

Attachment A

**Engagement Report – Amended Busking
Policy and Code, Public Exhibition**

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Overview

Background

Busking in our area is guided by two documents: the Busking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Practice Local Approvals Policy (the Policy) and the Sydney Busking Code (the Code). Together they outline the rules for busking and for accessing some of the most popular sites, which we call Special Busking Sites. These documents were updated and approved by Council in September 2025.

Shortly after, concerns were raised by buskers about some of the changes and on 17 November 2025, a Lord Mayoral Minute requested the busking policy and code be reviewed to increase locations for busking on George Street in the CBD, and the City of Sydney further consult Sydney's busking community and Transdev (who operate the Sydney Light Rail) as part of the review.

The busking policy and code were amended following this review and were approved by Council to be exhibited for public feedback in February 2026.

- September 2025: A new busking policy and code was adopted by Council
- November 2025: A Lord Minute requested the policy and code be reviewed and additional consultation undertaken
- December 2025: Additional consultation with buskers and Transdevs
- February 2026: Amended policy and code endorsed by Council to go on public exhibition
- February – April 2026: Public exhibition period

This engagement report outlines the outcomes of the public exhibition from February – April 2026. Community feedback received will help finalise the policy and code.

Engagement summary

From 24 February to 7 April 2026, we sought community feedback about the amended busking policy and code.

An email was sent to 467 stakeholders, including all buskers registered with the City of Sydney and people who made a submission during previous consultations inviting them to provide feedback.

Flyers with information about the consultation were also distributed to buskers and businesses at busking locations throughout the city centre including Pitt St Mall, Martin Place and George Street.

Communications about the public exhibition were also sent to Transport for NSW, ALTRAC and Transdev (Light Rail operator).

Purpose of engagement

- Provide opportunities for buskers, residents, workers and the wider community to have their say on the amended busking policy and code
- Provide opportunities for Transport for NSW, ALTRAC and Transdev (Light Rail operator) to review and respond to the amended policy and code
- Seek feedback on the amended busking policy and code
- Analyse feedback and report outcomes of the consultation to Council

Engagement context

It is important to note that the busking policy and code adopted in September 2025 were in effect while we sought feedback on the amended policy and code. As such, the feedback we received relates to elements of both the current policy environment and the proposed amendments. Where we received negative feedback about aspects of the policy that have been addressed in the amended policy, we consider that feedback to be a positive endorsement of the proposed amendment.

Engagement outcomes

We received **155 submissions** during the consultation period, including 108 surveys, 46 email submissions and one face-to-face meeting.

The Sydney Your Say page was viewed 1,324 times and the busking policy and code were downloaded 195 times during this period.

Figure 1: Engagement outcomes snapshot

Quantity	Description of activity
108	Survey submissions
46	Written submissions
1	Face to face meeting
155	Total

Key findings

Overall summary

Generally, people agreed that Sydney is a vibrant and dynamic city, and busking plays an important role in our cultural life and helps activate areas making them more welcoming and safer. However, feedback also highlights the importance of balancing busking with the impacts on residents, business and workers, pedestrian safety, and cleanliness of the city centre.

Feedback suggested the amended busking policy and code strikes a good balance between buskers, residents and wider community.

Buskers felt positive about busking being brought back to George Street, reinstating the 2-hour time limit, and more pitches available in Pitt St Mall for low impact acts.

A significant number of submissions supported the restricted busking areas between Bathurst to Liverpool streets and Hay Street, based on improving pedestrian safety near the light rail, reducing noise impacts and improving amenity.

Excessive noise from amplification and buskers that do not follow the rules were the major issues raised. Non-compliant busking was particularly noted at Pitt St Mall and along the restricted areas of George Street where some buskers currently busk later than 10pm, perform very loudly, and for longer than 2 hours.

Concern with the requirement for buskers to “Position yourself at least 5 metres from the light track” was also raised, stating this would place buskers in the middle of the pedestrian flow and would impede access.

Issues with preachers, protestors and ‘beggars’ who use amplification and take up public space and are not required to hold a permit was also raised.

Feedback suggested the policy needs clear noise rules, and a clear process of how the policy and code will be managed and enforced to ensure a good balance between busking and the enjoyment, safety and accessibility of shared public spaces.

Transdev feedback

Transdev, operator of the Sydney Light Rail, which runs along George Street, was consulted 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.

Issues and responses

The below table summarises the key issues raised in submissions, the number of times the issue was raised and the City of Sydney’s response to them.

