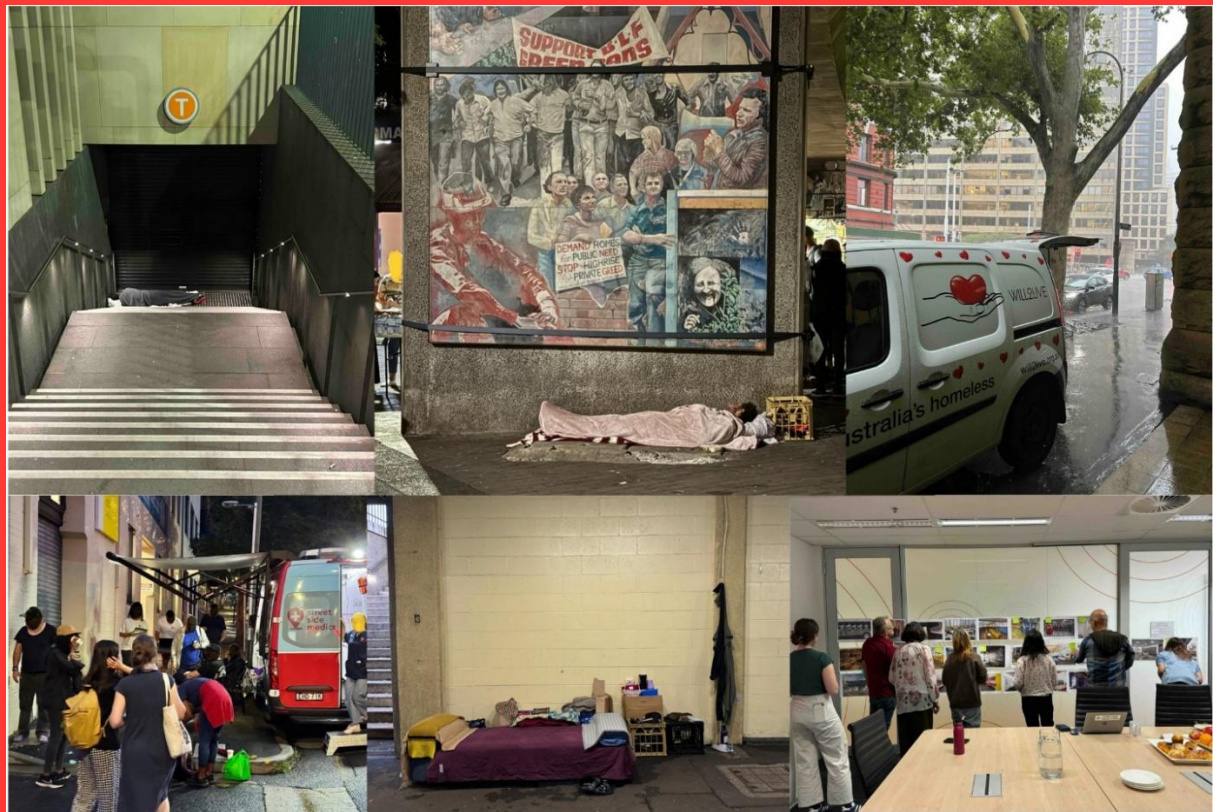


Care in Transit:

Designing for Passengers, Transport Operations and Homelessness Support



Project 6-041

Executive Summary

July 2026

Supported by:



Inclusive Design
Creating places where people thrive.



Acknowledgement

The Research Project team would like to acknowledge the amazing opportunity provided by TfNSW and the iMOVE CRC to work on such a pressing issue through this project. This initiative is a testament to the Department's values, culture, and commitment of care for the public good and the public interest. It also is a profound statement about TfNSW's international leadership and innovation.

We thank all the people, organisations and groups who assisted us with this work by entrusting us with their stories, hopes, concerns and ever thoughtful and considered feedback.

TfNSW Service Design Team, TfNSW Research Team, TfNSW Project Group

iMOVE CRC

La Trobe University research and administrative support teams

Street Care

Justice and Equity Centre

City of Sydney

Our list can only ever be partial, but the imprints of all who participated are still present within these pages.

Our greatest hope is for 'Care in Transit' to motivate change that improves the lives of people living precariously, who are unhoused and rough sleeping, and bridging their worlds with those of the broader public transport community.

Dr H. Menih, Project Lead

A/Prof J. Rudner, Project Lead

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*Inclusive Design, ^The University of Sydney

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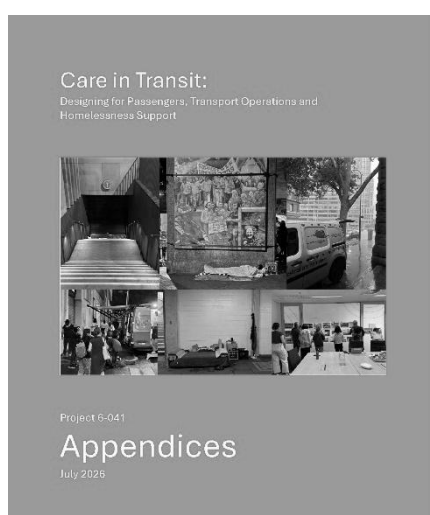
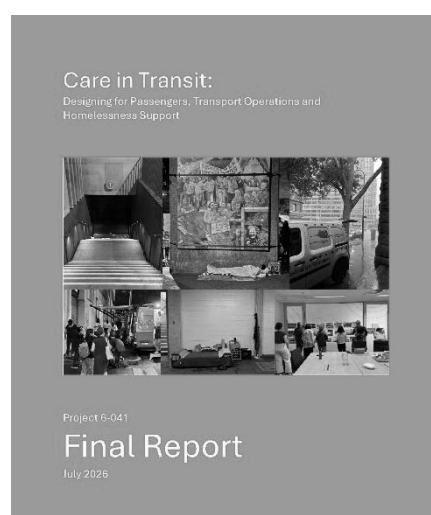
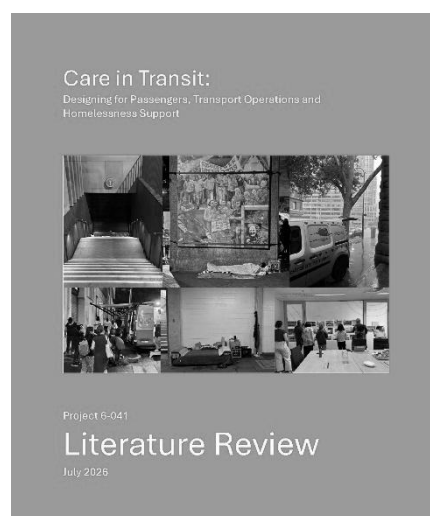
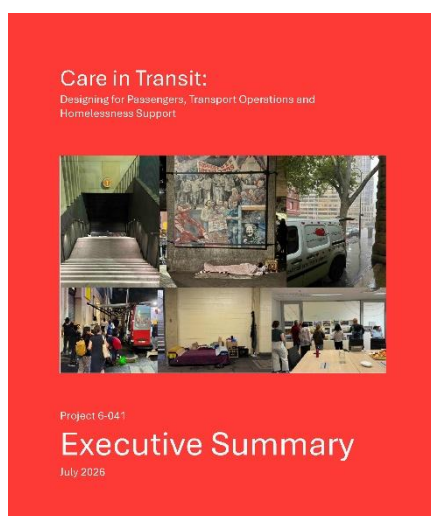
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This Executive Summary is one of four research deliverables from this work. The other documents are: *Literature Review*, *Final Report* and *Appendices*.



Executive Summary

Introduction

Care in Transit provides a visionary approach on how stations provide services to its customers whilst also responding respectfully to people experiencing homelessness. Transport precincts around the world are places of mobility that also provide places of refuge for people who are homeless or sleeping rough. These public spaces provide access to basic amenities such as toilets and water, create a sense of safety and community, become a place to pass time and to escape poor weather conditions, plus provide transport to other locations for social services or employment.

