

# Targeted stakeholder feedback, proposed amendments to Activities Local Law 2009

*City of Melbourne*

VERSION 1, 22 MARCH 2017

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Capire staff and associates take great care while transcribing participant feedback but unfortunately cannot guarantee the accuracy of all notes. We are however confident that we capture the full range of ideas, concerns and views expressed during our consultation activities.

Unless otherwise noted, the views expressed in our work represent those of the participants and not necessarily those of our consultants or our clients.

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# 1 Executive Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

Capire Consulting (supported by Social Fabric Planning), were commissioned to provide engagement support to assist with the City of Melbourne’s broader engagement strategy to gain insights and feedback on the proposed amendments to the Activities Local Law 2009.

The support included:

- strategic advice
- facilitation at four facilitated discussions
- business interviews across three key zones of the central business areas
- reporting on individual activities.

As part of this project, each event was minuted and a separate report was prepared.

This report is summary of the key themes, ideas and response across all four activities and interviews, including a summary of each individual session.

## 1.2 Summary of activities

Capire facilitated four targeted conversations and 38 business interviews. The summary of each activity is outlined below in table 1.

*Table 1 Summary of each engagement session*

| Session | Stakeholder Group                 | Number of participants | Date and time                       | Location and notes                   |
|---------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1       | Homeless Advisory Committee (HAC) | 20-25 participants     | Monday 20 February<br>6.30pm-8.30pm | Melbourne Town Hall                  |
| 2       | Melbourne Homelessness Service    | 14 participants        | Tuesday 28 February<br>9.30am-      | FrontYard,<br>King Street, Melbourne |

|   |   |                                    |                                   |  |
|---|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
|   | Coordination Project - operations group       |                                    | 10.15am                           |  |
| 3 | Business engagement - Small workshop          | 60 invited, 4 participants         | Thursday 9 March, 9.00am-10.00am. | Media Presentation Suite, Town Hall  |
|   | Business engagement - Door-to-door interviews | 38 interviews across four sessions | Between 7 and 10 March 2017       | Carlton- Elgin/Lygon Streets King Street and surrounds Block bound by Flinders/Elizabeth/Lonsdale/Swanston |
| 4 | Rough Sleeping Response Task Force            | 15 participants                    | 1.45pm-2.15pm                     | Mantra on Russell. 222 Russell Street, Melbourne. Flinders Room  |

## 1.3 Consultant observations

As consultants, we made the following observations:

- The topic of homelessness is an emotional issue for many participants. Throughout the engagement period, many participants felt genuinely upset when talking about the likely impacts of the proposed changes.
- Some participants showed frustration towards the City of Melbourne and bewilderment about the rationale for the proposed changes.
- Each session started with some initial concern, and after a release of frustration, each session fell into a constructive, dynamic and respectful conversation.
- Some business respondents found it difficult to speak from a business perspective rather than a personal perspective, given the issue is very personal for many.
- Given the business interviews were a door-to-door survey, not all business operators were ready to talk and at times it was difficult to speak to an owner or a senior manager. For many smaller stores, the manager was not available so the interview was undertaken with the next available employee.
- Some respondents thought the project title was misleading given it was called a review of the Activities Local Law 2009 and referred to the broader terminology about 'how people use public space' rather than homelessness.

## 1.4 Key feedback from the engagement

### 1.4.1 General comments

- Some participants thought a change to the way homelessness issues were being managed was inevitable, however they thought the proposed changes felt rushed and lacked sufficient evidence, strategic thinking and policy support to be useful.
- Overwhelmingly, there was disappointment that the City of Melbourne was heading in this direction after showing long-term positive leadership and compassion for homelessness issues.
- Most thought the proposed changes moved towards criminalising homelessness without providing sufficient alternatives and solutions to help those experiencing homelessness get the support they need.
- Many thought the proposed changes were reactive and did little in responding to the real issues facing the homeless community, specifically the lack of appropriate crisis, temporary and affordable housing, and the access to targeted services and supports.
- Respondents also commented on what they perceived as the 'rushed' nature of the proposed amendments. Some thought that careful consideration and an extended period of research on global best practice and how current laws can be maximised was necessary before launching any proposal to amend the law.

### 1.4.2 Feedback about the proposed changes to the definition of camping

- There was mixed and varied feedback about the proposed changes to the definition of camping.
- Some thought the proposed changes would provide more clarity and a clearer process for managing people who are rough sleeping without a structure, while others thought the proposed definition was too broad and could be open to exploitation.

- Others thought there may be some need for this broadened definition to deal with large groups congregating in informal 'camps' in prominent locations, but that it was generally inappropriate for dealing with single and small groups of rough sleepers.

