

Geraldton Zero Project



Engagement Hub Funding Proposal

October 2026



Supporters

This submission has the support and endorsement of the Geraldton Zero Project and the local homelessness sector.



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Western Australia and recognise their enduring connection to land, waters, cultures and communities. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We recognise that the ongoing impacts of colonisation have contributed to the overrepresentation of First Nations peoples experiencing homelessness. We are committed to listening to, learning from, and supporting First Nations-led approaches that strengthen self-determination and deliver culturally informed solutions to homelessness.

Recognition of Lived Experience

We recognise and honour the people, families and communities who have lived and living experience of homelessness and housing insecurity. We recognise the challenges, trauma and strength that can accompany these experiences, and we acknowledge the profound impact that access to safe, stable and affordable housing has on health, wellbeing, dignity and connection to community.

We value the expertise of people with lived and living experience of homelessness and housing security, and believe their knowledge and insights are essential to understanding the realities of housing exclusion and to developing effective solutions. We are committed to ensuring their voices are heard, respected and meaningfully included in decisions that affect their lives and communities.

“Geraldton needs a safe, welcoming, low-barrier hub where people can have their immediate needs met and be connected to the right housing, health and community supports before they reach crisis.”

— Community Member, Geraldton

Summary of Ask

Homelessness in Geraldton is a significant social and public health issue, characterised by long periods of housing instability, complex and intersecting needs, and limited access to coordinated support. Local evidence shows that people are experiencing prolonged homelessness, high rates of violence, unmet health needs, and restricted access to basic amenities, underscoring the need for integrated, trauma-informed responses centred on people’s strengths, goals, and safety.

The Geraldton Zero Project proposes the establishment of an Engagement Hub to align with local need and provide a low-barrier, culturally safe space where people can access essential amenities and multiple services at once. By bringing together multidisciplinary services, the hub would reduce fragmentation, strengthen early intervention, and create a central point of assistance. This is consistent with the WA Government’s All Paths Lead to a Home: WA’s 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030 and the WA Housing Strategy 2020–2030, both of which recognise that homelessness responses must be tailored to local contexts and strengthen collaboration across housing, health, and community sectors.

TOTAL BUDGET ASK: \$1,439,000

History of the Geraldton Zero Project

Since 2020, the Geraldton Zero Project has united community services, housing providers, and government agencies to build a coordinated, housing-led response to homelessness.

Guided by the Advance to Zero Framework and Housing First principles, the project began with Geraldton's first Connections Week, identifying 56 people sleeping rough and establishing the community's first real-time By-Name List.

Local data revealed long-term homelessness occurring alongside trauma, poor health, family and domestic violence, social isolation, and limited access to stable housing, with disproportionate impacts on Aboriginal people, women, and families. In response, partners developed a coordinated system centred on dignity and choice. Collaborative structures such as the Rough Sleeper Coordination Group, Improvement Team, and Ending Homelessness Leadership Group strengthened information sharing, reduced duplication, and improved pathways into housing.

This approach has delivered measurable results. Geraldton reached Functional Zero for people over 55 sleeping rough for four consecutive months in 2023 and became the third Australian community to record a sustained reduction in street-present homelessness. Between 2023 and 2025, partners supported 13 people into housing within 100 days and permanently housed 32 people with no returns to homelessness. These achievements reflect a strong culture of collaboration and evidence-informed practice, and demonstrate the impact of shared accountability in creating lasting change.

Why an Engagement Hub

Research indicates that an engagement hub provides a single, coordinated point of connection for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. By bringing multiple services together in one place, it removes barriers, strengthens trust, and ensures people can access timely, appropriate support without navigating a complex system alone. Unlike traditional office-based services that rely on appointments or referrals, engagement hubs are flexible walk-in approaches reducing barriers to engagement.