Similarly, people living precariously (PLP) and organisations supporting people who are unhoused or sleeping rough, utilise the assets owned and managed by Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW). TfNSW has a responsibility of care for all station users. Moving the services outside the geographic bounds of TfNSW's jurisdiction does not lead to better outcomes for their customers, as it will simply shift their concerns to another part of their journey as they go to and from other precincts. Moreover, many PLP are also customers of TfNSW.

Whilst TfNSW is not a social service provider, it has responsibility for the settings within which care can be provided to PLP, while ensuring actions don't impact its core function of transporting customers safely and comfortably to and from stations. The Department thus has a duty of care to manage and support social service delivery that occurs within the confines of its properties such as:

- Providing spaces
- Facilitating access to amenities
- Coordinating services and outreach activities
- Supporting initiatives that help people exit homelessness through transit
- Collaborating with social services, universities, government agencies and community organisations
- Building supportive working relationships across agencies
- Upholding respectful, trauma-informed engagement with PLP, in line with the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places 2022 (the Protocol) and commitments under the NSW Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2025-27, including through care and respect in staff interactions with PLP.

The Department is a critical stakeholder in the NSW Government Homelessness Strategy which has a vision to make NSW a place where homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurrent, with everyone having a safe home and the support they need to keep it. The Strategy is based on a Whole of Government consultation, that responds to multiple stakeholders who help shape practical and inclusive solutions.

Therefore, TfNSW created an opportunity to balance the needs and well-being of Transport customers and staff, the people who are homeless and sleeping rough, the service providers and the local communities. To better understand TfNSW's role in the NSW Government Homeless

Strategy, TfNSW developed the Care in Transit research collaboration together with iMOVE, and La Trobe University. TfNSW recognised the need for an external transdisciplinary team to lead the research and convened an internal research working group made up of stakeholders from various sections of TfNSW who had direct influence in the subject.

TfNSW policy, strategy and project teams, along with frontline staff, who are impacted by or responsible for taking forward the research findings and evidence, were engaged throughout the process. The outcomes of the research reframe transport hubs as part of an infrastructure of care, aligning with national, state and local planning priorities. It demonstrates how stations and precincts can support PLP without diminishing customer experience or service delivery.

A Literature and Best Practices Review, Design Principles, and Stakeholder Framework (Figure 1) were developed to create the foundation for policy direction. Together, this will inform how infrastructure will be designed with the consideration of homelessness service provision, provide the tools for how staff and operators manage their interactions with PLP and shape TfNSW's role alongside other Government departments and with non-government organisations. This project exemplifies how planning and design can address challenges in mobility to deliver environments that are safe, inclusive and socially responsive.

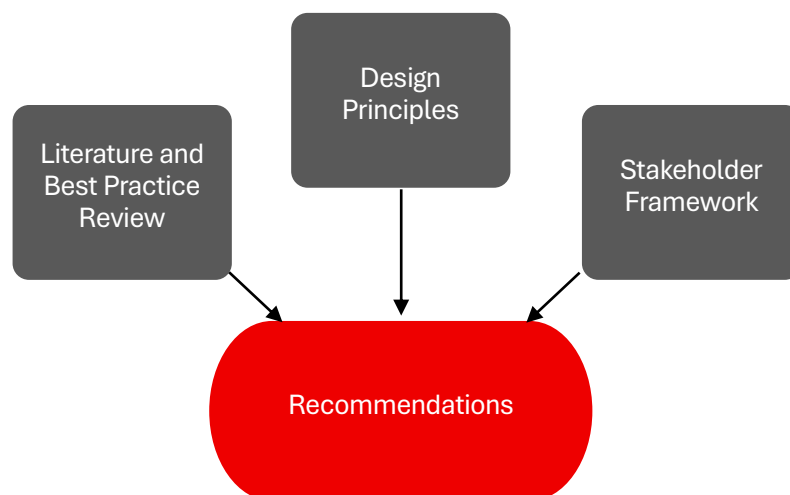


Figure 1: Research elements of the report

Need for Research



Rising Homelessness Around Stations

- **24% increase in rough sleepers** in Sydney, especially near Central Station and Wentworth Park. (Sydney Local Health District, 2025)
- Highlights the urgency and complexity of addressing homelessness in transport precincts.



Fragmented Stakeholder Landscape

- **Numerous stakeholders** involved: federal/state agencies, councils, grassroots organisations.
- Lack of a **shared framework** and **clear engagement pathways** complicates coordinated action.



Strategic and Operational Gaps

- Existing protocols support respectful engagement, but there's **a need for broader strategic frameworks**.
- Stations must evolve from passive spaces to **active hubs of care and support**.



Infrastructure and Design Limitations

- Inclusive design is a core value, but **implementation is still emerging**.
- Need for infrastructure that supports **care delivery and safe environments** for vulnerable populations.



Coordination and Leadership

- TfNSW is well-positioned to lead but must **strengthen cross-agency collaboration**.
- Requires **institutional clarity** on TfNSW's role within the broader care ecosystem.



Evidence-Based Action

- Research and stakeholder workshops revealed the importance of **lived experience input**.
- Findings emphasise the need for **inclusive, connected, and safe station precincts**.

Project Overview

Homelessness in and around train stations is a complex challenge requiring coordinated action across all tiers of government, alongside non-government and community-based organisations. As of February 2025, the City of Sydney recorded 346 people sleeping rough in the inner city, representing a 24% increase from the previous year's count of 280 individuals (Mercy Foundation, 2025). Notably, Central Station and Wentworth Park have been identified as key locations where individuals are sleeping rough (Sydney Local Health District, 2025).

TfNSW is one of twelve state government signatories to the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places (herein **The Protocol**) and Homeless People in Public Places Implementation Guidelines released by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice in 2022 and April 2024 respectively. The Guidelines provide guidance for departmental and agency staff so they can engage more respectfully with PLP or lacking housing (2024, p. 4). While the document guides direct relationships with unhoused people, more strategic and operational guidance is required - especially since train stations can play a significant role for PLP, who might become rough sleepers or who might connect with social services leading to opportunities to enter more stable housing situations.

TfNSW is already taking steps to address these challenges through internal pilots and cross-agency initiatives, such as Transport Asset Management's (TAM) Affordable Housing Pilot Project (2024). The department has also committed to collaborative research focused on care in transit, including this project. These initiatives reflect a growing institutional willingness to respond, but a more consistent and system-wide approach is needed.

TfNSW faces challenges in defining a stakeholder approach for care in transit due to the wide range of potential partners – from government bodies to informal support groups, especially concentrated in Sydney's central business district and inner suburbs. This complexity highlights the need for consistent engagement pathways and a shared framework. As a state agency, TfNSW is well positioned to lead care practices around transport hubs, guided by its commitment to inclusive design across its infrastructure program to improve the quality, reach and experience of its transport facilities, services and operational management.

Specifically, the project aimed to:

1. Identify stakeholders, their services and needs, and work with them through co-design to provide a framework on how to manage and engage with them.
2. Seek clarity on the services that are provided at a broad range of TfNSW precincts, how they are coordinated and communicated to those in need.
3. Understand best practice in creating infrastructure that accommodates for the delivery of homeless services whilst not being detrimental to the experience of other customers and the delivery of TfNSW services.

The Protocol and the Guidelines, provide further guidance on how people’s circumstances can be considered when enforcing laws and regulations (2024, p. 4). The document presents a person-centred care ethic for workers and offers guidance on engaging with PLP in ways that respect their personal agency.

The Guidelines primarily address incidental social interactions, which tend to occur at the interface between train station staff and PLP. Yet, the decision by TfNSW to consider more inclusive design in its future train station developments will support deeper integration of the Protocol into TfNSW organisational commitments, practices and culture.

Inclusive design practices will prompt the organisation to engage more explicitly with what it means to care institutionally, and how the boundaries of inclusivity will be delineated. The outcomes of these considerations will influence policy, management, station design and operations. The articulated parameters for caregiving by TfNSW as a government agency, and by workers representing the organisation, will flow to customer and service relationships via shifts in trust, solidarity, and reciprocity as expressed through social and spatial interactions.