### 1.4.3 Feedback about the proposed changes that allow the collection of unattended personal belonging

- While some people acknowledged that there was a problem with the accumulation of rubbish along the streets from those experiencing homelessness (particularly larger groups), there was agreement that this was not a straightforward issue that could not be dealt with by one response.
- Recommendations included that an alternative is required, potentially providing lockers to provide somewhere that is safe and secure for personal irreplaceable goods such as legal documents, medication, money, identification or family heirlooms.
- Some discussion revolved around having a building that could be centralised service area, such as a community hub or one-stop-shop where homeless people could go to safely store personal belongings and access the support services they need.

### 1.4.4 Feedback regarding the proposed fine

- There was strong opposition to the proposed fine to reclaim unattended personal belongings. Almost all participants thought that the fine was not the answer. Some thought it was too high and others thought it had the potential of adding trauma to an already vulnerable person.
- There was also some confusion about the fine and the difference between an existing free lost property service and a \$388 fine for collecting unattended belonging.

## 2 Summary of each session

### 2.1 Homelessness Advisory Committee (HAC)

The following table is a summary of the session held with the Homelessness Advisory Committee.

*Table 2 Summary of the HAC session*

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Name of Group</b>                       | <b>Homelessness Advisory Committee (HAC)</b>   |   |
| <b>Date of Session:</b>                    | Monday 20 February 2017  |   |
| <b>Length of session:</b>                  | 2 hours  |   |
| <b>Number of attendees:</b>                | 22 participants, 7 observers.  |   |
| <b>Groups represented at this session:</b> | Chair and Councillor, City of Melbourne<br>Manager, Social Investment, City of Melbourne<br>Team Leader, Social Investment, City of Melbourne<br>Project Officer, City People, City of Melbourne<br>Senior Social Planner, Social Investment, City of Melbourne<br>Inner Melbourne Community Legal | Co Health<br>Youth Projects<br>Individual Members<br>Launch Housing<br>Anglicare<br>Justice Connect<br>Consumer Representatives<br>WIRE Inc |

#### 2.1.1 Purpose of the meeting

A meeting was held on Monday 20 February to update the Homelessness Advisory Committee (HAC) on issues relating to homelessness within the City of Melbourne. The agenda proposed starting with a short presentation/update by Dean Griggs (City of Melbourne) followed by a discussion facilitated and minuted by Capire Consulting Group.

The facilitator (Jo Cannington) introduced the format for the discussion, outlining the session seeks to gain insights and feedback regarding the proposed changes to the Activities Local Law 2009.

Some members of the group stated that they did not feel ready to have this conversation and had fundamental concerns about the approach Council was taking and requested that instead of a targeted conversation, the group were provided with an opportunity to provide broader feedback to Council about the likely impacts of the proposed changes.

After some discussion, the group agreed to have a general conversation.

## 2.1.2 Context for reading this summary

As well as reading these notes, it is important to understand the mood in the room. All members of the group have either experienced homelessness or advocate for and/or support members of the community who are homeless.

At times, members of the group were very emotional talking about their experiences of homelessness and throughout the conversation there was a lot of passion, frustration and, at times, anger directed towards the City of Melbourne about the impact of the proposed changes.

After an initial five to ten minutes of heated debate, the group settled into an emotional, honest, dynamic and respectful conversation. This dynamic was maintained for the hour discussion and resulted in constructive feedback to Council.

## 2.1.3 Summary of key themes raised throughout the discussion

The following themes have been prepared as a summary of the key issues raised throughout the discussion.

### 2.1.3.1 THEME 1: CHANGE IN POLICY DIRECTION FROM THE CITY OF MELBOURNE

Some participants felt disappointed that the City of Melbourne was not showing the leadership expected on the homelessness matters and were confused why these changes had been proposed when historically Council had shown compassion and inclusion around homelessness issues.

There was a lot of feedback about the nature of the proposal. Some participants thought Council was reacting to media and police pressure rather than showing strategic leadership, tackling the complexity of the issues.

A few participants commented on the importance of appropriate training for enforcement officers to deal with unique and specialised needs of homeless people.

Others had concern that Council was setting up marginalised group against marginalised group given the needs and wants of the disability sector has been raised as one of the reasons for the reform.

#### 2.1.3.2 THEME 2: FUNDAMENTAL UNEASE WITH THE PROPOSAL AND THE IMPACT THIS WILL HAVE ON A VULNERABLE GROUP

There were a range of comments relating to the “unease” or feeling that the proposal was “just not right” given the complexity of the issues and given many homeless people are often experiencing extreme trauma and vulnerabilities. One participant suggested the proposal was against the charter of human rights and the New Urban Agenda for supporting inclusive and engaged global cities.

There was some discussion about understanding what else homeless people are meant to do, such as ‘where are they meant to store their belongings?’. Caution was given to not just focusing on the visual appearance of homelessness, but to take responsibility for helping and supporting vulnerable groups. One participant asked “where are they meant to go?” implying that the approach assumed choice without clearly providing any alternative options.

