

Resolution of Council

21 September 2026

Item 13.6

The NSW Police Raids on Oxford Street Must be Stopped

Moved by Councillor Worling, seconded by Councillor Miller –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) on Saturday night, 12 September 2026, between 12 and 20 police officers raided multiple LGBTQI+ venues, including Darlinghurst's Universal, Palms, Arq, The Beresford and Kinselas, among others
- (ii) this is the second such "intelligence-led" operation on the Oxford Street Precinct in three months, coordinated to target the supply and use of prohibited drugs, and antisocial behaviour
- (iii) the first raid, over the weekend of 12 to 13 June 2026, during Pride Month, resulted in numerous reports of police heavy-handedness, intimidation and disrespectful and aggressive behaviour, not normative community policing
- (iv) these police operations have left the LGBTQIA+ community traumatised, eroded their trust in police and have undermined drug harm minimisation
- (v) these operations also impact a traditionally strained relationship between the police and the LGBTQIA+ community, echoing the darkest chapters in Sydney's queer history such as the first Mardi Gras in June 1978, which ended in violence at the hands of police, and the Club 80 raids in 1983
- (vi) prompted by a massive volume of complaints -- the most received regarding police conduct in over a decade -- Member for Sydney Alex Greenwich and Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore wrote a joint letter to the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) in June 2026, requesting an investigation into the police actions at LGBTIQ+ venues along Oxford Street

- (vii) the probe initially cleared the officers involved of wrongdoing, but the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission ordered NSW Police to reopen the misconduct investigation into the conduct of officers operating in the inner-city precinct; however, this second operation, on 12 September 2026, proceeded despite the ongoing investigation

(B) Council further note:

- (i) Oxford Street's queer venues, staff, performers and patrons should not have to accept this heavy-handed level of policing and intimidation as the new normal
- (ii) such raids, which at the most generally only result in arrests for low level offences rather than serious crimes, are a grave cause of concern because:
 - (a) they increase public distrust of and anxiety about the NSW Police Force
 - (b) they severely risk public confidence in the setting of policing priorities, particularly at a time when there is significant public concern about the apparent failure of NSW Police to prevent violent crimes against innocent people
 - (c) often aggressive, high-visibility policing tactics do not stop consumption, but instead, change behaviour in dangerous ways. Examples include panic consumption or preloading, which can increase the risk of acute overdoses or severe medical emergencies
- (iii) the commercial impact of these raids is also significant for LGBTIQ+ venues. Patrons who feel intimidated or unsafe do not necessarily return the following week and attendance takes time to rebuild
- (iv) small businesses should not be expected to repeatedly absorb tens of thousands of dollars in losses when these operations produce no meaningful enforcement outcome
- (v) these invasive police operations directly undermine the work venues, promoters and the City itself are doing to rebuild Sydney's reputation as a vibrant international nightlife destination. They also fundamentally contradict the recommendations from the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, the current Labor Government's \$150 million nightlife vibrancy reforms agenda, and the City's ongoing revitalisation of the Oxford Street Precinct
- (vi) funding allocated to sniffer dogs and invasive raids would be better directed to community-led LGBTIQ+ safety teams, harm reduction services, and peer-support networks
- (vii) public safety and disrupting illegal drug supply are legitimate objectives, but repeated large-scale operations concentrated on the same strip, producing no arrests or charges, are doing more harm than good

- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to Police Minister Yasmin Catley requesting:
- (i) context and transparency around the intelligence driving these repeated operations and why they continue to be concentrated on LGBTQIA+ venues
 - (ii) that the September 2026 operation be examined by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, with the findings, including the cost to taxpayers and data on the effectiveness of sniffer dogs, made public
 - (iii) a mechanism allowing affected venues and promoters to seek financial reimbursement for demonstrable lost revenue resulting from future “intelligence-led” operations that produce no arrests or charges
 - (iv) the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission attend future operations of this scale to provide independent oversight of how staff and patrons are treated
 - (v) that the Minister address each and all of the matters raised in this Motion
- (D) the Lord Mayor be requested to send a copy of this Motion to the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission
- (E) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to investigate education and promotion of LGBTQIA+ rights to the LGBTQIA+ community and report back via the CEO Update.

Carried unanimously.

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