

Attachment A

**Engagement Report - Busking Policy and
Code Review – Targeted Engagement with
Busking Community**

Busking community – engagement report



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Overview

Background

The Busking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Practice Local Approvals Policy and the Sydney Busking Code guide busking activity in our area and outline the rules for using the most popular sites, which we call Special Busking Sites – these documents were updated in 2025 and adopted by Council in August following a public exhibition between 24 June and 5 August 2025. All registered buskers who provided the City with an email address were notified about the public exhibition, however, just four buskers provided feedback on the policy and code.

A Lord Mayor Minute (LMM) on 17 November 2025, requested that the City urgently review the policy and busking code, including 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.

The LMM requests the City consult Sydney's busking community in the review, 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 are to be fully explained to the busking community. The review will also involve Transdev - who operate the light rail on George Street - on the safety implication of any proposed changes.

Following the review, a report on any proposed changes will be provided to Council for approval to re-exhibit the policy and the code, with the aim of increasing busking opportunities as soon as possible in 2026.

Refer to the LMM: [Support for Busking in the City of Sydney](#) and Notice of Motion "[Supporting Busking in the City](#)" on 17 November 2025.

This report outlines the outcomes of targeted engagement activities with the busking community throughout December 2025 and January 2026. Feedback will help inform revision to the policy and code.

Engagement summary

Throughout December 2025 and January 2026, we invited Sydney's busking community to tell us what they think is working well about busking in Sydney, and what they think is not working well about busking in Sydney. We also sought feedback on suitable busking locations in our local area, particularly on George Street and Pitt Street Mall.

A stakeholder email was sent to 476 buskers registered with the City of Sydney to encourage them to provide feedback during the review of the policy and code. They were invited to complete an online survey, and to attend a drop-in session at Town Hall House on Monday 8 December from 12pm-4pm. Messages were sent with this information to all buskers who had previously communicated with us through social media channels.

Flyers with this information were also distributed to buskers at busking locations throughout the city centre including Pitt St Mall, Hyde Park, Circular Quay, Martin Place and along George Street.

An email was also sent to 14 people who made a submission during the public exhibition in July – August 2025 to advise them that a review was underway and any updates to the policy and code would be placed on public exhibition in 2026.

City staff also consulted with Transdev to understand safety implications of busking along George St, next to the light rail corridor, and Placemaking NSW regarding their management of busking in Barangaroo, The Rocks and Circular Quay.

Purpose of engagement

- Inform buskers of the proposed changes to the busking policy
- Explain why the City has proposed the changes to the policy
- Provide opportunities for buskers to provide feedback
- Seek feedback on new busking sites for George Street and other busy parts of the city, like Pitt Street Mall
- Consult with Transdev to understand safety implications

Engagement outcomes

We received **135 pieces of feedback** during the consultation period, including 31 surveys, 101 comments posted by 15 people at a drop-in session, 2 written submissions, and a face-to-face meeting.

Figure 1: Engagement outcomes snapshot

Quantity	Description of activity
101	Comments received by 15 people at drop-in session
1	Face to face meeting
31	Survey submissions
2	Written submissions (including a submission from Transdev)
135	Total

Key findings

Overall summary

The busking community indicated a strong **desire to be included** in any major changes to the busking policy and code, requesting the City of Sydney proactively consult with them during the review of the policy and code.

Clear communication is also needed to ensure changes are not made without buskers understanding how they will be impacted. Buskers asked for a clear explanation of the changes to the policy – such as details of safety concerns raised.

Respondents agreed busking **creates a lively, fun atmosphere**, allows performers to express their talents and shows diversity in culture. Feedback noted the popularity of busking, drawing crowds in person and millions online who watch them on livestreams every day, and that weight should not be given to the minority of people who complain about busking.

Feedback highlighted the desire to reinstate the **previous busking policy and code**, and the need for flexibility, as people who are homeless, begging, preaching or unlicensed performers (eg. TikTok dances) often occupy busking spots which make them unusable. There was a strong desire for no dedicated pitches on George Street, or dedicated busking ‘areas’ rather than specific ‘spots’. Some argued a one-hour time limit should only apply in popular areas where there are busking queues (such as outside QVB and Woolworths, and Pitt Street Mall), otherwise two-hours is preferable to allow enough time for set up/pack down. Solo musicians with amplified vocals felt they should not be considered a ‘high impact’ act and asked for the recent change to low vs high impact acts to be reassessed.

George Street is an important street for buskers to perform, especially at Town Hall, QVB, in front of Event cinemas, KFC and World Square. Buskers told us George Street worked well under the previous policy and code, where busking was available anywhere along the street, giving them freedom to pick their spot.

Busking safely on George Street alongside the light rail is important. Guidance was sought on how buskers can set up their act safely along the light rail – such as buskers orientated with their backs toward light rail so audiences are positioned away from the light rail and don’t linger on the tracks. Another requested permission to busk on George Street during the road and light rail closures associated with events like Vivid and New Years Eve.

Pitt Street Mall is another popular location for busking. The reduction in spots now available at Pitt Street Mall for “low impact amplified buskers” was raised as an issue, with calls for the Special Busking Sites under the previous policy to be reinstated. Buskers requested disruptions from Christmas activations be minimised. For example, audio of Christmas carols was being regularly played in the mall disrupting buskers performing – suggesting this should be programmed after closing hours especially on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Many buskers raised concerns about **preachers who are disruptive**. It was suggested that a separate location be set aside for preachers away from popular busking spots or ensure they don’t use amplification next to the busking spots. More action by rangers is needed on this issue.

They would also like to see more **advocacy and support**, including a dedicated busking liaison – following the example of Melbourne’s busking team. And would like to see busking included in entertainment programs of festivals and events run/funded by the City of Sydney.