A caring politics situates empathy at the center of decision-making (Care Collective, 2020) for physical, social and organisational infrastructures. It also ...engenders new concepts of belonging, citizenship and rights...” through which states (as well as communities and individuals) are called upon to contribute toward ...a sense of solidarity, toward all its inhabitants” (Care Collective, 2020, p. 68).

Care is... “an active relation co-constituted by care giver and receiver. It describes a caring relationship shaped through relations of trust, solidarity, and reciprocity, a relation in which care givers work with (rather than simply care for) care receivers in the performance of care” (E. R. Power, 2019, p. 765)

Research Approach

The project focused on creating inclusive environments that enable the delivery and receipt of care, particularly for PLP. Commencing in August 2024, this research employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate how PLP interact with and experience the public transport environment in Sydney, NSW. The study, which received Human Research Ethics Approval, integrated quantitative analyses of incident and usage data with qualitative research techniques including site observations, social service mapping, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and stakeholder workshops (Figure 2). This comprehensive approach enabled the research team to explore spatial patterns, service coordination, and the broader care ecosystem within the TfNSW network.

Our findings are anchored in two overarching priorities:



Design and manage train stations as inclusive care hubs – prioritising vulnerable users while ensuring balanced, supportive experience for all customers.



Strengthen collaboration with care providers at stations to support vulnerable users, while enhancing the station experience for all and deepening community connection.

Literature Review

The first stage of the project involved a review of scholarly and grey literature addressing policy, care, design, research methods, collective impact, effective partnerships, and useful national and international case studies by evaluating for the inclusion or exclusion of people experiencing homelessness. Findings from the literature informed analyses.

Quantitative Analysis

Incident data from 2022–2024 and entry/exit data from 2022–2023 were analysed to explore correlations between passenger volumes and types of incidents. Significant associations were found between higher passenger volumes and incidents such as harassment, graffiti, and bodily harm, particularly on the City Circle line. However, no strong spatial correlations were identified between station design and incident types.

Site Observations

Fieldwork was conducted across nine train stations over three observation periods of three days each from ~7:00am–1:00am on average in October 2024, December 2024 and May 2025. Stations were observed within the city centre to gain an understanding of how TfNSW assets were being used. Stations included Central Station, Town Hall, Wynyard, Circular Quay, Martin Place, St James, Museum, Kings Cross, with Parramatta included as a non-CBD site.

Observations focused on architectural features, urban furniture, and socio-spatial dynamics. Techniques included walking interviews and casual conversations with station staff, service providers, and PLP. These interactions provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of PLP and informal service provision. Safety protocols were followed, including trauma-informed research training, geo-location tracking and security support from TfNSW.

Social Service Mapping

The team reviewed existing social service provider directories, with 10 of 32 organisations responding to calls to verify offerings and mapped the location of the services. This mapping was refined through site visits, interviews, focus groups with service group networks and input from PLP to better understand service coordination and outreach logistics. These activities extended participation to 19 services in total. Discussions highlighted a complex pattern of located and mobile services, diversity of services—ranging from food and showers to medical care and education—and the challenges of coordinating care across agencies.

Focus Group Engagement

A focus group with StreetCare, a lived-experience advisory committee supported by the Justice and Equity Centre, offered qualitative insights into the use of public transport facilities by people experiencing homelessness. Discussions addressed safety, station design, interactions with staff, and the use of transport assets for shelter. The feedback informed inclusive design principles and best practice guidelines aimed at improving accessibility and dignity in transit environments.

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted with PLP, service providers - including local government, as well as researchers, and transport agency staff across Australia, North America, and Europe. These conversations explored trauma-informed practices, service coordination, and strategies for inclusive transit spaces. Interviews were documented and analysed thematically to identify challenges and opportunities for improving care within the transport network.

Workshops

Four stakeholder workshops were held to validate findings and refine design and governance frameworks. Participants included TfNSW staff, service providers, and advocacy groups. Workshops focused on inclusive design, operational barriers, and cross-agency collaboration. Feedback informed the development of practical, sustainable recommendations for improving public transport environments for PLP.

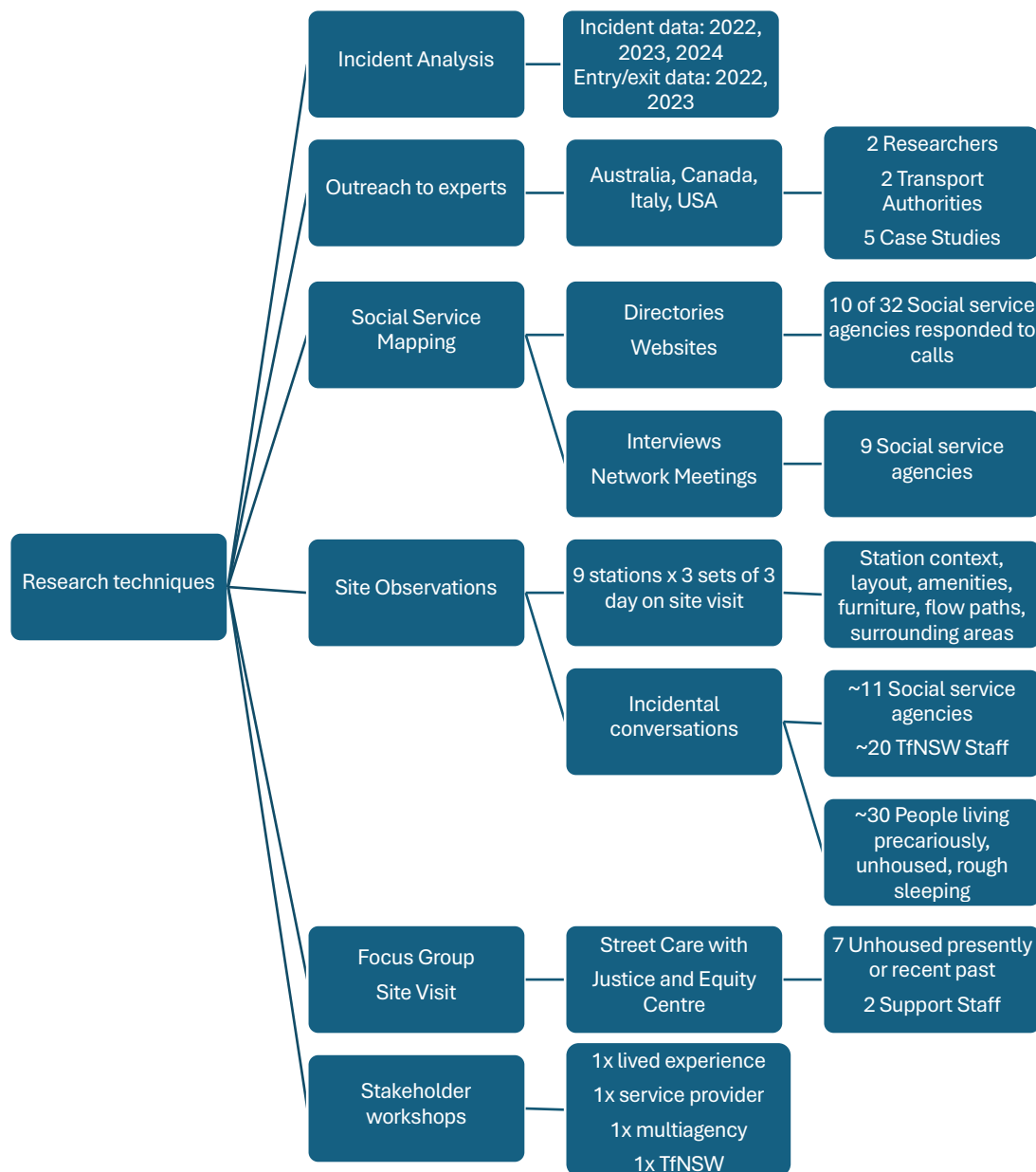


Figure 2: Summary of methods and participants

Fieldwork Insights

The literature revealed that there is a lack of research focused specifically on homelessness in Australian transport environments. To address this gap, fieldwork was conducted across Sydney stations and surrounding public spaces.

