

Item 3.5

Support for Busking in the City of Sydney

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

The City of Sydney strongly supports busking and we continue to be one of the most permissive city centres in Australia for busking. Buskers are ambassadors for the cultural life of the city and values we celebrate: diversity, respect and inclusion.

On 25 August 2025, Council unanimously adopted the Busking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Practice Local Approvals Policy ('the Policy') and noted the amended Sydney Busking Code ('the Code'), a guidance document accompanying the Policy.

These documents guide busking activity in our area and outline the rules for using the most popular sites, which we call Special Busking Sites. The Code seeks to make it easy for buskers to contribute to our city's vibrancy while ensuring fair access to limited space and avoiding artists overlapping each other, as well safety and amenity for others in the city centre including local businesses and residents.

Updates to the Policy and Code were placed on public exhibition for community feedback for a period of 42 days, between 24 June and 5 August 2025. All registered buskers who provided the City with an email address were notified about the public exhibition and encouraged to leave feedback on the proposed changes. Unfortunately, communication with the busking community was not as clear as it should have been, which understandably led to confusion and frustration. Just 4 buskers provided feedback on the Policy and Code.

The City's Policy "aims to support and promote busking culture in Sydney, in balance with the expectations and needs of all users of public space". It is therefore crucial that the details of the Policy and Code are directed towards achieving this aim.

I have asked the Chief Executive Officer to urgently review the Policy and Busking Code. This includes investigating increasing the number of safe George Street busking sites for all busking permit holders and enabling low impact buskers to perform for longer than one hour at suitable George Street locations.

This review should fully consult Sydney's busking community, including through social media and face-to-face meetings and provide opportunities for buskers to suggest new busking sites and changed arrangements. Where proposals for busking sites may not be possible for safety or amenity reasons, these should be fully explained to the busking community. The review should also consult Transdev - who operate the light rail on George Street - on the safety implication of any proposed changes.

Following the review, the Chief Executive Officer should report any proposed changes to Council for approval to re-exhibit the Policy and the Code, ensuring clear communication and consultation with all interested persons and opportunities for feedback.

This process should be carried out with the aim of increasing busking opportunities as soon as possible in 2026.

Recommendation

It is resolved that the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:

- (A) undertake an urgent review of the Busking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Practice Local Approvals Policy and the Sydney Busking Code as proposed in the subject Minute; and
- (B) following the review, bring a report to Council as soon as possible seeking approval to re-exhibit the Busking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Practice Local Approvals Policy and the Sydney Busking Code, together with a consultation strategy to ensure the busking community and other stakeholders are fully informed about the proposed changes and further opportunities to provide feedback.

THE RT HON CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor of Sydney