Issue	Times raised	Response
Amplification and noise • Clarity sought on use of amplification for low-impact and high-impact acts. • Questions why ‘amplification’ criteria for low-impact and high-impact acts was removed • Is any act using electronic amplification automatically classified as high impact? • Calls for 1-hour limit for amplification to remain • Amplification use on George Street near light rail (especially at Bathurst & Hay Streets) distracts pedestrians and residents • Support for restricted busking zones on George Street with numerous complaints about noise from non-compliant busking particularly between Bathurst – Liverpool streets • Request that amplification is “discouraged” near residential buildings in evenings • Concerns the 50-metre distance to determine acceptable volume does not consider noise travelling vertically and impacting people in high-rise buildings • Calls for clear, enforceable limits on the use of amplification for both buskers and religious preachers	69 times	Almost all busking acts rely on some form of electronic amplification. It is impossible to support a broad range of performance styles without including amplification equipment as a standard. The issues related to amplification are issues with volume, specifically – very high volume. The policy and code aim to: • provide guidance to buskers about how to identify if they are busking at a reasonable volume • minimise busking in locations with high levels of background noise • require buskers to alter their performance and/or turn down their volume if directed to by an authorised person • penalise musical acts who repeatedly perform at unreasonable volumes by moving them to a high-impact permit, thus limiting their access to busking opportunities This policy approach has worked well for many years for most busking activity in most locations. Proposed changes to Special Busking Sites are intended to address those locations where this approach has not been sufficient to manage the impacts of very loud busking – specifically, the removal of certain busking locations.

Issue	Times raised	Response
Non-compliant busking - Numerous issues raised about non-compliant buskers in Pitt Street Mall who play ‘excessively’ loud, are rude, monopolise the same pitch and often intimidate other buskers - Numerous noise complaints made about ongoing late-night busking using amplification for longer than 1 hour on George Street (particularly Bathurst – Liverpool streets) - Complaints also raised about non-compliant busker on Oxford Street (Riley – Crown Streets) and Hyde Park at St James station - Complaints of a lack of enforcement and managing non-compliance	34 times	During the Policy review and exhibition period, the City has taken a light touch approach to monitoring busker compliance and only intervening in matters of public safety. When the amended Policy is adopted and implemented, the City will undertake a period of increased monitoring of popular busking locations. This monitoring will focus on educating buskers on the updated and finalised arrangements for Special Busking Sites, and compliance with the Busking Policy.
5 metres from light rail tracks - Confusion about “position yourself at least 5 metres from the tracks” and “position your back to the light rail” rules on George Street - Buskers have issues with this rule noting it would place them in the middle of the pedestrian flow and cause access/safety issues - Suggested being 1m from the tracks facing away from them or gather more data to determine the distance	32 times	The safety guidance for busking near light rail has been updated in the post-exhibition Busking Code. Buskers are encouraged to position themselves at least 2 metres from the light rail track with their back to the tram line.
More spaces for busking - Request less restriction and greater flexibility for buskers including more spaces available to busk - Suggestions include opening restricted spaces on George Street (even if for daytime hours only), removing restrictions in Martin Place and opening Pitt St Mall up to high-impact acts - Suggest opening up spaces where it’s safe to do so	24 times	Feedback received suggests the proposed amended Policy and Code strike the right balance in providing ample, flexible space for a broad range of buskers in balance with the needs of residents, businesses and other users of public space. The City will continue to advocate to the NSW Government to open up more spaces for busking in the train and metro network, and on NSW Government managed land.

Issue	Times raised	Response
Implementation and complaints management • Calls for clear enforcement and management process • Calls for proactive monitoring of known non-compliant locations, and a process for council to initiate when a pattern of repeat complaints against the same performer is identified • Clarity sought on what time buskers should finish at the end of a day, who polices the busking code, and how to get in contact when there is a dispute between buskers, or between residents and buskers • Protection for buskers' safety and right to busk	20 times	The Busking Policy clearly states that in all locations busking is permitted between 8am – 10pm Sunday to Thursday and 8am – midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. A new section has been added to the post-exhibition Busking Code to reiterate these permitted busking hours. When the amended Policy is adopted and implemented, the City will undertake a period of increased monitoring of popular busking locations. This will focus on educating buskers on the updated and finalised arrangements for Special Busking Sites, and compliance with the Busking Policy. There is no fundamental 'right to busk' but the Policy's Principles note the contribution that busking makes to our city, the legitimate and important role that busking plays in the creative industries and that busking is strongly supported in our local area. The Policy aims to support safe busking practices, and any buskers who feel unsafe while performing are encouraged to remove themselves from potential harm and immediately contact the police. Once safe, we encourage buskers who have been threatened, harmed or made to feel unsafe to report their experience to the City's busking coordinator or customer service.
Busking outside World Square • Support for the exclusion of busking on George Street between Goulburn and Liverpool Streets (outside World Square), due to impacts on residents and overcrowding on footpaths	20 times	A compromise is proposed for this location, to balance the needs of both residents and buskers, and to support the vibrancy of this location on weekends. Busking to be permitted on Fridays and Saturdays only, during the