Preliminary observations confirmed both the visibility of homelessness in Sydney's transport environments and the vital role stations already play in informal and formal networks of care. Observations highlighted the diversity of people who use stations as places of safety or shelter, the complexity of their needs, extensive delivery of social services in or adjacent to stations, and the gaps in coordinated social service provision.

Stations are equally diverse as they are shaped by their design and amenities, connection, or lack of, to ownership of adjacent properties and their uses, as well as their surrounding urban context.

Central Station was identified as one of the most well-used stations in the CBD and across the network by rough sleepers due to its size, location, and availability of vacant spaces. Central Station offers the most supportive environment for service provision aimed at PLP given its long history of working with care organisations.

Fieldwork confirmed that stations are not only points of transit but also critical places where PLP meet every day needs and negotiate their place in public space.

“It’s not just about physical needs. It’s about having a sense of community and feeling included and how you feel about space.”

Design, purpose of mobility, social expectations and economic capabilities influence how various cohorts of people move, gather and rest, while amenities such as toilets, water, electricity, seating and storage shape daily routines and perceptions of safety. These environments communicate social messages – whether stations feel welcoming, stigmatising or exclusionary depends on how design principles are applied and how staff enact their roles.

If you sleep somewhere public, it s safer because someone might see if something happens.

Key insights:

1. There is a care economy/shadow care economy that TfNSW is contributing to through its provision of space, facilities, amenities, and care from staff.
2. Staff are not often equipped for their unofficial role in care.
3. There is a high diversity of people using stations to meet their basic needs e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, formal citizenship status, health, time and reason for being in station, and therefore require different approaches or engagement.
4. Stations are the safest place to be for many people for reasons such as security, hygiene, comfort, electricity, protection away from violence or drugs in homes or public housing, as well as purpose (make money, socialise), self-efficacy/determination.
5. Property and organisational boundaries challenge provision of care, expectation and ‘rules’ e.g. public, semi-public and private space, and management of those spaces such as local government or state government obligations compared to those of private or community interests - so communicative partnerships are essential for success.
6. The personal, social and organisational rewards/costs of care e.g. ethical, moral, political, financial needs to be recognised.

Design Principles: Infrastructures of Care

Rail travel must compete with other modes of transport if it is to fulfil its economic, social and ecological potential. It is imperative that the train network and its facilities are relatively more appealing than alternate modes while meeting customer requirements for safety, comfort, convenience and amenity. Furthermore, train stations are also workplaces, where health and wellbeing of staff is paramount. Therefore, the importance of accommodating and reconciling the diverse demands and expectations of transport environments held by their stakeholders cannot be underestimated.

The design principles presented here guide TfNSW decision-making when developing or re-designing train stations. These Principles augment other guidance documents that help the organisation create more inclusive environments¹.

Train Stations as Ecosystems of Care

Railway stations often function as the centre of a complex ecosystem of care within which PLP and others engage in a mix of formal and informal care through tangible and intangible measures. Social service providers range from registered agencies who exist in a structure of organised, institutional care to ‘organic’ care offered and received informally from staff, unregistered individuals or groups delivering social services, passengers and other PLP. As such, the ecosystem of care is made possible by physical, social and financial measures underpinned by the professional and/or personal investment of staff, passengers and other PLP (Figure 3). These domains of care are interdependent, so they are bound by complex feedback loops.

They’ll have doctors, they’ll have social workers, they will have vans with dry cleaning facilities ... it’s been going on here for years and years ... every day, seven days a week.”

¹ Beyond A to B: Urban Design for Public Transport and Precincts (2024); Better Placed (2017); Safer Cities Program – Great Places Toolkit (2024); TfNSW Principles and Framework for Aboriginal Engagement (2022); NSW Guide to Gender-Inclusive Placemaking (2024); Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2018–2022

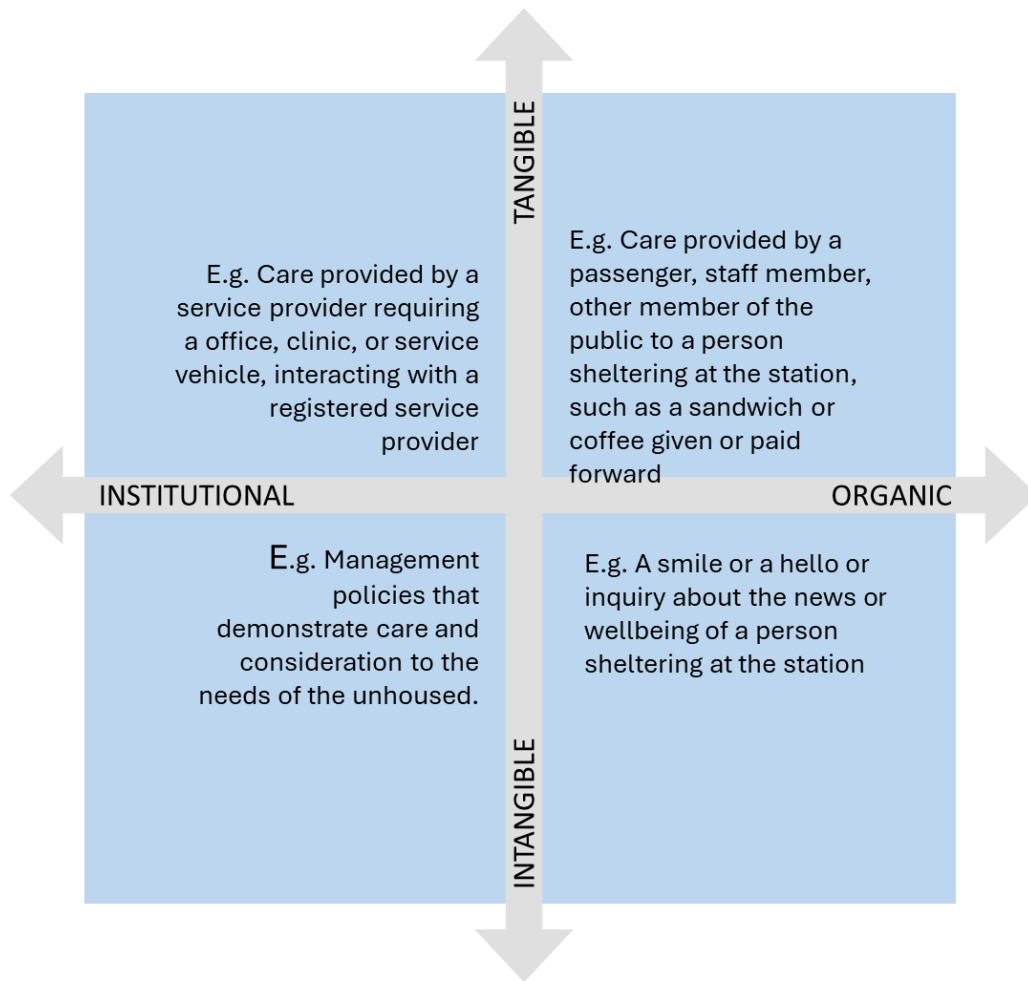


Figure 3: The ecosystem of care at railway stations

The care ecosystem can also be understood as inter-related domains of influence and impact, which is illustrated in Figure 4.

- Hardware: physical places we create that frame who can go where and how the level of appeal for places
- Software: emotional and behavioural elements of hopes, fears, expectations and values that people bring to places and their interactions
- Orgware: priorities, policies and perspectives of the organisations and agencies that wield power over spaces and relationships.

Action in any of these dimensions will affect the other two. Interactions are likely to be particularly strong in the relatively closed environments of railway stations.