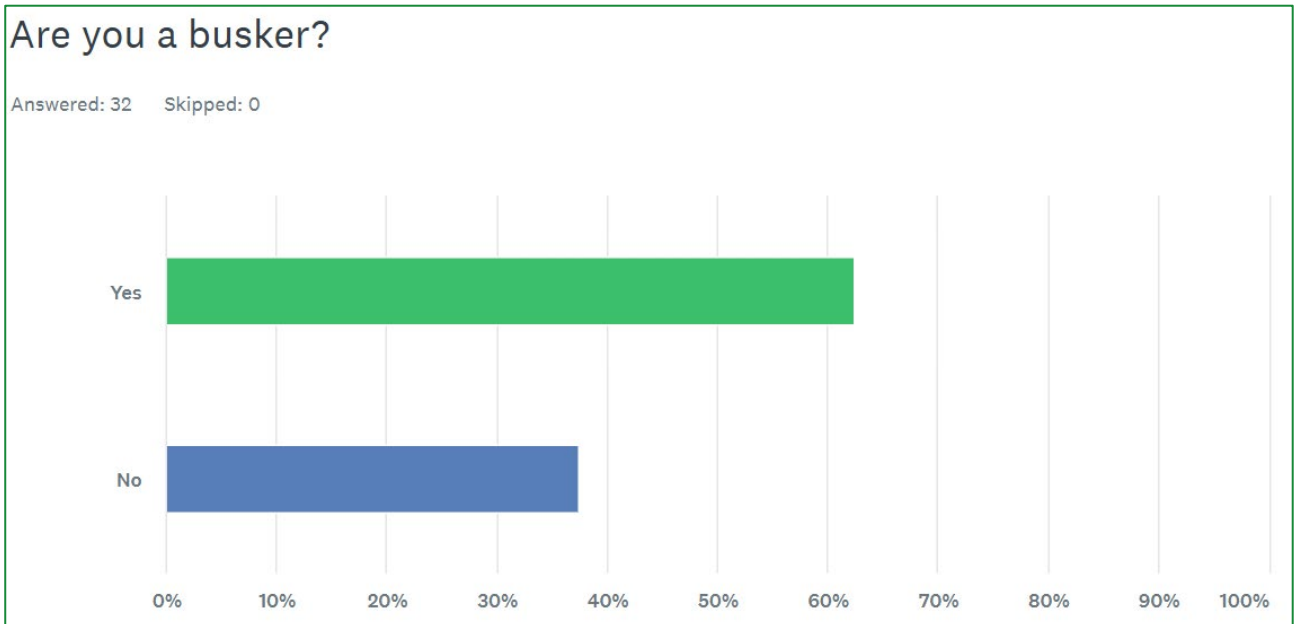
Online survey

31 surveys were completed. Respondents answered 11 questions, responses to these questions are outlined in the below graphs and commentary.

Q.1 Are you a busker?

63% of people who completed the survey selected 'Yes' to this question, and 37% selected 'No'.

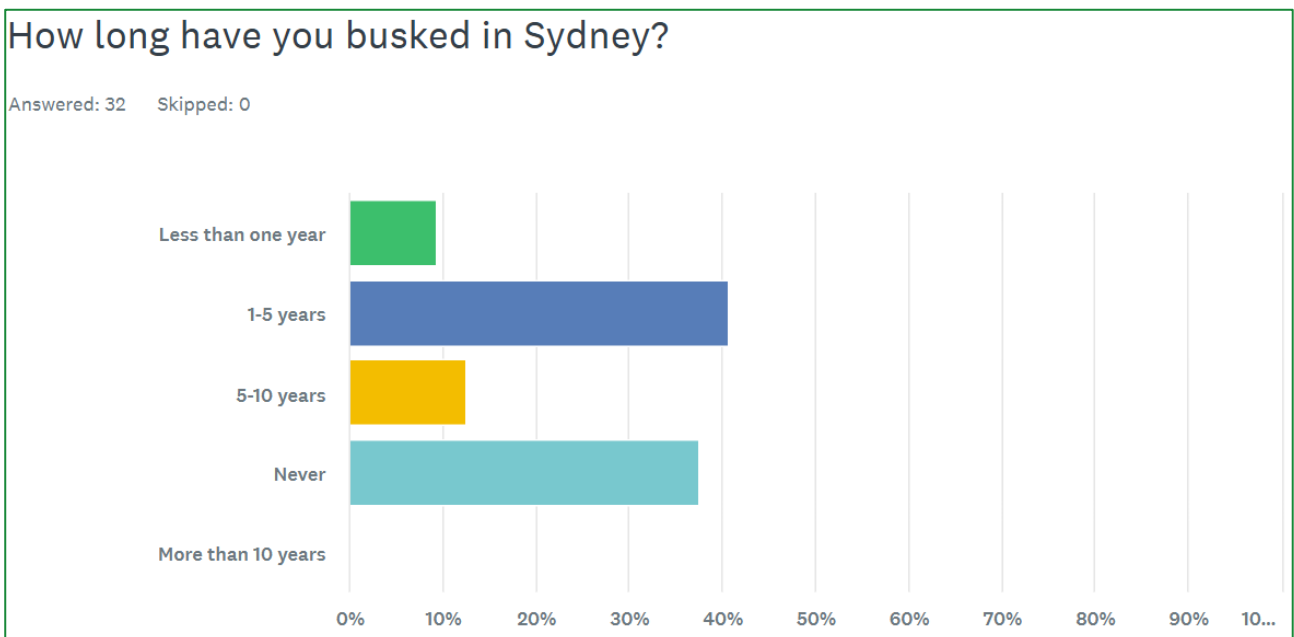
Image 1: Are you a busker?



Q. 2 How long have you busked in Sydney?

About 40% of people surveyed have busked in Sydney for 1 – 5 years, 38% have never busked, 13% have busked for 5 – 10 years and 9% have busked for less than one year.. Responses to this question are shown in the below graph.

Image 2: How long have you busked in Sydney?



Q. 3 What do you think is working well about busking in Sydney?

Respondents agreed busking creates a lively, fun atmosphere and an enjoyable environment. It allows performers to express their talents, sing in different languages, showing diversity in culture and adding vibrancy to the city. People also commented on the popularity of busking, drawing groups of people who watch them play music they can enjoy for free, and that millions of people from around the world watch buskers on livestreams every day.

It was noted that it's easy to obtain a busking licence at the City of Sydney compared to other authorities that require buskers to get their own insurances which is complicated and expensive.

Responses indicated busking was working well before the most recent busking policy changes. In particular, George Street worked well under the previous policy and code, where busking was available anywhere along the street. George Street is an important street for buskers to perform.

"I think busking was working well before the most recent busking policy changes."

"Prior to the code change - honestly i had no complaints."

The freedom for buskers to pick their spot, with a flexible time limit is also important.

A one-hour time limit in popular areas where there are busking queues such as outside QVB and Woolworths was noted as working well.

Other comments expressed disappointment about busking in Sydney, noting there was *"nothing at the moment"* that was working well, and called for the previous policy to be brought back. It was noted that busking used to provide income for buskers but now it doesn't.

Another comment called for more protection for buskers forced to stop playing because of complaints made by the same people at 8pm on a Friday night.

Q. 4 What do you think is not working well about busking in Sydney?

Many respondents mentioned there are not enough spots to busk, especially in desirable locations such as city centre areas with high pedestrian traffic.

They commented that recent infrastructure changes and placement of pitches means they are not in ideal places.

Buskers called for more flexibility, particularly on George Street, where busking spots are often occupied by other activities such as people begging, preaching, protesting, people who are homeless or other activities. Particular mention was given to unpermitted TikTok dancers and preachers who disrupt busking activity, with buskers calling for rules to be put in place for them.

Lack of available spots creates long wait times for buskers, can cause conflict among buskers competing for available spots, reduces the amount of work available and impacts buskers' income.

Respondents called for more busking spots on George Street.

"There are not enough spots to busk. George Street should be opened back up again and there should rather be one or two RESTRICTED spots if needed rather than the whole strip being restricted and only allowing 6 spots for a 2.5km strip. We need to be able to be flexible with where we set up given the numerous protesters/tiktok dancers/religious preachers/homeless people we share the space with."

It was suggested that more action is needed to stop buskers and unpermitted users (such as *"homeless people who play instruments"*) who camp at a pitch all day, monopolise pitches and *"bully"* others who want to play there. One respondent mentioned that some buskers put their gear at a pitch but don't play for hours sometimes waiting for the premium time.