#### 2.1.3.3 THEME 3: FINES ARE AN INAPPROPRIATE AND INEFFICIENT WAY TO DEAL WITH A SOCIAL PROBLEM

There was strong agreement that fining homeless people was not the answer. A range of examples were given from the emotional stress this could cause some people, to the impact it will have on their already limited finances.

Some services highlighted that this could end up impacting their ability to provide service support as service may end up needing to assist a person to pay a fine to access their goods, instead of buying their medication or supporting them in other ways. For example,

for many services a client needs important documentation before they can get help: they may need a birth certificate or banking, legal or medical documentation.

The impact on the legal system was also raised as a likely impact from the reform given the time and effort it will take to fight a fine and the impact this could have on already limited legal resources. The legal expert from Justice Connect, who was present, noted that it has frequently been observed that the courts show leniency to people who cannot help but break the law, such as those who are homeless. It was felt the amendments would unnecessarily clog up the courts with cases.

#### 2.1.3.4 THEME 4: NEED TO MAXIMISE THE EXISTING POWERS OF THE LAW

There was some discussion that this reform implies there is a criminal element to homelessness and some people felt there were sufficient existing laws in place to deal with the issue and that this initiative was only adding further negative stigma to an already vulnerable and marginalised group. Some believed this was a change in the policing position and some discussion about the City of Melbourne and the need for the separation of powers.

#### 2.1.3.5 THEME 5: FURTHER JUSTIFICATION OF THE BUDGET ALLOCATION TO THE ISSUE

The presentation made by City of Melbourne's Manager, Social Investment, Dean Griggs outlined the options considered for the \$2 million allocated to the homelessness issue. There was discussion about the importance of "doing something on the ground" by providing an alternative and/or support now before people are fined and without any other options.

The group discussed the potential for the City of Melbourne to provide lockers, and some saw this as a quick win, while acknowledging that there would be some management time required to operate the program.

#### 2.1.3.6 THEME 6: CAUTION ABOUT REDEFINING THE TERM "CAMPING"

Some thought changing the definition of the term "camping" allowed for the assessment to be too subjective and there were specific examples of the impact taking away personal goods can have on an already vulnerable person. For example, the change of definition might now include "a car" and this might be the only safe place a person may have to

sleep, for example, a woman fleeing domestic violence or a homeless person between temporary accommodation options.

2.1.3.7 THEME 7: ONGOING ROLE OF THE HOMELESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HAC)

Several members of the group asked for clarification of the role of the HAC and highlighted their disappointment finding out about the changes through the media. Many felt that, as appointed representatives, they have a role in advising Council about what they should do on this issue and felt they have not been adequately consulted. They also want clarification about the ongoing process and impact/ influence they will have the decision and recommendations to Council.

## 2.2 Melbourne Homelessness Service Coordination Project - operations group

The following table is a summary of the session held with the Homelessness Service Coordination Project - operations group.

*Table 3 Summary of the Melbourne Service Coordination Project operations group session*

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Name of Group</b>                       | <b>Melbourne Homelessness Service Coordination Project - operations group</b>  |   |
| <b>Date of Session:</b>                    | Tuesday 28 February 2017   |   |
| <b>Length of session:</b>                  | 1 hour   |   |
| <b>Number of attendees:</b>                | 17 participants  |   |
| <b>Groups represented at this session:</b> | Team Leader, Social Investment, City of Melbourne<br>Senior Social Planner, Social Investment, City of Melbourne<br>Salvation Army<br>CHP<br>IWAMHS Community Team | 'Hot Spots' Chair<br>Anglicare Victoria<br>Youth Projects<br>Cohealth<br>Launch Housing<br>Frontyard, MCM<br>RDNS HPP |

## 2.2.1 Purpose of the meeting

A meeting was held on Tuesday 28 February to update the Melbourne Homelessness Service Co-ordination Project operations group about the proposed changes to the Activities Local Law 2009. The group consists of frontline workers working on homelessness and related health issues.

The session was held at the FrontYard youth facility on Kings Street and the discussion was added as an additional agenda item to an existing meeting.

## 2.2.2 Context for reading this summary

The session took place towards the beginning of the engagement period and knowledge of the proposed changes varied amongst the group. Some time was spent with a questions and answer format to clarify different commitment of the proposal.

## 2.2.3 Summary of key themes raised throughout the discussion

The following themes have been prepared as a summary of the key issues raised throughout the discussion.

### 2.2.3.1 GENERAL

- This approach doesn't respond to the real issue. There is a lack of suitable crisis, transitional and affordable accommodation in the CBD and the quality of the accommodation on offer is poor.
- The issue isn't just about accommodation, it's about having enough services and program supports for our community.
- The proposed changes to the law is painting all homeless people with the same brush. Not everyone who is homeless gathers in a public place in a large group. What impact will this have on individuals?
- The proposal simplifies the issues, potentially criminalising homelessness when what homeless people need is appropriate housing and targeted support for their issues.

