

Public Exhibition

Amended Busking Policy and Code



Recommendation

Public Exhibition – Amended Busking Policy

The report recommends Council:

- Note the feedback received from buskers, outlined in an Engagement Report
- Approve for public exhibition an amended Busking Policy and Code
- Seek further feedback and report any recommended changes to Council following a 42 day public exhibition process.

Background

Support for Busking in the City of Sydney

Busking in our area is supported by two documents:

- The Policy – the framework and conditions for busking permits
- The Code – guidance on how to busk well and how special busking locations are managed

Following concerns raised by buskers, Council directed staff to:

- Consult with the busking community regarding recent changes to the Policy and Code
- Investigate increasing the number of safe busking sites on George Street
- Consult with the light rail operator on safety implications of any proposed changes

Consultation

Targeted Busker Engagement

Through December and January, City staff invited buskers to provide feedback via:

- A drop-in session at Town Hall House
- Face to face meetings
- A survey
- Written submissions

134 pieces of feedback were received.

- 101 comments from 15 buskers who attended the drop-in session
- one face-to-face meeting
- 31 survey responses
- one written submission

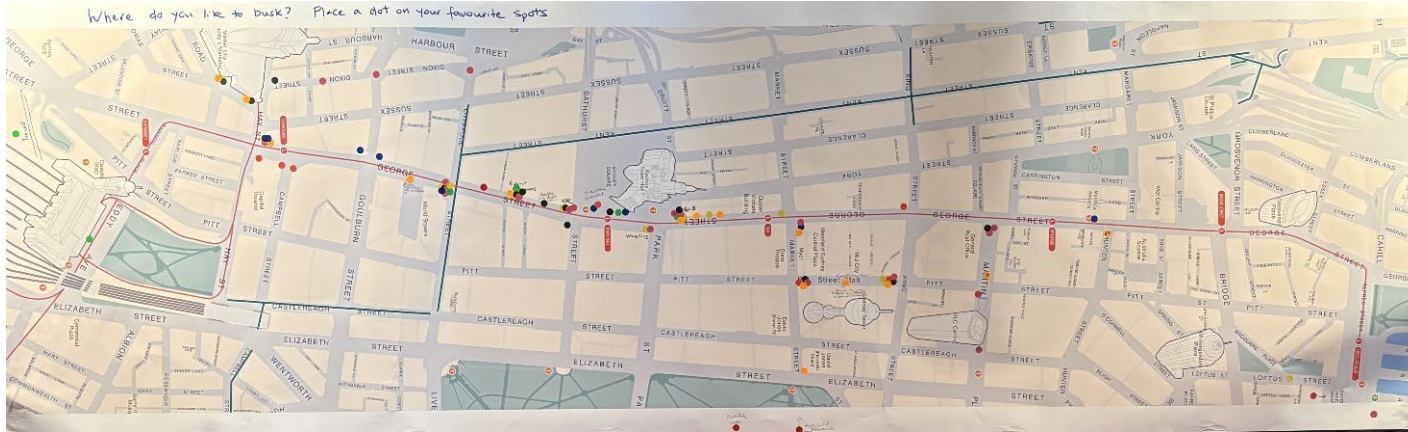
Insights

What we heard...

- The Policy and Code, as they were prior to recent changes, worked well. Many buskers wish for the previous policy and code to be reinstated.
- A need for clearer communications to ensure buskers properly understand changes that will impact them, and how they can influence decision making about busking.
- The approach to allocating specific busking sites in certain locations needs more flexibility so that buskers can use their discretion to negotiate conditions on the day, i.e. to avoid rough sleepers, bad weather, retail activations, etc.
- Safety around the light rail is an important consideration and more guidance could be provided.

Insights

Where buskers want to busk



- Pitt Street continues to be a very popular pitch. Buskers want two pitches for musical acts and rules that ensure the pitches are shared.
- Buskers want as many opportunities to busk on George Street as possible, with flexibility to choose the best location on the day.

Insights

Complaints data

City staff analysed complaints about busking received in 2025

- 463 complaints received from
 - 246 anonymous complainants, and
 - 42 identified individual complainants
- 97% of complaints relate to the CBD, only 15 complaints in other areas
 - 47% George Street
 - 27% Haymarket / Hay Street
 - 23% Pitt St
- Issues reported
 - 70% excessive volume
 - 8% performing outside of approved busking hours
 - 5% crowding / poor crowd control / safety
 - 2% offensive behaviour
 - 14% a combination of the above

Insights

Consultation with the light rail operator

Key information provided by Transdev regarding light rail safety implications:

- Near misses with pedestrians mainly occur in the CBD and are formally recorded
- 10+ near misses recorded per month
- The corner of George and Bathurst Streets has multiple records related to busking, noting audience crowding has impeded pedestrian flow and contributed to near misses
- Drivers reported the following observations:
 - Crowds gathering around buskers inadvertently move into the path of trams or cause pedestrians to step out onto the light rail track.
 - Busking at pedestrian intersections is particularly problematic.
 - The sound of busking sometimes drowns out the tram warning bells.
 - People filming buskers or taking photos distracts them from oncoming trams.