Respondents highlighted the need for more protection for buskers from abusive behaviour, which they feel can be reduced by returning to the previous code or reasonable patrolling.

“the biggest issue I have is safety. Previously if there was a homeless person or a beggar where i wanted to sing i would simply move on, i can no longer do this leaving me with the option to not busk or be borderline abused. I have been yelled at and verbally abused, had money stolen and my equipment thrown multiple times, again previous i would just move away, but i cannot longer do this, leading to putting myself in dangerous situations”

“the town hall and qvb spots clash so much. The pitches are too close and when two people play at an average volume the sounds clash, it doesn’t sound good, but again there’s no other choice than to play at the same time currently if we want to busk in these areas –

I know council have no control but the preachers are a real issue. Again, previously i would simply move to another spot, but i do not have that luxury anymore, so the only option is play over the top of preachers, have arguments, be harassed, sounds awful or go home and don’t busk”

The recent change to low vs high impact acts was also raised as something that needs to be assessed, with solo musicians with amplified vocals feeling they should not be considered high impact. It was noted that there is ambiguity about 'low Impact' acts, with information on the website unclear ie. *“either it is without amplification, or amplification that can be turned down.”* Another commented that *“No amplifier at some sites is stupid”*.

The reduction in spots now available at Pitt Street Mall for low impact amplified buskers was raised as an issue.

Having a one-hour time limit was also an issue raised in responses, with two hours preferred at each pitch.

“With the new code in mind - only being able to play for 1 hour is awful, it takes 15 mins to setup, then 15 to pack down - this is basically half of the time we are allowed to busk...”

Respondents commented that the current busking policy and code is reducing the arts and creativity in our community and has reduced trust between buskers and the City of Sydney.

Restrictions on fire performing was also mentioned, with performers noting they reduce the diversity and calibre of circle acts performing in Sydney.

“The restrictions are not working! When I go to Sydney I love seeing and hearing the music play in the streets amongst the chaos of the city noises. It brings joy and happiness to my day when walking in the streets of Sydney”.

One respondent felt it was unfair that rangers move buskers on from busking on George Street at Hay Street because of noise complaints they believe are made by one person.

“I got kicked off by two rangers due to a noise complaint. However, the amount of appreciation I receive is bigger than the noise complaint so I don’t think it’s fair to kick me out because of one person that was not happy about it. I was busking in George Street intersection with Hay Street (close to the Golden Tree). Please note I always busk reasonable hours and with reasonable volume. I also don’t play for more than 2 hours. I understand rangers coming to ask to “reduce” the volume, but not to ask you to move specially if you haven’t even played for one hour.”

Other issues raised include – crowding around buskers spills on to the light rail tracks delaying services, lack of sun safety or weather protection available, lack of seated areas, requests for a busking booking system, and the desire for one busking permit for the whole of Sydney as currently it is very fragmented and you have to get permit from every Council separately, with one busker commenting *“why do I need separate permit for Rocks when I have City of Sydney permit?”*

“There’s no areas with sun or rain cover, i am aware it’s my decision, but i’ve gotten so sun burnt over this summer because the options are busk in the sun or don’t busk, same for the rain...”

“No more seated areas, i used to play at KFC all the time so people could sit down out of the way if they wanted to stay and watch, people now literally sit on the floor as there’s no other option”

A respondent suggested quality controls for buskers, issuing licenses to buskers who have a profile to show their busking quality, and a category of what kind of activity can occur during what time.

Another suggested a busking association or a panel, and discussions held with all buskers who are interested in the City of Sydney’s plan and align visions.

One respondent mentioned not much is not working and *“every audiences are positive and energetic”*.

Q. 5 Where do you like to busk in Sydney?

Popular places mentioned in response to this question included: Pitt Street (both north and south ends), the QVB forecourt, Town Hall in front of Woolworths, and on George Street at KFC, Town Hall, Event cinemas, Regent Place, World Square, and Market City entrance.

“George street is the only street that feels safe to busk in. There is enough space to set up, and allow for pedestrian access, majority of the city streets are not made for this. The idea that “we can busk anywhere else” is silly, have a walk through city streets and you’ll see it’s a lot more dangerous in small side streets. Kfc, QVB side, world square etc are all perfect busking pitches.”

Darling Harbour, Circular Quay, Martin Place, Hyde Park, Central Station and the area from Town Hall to Central were also mentioned.

Chinatown is also popular including: in front of Paddy’s Market, on George Street in front of Starbucks and at the intersection with Hay Street, and at Thai town opposite the Chinatown light rail stop.

General comments included the CBD, places with high foot traffic (ie. *“where office workers, residents, commuters and tourists pass through the most”*), not just any pitches, workable spots, and anywhere that has adequate shade from harsh weather conditions like the summer sun or rain. Another mentioned places where there are no other buskers around *“sometimes even quiet places so that I can have more personal interaction with people who pass by.”*

The below comments were received by people who like to watch buskers:

“I like seeing busking happening in the city”

“George street is the best place to watch them.”

“I’m not a busker myself but I would like buskers to somehow regain their popular busking spots”.

Q. 6 Where do you think would be suitable for busking but is currently not available to buskers?

Many respondents to this question mentioned the areas recently restricted, particularly referring to George Street and Pitt Street Mall.

Comments included:

“Please reverse the new laws as there was never an issue with busking before in those areas.”

“Give all the old spots back and any spot that has high traffic should be made. For the people and buskers and city’s sake.”

Anywhere along George Street was mentioned, specific locations on George Street that were raised included – Town Hall, QVB, in front of Event cinemas, KFC and World Square.

For example:

“George street south of QVB. It is wide and a significant amount of tourists and workers are passing through, giving a large exposure. This area is also wide enough so people can reasonably gather without affecting the light rail. Since busking there from 2023, I had yet to witness a single incident where the crowd interferes with the light rail and people are aware of the light rail most of the time.”

Another comment raised several areas “away from the light rail tracks” including – the intersection of George and Market streets, intersection of George and Liverpool streets, intersection of George and Goulburn streets, along George Street between Liverpool and Goulburn streets, and around Wynyard (although there is currently a lot of construction in that area).

Another ‘old area’ mentioned was *“in front of Starbucks and in the corner with the Golden Tree area. These areas always worked well for many buskers. The new restrictions affected mostly the “smaller” buskers that don’t go to big pitches (such as Pitt Street).”*

The original spots in Pitt Street were also referred to in numerous comments.

Martin Place, Darling Harbour, North Sydney, in train and metro stations and during events (VIVID) were also mentioned.

For example:

“In train stations, especially the new Martin Place metro, more promoted opportunities or booking systems or auditions during VIVID.”

Others commented more generally such as *“high traffic foot areas”,* or *“any area that is not directly exposed to traffic noise and has some crowds”* and *“anywhere with adequate shade from harsh weather conditions like the summer sun or rain.”*

Further comments included:

“I don’t think there should be restrictions on where they can set up, I think they should be able to set up anywhere as long as they aren’t in the way or in a dangerous spot.”

“We would like some permanent umbrellas to shade our sorry asses in summer. Also platforms the height of a milk crate to give greater distance between random druggies and insane people who come and try to hug us.”