- Need to consider developing the Bailey House (night time accommodation model) and a FrontYard (day time multi service for youth model) for people experiencing homelessness. The city needs a few locations across the city, where homeless people can go, store their belongings safely, and access the support and services they need.
- There was some acknowledgement that accumulated belongings are an issue in the city and impacts all city users.

#### 2.2.3.2 FEEDBACK ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DEFINITION OF CAMPING

- It may encourage people to consider a pathway out of homelessness.
- It's potentially draconian.
- The use of the word 'camping' is misleading and the law need to refer to rough sleepers if that is the intention of the change.
- Isn't helping the issue.

#### 2.2.3.3 FEEDBACK ON THE PROPOSED REMOVAL OF BELONGINGS

- Acknowledgment that there is a problem when a lot of people leave their goods in the one area however there are only a few groups that do that and many other individuals/ smaller groups are being impacted by these changes.
- Need to provide an alternative storage option instead of just taking goods away. What are they meant to do instead?
- Consider lockers as a good option for important documentation and belongs-identification, legal documents, photos, family heirlooms.

#### 2.2.3.4 FEEDBACK ON THE PROPOSED FINE.

- Fining homeless people doesn't make sense; how are they going to find the money to pay this?
- Could come back to haunt people in the future. For example, once they transition out of homelessness, they might have to deal with huge debts.
- The fine is too high. A small nominal fee might be more realistic if this is the desired direction.

## 2.3 Business engagement

Between 7 and 10 March 2017, Capire conducted a targeted workshop and face-to-face interviews with businesses from around the City of Melbourne, which is summarised in the table below. The purpose of the engagement was to gauge the level of support to the proposed amendments to the Activities Local Law.

- The workshop was attended by four businesses operating in the CBD and surrounds.
- The interviews were undertaken over 10 hours and covered three main zones across the City of Melbourne:
  - The central CBD business zone, including the area bound by Swanston, Flinders, Elizabeth and Lonsdale Streets
  - The King and Flinders Street business zone, including Flinders Street between Queen and King Streets and King Street from Flinders to Bourke Street
  - The Carlton business zone, covering Lygon Street between Grattan and Elgin Streets, and Elgin Street between Lygon and Rathdowne Streets.

*Table 4 Summary of participants*

| Technique                                   | Number of participants  |
|---|---|
| <b>Workshop</b>                             | Participants in one workshop. (102 invitations sent out to businesses previously impacted by homelessness, shopping/retail centres, business precinct presidents and executive officers). They represented, Queen Victoria Market, a fast food chain, a Local Church and a larger shopping centre operating in the CBD. |
| <b>Door-to-door interviews</b>              | 38 interviews across four sessions.   |
| <b>Flyers handed directly to businesses</b> | 32 fliers across four sessions and encouraged to participate online.  |

### 2.3.1 Context for reading this summary

The following list is a summary of the context for reading this report.

### 2.3.2 General observations

- Respondents found it difficult to speak from a business perspective rather than a personal perspective as the issue is a very personal one for many.
- Given the interviews were a door-to-door survey, not all business operators were ready to talk and at times it was difficult to speak to an owner or a senior manager. For many smaller stores, the manager was not available.
- After explaining the proposed changes, respondents would often comment that the survey is about homelessness, rather than broader 'how people use public space'.

### 2.3.3 Summary of key comments raised throughout the interviews and at the workshop

The following summary has been prepared to identify the key comments/issues raised throughout the interviews and at the business workshop.

#### 2.3.3.1 GENERAL

- Some thought the proposed response did not address the broader causes of homelessness and more could be done.
- Most people thought the issues was much broader than being presented and thought that community education and better service support, more public housing was important.
- Almost all participants wanted more information about how often this proposed change to law will be applied, when and where?
- Some thought that these changes would make the city safer and cleaner.
- Some discussion about public space and the importance of the whole community having access to public land.

#### 2.3.3.2 RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE DEFINITION OF CAMPING

There was debate about this proposed change to the definition of camping. Most people were opposed to the change but some also supported the proposal. Issues included:

- did not take people off the streets given no alternatives are being provided
- damages business when people are sleeping rough in front of the property
- streets are not for camping on; other locations such as parks are more appropriate
- sleeping rough creates a bad impression of Melbourne for tourists and impacts business.

#### 2.3.3.3 RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL OF THE REMOVAL OF UNATTENDED BELONGINGS

Some participants thought the proposed changes were helpful and provided a consistent response for business, however many were not convinced this was the best response. There was strong debate for both support and opposition to this change. Comments included:

- a belief that Council should not take from people who have so little already
- could cause distress to those who had their belongings taken
- was unfair given they were homeless and that there was a need for an alternative, somewhere to store their belongings
- acknowledgement that it would improve the appearance of the streetscape, particularly for tourists
- it may be necessary in some cases, but it should not be a 'blanket rule' and used only in more extreme cases of large amounts of unattended belongings
- some businesses thought that the disposal of unattended belongings can be costly to small business and welcomed the approach - provided the process was clear to all involved
- some thought a better approach was the existing City of Melbourne program called Connect Respect; they felt giving staff the confidence to approach people and a solution that didn't demonise homeless people was critical
- some businesses wanted clarity about the difference between "lost property" and "unattended goods".

