reform to support more culturally appropriate housing

There was evidence from stakeholders that current tenancy laws need review to ensure that they support understanding and provision of housing that meets the needs of Aboriginal people, including the cultural obligations placed on some people when family and community visit. A review of tenancy laws with both cultural appropriateness and prevention lenses may help address some of the challenges around overcrowding and who landlords should connect with when circumstances are becoming of concern, ultimately building understanding of people's housing needs, preserving tenancies and reducing the number of Aboriginal tenants appearing before the SA Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Invest in safe spaces and transitional accommodation options

There is a need for a number of safe spaces that don't look like traditional housing, where Aboriginal people can gather, sleep and, at least in some of these spaces, drink. Such accommodation options need to be in a range of places across South Australia, and there is a need for some of these safe spaces to be established (over time) in the Park Lands or vicinity.

Multiple sites and options are needed because we know that there are multiple groups of Aboriginal people, from different communities, in Adelaide at any given time. There are models around the country that are working for such groups, including the Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre (Mount Isa) and Yumba-Meta service (Townsville). Uniting Communities in Adelaide also runs the Kurlana Tampawardli 24-hour short-term crisis accommodation service at Hendon. As part of the *Aboriginal Housing Strategy* development the SA Housing Authority should consider investing in the establishment/expansion of services like these. Local agencies such as Anglicare and Baptist Care have also conducted significant consultation on potential adaptation of these models in South Australia which serve as resources to draw upon for further action/investment.

Support small scale innovations to enable more culturally appropriate housing

Similar to how the SA Housing Authority allocates ten houses a month for rough sleepers exiting the By-Name List process for the Adelaide Zero Project, the SA Housing Authority should similarly identify a set number of properties to support people who want housing and are staying in the Park Lands. These properties should be allocated on a prioritised basis through the Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice/Coordinated Care Group.

To support increased capacity in culturally appropriate housing the SA Housing Authority should also consider establishing an innovation team to use continuous improvement methodologies (as are used within the Adelaide Zero Project) to trial small innovations that could have larger and lasting impacts. With improved data on why visitors are arriving, this innovation team could also inform more small tests of change involving the health system, which is often the driver of Aboriginal mobility/visiting.

Grow the Aboriginal Controlled community housing sector

The State Government needs to support the growth and development of the Aboriginal Controlled community housing sector in South Australia. The *Aboriginal Housing Strategy* should consider how best to do this.

Use data to inform *Aboriginal Housing Strategy* investments

There remains a shortage of culturally appropriate housing. Data collected via the Adelaide Zero Project By-Name List and the proposed Aboriginal Mobility List can provide dynamic evidence of exactly what the housing needs of remote visitors and others sleeping in the Park Lands are, in near to real time and at different time points in the year (seasons, cultural events etc.). All relevant government agencies should consider how they can utilize this data to inform service planning and investment decisions, including the SA Housing Authority in the development of the state's *Aboriginal Housing Strategy*.

Enhance flexibility and support coordination with Aboriginal hostels

It was identified that whilst there are a few Aboriginal Hostels in Adelaide, these accommodation options are often not taken up by remote Aboriginal visitors. There are a variety of reasons for this including strict policies in relation to drinking, smoking, etc., and because of high costs. With greater flexibility in the hostel service models, Aboriginal people, including remote visitors, might take up these opportunities, increasing the range of accommodation options available. Flexibility in the service models for hostels should therefore be considered alongside better connection to the wrap around supports people may need, with these supports determined and coordinated through the case conferring/system coordination elements of the proposed Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice. A voucher scheme could also be trialled to make these hostels more affordable for Aboriginal people visiting from remote communities, although only where they are deemed an appropriate option and based on the advice of the Aboriginal Mobility Community of Practice.

Trial allowing sleeping out in the Park Lands

Most stakeholders consulted for this project felt a strong need for community (and system) acceptance of a level of visiting, gathering and sleeping out in Adelaide's Park Lands. Such practices ebb and flow depending on a range of events, climatic conditions and other factors. They have been part of Aboriginal culture for many generations. The challenge here, of course, is ensuing people in the Park Lands meet local Aboriginal peoples' expectations, as well as general community, council and police expectations in terms of acceptable behaviours. Given this, the City of Adelaide should consider, over time, changes to their current by-laws to enable sleeping in the Park Lands.