Q. 7 Where do you think is unsuitable for busking in Sydney?

Several respondents agreed that it is unsuitable to busk in areas without sufficient foot traffic.

Comments included:

“Only place not suitable is in the middle of a walkway, on the road or on the tracks”.

“Anywhere there is less than a meter to pass by”

“Anywhere that doesn’t impede people or stop them from going on with their business is suitable.”

“Most places actually, because of a number of factors - poor foot traffic - poor lighting - not enough space.”

George Street north of QVB was specifically mentioned in one comment as being unsuitable:

“George Street north of QVB is unsuitable because the footpath narrows and creates genuine pinch-points. In this section, both audiences and performers are more likely to drift closer to the light rail alignment without realising it. The concerns raised in the recent restrictions genuinely apply here, and the narrow width makes safe crowd management difficult.”

Areas too close to the light rail were also mentioned in a number of comments, such as:

“Any areas within 10m of light rail tracks.”

“Close to light rail. On busy corners where buskers would impede pedestrian flow. Also it can be dangerous to busk too close to the traffic.”

“I concede that the light rail on George Street does warrant strict guidelines.”

“I admit some areas along George St shouldn’t have buskers as they push crowds to lightrail.”

In contrast, a few respondents either couldn’t think of any areas being unsuitable or referred to “nowhere” being unsuitable.

For example:

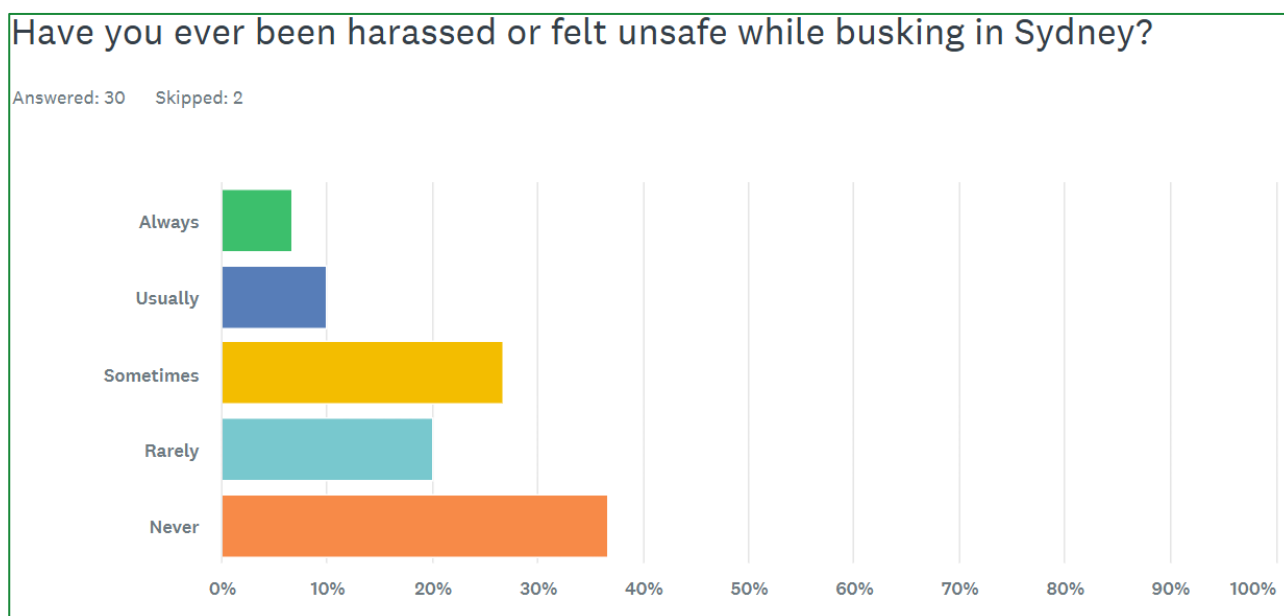
“I think all spots are suitable and workable. Buskers also have always been able to keep safe entertainment for pedestrians. I don’t see any concerns. The religious groups make it unsuitable for any buskers when they can play amplified music at any noise level any time This affects buskers a lot especially since buskers can’t busk unless x metres apart.”

Other areas mentioned as being unsuitable included – in a really quiet suburb, and “QVB, Pitt street, areas that doesn’t attract any audience and would cause impact to people dining and shopping” and “in areas which are busy. I think people who busk there are greedy.”

Q. 8 Have you ever been harassed or let unsafe while busking in Sydney?

About 64% of respondents have been harassed or felt unsafe either ‘always’ (7%), ‘usually’ (10%), ‘sometimes’ (27%), or ‘rarely’ (20%). Whereas 37% respondents have ‘never’ been harassed or felt unsafe. Responses to this question are shown in the below graph.

Image 3: Have you ever been harassed or felt unsafe while busking in Sydney?



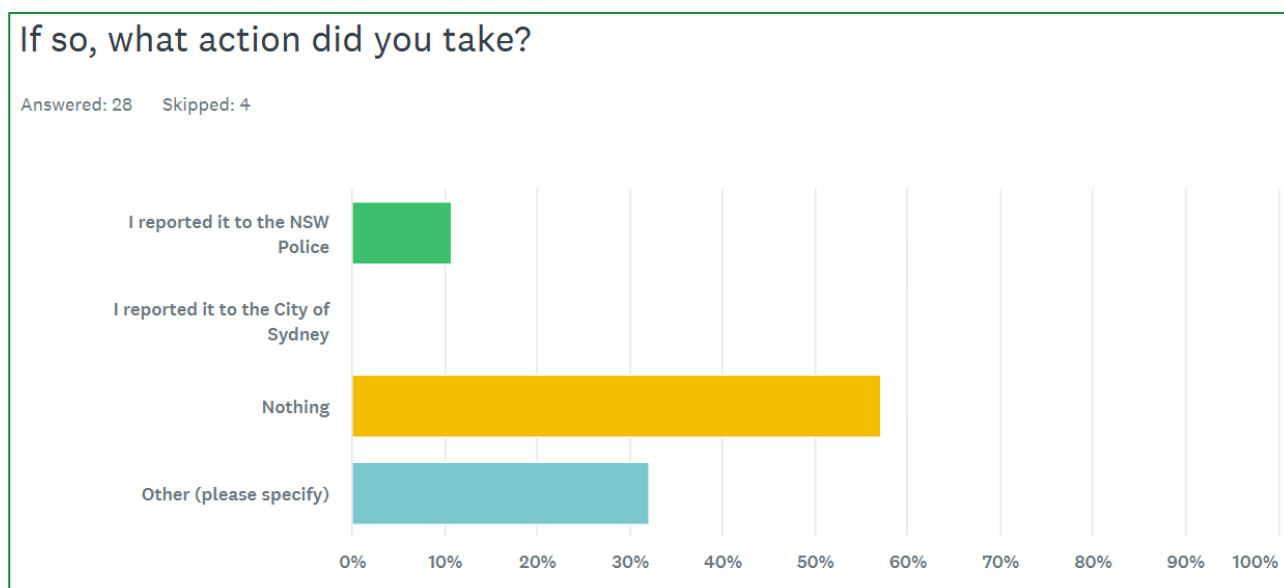
Q. 9 If so, what action did you take?