Proposed amendments

The Busking Policy

- Amplification will not automatically make an act High Impact.
- Inclusion of PASS accreditation (Peer Assessment for Street Safety) from Street Performance Australia as criteria for receiving a High Impact permit without attending an act assessment.
- Removal of clauses 14.2 and 14.3 that prohibit busking on George Street or within 5m of traffic intersections, pedestrian crossings and light rail tracks.
- Addition to clause 14.7 noting that a busking site must not be established where the act or their audience is likely to hinder access to a pedestrian crossing or to public transport (including light rail).

Proposed amendments

The Busking Code

Pitt Street Mall:

- There are 3 pitches in Pitt Street Mall.
 - One for Extended Duration acts only.
 - Two for Low Impact acts only.
- Buskers may perform at these pitches for one hour only.
- Buskers may perform at only one pitch once per day and not the same pitch on consecutive days.
- Reason: return to 2 pitches for musical acts, ensure pitches are shared, address concerns about repeatedly hearing the same acts every day



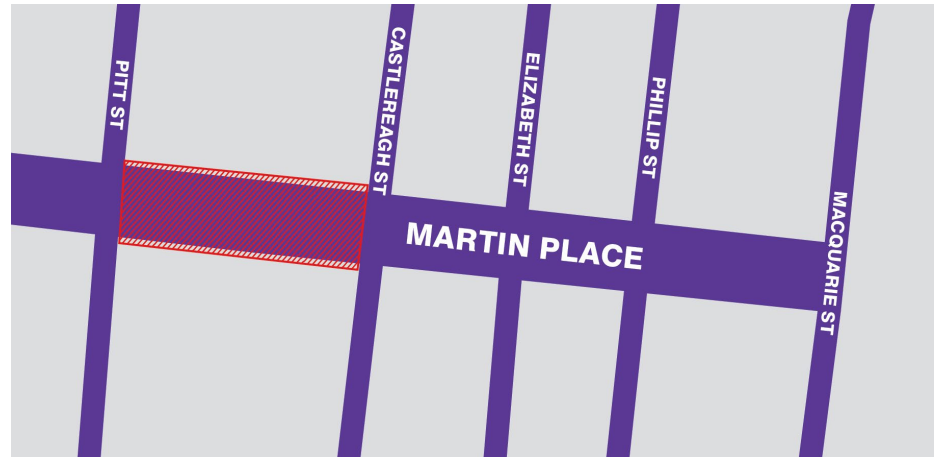
Proposed amendments

The Busking Code

Martin Place:

- Rather than defining busking sites, standard rules apply except for one excluded area:
 - No busking is permitted in Martin Place between Pitt St and Castlereagh St.

Reason: to avoid conflicts with busy dining, event and retail activation locations in the section of Martin Place.



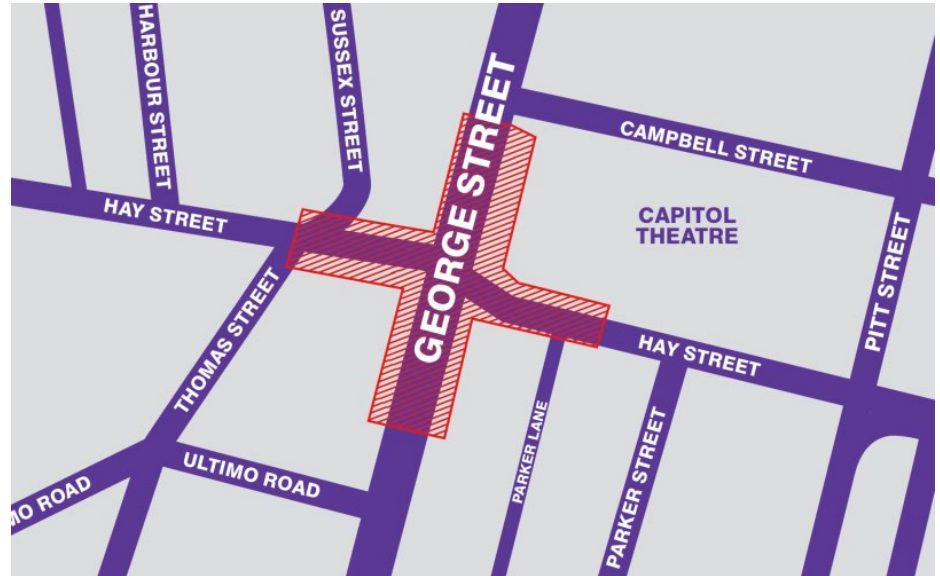
Proposed amendments

The Busking Code

George Street:

- Standard conditions apply, except for three excluded areas:
 - The intersection of George Street and Hay Street, within 50m of all corners of the intersection.