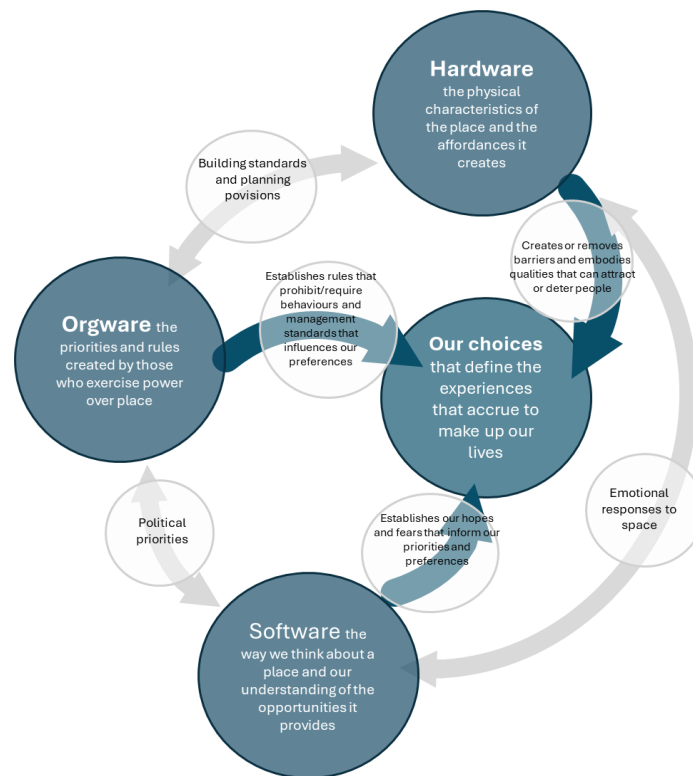


Figure 4: Relationship between hardware, software and orgware

Challenges of Reconciling Needs for Care

Balancing competing interests with ecosystems of care can be challenging when managing spaces used for purposes other than efficient mobility. Staff, passengers and station users contribute to each other's perceptions of public safety² and insecurity (Figure 4). Common activities such as waiting, resting or hanging out at train stations can lead to:

- hazards e.g. people and possessions creating fire and trip hazards, management liabilities
- experiences of distress and discomfort (emotional, mental, social and physical) such as fear of unpredictable, anti-social or confrontational behaviours
- potential and actual abuse
- public expression of unresolved traumas
- ethical failure/reputational damage of staff and organisation.

Challenges are exacerbated when train stations are used to augment or replace other forms of domestic need such as accommodation. While communities can form within station environments and along the network, leading to high levels of respect and empathy for PLP, emotional discomfort can also be present. Feelings of fear, pity, shame, confusion and/or anger can be triggered by adverse perceptions and experiences leading to reduced patronage – whether warranted or not.

² List is not exhaustive.

Objectives of Care

Any actions that support PLP and the social services helping them, passengers and other network users, are tasked with reconciling diverse needs. Figure 5 illustrates four possible approaches to prioritising different groups of train station users. To achieve care in transit, design interventions should be developed to achieve Approach 'D', whereby balancing rather than significantly prioritising one group over another. An auxiliary objective centres on enabling PLP to access better alternatives than railway stations to live their lives, rather than viewing success as a matter of simply encouraging them to leave railway stations.

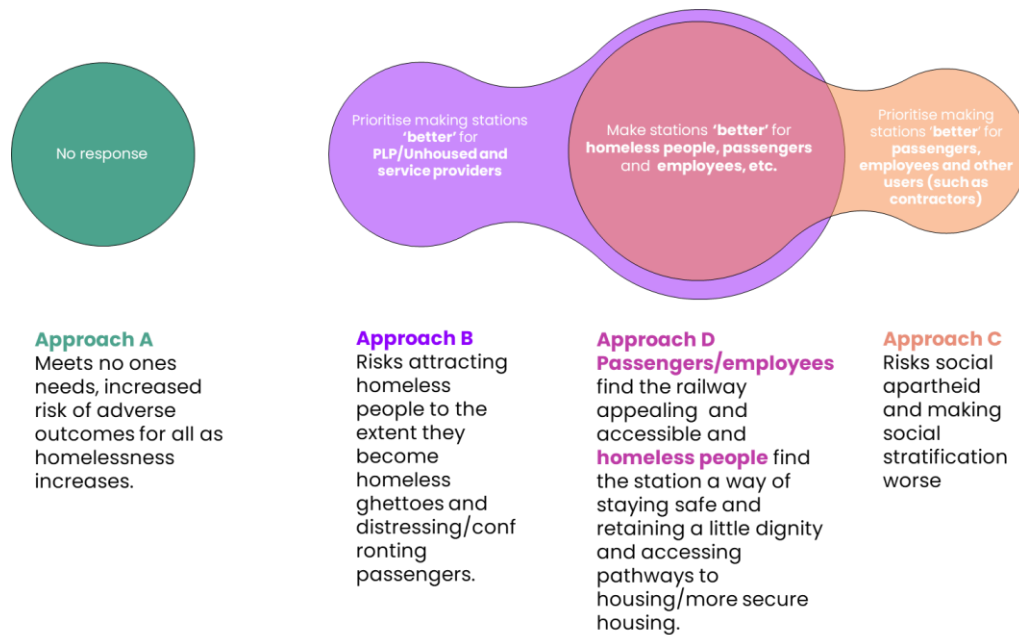


Figure 5: Four potential approaches to designing and managing stations and their outcomes

Values

This research identified the following six essential values for directing design processes:

- Elevate Dignity – services and opportunities can be accessed without diminishment of esteem or at a cost of attracting stigma
- Efficiency of Care – services and opportunities achieve their optimal impact through considered and effective delivery without unnecessary call on resources, which could be denied, so they can -be used elsewhere
- Support Care – offering and receiving care, in all its forms is no more difficult than it needs to be
- Reconcile agendas- care should not be a zero-sum game. Supporting the wellbeing of one group is not achieved by diminishing the experience of another group
- Recognise the interplay between the built, social and regulatory environment, and ensure they complement each other

- Value passive care. The mere presence of other people who may look out for PLP offers some reassurance and emotional comfort to many PLP.

Care Priorities in Decision-Making

Care in All Decisions

Designing for care in transit ensures that interventions made to meet the needs of one group of people will not result in, or will limit, a corresponding denial of opportunity for others. All elements that serve the needs of PLP need to be legible, perceived as welcoming and inclusive to diminish unintentional barriers for self-care or accessing other services and opportunities.

Designing for care means considering the most effective and efficient place for care to be delivered which may be delivered in a station or not. Services need to be situated with appropriate visibility and accessibility so opportunities can be accessed, with supportive privacy and confidentiality and free from unnecessary social judgement or perceived stigma.

Minimising Conflict for Space

The organic provision of many forms of care is facilitated when those who share stations and provide that care feel safe and do not feel their own ability to meet their needs is diminished. Providing ample opportunities to sit, access electricity outlets, water and other amenities will reduce the potential for conflict because people will be able to find a comfortable space/place and reduce concern about the broader use of facilities by PLP.

Recognising Needs

Needs can be divided into foundational needs of safety, shelter, food and water and subsidiary needs (such as the need for affection, connection, expression, satisfaction, etc.). To enable PLP to change their housing trajectory towards more stable housing both foundational and subsidiary needs should be met.

Recognising Embedded Messages in Design

Physical and social surroundings communicate meanings of how their elements can or should be used, when, why whom, and for length of time, which can signal levels of care within environments for different cohorts of people. Our surroundings can promote inclusion when they enable people, regardless of housing status, to:

- Occupy places that reflect positively on their self-esteem such as places embodying a high standard of design and management.
- Avoid places that reflect negatively on their sense of self-esteem, such as places that look and feel 'left over' or are poorly maintained.
- Share places with other people on equal terms, where that occupation is by right and not conditional or less than other users.

Places that are well designed, well-maintained and are comfortable suggest institutional and public care while inferring higher status on the people occupying that place.