Most respondents who have been harassed or felt unsafe while busking in Sydney took ‘no action’ (57% respondents), while 11% reported it to the NSW Police and 32% took ‘other’ action. No one (0%) reported it to the City of Sydney.

Of the 32% who took ‘other’ action, this included – de-escalating, carrying on performing if there’s no security or police nearby, grabbing their things off the person, stopping performing and asking the person to move away in a loud voice, and giving a warning before escalating to the police or 131444. One respondent noted that police attended spontaneously when “*I was robbed and bashed*” and wondered if someone had called them or if they were passing by.

Responses to this question are shown in the below graph.

Image 4: If so, what action did you take?



Q. 10 Please provide more details of any issues or safety concerns

Issues raised by respondents who answered this question included – being harassed by people affected by drugs and alcohol, people with mental health issues, rowdy teenagers, people who are homeless or people who are ‘beggars’. Respondents mentioned being robbed, spat on, sworn at, experiencing racist slurs and sexual harassment. Busking equipment being thrown or damaged was also mentioned.

Comments included:

“I don’t think it’s the councils responsibility to keep buskers safe - we choose to go out, but before the new code it was easy to avoid situations. Now buskers are having confronting conversions when beggars etc are in the few busking pitches because we literally cannot play anywhere else without being kicked out. As i’m writing this survey, i left busking early because i was being harassed by a beggar that wanted the spot i was busking in (infront of woolies town hall, 1 out of 2 pitches in town hall)”

“It’s difficult to report a dangerous person if you have no evidence or don’t know their name. Some just yell racial slurs at me / one has taken \$5 and just left. It is intimidating as a young female busking sometimes so I just leave it for my safety.”

“It’s hard to stop people spitting at buskers or kicking over our equipment or even stealing our money. Unless a policeman is permanently standing beside us then nothing can be done.”

Chinatown, Pitt Street near Woolworths, north of QVB, south of Wynyard station, and The Rocks were areas mentioned where respondents have felt unsafe or experienced harassment:

“I’ve been harassed by beggars and also old men. I always have to negotiate with beggars and give them money in order to play. Specially in China Town area. I got spat on once by an old guy. Other time a guy was racist and told me to “go back to my country”. All these situations happened in China Town.”

Another issue raised was regarding people who make noise complaints against buskers and rangers who respond to these complaints.

Comments included:

“Buskers would really like to have their popular busking spots back and not have ‘certain people’ complaining that it’s ‘noisy’.”

"My biggest absolute biggest concern is the rangers and city being cowards and cowering (sic) to rich entitled people who call and complain to shut down buskers. How absolutely embarrassing that you let a handful of people bully you and making you submit to their will. Be brave and stand up for live music and buskers...."

"I live in America. I watch buskers from Sydney on tik tok. The entire reason I would ever go to Sydney would be to see buskers and watch them and support them all day long. I'm not alone. Look at Edinburgh fringe festival in Scotland. It is a busker fest that so many people attend. Sydney could be this all year round...."

"Shame on you for adding a add pay kiosk where buskers used to play."

One respondent requested something be done with illegal, unlicensed selling on George Street – *"Please do something for illegal non licensed sellers on George St"*.

Safety concerns raised by respondents referred to light rail, particularly *"crowds spilling onto the light rail tracks."* For example:

"Sometimes people without undercover residence may come near us where the majority of them resides north of QVB, which further pinches the possible busking zone. This is the case at least south of Wynyard station. They also, sometimes, engage in disruptive behaviour which equally effects the safe operation of the light rail."

However, one respondent commented there were *"no safety concerns. If people are standing on the light rail tracks that's an issue caused by themselves or the city. Afterall, it's not the buskers fault there's a train on the sidewalk with no physical boundaries."*

Q. 11 Do you have any other feedback about our busking policy?

Advocacy and support for buskers

Respondents mentioned they would like to see more advocacy and support for buskers, including a dedicated busking liaison, for example:

"Would love to see more support and advocacy for buskers from the council. Bi-monthly meetings, a dedicated busking liaison, notification system for complaints so buskers can deal with problems without cops needing to be called, alternative safety measures installed instead of bans, notifications not just of pitch closures but of funding and gig opportunities for council events."

"Every single busker WANTS TO BUSK!!! we want to do it safely, we want to work with the council, we want people to enjoy what we provide, we are more than willing to work with council if you just give us the opportunity. It's so sad to see what's happened to sydney :((((("

Consultation and better communications

Also mentioned was the need for more consultation and better communications with performers. Speaking with buskers in person (not just via email) is also important to ensure they are represented when changes to the busking policy/code are made.

Comments included:

"The more consultation with performers like this the better! Please reassess your process of safety assessments for high impact/ dangerous acts- currently I have tried to set up a safety assessment and no response! Therefore we have not been able to work in City of Sydney. And puts off international acts from visiting. Look at City of Melbourne as an example."

"The original communication with buskers was extremely poor. Not many received or read the email that was sent and the council didn't seem to notice when only a very small number of submissions were received and no one showed up to supposed meetings. Flyers delivered in person along the busy pitt street mall on a Saturday would have been the logical solution if a genuine attempt to engage with buskers on the review of the policy was intended."

"It's possible that the council needs to ensure their email list of buskers is correct. I think that's what's caused the strong reaction from most buskers who seemingly were not consulted due to not receiving emails from council. I don't have that issue!"

"Can surveys like this be disseminated not just through email? These things can get lost in electronic communication. I think a lot of us would be happy to be approached in person."

More flexibility & return to the previous busking policy / code

Several responses called for the return of the previous busking policy and code, and to bring back previous popular busking locations or create more busking opportunities. The need for greater flexibility was also noted. One comment mentioned the one-hour time restriction is not practical for buskers and two hours would work better.

Comments included:

"Stop the restrictions"

"Reverse all and put everything back the way you found it. You are ruining present and future buskers and peoples happiness with your terrible decisions"

"Please review and bring back the signature spots for busking"

"We want busking every where in sydney don't touch busker please."

"Get you act together and give us more busking opportunities please."

"Instead of banning the locations, latest time can be change to 10-11 instead 12 midnight."

"I support a safety-based approach, but I believe the current blanket restriction does not accurately distinguish between areas of genuine risk and areas that have operated safely for years. George Street south of QVB is wide, well-managed and consistently safe for busking, whereas the northern end presents the real pinch-points. A more flexible, location-specific model would maintain safety while still supporting the performers who contribute to the cultural life of the city. I would welcome further consultation that includes regular buskers who understand how the street actually functions day-to-day. For behavioural issues by other buskers. I suggest increasing patrolling instead of kicking us out."

Issue with 'preachers'

Respondents raised several issues with loud, unlicensed 'preachers' in the city centre, who they feel are the cause of people's frustration, not buskers.

Comments included:

"Buskers were never an issue and have always been an amazing part of the central city. I am extremely disappointed as someone who lives in the CBD and I am embarrassed of living in a city that makes restrictions like these without any good reason. Please focus more on the noise levels of preachers near town hall. They're louder and more frustrating than buskers, and they actively harass young school girls and other members of the public. Busking has never been the issue, preaching is the real issue."

