

Joint statement

Local law change in the City of Port Phillip

May 2026

The City of Port Phillip recently voted to penalise people who are sleeping rough, against the wishes of the community and the advice of local service providers.

We the undersigned have consistently opposed this unjustified amendment to local law.

It specifically targets ‘encampment equipment’ – the mattresses, blankets, sleeping bags and personal possessions of people sleeping rough – and enables local law officers to remove them in response to ill-defined concerns about ‘safety and amenity’.

It adds nothing to local laws that already exist for removing items that are abandoned or causing obstruction. It adds nothing to processes that are already being used to engage people sleeping rough with local service providers who can assist them.

All it adds is permission to punish people for being inconveniently homeless, by taking the things they need to survive and feel safe.

There is no situation in which this is a reasonable, proportionate or practical response to any kind of ‘behaviour’.

We note that three Port Phillip councillors spoke out against the amendment, for its clear potential to violate human rights and for the legal risks it creates for Council. We also note with gratitude that 708 people – including 105 people with experience of being homeless – shared their views in a rigorous community consultation, with 76% of respondents opposing any move to take away people’s survival items.

When so many people tell you it’s a bad idea, doubling down on it seems baffling.

So what now? We will be watching the implementation of this unnecessary local law, and we won’t be silent about the harm it causes.

We will support the protocol accompanying the law change, which mandates local law officers to refer people to outreach services in the first instance – while noting this could have been done without changing the law at all.

And we will continue to push for genuine ways to reduce homelessness and increase community safety: like better-resourced street outreach programs, health and mental health care, places that provide meals and showers, and – most critically – safe and accessible housing.

Signatories



Bridge It
Kate Mackenzie, Manager - Cocoon



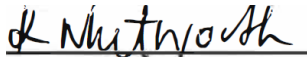
Federation of Community Legal Centres
Louisa Gibbs, CEO



First Step
Patrick Lawrence, CEO



Fitzroy Legal Service
Hamish McLachlan



Homeless Persons Union Victoria
Kelly Whitworth, Co-founder



Justice Connect
Paula Hughes, Head of Community Programs



Launch Housing
Sherri Bruinhout, CEO



Sacred Heart Mission
Hang Vo, CEO



Southern Homelessness Services Network
Ruth Gordon, Coordinator



Southport Community Legal Service
Sue Brown, Principal Solicitor



South Port Community Housing
Charlie Beckley, CEO



Southside Justice
Mel Dye, CEO



St Kilda Gatehouse
Nickie Gyomber, CEO



The Salvation Army
Major Mal Davies, Divisional Commander
Victoria Division



Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS)
Nerita Waight, CEO



**Victorian Indigenous Statewide
Homelessness Network**
Jason Tamplin, Coordinator



**Vixen, Victoria's Peer Sex Worker
Organisation**
Gia Green, Vixen Manager



Windana
Laura Mahoney, CEO