Care in Contextualised Design

A place-based approach is essential for informing design of services and physical design interventions such as mix of issues and user expectations, legacy of past perceptions, behaviours and experiences, plus management techniques. Considerations include:

- Type of intervention
- Scale of intervention
- Sustainability of intervention
- Displacement due to intervention

Adaptability

Needs change as the nature of homelessness changes. Any interventions will need to be subject to periodical review and adaptable to ensure spaces and activities can respond to changing needs and priorities as well as amendments to the regulatory context.

Recognising and Addressing Plurality of Needs

Decisions must be made with some understanding of the multiple perspectives that will inform how different groups of people perceive their environment, possible issues and potential solutions. It is important that perceived enhancements for one group are not achieved at the cost of significant disadvantages for others.

Meet Multiple Needs Wherever Possible

Interventions need to be designed so they are perceived and experienced by different people, with different perspectives as relevant to their needs without diminishing the ability of that intervention to meet the needs of others.

Design Principles

The values, priorities and contextualisation of design leads to a people-centric focus that seeks to offer the greatest level of accessibility within dynamic environments that support dignity and discretion, while reducing interpersonal stress and conflict (Table 1).

Table 1: Design principles and expression of principles

Principles	Built form expression of that principle
1. Polyvalence Different people can experience the same place and see it as relevant to their ability to meet their (different) needs	Each element can serve multiple purposes; formally and informally with minimal conflict
2. Incidentally Each person has the opportunity to meet multiple needs at the same time	Elements are arranged to enable them to be accessed with minimal unnecessary cognitive or physical effort
3. Legibility Each person can understand the options open to them	All available opportunities can be easily understood (but balanced with a need for discretion where appropriate)
4. Appropriately discreet Use of any particular service or opportunity brings minimal risk of attracting stigma	Available options, opportunities and experiences are as visible as they need to be for the intended audience and no more
5. Welcoming Being in and around a station makes the user feel welcome and they have a right to be there	Accessing choices and opportunities does not impose emotional or physical discomfort
6. Conciliatory Stations are designed and managed to minimise conflicts and the tension associated with the anticipation of conflict	Potential flashpoints or points of conflict are minimised
7. Dignifying The experience of a station offers the user the conscious or subconscious comfort and reassurance their needs have been considered and determined to be important	All (reasonable) human needs accommodated. Being there reflects well on the person in that space
8. Salutogenic Being in a station does not add to the allostatic load (burden of stress) on the users	Physical environment supports healthy lifestyles, does not provoke feelings of stress, anxiousness, or are depressing
9. Evolving Design responds to changing needs/priorities and learn the lessons of previous services	Spaces that can easily be adapted to different uses
10. Stations better for all When PLP, staff and passengers are less stressed the chances of conflicts arising are diminished	Qualities that diminish the perceived time people are waiting for their trains and ensure they are not stressed by discomfort or fear

Illustrating Care in Design

Care in Transit commences when people make the decision to travel, work or rest in train stations. This includes reputation, communication about services, as well as the assets and services. This section illustrates how care in design might be expressed in station environments.

Station Approach

Many customers, staff and other station users engage in anticipatory navigation as they approach station facilities or move between transport modes. Routes may be selected based on their needs or perceptions of efficiency, safety, weather, people and so forth.

You need to have [signs for facilities] big, because most people don't know where to go".

Signs don't make sense to everyone. You feel stupid for not knowing".

Important elements include:

- Clear access zones for different modes of transport.
- Clear signage and other way finding techniques leading to the train station as well as other services on the site e.g. located social services, cafes, parking area for mobile social services.
- Vegetation that enhances the landscape while maintaining visibility.
- Seating that provides arm rests for mobility, and space for stretching out.
- A water station that is easily accessible for drinking directly or filling water bottles.
- Roof overhang that can protect from weather.
- Lighting at night that facilitates visibility rather than pools of light and dark near pathways and semi-light near seats close to the station for those who need to rest safely.

Concourse and Platforms

Figures 6 and 7 provide examples of design that seeks to reduce conflict between diverse train station users by providing adequate seating, wide corridors and lockers for the commuting public, including those who are unhoused.

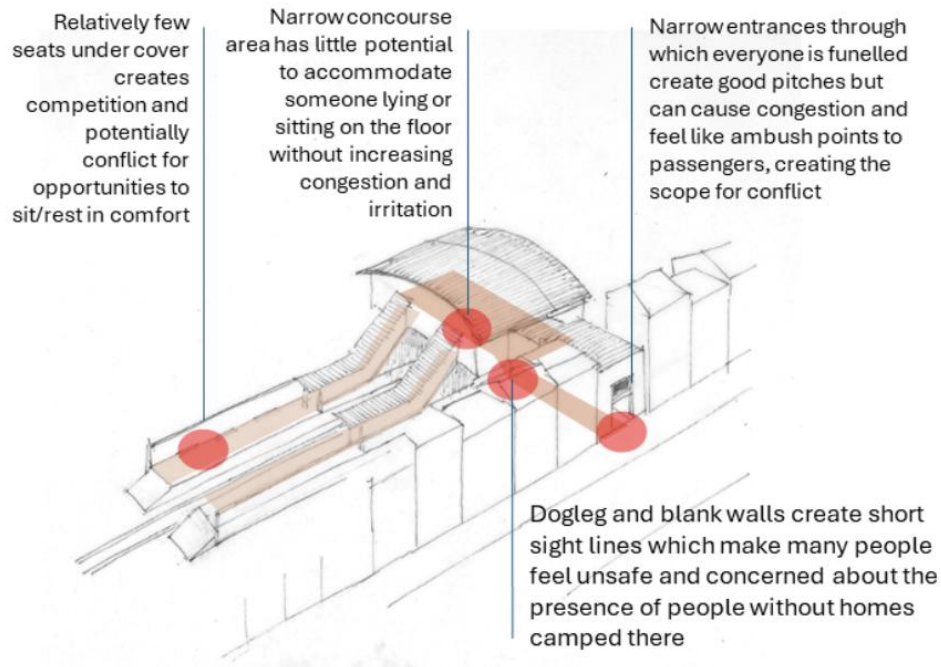


Figure 6: Design decisions that exacerbate potential conflicts

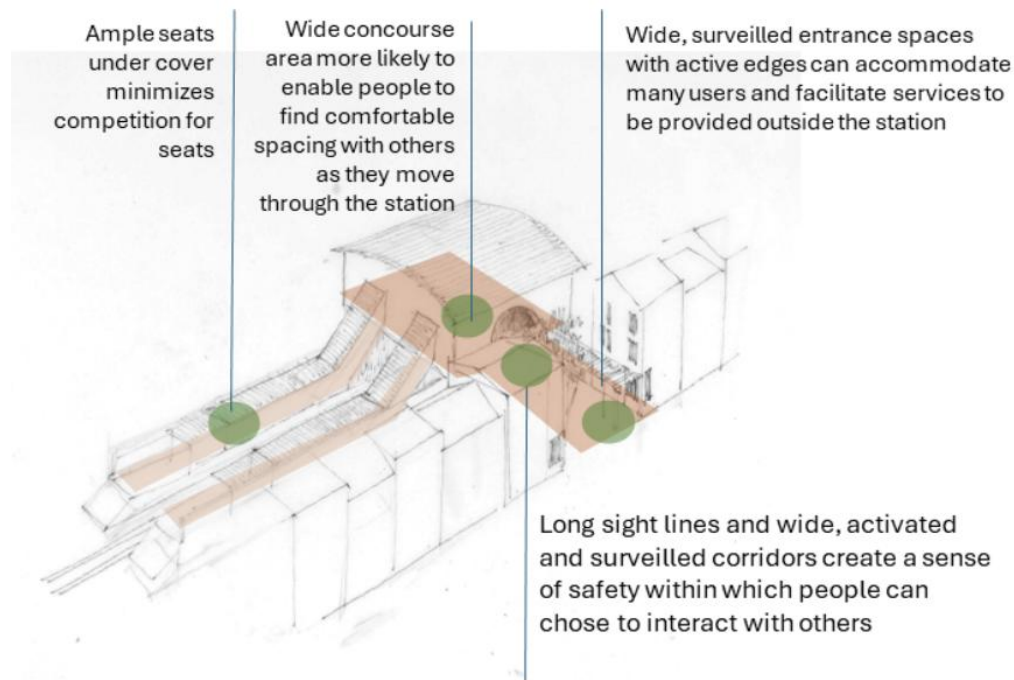


Figure 7: Design decisions that ameliorate potential conflicts

Accessing Social Services

Figure 8 emphasises how design and signage can communicate respect, support dignity while providing social service provision within a station asset. Ideally, entry ways would be accessible from the street rather than the station to help delineate boundaries between transport and other services.