As noted throughout this report, people sleeping out in the Park Lands must also be supported with rapid connection to housing where that is sought, coordinated access to support and via the provision of cultural engagement services where someone does not want/need either housing or support responses. The City of Adelaide cannot act alone here. A collective and coordinated response is required to support positive outcomes for individuals, groups and the community. Any proposed changes to Council by-laws should therefore happen in a staged way. Changes could initially be trialled in relation to meeting the needs of remote visitors during key arts and cultural events, and certainly only once the other recommendations about support coordination have been established.

This recommendation needs cross-government and cross-sector collaboration. The City of Adelaide independently moving to allow (under certain conditions) sleeping out in the Park Lands without a well-functioning system of support coordination for responding to the needs of the highly vulnerable people would simply not be appropriate. Changes to current approaches by either the City of Adelaide or the various State Government agencies involved needs to be done in a joined-up way. The proposed joint Council and State Government Aboriginal Mobility and Park Lands Action Plan provides a mechanism for this.

Conclusion

Establishing the means for a greater understanding of the groups of Aboriginal people who congregate in the Park Lands, why they are there, for how long and what they need to be safe and well were the major objectives of this project. Mobility has been a way of life for literally thousands of years for Aboriginal

people. The issues here are lack of understanding of cultural norms, traditional cultural practices and the needs of Aboriginal people visiting on Kurna Lands, including the need for basic amenities and infrastructure, which could otherwise be seen as basic human rights.

The rapid review of the specific evidence on Aboriginal people sleeping out in urban parks finds a range of issues related to defining and understanding their needs, recognising that mobility and transience in living circumstances is part of culture and community. It also finds that past efforts have not provided or sustained positive outcomes for Aboriginal people. To learn these lessons, it is clear that we need a better understanding of the needs of people gathering and sleeping in the Park Lands. Core questions to be answered here are: why do people come to Adelaide? Why do they gather and sleep out in the Park Lands? What short and long term supports (including infrastructure) are needed while people are visiting on Kurna Land? Tools such as a more culturally appropriate VI-SPDAT in the form of the proposed Cultural Engagement Protocol provides a means for garnering greater insights into needs and for ultimately providing robust data to support meaningful outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities. These need to be developed and considered alongside tools being used elsewhere in similar situations, such as those being used by the Racial Equity Network in the US and the Indigenous Data Network in Melbourne (see Appendix 1)

As noted throughout this report, if Aboriginal mobility is understood in a housing, services and cultural context, then a housing pathway is not always the answer to the ‘problem’ of Aboriginal mobility/homelessness in Adelaide’s Park Lands. A much more sophisticated and nuanced approach is needed to support people gathering and sleeping out in the Park Lands. The status quo will continue to result in an unacceptable number of premature deaths in the Park Lands each year. This should never be acceptable and should be evidence alone of the need for urgent action to make positive changes. We all have a role to play in the solutions – federal, state and local governments, service providers, specialist homelessness services, the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community – it is about our willingness to come together again, to prioritise this work, to commit the resources needed to recognise our duty to provide decent life and living conditions for all citizens.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Indigenous Data Network

The Indigenous Data Network (IDN) assists Indigenous communities in developing the technical capability and resources to enable them to manage their data for community advancement. By strengthening communities' agency in their data, the network empowers them to make informed decisions about their own development.

Bringing together community, university, government, non-government and private sector partners, the IDN creates an ongoing community of practice to address a range of shared concerns related to: data collection, management, discovery, and access; capability development; negotiation with government and non-government organisations; and educational programs.

The Data Network is led by a Steering Committee. A secretariat and administrative hub are based at the University of Melbourne, which is well-positioned in this space given its breadth of experience in Indigenous scholarship and in digital social sciences and humanities for more than two decades.

The Network has a number of shared concerns/foci:

- identifying best practice in community data collection, management and access.
- assisting Indigenous communities to apply best practice in data management by providing technical and educational resources.
- developing specific strategies and approaches to make better use of data over which Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people have ownership.
- creating a directory of databases to increase awareness of existing data sets and how to access them.
- integrating and archiving Indigenous datasets and preventing the orphaning of important datasets which would be detrimental to communities.
- negotiating with government and non-government organisations to ensure data activities are aligned with Indigenous priorities, and that data collected is available for sharing under appropriate conditions.
- working with the Indigenous Research Exchange to develop guidelines and best practice case studies for research and data analysis in evaluation to improve Indigenous outcomes.
- coordinating educational programs to ensure the development of a critical mass of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with expertise in data sciences.
- developing panels of experts who can provide advice and assistance on data issues.