#### 2.3.3.4 REPONSES TO THE PROPOSED FINE

There was strong opposition to this proposal from almost all participants. Specifically:

- homeless people have no way to pay the fee

- perpetuate the cycle of homelessness and marginalisation
- unreasonable to ask people to pay to reclaim their own belongings
- the fee is far too high; 'regular' people cannot pay that kind of fee to reclaim lost property, let alone people who are homeless
- unfair on an already marginalised and vulnerable group.

#### 2.3.3.5 OTHER IDEAS

Other suggestions included:

- to work with developers to include new lockers, showers and supports service within new developments
- extend the reach and greater implementation of the *City of Melbourne Connect Respect program*
- provide more information about service support and housing options so it's readily available for business.

## 2.4 Rough Sleeping Response Task Force

The following table is a summary of the session held with the Rough Sleeping Response Task Force.

*Table 5 Summary of the Rough Sleeping Response Task Force session*

| Name of Group                              | Rough Sleeping Response Task Force   |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Date of session:</b>                    | Wednesday 15 March   |   |
| <b>Length of session:</b>                  | The session was held within an existing meeting and allocated 30 minutes for the discussion. Given the length of the session, only a high-level discussion was achieved, however participants were encouraged to continue the conversation online. |   |
| <b>Number of attendees:</b>                | 23 participants  |   |
| <b>Groups represented at this session:</b> | Chair, Melbourne Health<br>Salvation Army<br>Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation<br>DHHS<br>Youth Projects<br>Brotherhood of Saint Laurence<br>Team Leader, Social Investment, City of Melbourne<br>Legal Counsel, City of Melbourne                | Launch Housing<br>Salvation Army<br>Council to Homeless Persons<br>Vincent Care<br>Corrections Victoria<br>CoHealth<br>Melbourne City Mission<br>Victoria Police<br>Manager, Social Investment, City of Melbourne |

## 2.4.1 Summary of key themes raised throughout the discussion

The following themes have been prepared as a summary of the key issues raised throughout the discussion.

### 2.4.1.1 THEME 1: NEED FOR A FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF HOMELESSNESS

There was much discussion about the need for the Federal and State government, and City of Melbourne to work together to come up with stronger partnership for responding to long term issues of homelessness, suitable housing, more funding for better support and consistency between different levels of government.

### 2.4.1.2 THEME 2: CONSISTENT APPROACH TO CITY OF MELBOURNE RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS

Some participants suggested that this approach was inconsistent and contrary to existing City of Melbourne policy. Much disappointment from the group about the way this matter is being handled. Need to explore and utilise existing programs, policies and legal avenues before considering a new approach.

### 2.4.1.3 THEME 3: NEED FOR A MORE COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE TO THE ISSUE

Strong opposition to the general response and proposal from the City of Melbourne, specifically removal of personal belongings and the proposed fine and need for a more compassionate solution, such as lockers and more targeted service support. Some participants showed agreement with the United Nations position that this proposal is a violation of human rights.

### 2.4.1.4 THEME 4: NEED FOR A LONG-TERM MORE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS

Many thought this approach is reactive and short term and not based on the existing evidence. Some participants suggested the events of recent months were a product of a poorly managed issue and requested greater longer-term strategic leadership.

### 2.4.1.5 THEME 5: UTILISATION OF EXISTING LAWS

Some participants thought there were sufficient existing laws to deal with homelessness and that it was more about maximising their utilisation and applying them across the city.

#### 2.4.1.6 THEME 6: APPLICATION OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

There was also some concern about how the proposed changes would be implemented on the ground, and how this could be affected by changing political mindsets. Great clarity around on-the-ground application processes was desired.

# 3 Appendix 1: Detailed findings from business interviews

## 3.1 Findings from the business interviews

### 3.1.1 Participation

A total of 38 interviews with people working in businesses from 7 to 10 March 2017. When possible, business owners or managers were sought out, but employees were also interviewed when no management was available. People who could not take time out of their work to do the interview were given a flyer that provided the link to the *Participate Melbourne* website where they could complete an online survey or put in a submission.

*Figure 1 Number of business interviews by location*



Note that two sessions of interviewing were conducted in the central CBD zone at the request of the City of Melbourne, compared to one each in the Carlton and King Street zones.