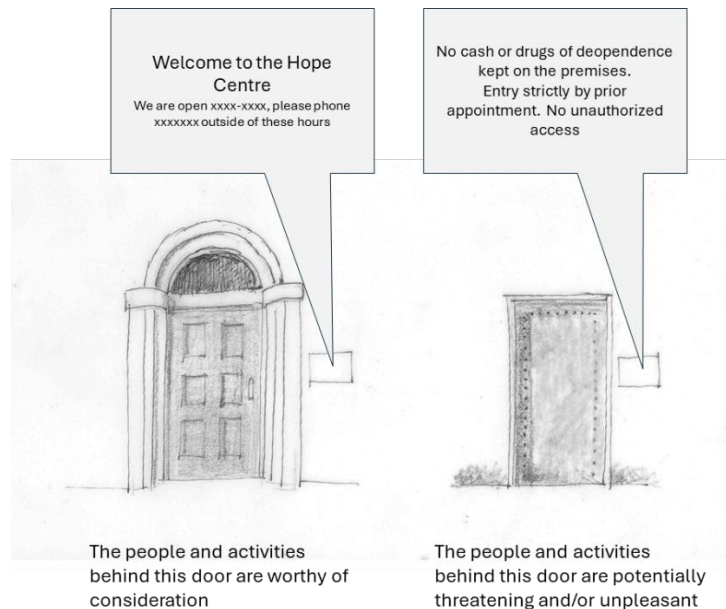


Figure 8: Embodied messages communicated by design

Supporting Social Environments

Figures 9 to 11 illustrate how spaces in or around train stations can support social inclusion. In each of the images, station users can sit, observe, seek social connection directly or passively.

In the first image, multiple people can sit within a landscaped area, using perches or sitting against the walls. The foliage offers therapeutic benefits at the same time as a reduced visibility that still provides surveillance.

In the second image, greater inclusion can be created by advertising social services, exhibiting art works or photographs – some of which from or featuring people living precariously.

The café in the third image requires greater economic ability, however it can facilitate ‘pay it forward’ as well as allowing people to rest nearby and benefit from proximity to other people, lighting and security.

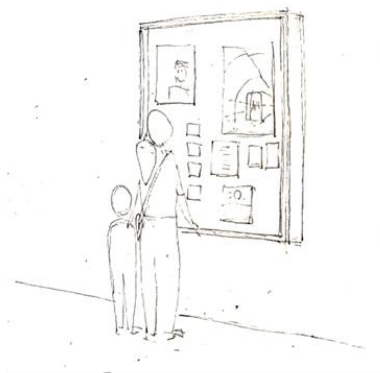
Combination planting bed,
perched seating wall



"I like it, it really brightens the station"

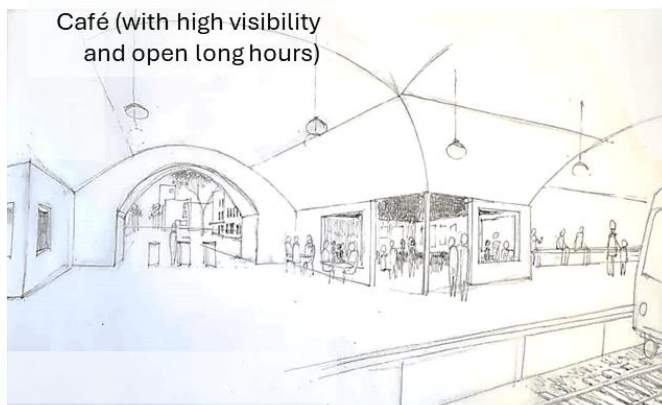
"I like it, its somewhere to rest"

"Gallery wall"
exhibiting Art on the
tracks: curated works
by staff, passengers,
PLP



"I like it, it gives me something to look at as I wait for the train"

"I like it, it's the first time I had my work exhibited"



Café (with high visibility
and open long hours)

"I like it, I can sit nearby and stay safe"

"I like it, I can get a coffee"

Figures 9-11: Design characteristics that resonate with different people for different reasons

Specific Design Features

Lift designs	Design lifts that are flush or bulge outward from walls to reduce conflicts between station users or assist with feelings of safety. This design supports high visibility and prevents situations in which people using lifts and people sleeping in lift alcoves are sharing limited space
Electricity outlets	Provide electricity outlets through seating which provides customers, including people living precariously, with an opportunity to charge their phones, rest longer, improve their safety by keeping phones connected, and improve others' safety by reducing tripping hazards
Lockers	Provide lockers and/or lockers on wheels that can be secured, for people living precariously who use train stations for work e.g. selling the big issue or need to store belongings but cannot afford fees. These lockers support the ability of people living precariously to go to the toilet, maintain their hygiene, etc. without fear of losing or having their belongings stolen.
Toilet facilities	Provide a diversity of toileting facilities, while ensuring enough space for belongings within the cubicle space. Provide access to more comprehensive toilet and shower facilities at larger stations or stations in areas with high levels of recreational activities or tourism. People living precariously can be allocated time periods where they can access the facilities with minimal conflict e.g. low peak work hours.
Roof hangings etc	Design-in roof overhangs, interior placement of station roller doors or vertical posts, buttresses and other features that can provide rough sleepers with protection from weather and low-level visibility that still offers safety to staff, passengers and PLP.

Stakeholder Framework

The Stakeholder Framework identifies that TfNSW has largely operated at the margins of the homelessness support system. While TfNSW is an invested stakeholder and potential partner for social service providers who support PLP, engagement with social service providers has typically been limited to crisis or enforcement-driven interactions, such as contacting police or health services in emergency situations. This has positioned TfNSW as a reactive outsider rather than an active contributor to care, limiting both the effectiveness of responses for PLP and TfNSW's ability to draw on the expertise of the homelessness sector.

“I’m not a trauma psychologist; I’m not trained to do this – I don’t have the skills.”

By increasing its visibility, clarity of role and consistency of participation in homelessness and public space governance, TfNSW can directly improve outcomes for PLP who use stations as places of refuge, access, and connection. Early engagement, shared planning, and clearer pathways between transport operations and support services enable care to be provided more safely and effectively, rather than only at points of crisis.

The stakeholder map (Figure 12) positions TfNSW as an active partner within the broader care ecosystem. This signals a shift from managing homelessness as an external issue to recognising stations as critical sites within place-based responses to rough sleeping. By participating more deliberately in these networks, TfNSW can help homelessness more effectively.