Issue	Times raised	Response
Support to retain busking on George Street between Goulburn and Liverpool Streets (outside World Square) due to suitable public space for performers and audiences in this location.	9 times	standard hours for a Special Busking site, 11am – 10pm.
Light rail and public safety - Light rail drivers face challenges on George Street with people spilling on to the tracks while watching buskers - People are unable to hear Light Rail vehicle warning bells over busking music - George Street between Bathurst and Goulburn Streets highlighted as area of particular concern - Large crowds for buskers at Hay and Thomas Streets was also raised as a concern	18 times	The amended Code proposes areas to be excluded from busking and new guidance for safe busking near light rail in order to address these concerns. Proposed changes to Special Busking Sites prohibit busking within 50 metres of the George and Hay Street intersection, this includes the eastern corner of the Hay and Thomas Street intersection. The western side of this intersection has suitable footway space adjacent Paddy's Market
Preachers, protestors and beggars - Concerns around protesters and preachers in the city centre who use loudspeakers and cause offence and impact the community - Issues with beggars who pose safety risks to buskers and other vulnerable people and take up busking pitches but don't pay for permits	14 times	Public preaching and protesting are not activities that are regulated by local government and can only be undertaken in accordance with relevant state and federal laws. The preaching of hate speech should be reported to the police. The City does not "move on" people who are experiencing homelessness or sleeping rough. Where other people are using a public space in which a busker would like to busk, we suggest the busker use another suitable location. Any busker who feels threatened while performing is encouraged to remove themselves from potential harm and immediately contact the police. Once safe, we encourage buskers who have been threatened, harmed or made to feel unsafe to report their experience to the City's busking coordinator or customer service.
Places for circus acts that involve fire Concerns expressed by street performers whose acts involve fire not having a place to perform in the inner-city. These	2 times	The City has reviewed inner-city locations and there is not suitable locations on City of Sydney managed land for the safe use of fire. The City's

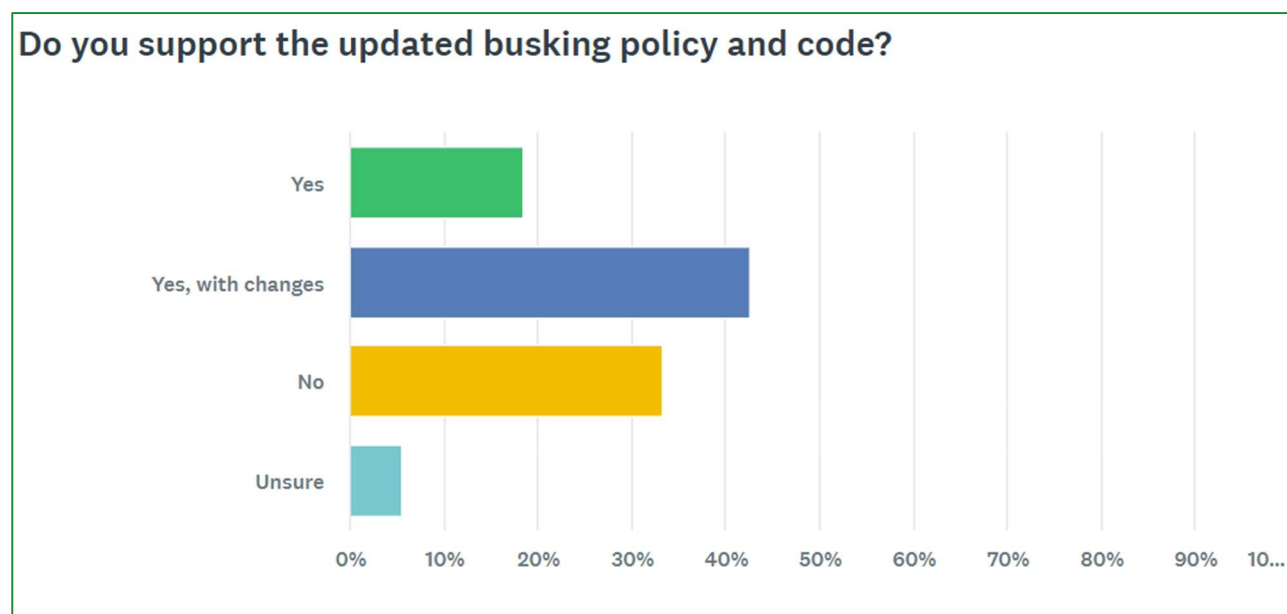
Issue	Times raised	Response
submissions note that fire performances are a part of the busking experience in many major cities and we should have spaces for this in Sydney.		policies do not allow for the use of flames in our public parks. The City will continue to advocate for more access for fire acts in suitable NSW Government managed sites such as Barangaroo and Darling Harbour.