### 3.1.2 Interviewee responses

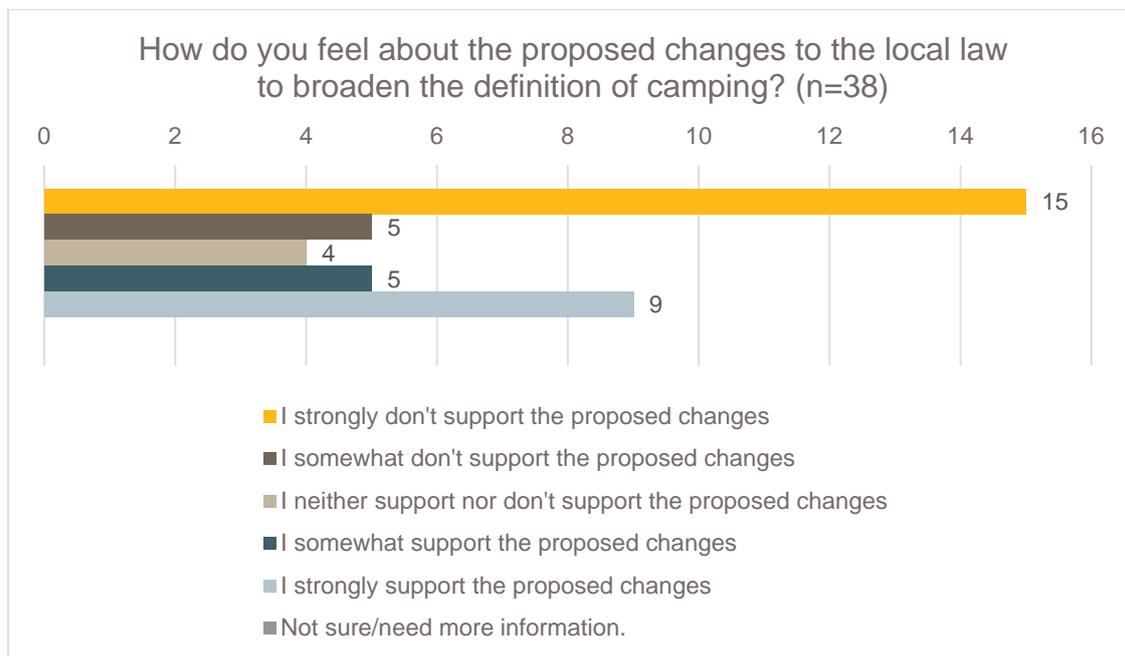
Interviewees were firstly asked about their degree of support for the three proposed changes to the Activities Local Law (broadening the definition of camping, the removal unattended belongings and a fee to reclaim the belongings) and the reasoning behind their degree of support. They were also asked about any other actions they thought could be

taken to address rough sleeping and unattended belongings in the City of Melbourne. The findings are presented in the following sections.

### 3.1.2.1 BROADENING THE DEFINITION OF CAMPING

Interviewees attitudes to the proposed amendment that would allow for the broadening of the definition of camping are shown in the figure below. Over one third were strongly against the proposed change.

*Figure 2 Attitudes to broadening the definition of camping*



The main reasons that interviewees were strongly against the proposed changes were:

- did not take people off the streets, as no alternative location or services were provided
- did not address the broader causes of homelessness
- regarded as very harsh and targeting those who have nothing already
- regarded as criminalising homelessness
- did not benefit business to do so.

The main reasons that interviewees strongly supported the proposed changes were:

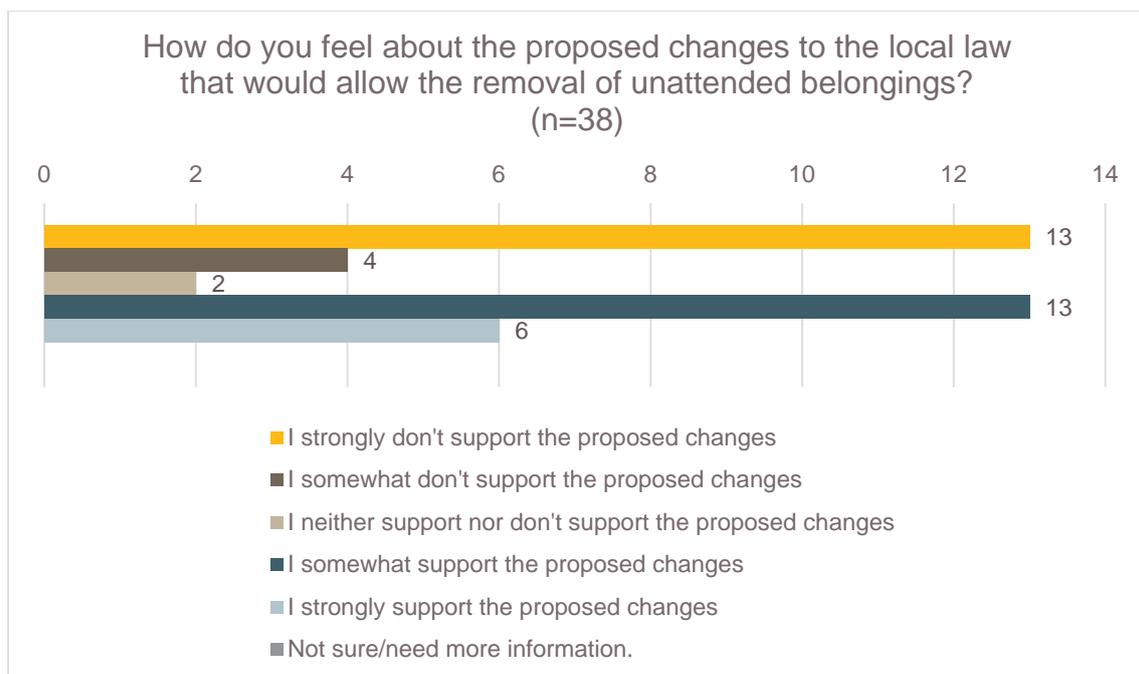
- people sleeping rough create a bad impression of Melbourne for tourists
- damages business when people are sleeping rough in front of the property