Research from Sakyi and Eshetu et al. (2026) draws on international literature that synthesises five key principles of engagement hubs, that for successful engagement hubs they should operate as **low-barrier and flexible engagement, integrated and co-located service delivery, housing-led and person-centered support, trauma-informed and relationship-based practice, partnerships and coordinated service delivery**. A hub enables early intervention through partnerships across sectors, and this shared approach identifies risks sooner, reduces reliance on crisis responses, and supports greater housing stability. For regional communities like Geraldton, a hub will improve communication between organisations, maximising existing resources, and provide a central coordination point that addresses service gaps.

International evaluations of co-located homelessness services have demonstrated multidisciplinary partnerships have improved access to healthcare, strengthen housing outcomes, and reduced fragmentation across service systems. In Geraldton, workers have described *"we may not hear from someone for several weeks/months, and then they present only when in crisis."* Due to sporadicity in service delivery and client contact, the challenges are further compounded by limited access to mobile phones, where Geraldton homelessness workers identified not having a phone as a point when clients become disconnected from services. A co-located service delivery would reduce this fragmentation.

A single, culturally safe entry point will enable people to connect with multidisciplinary services and is expected to provide easier access to support, improve housing stability, allow for better health and wellbeing, and strengthen community connections and service delivery. Rather than referring people between multiple organisations, we envisage a model in which services were organised around the individual, summarised by one Geraldton worker as, *"Bring services to the people, do not refer out."*

This would position Geraldton to strengthen early intervention, reduce crisis-driven responses, and ensure people receive support in ways that uphold dignity and choice.

Evidence and Data

Homelessness affects communities across Australia; however its nature and drivers differ between metropolitan, regional, and remote settings.

According to the 2021 Australian Census, approximately 9,700 people in WA were experiencing homelessness. Regional communities face distinct challenges related to limited housing availability, workforce shortages, geographic isolation, restricted service availability, and reduced access to specialist supports, all of which can prolong housing instability and limit opportunities to exit homelessness. Furthermore, local data shows that Aboriginal people comprise approximately 61% of people experiencing homelessness in Geraldton despite representing a much smaller proportion of the regional population. Broader evidence demonstrates that the continuing impacts of colonisation, systemic disadvantage, intergenerational trauma, and structural inequities impact on housing outcomes.

Housing and Homelessness Circumstances

Real-time data from the Geraldton By-Name List (2020-2025) and 255 Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) surveys completed highlight high levels of vulnerability and prolonged homelessness. The 2026 AnglicareWA rental affordability snapshot shows there is no property for any household type receiving JobSeeker and no properties available for a single person on a minimum wage. People are locked out of the rental market and face housing insecurity. Yet their only touchpoint is when they hit a crisis point. Crisis accommodation is also under strain: between January and July 2026, the Salvation Army Geraldton Emergency Accommodation, Referral and Support Services (GEARSS) were unable to accommodate 41 families and individuals due to capacity limits, leaving many couch surfing or sleeping rough. People reported long periods of instability, limited social support, and feeling unsafe where they slept, alongside significant physical and mental health needs.

Service Needs, Safety, Health and Vulnerability Indicators

Most VI-SPDAT participants reported not having enough money for basic needs other than housing (65.0%), and more than half reported having no reliable people who cared about them (57.5%). Safety and violence were also major concerns, with 47.5% reporting that they did not feel safe where they slept and 60.0% reporting violence in the previous year. Health needs were substantial, with 75.6% reporting an ongoing serious health condition and 65.9% reporting a diagnosed mental health condition. An engagement hub in Geraldton would provide an accessible point of contact for people in the Midwest supporting health, dignity and recovery.

Access to Basic Needs

A one-day Pilot Engagement Hub, delivered through the Geraldton Zero Project in August 2026, demonstrated the impact of a coordinated, low-barrier model. 25 people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness accessed support in a single, accessible space where multiple agencies collaborated in real time. People received housing assistance, legal support, showers, haircuts, essential items, and meals while staff were able to jointly resolve complex issues that would otherwise require multiple appointments across different locations.