"Change it back or increase a lot more spots in high traffic cbd city Especially for amplified So many shop owners have come out an expressed they love the singers and buskers How they wish they could be there all day So many are upset and frustrated by the preachers religion groups who are allowed to blast music all day any day loud as they want no rules at all and do it when buskers are trying to make a living it's not fair."

"The ones who are not bound to the busking code such as preachers are still allowed to be out there wherever they want causing the same level of disturbance. It just needs to be reversed, it's really that simple..."

Queuing, rotations and booking system

It was noted that it can be hard to get into a queue to play at popular locations such as Pitt Street Mall and a 'rotation' system or assistance from rangers would help ensure everyone can busk there.

Comments included:

"It can be very hard to get into a queue to play in Pitt street. I do think a common sense and "rotation" in the spots between buskers would be ideal for everyone's experience. I am not sure how, but I do think buskers shouldn't be playing every single day in the same spot. At least I try not to do it (I also busk in Circular Quay and Chatswood). What I see is that the new restrictions affected mostly those musicians that makes a living from busking in spots that others don't want to go to, for example in China town area as we have been kicked out by rangers. I think more rangers "assisting" everyone to get a chance to play in Pitt Street and less rangers kicking buskers out from other spots."

"There should be a booking system to avoid fighting over good spots. This also gives you good statistics."

Pitt Street Mall

One respondent mentioned that the southern pitch in Pitt Street Mall should be reassigned back to low impact.

Busking permits

Two responses received were about busking permits, including:

"All good => Maybe, can you make the licenses free? Any more vibrancy funds you can allocate to offset the costs of making busking licences free? ;)"

"Busking policy is quite good, with clearly defined rules, if only we could have a universal permit that is valid throughout the whole Sydney."

Drop-in session

15 people attended a drop-in session at City of Sydney offices at Town Hall House on Monday 8 December 2025 from 12pm-4pm.

They posted comments onto several consultation boards around the room, including a board asking what is working well about busking in Sydney.

What is working well about busking in Sydney?

Buskers indicated a preference for the previous busking policy and code – commenting that they had no issues with it, and requesting it be reinstated. Buskers also commented that 1 hour time limit in Pitt Street Mall works well for that location.

The below table summarises comments received.

Table 1: What is working well about busking in Sydney?

Comment	Times raised
One hour limit in Pitt Street Mall is good/ok	3
No faults with previous policy and code / would like the old policy back	2
The process to get a license is very easy	1

Comment	Times raised
I enjoy having no booking system. Show up and play	1
Going from spot to spot progressively down the street	1
Good time to busk (early morning, 11am-1pm)	1
Thank you for being receptive to feedback	1
Well trained enforcement, discretionary powers	1
Long policy and code don't work. Buskers need key messages/principles to follow	1
Rule: Buskers to manage their audience	1

What is not working well about busking in Sydney?

Buskers were also asked what is not working well about busking in Sydney. They indicated a desire for more busking spots on George Street and a preference for not having designated spots on George Street – noting that designated spots are often occupied by people begging or preaching, TikTok dancers performing without permits, or other activities such as construction work. Having only six spots on George Street has increased tension among the community due to limited availability.

Other comments included allowing a 2 hour limit on George Street, to factor in the time required for set up and pack up. The below table summarises comments received.

Table 2: What is not working well about busking in Sydney?

Comment	Times raised
One hour restriction on George Street. It should be two hours on George Street. Set up/pack up eats into your time.	5
There should be more spots on George Street. Limited spots. Having only 6 designated spots on George St is hard because it depends on what's happening on the day (closures, protests, preachers, homeless). Tension has really increased as no other spots available nearby.	5
Not allowing buskers to choose their own position. We are forced to place next to construction, dangerous homeless etc. There should not be allocated spots on George Street (flexibility) Problem with designated spots can't adapt eg. homeless people occupying spot. No designated spots on George Street	4
TikTok dancers/K-pop/BIS dance groups performing in Pitt St Mall without license on weekends are loud and don't account for buskers	3

Comment	Times raised
Preachers at Pitt St Mall are very loud.	3
On a Saturday the gospel music near Town Hall makes the Woolies spot unplayable.	
After Pitt St, Town Hall corner is the most popular spot but Saturday preachers make it unusable.	
Christmas music in Pitt St Mall is too loud.	3
Christmas music in Pitt St Mall competes with buskers would have been good to invite buskers to do Xmas music.	
Abuse from homeless/intoxicated people.	2
Get yelled at by people begging if go over the time.	
Circle acts need fire. Fire priority (Fri-Sat-Sun and event and holidays)	2
Fire performing should be allowed.	
On majority of key days such as Vivid, Christmas period etc busking is blocked by activations and other things.	2
Sometimes competing with markets and activations.	
Contacting buskers for Council gig events.	3
More frequent comms with Council. They send us gig opportunities.	
Not policing illegal shops and religious groups.	2
Rangers don't support compliance.	
Woolies v QVB spots can't operate at same time. Woolies & QVB could work as 1 hour alternating spots would give each busker time to set up & pack down	1
High impact performance. Move back to low impact for solo performers.	1
Don't police current policy	1
QVB security misinformed about rules	1
Advertising triffids	1
Feels like busking energy has gone	1
Online permit system	1
Reimburse buskers for 1 year as compensation over this period	1

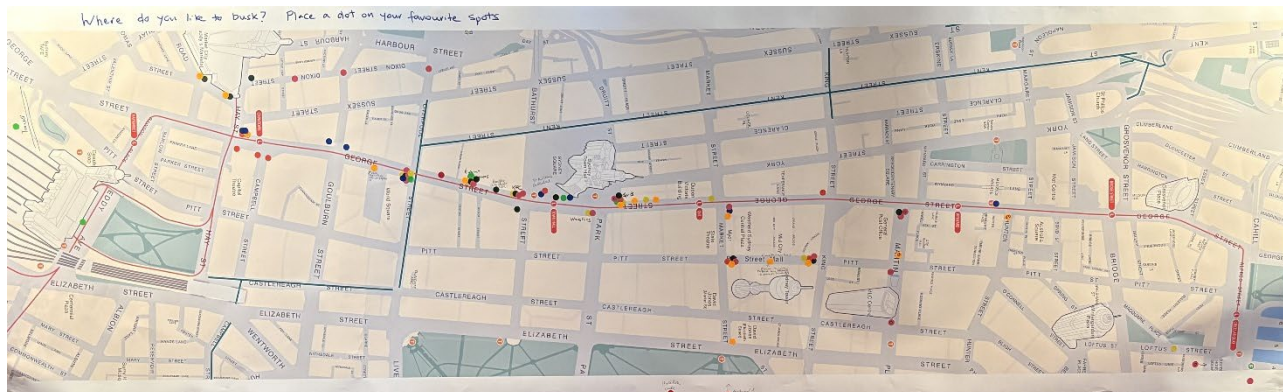
Where do you like to busk in Sydney?

People were asked to put a dot on a large map of the city centre at spots where they like to busk.

The most popular locations to busk indicated on the map included Pitt Street Mall, and several locations on George Street, particularly between World Square and Market Street – such as outside QVB, outside Woolworths building, and outside KFC, Event cinemas and World Square.