- streets are not for camping on; other locations such as parks are more appropriate
- the issue of increasing homelessness needs to be addressed
- some are not 'real' homeless people and don't want help
- it would make the city safer and cleaner.

### 3.1.2.2 REMOVAL OF UNATTENDED BELONGINGS

Interviewees' attitudes to the proposed amendment that would allow for the removal of unattended belongings are shown in the figure below. Over one third were strongly against this proposed change, and over one third somewhat supported the proposed change.

*Figure 3 Attitudes towards the removal of unattended belongings*



The main reasons that interviewees were strongly against the proposed changes were:

- should not take away people's personal belongings, particularly when homeless people have so little already
- would cause distress to those who had their belongings taken
- homeless people do not have anywhere else to store their belongings
- does not do anything to support homeless people or help them leave homelessness.

The main reasons that interviewees somewhat supported the proposed changes were:

- removal of belongings will act as deterrent for leaving belongings unattended
- it would create more public safety
- it would create cleaner public spaces
- It would improve the appearance of the streetscape, particularly for tourists
- if the belongings were unattended for a set period (for example two days), it would be more appropriate to remove them
- it may be necessary in some cases, but it should not be a 'blanket rule' and used only in more extreme cases of large amounts of unattended belongings
- provided that the retrieval of the belongings had no fee attached to it, and it was treated more like picking up lost property.

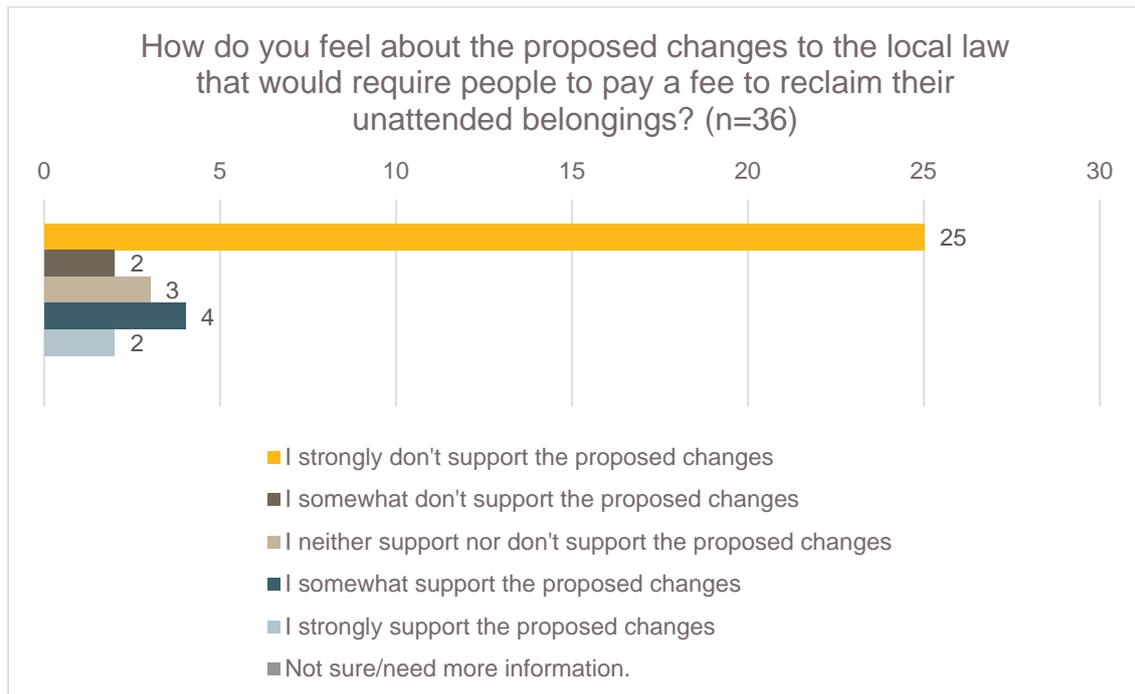
The main reasons that interviewees strongly supported the proposed changes were:

- the eyesore created by belongings left on the streets
- camps and unattended belongings create a poor impression for visitors and business patrons
- the public danger of unattended belongings needs to be mitigated; for example, people may trip over the belongings, children are exposed to bottles and syringes
- not all people on the streets are 'real' homeless people; some will refuse help or food because they make a lot of money begging.