Reason: limited space for pedestrians, high levels of background noise, busking here impacts pedestrians' capacity to see, hear and navigate around trams, and residential complaints.



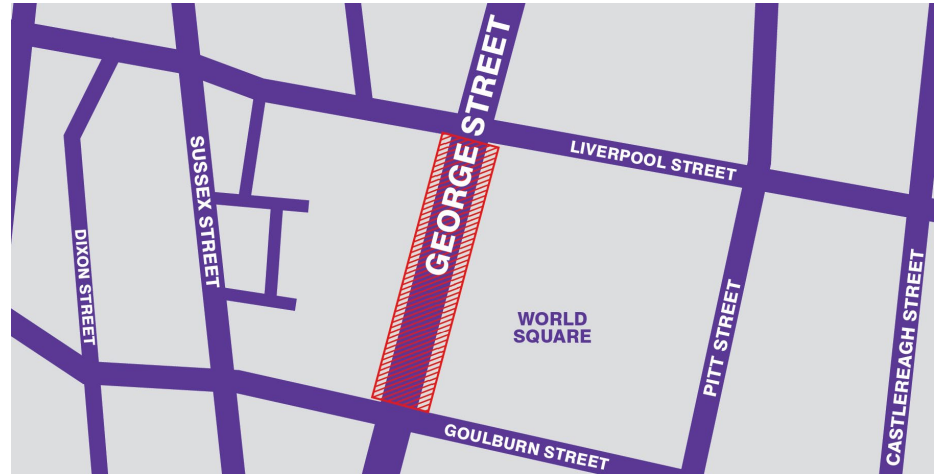
Proposed amendments

The Busking Code

George Street:

- Standard conditions, except for three excluded areas:
 - Either side of George Street between Goulburn Street and Liverpool Street

Reason: busking here impacts residential apartments above World Square.



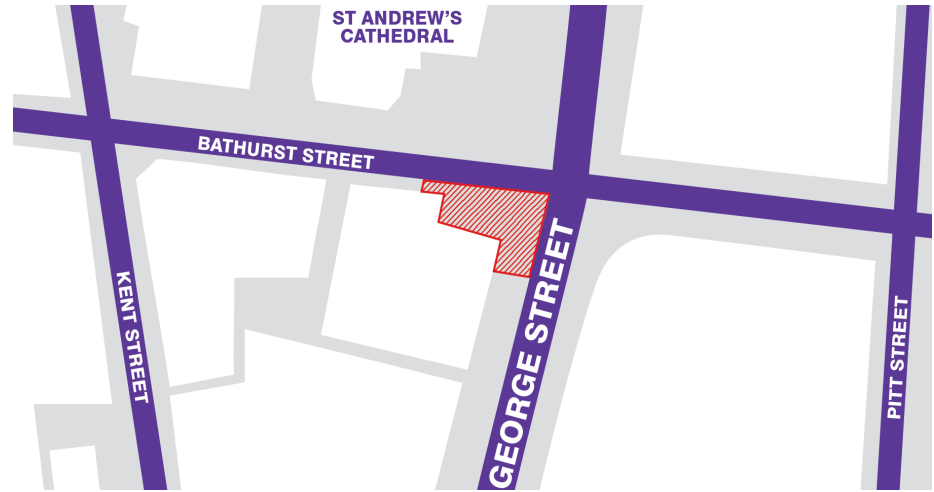
Proposed amendments

The Busking Code

George Street:

- Standard conditions, except for three excluded areas:
 - the southwestern corner of the intersection of George Street and Bathurst Street (outside KFC)

Reason: feedback received from Transdev notes records of near misses with trams in this location related to busking activity and residential complaints.



Further Support for Busking

- An online resource designed for devices.
 - Interactive Code
 - Real-time updates
 - Easy way to contact and interact with us
- Collaboration with Placemaking NSW to better align programs and information related to busking in Barangaroo, The Rocks, Darling Harbour and Circular Quay.
- Continue to provide a busking coordinator role.
- Continue to facilitate opportunities for buskers to participate in festivals and events.