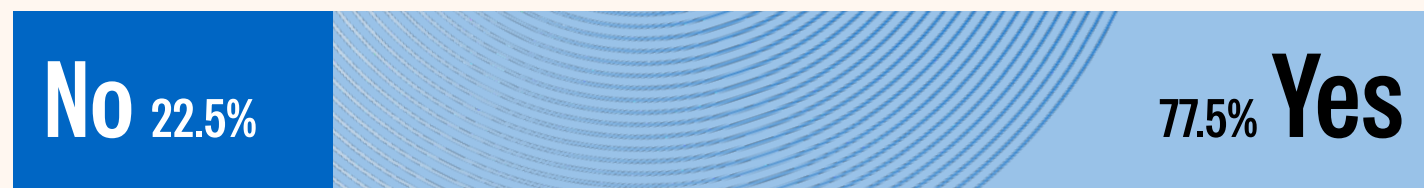
This showed that access to basic hygiene facilities remain a major gap, and that a single entry point will strengthen intervention, reduce fragmentation, and ensure people experiencing homelessness can connect with coordinated support in ways that uphold dignity and choice.

VI-SPDAT participants experienced prolonged housing instability, with a median of 1.1 years spent sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation and a median total duration of homelessness of 1.5 years.

Access to Basic Needs

Among VI-SPDAT Participants

Do you have **access to food and water** when hungry or thirsty?



Do you have **access to a toilet** when needed?



Do you have **access to laundry or replacement clothes** when needed?



Do you have **access to a shower** when needed?



Do you have enough **money** every fortnight to take care of **basic needs**, excluding housing?



Local Examples of Current Unmet Needs

Dignity Van — Centacare Housing First Support Services

The Dignity Van is a key engagement tool in Geraldton, providing an approachable way for staff to connect with people sleeping rough and experiencing housing instability. It is the only dedicated outreach system in Geraldton. It often serves as the first point of contact for individuals who feel unable to access mainstream services, offering practical support that builds trust and opens pathways to housing, healthcare, and ongoing assistance.

From January to June 2026, the Van delivered 72 assertive outreach sessions, making 215 client and community

connections, completing 130 loads of washing, providing 90 showers, and distributing 21 breakfast packs. These figures show that many people rely on mobile, low-barrier support to meet basic needs and stay connected to services.

While the Dignity Van is vital, the scale and complexity of need in Geraldton exceed what mobile outreach can sustain. A permanent hub would strengthen this work by offering a consistent, central location where people can safely access amenities and connect with coordinated, trauma-informed support.

Chrysalis House Women's Refuge — Desert Blue Connect

Chrysalis House Women's Refuge accommodated 22 women in 2025-2026 who were experiencing homelessness but were not seeking support for family and domestic violence. This reflects a major gap in Geraldton's homelessness system and the lack of appropriate alternatives for women in crisis. When support is only available at crisis point, opportunities for early intervention and stabilisation are limited.

Local evidence from Desert Blue Connect shows the scale of housing pressure across the MidWest. Private rentals remain unaffordable, with regional renters needing around \$93,000 a year to avoid rental stress. Public housing waitlists extend for years, and key community housing options - including MRAC housing, Salvation Army units, and Haven House - are at capacity.

Caravan parks, often used as temporary accommodation, are not suitable or viable for long-term options. With no accessible housing pathways, some women return to unsafe environments simply because they have nowhere else to go.

These conditions demonstrate an urgent need for an engagement hub in Geraldton. A hub would provide a consistent and accessible point of support, strengthen early intervention, reduce reliance on crisis refuges, and ensure women and families have a place to seek help that upholds safety and choice.

A Lived Experience Example — Desert Blue Connect

A woman in her forties relocated to the MidWest with her children after years of housing instability and family violence. Following a serious incident, the family required emergency accommodation and intensive, wrap-around support. Their needs extended far beyond immediate safety, including school re-engagement, legal protection, income support, health care, counselling, tenancy support, and advocacy to secure longer-term housing.

Through coordinated case management, multiple agencies worked together to provide crisis accommodation, transitional housing, restraining orders, school enrolment support, and pathways to employment. The mother secured work, the children returned to school, and the family's housing stability improved. However, achieving these outcomes required

navigating numerous services, appointments, and locations - an overwhelming process during a period of trauma and instability.