Source: Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, see <https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/centres-institutes/centre-for-health-equity/research-group/indigenous-data-network>

Appendix 2: Counting the homeless

Allen and Clarke Policy and Regulatory Specialists Ltd (2018) identify four methods of counting the homeless population including By-Name List approaches. Their work indicates that no matter which method is used to count the homeless, the count should be designed and conducted in collaboration with Indigenous populations – as service providers, researchers, volunteers, community leaders and people with lived experience. In addition, the non-Indigenous workforce need to be trained in the cultural protocols of the community to ensure cultural sensitivity.

The Adelaide Zero Project uses the VI-SPDAT to count rough sleepers. The VI-SPDAT or Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool is a screening tool used by practitioners to support collaborative decision-making within and across agencies to provide the assistance required to house and support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This tool has been customised for local Australian conditions by the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) and communities using the tool. And, based on the needs and experiences of the Adelaide Zero Project, the Australian version of the tool now includes the Adelaide Zero Project's questions specifically for remote visitors. Figure 2 outlines the questions in the VI-SPDAT that are asked specifically of remote visitors. In addition to these questions the VI-SPDAT collects a range of questions on demographic characteristics, history of housing and homelessness, risks (e.g., contact with hospital services, police, at risk of DV etc), socialisation and daily functioning, wellness, caring responsibilities, services connected to/with, preferences for housing.

Figure 2: Adelaide Zero Project VI-SPDAT questions specifically for remote visitors

Remote visitor questions

Do you come from a remote community? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If answered **yes** to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and **yes** to the remote community question please ask the questions below.

If **no** to either or both, please continue to **Section B**.

Which community do you come from?	Community:
Do you have somewhere to live back in your community or where you have kinship connections?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do you have somewhere to live here?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do you need help to get home? (Note: Yes response may mean survey should not be continued)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do you want to permanently relocate to Adelaide?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
How often are you sleeping rough at present?	Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/>
Whereabouts do you usually sleep rough?	Location:
For what reason did you come to Adelaide?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Visiting family <input type="checkbox"/> Bailed to Adelaide	
<input type="checkbox"/> I had to go to hospital <input type="checkbox"/> Education	
<input type="checkbox"/> Visiting/accompanying someone going to hospital <input type="checkbox"/> Employment	
<input type="checkbox"/> I want to move to Adelaide <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	
<input type="checkbox"/> Holiday or respite <input type="checkbox"/> Other reason: _____	
How long do you plan to stay?	

Source: Adelaide Zero Project VI-SPDAT.

OrgCode (2020) in Canada, who developed the VI-SPDAT, recognise that it is impossible to develop a tool that can meet the needs of all populations, so they have provided guidelines on how it can be implemented with Indigenous populations to enhance its cultural appropriateness. Of importance here is familiarity with local settings and the utilisation of the tool at the *right time*, in the *right place*, and by the *right person*. These attributes are defined as:

- Right time – is after allowing individual opportunity to resolve own housing crisis with minimal assistance from service provider agency
- Right place – is defined by participant with their safety and that of worker at forefront
- Right person – in most cases, someone who reflects community they are supporting – Indigenous workers and agencies should be gathering information to inform the VI-SPDAT

OrgCode suggests a number of topics that all staff should undertake as part of a training exercise so that the tool can be implemented in culturally appropriate manner and in enhancing the sharing of results and case conferencing with agencies in providing services and supports. The suggested training modules are:

- Indigenous cultural sensitivity/awareness
- knowledge of local Indigenous people and history
- trauma informed care
- understanding of the Definition of Indigenous Homelessness
- SPDAT training

The guidelines indicate the conditions under which the tool is administered can be influential in gathering as much information as possible. It assumes that the location of interview/administration is an office of some kind. It lists a number of questions that agencies collecting the information should consider:

- ‘Do participants see themselves reflected in the staff and décor?’
- Are participants treated like relatives or clients?
- Are participants offered coffee, tea, etc and are various medicines available?
- Is there the opportunity to smudge – before, after and/or during – the engagement (when culturally appropriate)?
- Is time provided to debrief with participants so that they are not expected to carry emotional, spiritual and mental pain out the door with them?
- Is information about where other supports can be accessed freely provided?’