### 3.1.2.3 FEE TO RECLAIM BELONGINGS

Interviewees attitudes to the proposed amendment that would require a fee to be paid to reclaim unattended belongings are shown in the figure below. Over two thirds of interviewees were strongly against the proposed amendment.

Figure 4 Attitudes towards a fee for reclaiming unattended belongings



The main reasons that interviewees were strongly against the proposed changes were:

- regarded as 'kicking people when they're down'
- homeless people have no way to pay the fee
- perpetuate the cycle of homelessness and marginalisation
- unreasonable to ask people to pay to reclaim their own belongings
- creates a poor impression of Melbourne to tourists
- the fee would encourage people to steal or mug in order to find the money to reclaim their belongings
- the fee is far too high; 'regular' people cannot pay that kind of fee to reclaim lost property, let alone homelessness
- the fee has malicious intent.

The main reasons that interviewees somewhat supported the proposed changes were:

- homeless people will be able to retrieve the belongings
- the fees could be used to clean the streets.

### 3.1.2.4 OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Interviewees were also asked if they thought there were any alternative actions that could be taken so that people are not forced to sleep rough in the city and to reduce the number of personal belongings left unattended on the streets by people sleeping rough. These suggestions are presented in the table below.

*Table 6 Business interviewees' suggestions for alternative actions*

| <b>Actions to address rough sleeping</b>  | <b>Actions to address unattended personal belongings</b>  |
|---|---|
| More support for service providers and charities, such as the Salvation Army        | A locker system available in different places around the city,  |
| Designated places to 'camp' within the city outside of tourism hot spots            | A locker where the removed belongings are placed, and can be recovered with a small fee   |
| Service centres with food, bathrooms, shelter, clothing, toiletries, blankets, beds | Treating removed unattended items like lost property, which can be disposed of after a set period if not claimed (for example three months) |
| Use the vacant buildings or structures in the city as accommodation                 | Distribute bags, suitcases, trolleys or wheelie boxes   |
| Addressing mental health issues that push people on to the street                   | Everyone should have personal responsibility for their own belongings   |
| Addressing those with drug and alcohol problems                                     |   |
| Addressing lack of work   |   |
| Addressing domestic violence  |   |
| More community involvement in support work  |   |
| More public housing and hostels to provide long-term options                        |   |
| Counselling and healthcare services   |   |
| More promotion of the options available to homelessness people for support          |   |

### 3.1.2.5 OTHER COMMENTS

Interviewees could make any other comments at the end of the interview. Their comments included:

- 'The Government in Beijing is harsher. Need to be a bit tougher here in Australia.'
- 'Catch 22 – it is not a one size fits all approach to help homeless people. They're on the street for different reasons: mental health issues, addiction issues, without a home. We expect a certain level of behaviour if people use our facilities. If they're nice, respectful people, it's no problem to use our bathrooms. Twenty per cent are a problem, and occasionally we've had to call the police. It's a tricky and tough situation. We feel for them.'
- 'These people need government to give support. But there are the people who beg as a business. Sometimes if we offer them food, they refuse it. Make the distinction between begging as business and genuine homeless people. Police should move on the non-genuine homeless people.'
- 'Honest people who are homeless don't ask for things, they just accept what they are given.'
- 'They need to clean the streets up because it looks terrible. Where do they shower, urinate?'
- 'Provide guided support. Removing people doesn't help the situation. It will just move the situation to somewhere else.'
- 'I have two businesses, and I go home every night, so everything is fine for me. Changing the local law is not a solution.'
- 'It's a free country but you need to act according to the law.'
- 'The Flinders Street scenario put it in the public's eye. More public housing; it should be free!'
- 'A lot of homeless have psychological issues; they need help. Provide a safe environment for them to go to. Introduce a support system.'
- 'People need to help and support each other. I hate donations. People should give them their time and energy. Engage with them and get to know them to break down barriers.'

At our business, we give out free water and they come in and listen to the music. Sometimes staff give them their lunch.'

- 'They need a place to go! Do we want to be more like America? No.'
- 'What you are proposing is ridiculous. Don't ignore the bigger issue.'
- 'The homeless are stigmatised, we need more education about homelessness. Affirmative action for homeless to get jobs.'
- 'I'm proud to be Victorian; we are one of the most progressive states and Melbourne is not like this!'
- 'I have a lot to say but I don't want to get too dramatic. People see homelessness as a problem, but it ain't.'
- 'Lots of homeless can give a bad vibe to the area but where else are they going to? There are only about four people rough sleeping in Carlton which is not a big deal. I know quite a few homeless - if you ban them from CBD, you just shift the problem. We need to come together as a state.'