The collaboration between agencies enabled the family to access crisis accommodation, transitional housing, family violence restraining orders, school enrolment support and pathways to employment. This shows that homelessness is rarely a single-issue experience and that individuals and families often need a variety of supports at the same time. A hub would reduce the burden on service users, strengthen early intervention, and ensure people can access coordinated, trauma-informed support without navigating the system alone.

Intended Engagement Hub Delivery

Service Delivery Area and Schedule of Operations

The Geraldton Engagement Hub will operate in Geraldton, Western Australia, supporting people aged 18 and over who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness across Geraldton and surrounding communities. The hub is proposed to operate Monday to Friday, from 7:00am to 3:00pm, with operating hours adjusted over time to ensure the service remains accessible, responsive, and aligned with community needs and patterns of demand.

Clientele

The engagement hub will provide support to adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness. A triage process will be used to understand each person's immediate needs and priorities, with particular focus on ensuring people who are currently sleeping rough can access timely, appropriate support.

Service Activities

The engagement hub will offer a central location where individuals can access meals, toilets, showers, laundry facilities, hygiene and sanitary products, phone-charging stations, computers, and internet access. The hub will also provide pathways to specialist and coordinated supports, and staff will facilitate warm referrals and service coordination to ensure people receive the right support at the right time. This will look like partnering with local service agencies such as Department of Housing and Works and WACHS with specialist services providing support to clients. It will enable co-location of service delivery with visiting services such as dental or health being able to operate within the hub.

Service Model

The engagement hub will operate with a low-barrier, integrated service model grounded in trauma-informed, person-centred, and strengths-based practice. Responses will be tailored to each person's goals, circumstances, and preferences, and will be delivered in a non-judgmental manner. Cultural safety will be supported through Aboriginal leadership, partnerships with Aboriginal organisations and culturally informed service delivery.

The hub will adopt a No Wrong Door approach, ensuring that any person who seeks support is connected to the broader service system as needed. A whole-of-community approach will underpin service delivery, strengthening place-based collaboration and collective action to reduce homelessness and improve outcomes for our community.

The Collective Impact Approach

Homelessness is driven by interconnected factors which often occur together, meaning no single service or sector can meet people's needs in isolation. Evaluation of the WA engagement hubs report (2025) found that collaboration between participating organisations was one of the greatest strengths of the model. Evidence supports housing-led, integrated responses that coordinate multidisciplinary supports while keeping housing stability at the centre, meaning a collective impact approach strengthens Geraldton's ability to respond by bringing organisations, government, and community groups together around a shared purpose.

Measuring success of the engagement hub is enabled through improved experiences and outcomes: reductions in homelessness through the By-Name List, increased housing placements with support from Department of Housing and Works, sustained tenancies through the delivery of the Regional Supportive Landlord Model, and stronger service coordination enabled with the RSCG. Client experience and satisfaction can be measured within the hub to ensure support remains responsive and respectful.

Alignment with Government Priorities

The Engagement Hub initiative also aligns with a range of key government strategies, including:

- All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030.
- WA Housing Strategy 2020–2030: Connecting 150,000 WA households to a home by 2030
- State Public Health Plan for Western Australia 2025-2030
- WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015-2030
- Greater Geraldton 2031 Strategic Community Plan