In addition the guidelines indicate there are a number of key points to be kept in mind when using the VI-SPDAT/SPDAT that can assist with applying the tools to Indigenous populations. These suggestions intend to make the tools more user friendly and turn the application into more of a discussion with a person rather than an interview. The key points highlighted are:

- The tool can be conducted over a number of sittings;
- The questions do not have to be asked in the order that they are presented. It is suggested grouping together all the physical questions, emotional questions, spiritual questions and mental health questions. Each question needs to be assessed and considered in the context of the specific person being interviewed. From the Canadian examples the following questions were highlighted:
 - In relation to the question ‘In the past three years, how many times have you been homeless?’ it may be more instructive to ask the question differently for those people who

are experiencing chronic homelessness. The question has been rephrased to '*Where are you staying now, and before that...and before that...*'. This approach provides greater insight into tracking incidences of homelessness and the assistance they may have received along the way.

- The question about harming yourself also may cause stress and so it is suggested 'Regardless of the significance of self-harm as an indicator of vulnerability in the journey back to housing stability, this may be a question connected to shame and therefore participants may not want to talk about it. Within your community/agency, it will be important to talk about this in light of local teachings on how to address this question.'
- Given the placement of the question related to recent or past trauma or abuse provides the interviewer/assessor with the opportunity to demonstrate they have been listening to the participant's story but summarising what has been spoken about already. For example *...so I heard you say you were taken from your family in your home community at 8, brought to the city for foster care and ran away because they were mean to you, people started to abuse you and you started using drugs/drinking at age 9 and have lived on the street since then. Would it be fair to say your homelessness was caused by trauma in your life?*
- Reframing the questions for clarity as long as the intent of the question remains true.
- The definition of Indigenous Homelessness should be known when working with a person who self identifies as Indigenous. In the Canadian experience this is the (comprehensive) Twelve Dimensions of Homelessness (Table 1). The dimensions of homelessness however defined for different Indigenous communities are important in questions related to trauma and the history of housing and homelessness.
- Including stories of families and communities can be important during the assessment process.

Guidelines similar to those developed by OrgCode in Canada needs to be developed in Australia, forming the foundation of guidance and understanding in the recommended Cultural Engagement Protocol, within the Cultural Engagement Framework (Figure 1).

See: <https://docplayer.net/201452832-Spdatsuite-of-tools-its-application-with-indigenous-persons-guidance.html>

Appendix 3: Case Study of Park Land living

The following is a summary of the views of an experienced Aboriginal practitioner in Adelaide documented through an oral history interview undertaken in late 2020. The oral history account appears with the approval of the Aboriginal practitioner.

Homelessness and rough sleeping in the Adelaide City Park Lands has been present for more than a decade. While mobility is a way of life for Aboriginal people, culturally it is about trade routes, song lines and safe tracks through the community.

There are a range of reasons why Aboriginal people from the APY Lands and Western Australia and the Northern Territory come to the City of Adelaide. These reasons include the need to visit the city for health needs and a lack of accommodation – short stay or long stay; kinship reasons; cultural reasons, the policies of the Housing Authority, liquor licensing rules in other places; and our lack of appropriate responses and understanding particularly with the loss and trauma and grief in the community.

As a community our responses have been to deal with the immediate issues rather than provide a safe haven approach as the first approach. This lack of considered responses meant that 15 Aboriginal people, long term sleepers [out] in the Park Lands, who did not want traditional housing but just to feel safe, have slowly passed away without the benefit of a supported quality of life, to end of life. Research indicates **these 15 people had over 800 interactions with Housing SA and yet they died in the Park Lands.**

There are a range of examples of how to cater to the needs of Aboriginal people see for example Yumba-Meta in Townsville and for South Australia the proposed Anglicare Healing Centre. The lack of action in South Australia (including the impact of the loss of the Aboriginal Housing Authority) to improve the conditions of people meeting in the Park Lands and at times sleeping in the Park Lands highlights the lack of sophistication that still exists politically and collectively in South Australia.