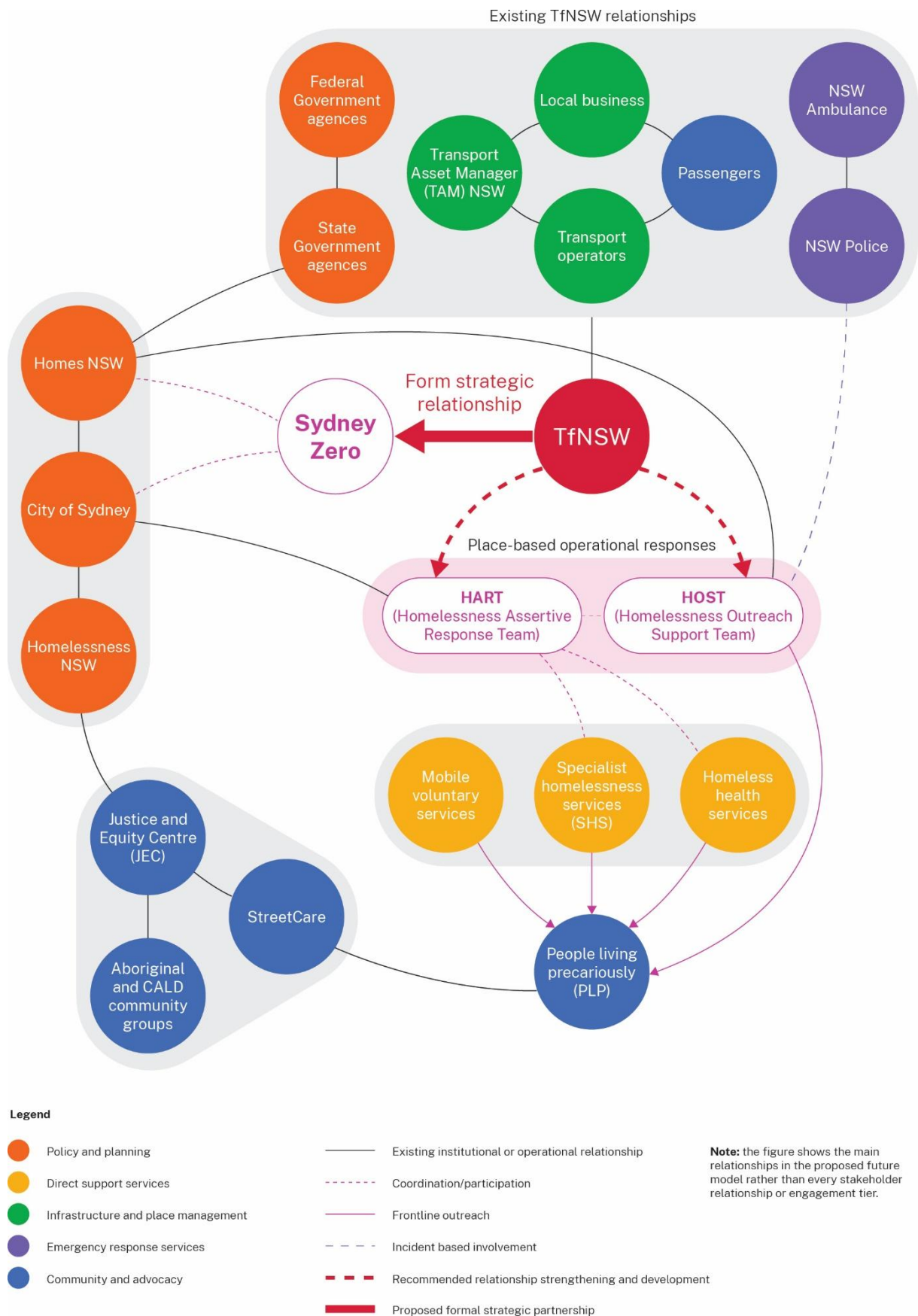


Figure 12: Proposed insertion of TfNSW into stakeholder networks that address homelessness

Development of a stakeholder framework underscores the benefits of increasing TfNSW profile and presence in social service support discussions. The framework classifies stakeholders by their core functions and level of influence on outcomes. By considering these relationships and categorising their strategic and operational purpose, more effective partnerships can be developed.

Formal partner engagement → Less ad hoc action → Better care

Engagement through a formalised stakeholder framework is critical because international case studies consistently demonstrate that transport authorities cannot effectively address homelessness within their premises in isolation. Where positive outcomes have been achieved, transport agencies have worked as active partners within broader interagency systems of care, rather than responding in ad hoc or crisis-driven ways.

For TfNSW, participation at a strategic level, particularly through alignment with Sydney Zero, enables the organisation to contribute to place-based, coordinated responses aimed at making rough sleeping rare and non-recurrent.

Sydney Zero aims to make rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurrent, and is highly relevant in inner-city Sydney, where services, governance structures and rough sleeping are already organised at a metropolitan scale. The research recognises that other parts of NSW will require locally appropriate, place-based coordination models that reflect different service ecosystems, geographies and needs.

By engaging in this way, TfNSW shifts from reactive incident management to intentional planning, clearer role definition and shared accountability, improving care pathways for PLP while supporting safer, more predictable station operations.

Stakeholders' feedback affirmed the framework's overall direction and functions while also identifying areas that would benefit from further development. Improvements primarily addressed role clarity, practical implementation, and contextual adaptability.

Key functions include:

- policy and planning: stakeholders who shape strategy, develop policy, allocate funding, or guide systemic responses to homelessness and public space management.
- infrastructure and space management: stakeholders responsible for managing, maintaining, or delivering transport services and infrastructure.
- direct support services: organisations that provide housing, health care, case management, and outreach to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- emergency response services: stakeholders who respond to incidents and crises in transport environments, including health emergencies and public order concerns.
- community and advocacy: individuals and groups who bring lived experience, represent affected communities, or shape public perception and policy discourse.

Organisations serving these functions exert different levels of influence as decision-makers, delivery partners, hubs and influencers. When working toward solutions for PLP in train stations, engagement with partners can take the form of collaboration with an emphasis on close relations and leadership, coordination which focuses more on regular communications for operational matters, cooperation that is characterised by irregular, reactive or project-based relationships, and co-existence with entities with few ties and interactions.

Recommendations

This research highlights that homelessness around transport hubs reflects deeper systemic gaps in care, but also presents a unique opportunity for coordinated, cross-sector solutions. TfNSW is well-positioned to lead this transformation by reimagining stations not just as transit points, but as vital spaces of refuge and connection for vulnerable individuals.

By embracing care as a strategic commitment, TfNSW can influence and support a broader ecosystem of inclusion and dignity through its infrastructure. With strong governance and collaborative partnerships, care becomes an embedded feature of transport environments, guided by clear design principles and stakeholder frameworks. Table 2 provides a practical set of actions based on domain and priority for TfNSW to strengthen its leadership in supporting PLP. Implementing the recommendations will ensure that care is a purposeful and transformative element of the transport experience.

Table 2: Domains and priorities for action

Domain of Action	Priority 1 – Foundational	Priority 2 – Enhancing
Governance	1.1 Partner with Sydney Zero 1.2 Establish station-specific governance frameworks 1.3 Advocate for housing mix in TfNSW precincts	1.4 Support City of Sydney logistics work 1.5 Co-fund JEC & StreetCare guide
Inclusive Station Design & Infrastructure	2.1 Integrate built + programmatic design 2.2 Deliver inclusive amenities (toilets, charging, lockers) 2.3 Ensure high-quality, adaptable design when facilities are allocated for social service provision 2.4 Deliver inclusive seating design	2.5 Promote inclusive engagement & culture of care (art, greening, boards, libraries) 2.6 Provide larger receptacles & item removal policies
Access to Services & Mobility	3.1 Provide discreet, high-quality signage for PLP 3.2 Offer free transport when engaging with services	3.3 Allocate spaces for mobile service provision
Staff Capability & Support	4.1 Deliver trauma-informed training 4.2 Define and communicate referral and enforcement protocols 4.3 Equip and support staff to maintain passenger safety	4.4 Provide cross-agency briefings 4.5 Expand training modules
Lived Experience & Advisory Engagement	5.1 Establish advisory group with paid lived experience reps (incl. Aboriginal and CALD voices)	5.2 Support alternative advisory models (e.g. StreetCare)
Research & Evaluation	6.1 Maintain/expand research partnerships 6.2 Monitor impact across all recommendations	6.3 Develop shared data platforms
Pilot Initiatives	7.1 Trial safe rest and wellbeing spaces at high-need hubs 7.2 Trial liaison roles to coordinate with service organisations 7.3 Trial peer navigator/greeter roles in stations	7.4 Trial reduced or rent-free leases for service hubs 7.5 Test accreditation for volunteer-run services 7.6 Explore modular accommodation trials

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