GOVERNMENT PRIORITY	HOW THE HUB RESPONDS
PRIORITY 1 Improving Aboriginal Wellbeing	• Provides a culturally safe, accessible entry point for Aboriginal people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, grounded in local community, culture and Country. • Strengthens co-design and respectful engagement through partnership with Elders, Aboriginal organisations, community members, and people with lived experience. • Improves pathways into housing, health, and family supports by addressing barriers such as discrimination, service mistrust, overcrowding, mobility, and limited culturally appropriate options.
PRIORITY 2 Providing Safe, Secure, and Stable Homes	• Provides a low-barrier, Housing First entry point that prioritises access to stable housing without preconditions, connecting people sleeping rough or experiencing chronic homelessness to immediate and longer-term options. • Strengthens coordinated, wrap-around support by linking people to tenancy assistance, mental health, alcohol and other drug services, financial counselling, health care, legal help, and family support, including for those with complex, long-term needs. • Builds local housing pathways across crisis, social and community housing, and private rentals, shifting Geraldton's response from crisis management to housing-led solutions that reduce chronic homelessness.
PRIORITY 3 Preventing Homelessness	• Identifies people at risk and provides support for rental stress, family breakdown, financial hardship, mental health concerns, and tenancy instability before crisis occurs. • Strengthens prevention pathways through tenancy advocacy, financial counselling, emergency relief, transition planning, and targeted support for vulnerable cohorts. • Reduces the likelihood that people move from housing stress into rough sleeping by increasing awareness of supports and ensuring timely, coordinated assistance.
PRIORITY 4 Strengthening and Coordinating Responses and Impact	• Provides a practical No Wrong Door entry point, reducing fragmentation by bringing agencies together and enabling warm referrals, shared planning, and coordinated case responses. • Improves local coordination and data sharing across government, community services, Aboriginal organisations, health providers, and outreach teams, helping identify people sleeping rough and track unmet need. • Strengthens accountability and future planning through clearer reporting on engagement, housing outcomes, sustained tenancies, referrals, and system demand.

Funding Request and Budget Breakdown

TOTAL OPERATIONAL COST:
\$939,000 one-year

TOTAL COST WITH FIRST YEAR ESTABLISHMENT:
\$1,439,000

ENGAGEMENT HUB BUDGET

Operational Costs

Salaries & Wages (+15%)	\$480,000
Property Costs	\$100,000
Property Costs (Utilities)	\$10,000
IT-related Costs	\$23,000
General Admin Costs	\$6,000
Financial, Insurance & Professional Services	\$50,000
Training & Development	\$10,000
Security	\$100,000
Employee-related Expenses	\$15,000
Office Supplies	\$5,000
ER	\$60,000
Client-related Expenditure	\$60,000
Contribution Margin	\$20,000
TOTAL	\$939,000
Add: First year establishment costs	\$500,00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,439,000

In-kind Contributions

Partner agencies of the Geraldton Zero Project will contribute resources and specialist expertise, as well as ensure designated staff operate from the hub to provide co-located and centralised support across a range of service areas.

ENGAGEMENT HUB EXAMPLE

RUAH Perth Engagement Hub

The RUAH engagement is a fixed daytime drop-in service that operates within Perth CBD. They operate with no referral and walk in access. The service activities include showers, light beverages, packaged food, clothing, toiletries, hygiene items, phone-charging, computer access, internet access, art room, recreational facilities, and assertive advocacy. Workers can support crisis accommodation referrals, ID document and Housing application support, health, AOD, financial counselling and legal referrals. The service is able to support clients during the week and operates Monday-Friday 8:30am-2:00pm.

Projected costings of the Ruah engagement hub for FY are \$1,867,000.

The Cost of Inaction

Without investment in an engagement hub, homelessness in Geraldton will continue to rise, and people will remain dependent on crisis-driven, fragmented supports that cannot meet local need.

Without a low-barrier entry point, people must navigate multiple services during periods of trauma and exhaustion, increasing disengagement and extending homelessness.

Crisis services are already operating at or beyond capacity. Women's refuges are accommodating people who are not seeking FDV support simply because no other safe options exist. Mobile outreach provides essential amenities but demand far exceeds what outreach alone can sustain. The lack of coordinated entry points also strains service providers, leading to duplication, isolated case management, and reactive responses.

For the broader community, inaction means rising homelessness, reduced safety, and ongoing pressures on already stretched systems. Housing will remain inaccessible, waitlists long, and crisis services overwhelmed.

Failing to invest now will entrench crisis responses, escalate human and financial costs, and leave Geraldton without the coordinated, trauma-informed infrastructure needed to reduce homelessness.