Other popular locations on George Street were at Hay Street and around Haymarket. These are indicated in the image below.

Image 5: Where do you like to busk in Sydney?



Where else do you like to busk?

Buskers were also asked where else in the city they like to busk. George Street when light rail is not running, Martin Place near the Christmas tree/activations and Circular Quay were other locations mentioned more than others. The below table summarises comments received.

Table 3: Where else do you like to busk?

Comment	Times raised
On George St during light rail closure	2
Better uplift during events in closed road	
Martin Place at George Street is not allowed but would like it opened up as a basking spot (December crowds)	2
Next to the Christmas tree at Martin Place	
QVB outside Haigh's	2
George Street along QVB where there's shelter from rain and wind	
Circular Quay and near passenger terminal	2
Pitt Street Mall at Mid City Centre	1
Pitt Street Mall middle pitch is a smoking hazard. There are constant smokers near bins, please move bins if this spot is to stay	1
Sydney Town Hall (but preachers are there)	1
Eddy Ave – early morning	1
Haymarket	1
Hay Street	1

Comment	Times raised
Campbell Street outside Starbucks	1
Dixon Street during night markets	1
CBRE Darling Harbour	1

What makes a good busking spot?

Buskers were also asked what makes a good busking spot. Comments included areas where there are lots of people, shops and seats for people to sit and relax. Busking in areas where there is shade and protection from rain, sun and wind is also important. Buskers noted their equipment is heavy to carry around so they prefer to busk near transport such as Town Hall station. Busking outside World Square is also popular as World Square has storage facilities for equipment.

Table 4: What makes a good busking spot?

Comment	Times raised
George Street with shelter from rain and wind.	3
Shade in summer is important.	
Shade for sun and rainy conditions.	
Close to transport as equipment is heavy.	2
Near transport (Town Hall station) as have heavy equipment.	
Spot for audience to sit down.	2
Nearby seats	
Need flexibility – things like homeless people	1
George Street from World Square to QVB at Market Street (shops, seats, people)	1
High foot traffic. People who are relaxed, having dinner, chilling. Not people getting off work, busy people travelling	1
Near storage ie. World Square has storage facilities for equipment so busking nearby is popular	1
S.P.A accreditation - clarity	1
KFC favourite spot, lots of seats and Event cinemas	1
Back to wall	1
QVB by the statue	1
QVB & Woolies is good but homeless occupy these spots	1
George Street as it's pedestrianised and there's more footpath space on both sides	1

Comment	Times raised
Busking 4-6 hours in 2 hour slots along George Street in one day	1
Thursday nights at Pitt St Mall north and south pitch	1
Pitt St Mall middle pitch's good sound	1
1 hour limit in Pitt St Mall should stay, but more pitches	1
Book-in to use Martin Place stage	1
Martin Place and George Street Circle Acts good.	1
QVB sth forecourt for circle acts	1
2 hours is good	1
George St: buskers with back to tracks to avoid people on tracks.	1
Use light rail tracks when closed	1
QVB & Woolies 1 hour alternating	1
Classify busking area rather than 'spot'	1

Face-to-face meeting

One member of the busking community requested to meet with City staff in person to provide feedback. The below summarises the feedback received during this meeting on 3 December 2025.

How long have you been busking? Since 2020

Where do you like to busk in Sydney?

- Corner Hay & George Street, opposite Bank of China
- George Street – outside Woolworths, outside QVB, outside flight centre, outside Myer (at George St corner), corner Bathurst and George St outside KFC, Regimental Square

Where do you think is suitable for busking but currently not available?

All locations on George Street and Pitt Street that were previously available under the previous code.

What do you think is not working about busking in Sydney?

Overall, the respondent stated that the current “draconian code” is not working, and requested the busking policy and code revert to the former policy and code.

Specific issues and requests raised included:

- Pitt Street Mall
 - North and south pitches should be reinstated
 - 1 hour per day is not enough time, it should be 2 hours at each location
- George Street
 - Request previous code brought back enabling busking on George Street
 - Does not want allocated spots on George Street (because if pitches are occupied ie. from 'beggars' buskers cannot use them)

- Request 2 hours along George Street
- High impact performances
 - High impact acts should be for large performances, not single acts with amplification
 - Request single acts with amplification return as low impact acts
- Lack of support for buskers
 - Request more support from rangers/compliance officers. The Melbourne model of managing busking is very proactive – kind, respectful, helpful and supportive. Their staff act as mediators liaise with buskers to resolve disputes between buskers, with residents and businesses.

Have you been harassed or felt unsafe while busking in Sydney?

Yes

If so what action did you take?

Reported it to the NSW police

Provide more details of any issues/safety concerns

The respondent spoke of being physically assaulted on multiple occasions, has had unpleasant interactions with “drug addicts” and “beggars”, and requests begging be made illegal and drug addicts removed from the street.

Other comments

Other comments and suggestions raised included:

- Establishing a permit system for “beggars”
- Reimbursing all busking permits for the last 12 months and make them free for the next year
- Not enforcing the new code until the revised policy is adopted
- Not restricting all buskers from desirable spots such as Hay/George Street (outside Bank of China). Only buskers that draw crowds should be restricted from this pitch, if need be.
- Providing buskers with opportunities for paid events (eg ask buskers to indicate if they would like the City of Sydney to share their email address with festival/event organisers)
- Putting up safety fencing along the light rail line to prevent pedestrians from walking onto the tracks

Written submission

One written submission was hand delivered to City staff at the drop-in session. This submission called for reinstating the previous busking policy and code, noted the importance of consulting buskers in changes to the policy and code, and including buskers in the entertainment programs for events run/funded by the City of Sydney. Suggestions for Pitt Street Mall and George Street were also mentioned – this submission is provided in the image below.

Image 6: written submission received

Busking Policy Feedback

- **Reinstate the previous policy:** 3 pitches at Pitt Street Mall with 2 pitches available for musicians + flexible setup anywhere on George Street
 - The time limits should only apply where there are other buskers in the queue who want to perform - use common sense
 - Permission to busk on George Street during the light rail closures without being moved on by the rangers or police
- **Include buskers in any major policy change consultations** proactively and in advance.
 - Make sure someone goes out and talks to buskers and send out clearly worded communications, not something coded under **"Public Exhibit"**.
 - Only make changes after a wider public consultation, e.g. statistical surveys of the wider audience to ensure commensurate weight is given to the general public and not the minority who may complain (e.g. 5 individuals and 3 businesses responsible for more than half of some 200 complaints).
 - Ensure any proposed policy changes are not made unilaterally without communicating what their potential impact is
 - Provide clear rationale and statistics for any claims, e.g. safety. Number of concerns raised, the contents, etc.
- **Proactive, positive outreach and inclusion of the busking community** in the entertainment programs run and funded by the council, e.g. street festivals, etc. A dedicated and enthusiastic staff member who is pro-busking (follow the example of Melbourne's Busking Team)
 - Proactively include pitches for buskers during big festivals such as VIVID

Pitt Street Mall

- Minimise the pitch closures and/or provide alternative pitches for busking during the pitch closures
 - Example: under the new policy, only Central pitch is available to musicians and circle acts. On the surface, Council communications implies 2 out of 3 pitches remain open for busking, in reality none of them are open for 90%+ of the active busking community!
- Minimise disruption to busking through activations and installations
 - Example: the Christmas carols audio comes on every 15 minutes after 6pm. The music disrupts the natural flow of the performance. The music should be programmed to come on after the Mall closing hours at least or especially on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

George Street

- Set aside a separate location for the preachers away from the popular busking spots or ensure they don't use amplification next to the busking spots
- Involve busking community in the design and creation of the new public spaces, e.g. to ensure there is seating, shade, etc. for the audience

Transdev feedback

We consulted Transdev, operators of the Sydney Light Rail, which runs along George Street, to understand any safety implications of busking in areas along the Light Rail corridor.

