

Aboriginal Mobility Data Project – Summary

Conducted by: *The Australian Alliance for Social Enterprise (TAASE) & The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH)*

Funded by: *City of Adelaide, through the Don Dunstan Foundation / Adelaide Zero Project*

Project Team: *Mr David Pearson, Dr Selina Tually, Dr Debbie Faulkner, Professor Ian Goodwin-Smith*

Timeframe: *April 2020 - January 2021*

Project Background

There have been a number of suggestions about how to provide a better service response to Aboriginal visitors to Adelaide who sleep rough generally, but particularly in the inner city. However, these are based on limited knowledge about which community groups are represented among the remote visitors, their reasons for travelling to Adelaide, as well as their immediate and long-term needs.

The Adelaide Zero Project (AZP), a collective impact initiative seeking to end rough sleeping homelessness in the inner city, has identified a lack of culturally appropriate responses for Aboriginal visitors sleeping rough in the Adelaide Park Lands.

The need for more culturally appropriate service responses was also identified in AZP service reviews conducted by the Institute of Global Homelessness on behalf of the Adelaide Zero Project, first with Baroness Louise Casey's review and second with the review undertaken by Dr Nonie Brennan as part of the Thinkers in Residence program.

In order to address these issues, the AZP wrote to the Premier in January 2020 and recommended a high-level taskforce be established to address ongoing concerns regarding safety, health and mobility of Aboriginal people in the Park Lands.

In mid 2020, the City of Adelaide provided funding to the AZP to commission work to progress these matters. This work has now been completed by TAASE at the University of South Australia, and AAEH on behalf of the AZP, with oversight and advice from the Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement. The final report can be found at www.adelaidezeroproject.org.au. A summary is provided below.

Project Summary

It is widely acknowledged that not enough is known about these diverse and constantly changing groups of people visiting and sleeping rough in the Adelaide Parklands and beyond. Not enough is known about their needs and not enough is done to coordinate efforts to meet those needs.

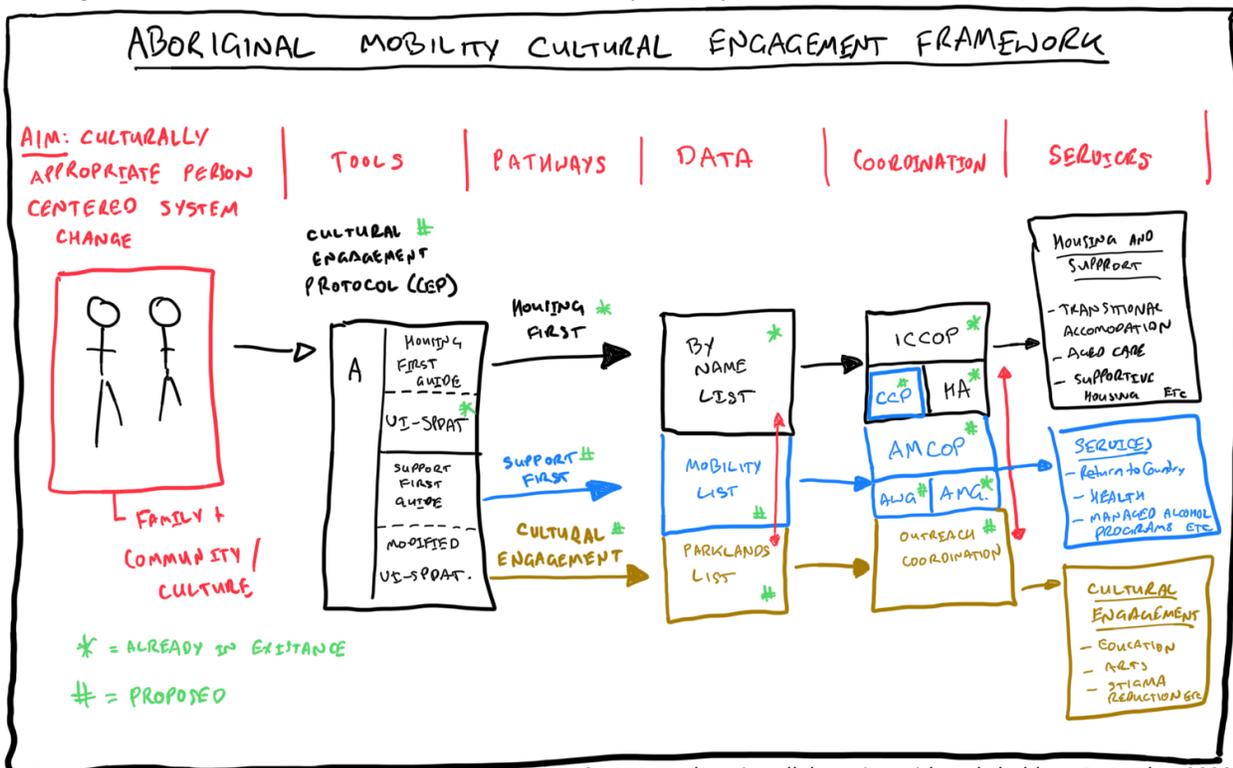
What is known, however, is that the status quo is unacceptable to almost all stakeholders, and without focused action we will see more of what has already occurred: Aboriginal leaders and sector workers, outreach services and South Australia Police frustrated with the little they can do other than 'managing' 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.

We engaged with multiple stakeholders to understand how to address these issues. We 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:

- A **Housing First pathway**, which has been created/improved through the AZP, 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.

Through our conversations with stakeholders, these pathways were visualised as follows:



Source: Authors in collaboration with stakeholders, December 2020.

To enable improvement or creation of these pathways, the 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.

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 AZP has pioneered offer a model that can be built upon to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people in the Park Lands. This is the case for those people who are seeking housing, seeking support, and for those who could benefit from cultural engagement**. In line with the clear lessons from the Adelaide Zero Project to date, robust and real time data must drive all decision making alongside continuous improvement of the pathways proposed.

A range of options is set out in the report in relation to the structure, governance and coordination of each of the pathways described. **Government investment and cross-sector leadership 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 support and 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.

Project Findings 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 can be found in the report available on the AZP website.

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



Systemic recommendations	Who	Service recommendations	Who
6) Utilise the Care Coordination Group	Various	6) Hold an arts and mobility forum	AARD/Arts SA
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		

Further Information

Contact: David Pearson

Email: David.pearson@aaeh.org.au

Phone: 0437 310 239