Transdev acknowledge that busking adds to the fabric of the city and proposes that busking locations are chosen where there is adequate open space and public safety is the primary objective, such as Martin Place, and the open area between St Andrews Cathedral and the southern side Town Hall, away from the tracks.

Transdev data indicates that the city centre is a high-risk location for pedestrian safety, with the majority of light rail near misses and collisions with pedestrians occurring in the CBD.

Large crowds which impede the flow of light rail traffic are mainly reported on George Street, with particular concern about the intersection with Bathurst Street and in the Chinatown area.

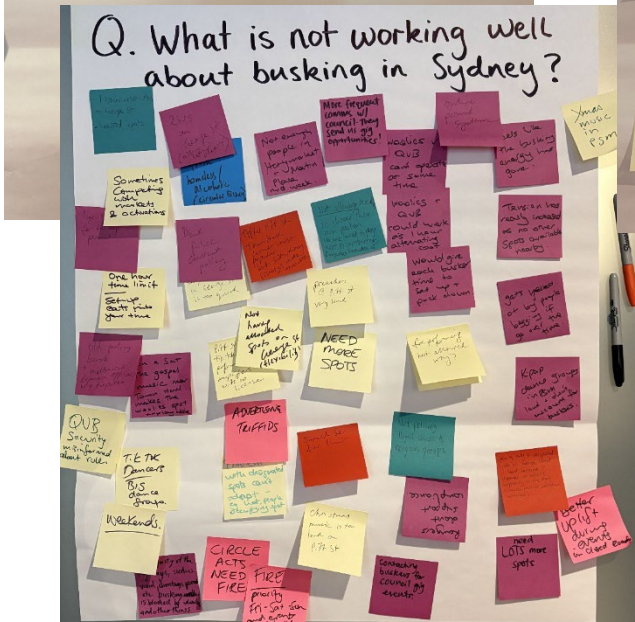
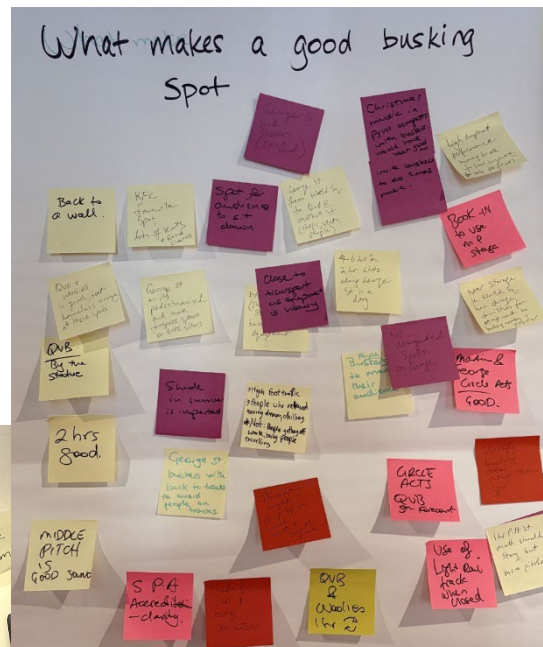
Intersections are particularly problematic, where busking at traffic intersections can impact pedestrian movement, where people move on to light rail tracks more so than in other areas.

Light rail drivers have observed the following:

- Crowds tend to orient their attention towards the busker and away from the light rail tracks
- Crowds tend to grow backwards and do not necessarily realise that they are encroaching on light rail tracks
- People often film or take photos which can distract them from approaching light rail vehicles
- Busking noise can make it hard to hear light rail warning sounds

Other suggestions include delineation via traffic cones/floor markings to help control busking position a safe distance away from light rail vehicles, busking signs and “watch for light rail coming” signs.

Where do you like to busk? Place a dot on your favourite spots



Appendix 2: Stakeholder emails



Invitation to participate in our busking policy and code review

We're now reviewing our [busking policy](#) and the [Sydney busking code](#). These documents guide busking activity in the [City of Sydney local area](#) and outline the rules for using popular sites.

This review will consider and propose new busking sites for George Street, which we'll ask for community feedback on. It will also look at suitable locations for busking in other busy parts of the city, like Pitt Street Mall.

We invite you to participate in this review by joining a drop-in session or completing an online survey.

Join a drop-in session

You can learn more about the busking policy and code, speak with City of Sydney staff about the review and provide feedback.

When: Monday 8 December, drop in anytime from 12pm to 4pm

Where: Town Hall House, 466 Kent Street, Sydney – Green & Global meeting rooms on level 2, next to the customer service centre and city model (entry via Druitt Street or Sydney Square)

Take our online survey

You can also provide feedback by completing our [online survey](#) by 30 January 2026.

Your feedback will help inform any updates to the busking policy and code.

Stay informed

The outcomes of the review including any proposed changes, will be reported to Council for approval to seek public feedback on the policy and the code as soon as possible in 2026.

We'll provide further updates early next year. If you'd like to stay informed, please make sure you have given us an email address that we can contact you on.

More information

You can read more about the review requested on 17 November 2025 by Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore AO through the Lord Mayor Minute [Support for Busking in the City of Sydney](#).



City of Sydney busking policy and code review

Thank you for your feedback and interest in our [busking policy](#) and the [Sydney busking code](#), adopted by Council in August 2025.

In November, after we received feedback that buskers were not aware of the new policy and code, Council requested staff to review both documents.

This review will consider and propose new busking sites for George Street. It will also look at suitable locations for busking in other busy parts of the city, like Pitt Street Mall.

The outcomes of the review including any proposed changes to the policy and code, will be open for public comment in early 2026.

We'll provide further updates early next year.

More information

You can read more about the review requested by Council on 17 November 2025 through the Lord Mayor Minute [Support for Busking in the City of Sydney](#).

Appendix 3: Flyer

CITY OF SYDNEY 

Have your say

**Buskers, you're invited to talk
about our busking policy and code.**

Join us to discuss our busking policy, code and locations.

You'll get to speak with City of Sydney employees and provide feedback.

A revised busking policy and code will be open for consultation in 2026 before they are adopted by Council.



Take the online survey
Can't make the drop-in session? Feel free to complete the survey.

Drop-in session
When: Monday 8 December, come anytime from 12pm to 4pm
Where: Town Hall House, 456 Kent Street Sydney – Green and Global rooms, level 2, next to customer service. Enter via Druitt Street.

cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