Online survey

108 surveys were completed. Respondents were given the option to answer 3 questions, responses to these questions are outlined below.

Q.1 Do you support the updated busking policy and code?

18.5% (20 responses) selected 'Yes' to this question, 43% (46 responses) 'Yes, with changes', 33% (36 responses) selected 'No' and 5.5% (6 responses) were 'Unsure'.



Q. 2 Tell us why you support or do not support the updated policy and code?

Why people support them

People support the amended policy as they feel it addresses the needs of both buskers and the public. People felt positive about more flexibility for busking on George Street; reinstating the 2-hour time limit and more pitches in Pitt St Mall for low impact acts; and the clear wording that leaving bags/equipment unattended is not a form of queuing. Comments included:

"I support the updated policy as I think it gives back the performers their preference to live their creative lives."

"I support the changes giving buskers more freedom to do their work. I support the loosening on the earlier restrictions which limited them to certain locations. Artists are important."

“Provides extra opportunities for buskers. Music is an enjoyable experience for everyone whether they’re visitors from overseas or locals and will give Sydney and fantastic culture and will add to the excitement of it.”

Numerous submissions from residents at World Square and George/Bathurst streets supported the restricted areas on George Street from Bathurst to Liverpool streets – with some calling for the restricted area to be extended further south and north. Submissions called for restricted hours up to 10pm (although some commented busking should stop earlier, at 8pm or 9pm).

Comments included:

“Busking at the corner of George and Bathurst has been a problem for years - it’s about time something was done.”

“Thank you for taking serious note of the noise complaints on the Bathurst and George Street corner. I am a resident living above this corner and have become increasingly distressed by the noise level especially after 9pm in the evening on Thursdays and Fridays and sometimes other days. Can you make the following change to ensure use of amplifications is discouraged or disallowed. I know you took out the amplification notations. But could we please put in specifically, “use of amplification systems are discouraged from early evenings.”

“As a Sydney CBD resident who lives close to the World Square block and uses public transport to get around: the restricted areas completely make sense to me. I used the light rail and walk around all the time and have seen in the past the dangers of pedestrians walking very close to light rail lines because buskers were blocking pathways along George street. I have also previously witness overly loud buskers in the World Square area singing until 12am. I want to say thank you to the council for hearing the feedback/complaints by residents on the World Square area.”

“I am a resident of World Square facing George Street and had been suffering from busking noise until recently but I also miss the buskers when I walk along George Street . I support the updated policy which is balancing the needs of residents and vibrancy of the city. I am delighted that the council have maintained no busking on either side of George Street between Goulburn and Liverpool Streets. I recommend extending the no busking zone by 20m to the north of Liverpool Street (outside 3 Monkeys bar and Century Hotel and 20m to the south of Goulburn Street.”

There was support for the 1-hour time limit and only including low impact/extended duration acts at Pitt Street Mall,

“We, as a business that is located on Mid-city ground floor would appreciate the updated busking code of “Extended Duration Act who is quiet, non-amplified and non-musical”. The prolonged exposure of team members and customers to loud acts in front of the store has truly impacted the business and our customers who are feeling uncomfortable and having trouble to hear/communicate effectively under loud amplifier for hours every day.”

People who support the amended policy and code commented on the need for it to be enforced noting current issues with non-compliant buskers, particularly in Pitt Street Mall and on George Street.

“I support it because it is important to have clear rules for busking. I just hope they will be enforced, because some buskers are clearly breaking the rules..”

There is some confusion around “position yourself at least 5 metres from the tracks” and “position your back to the light rail” rules on George Street which was raised multiple times as an issue. Many buskers noted it would place them in the middle of the pedestrian flow, and would cause safety issues, suggesting a pitch 1m from the tracks facing away from the tracks would be better.

“The policy is very good, with a few changes: - the 5m from light rail tracks is crazy. You will be forced to be in the middle of where people walk. It make more sense to be 1m from the tracks but facing away from them. - there are 2 very good busking pitches which are blocked: world square (liverpool st, george st) and kfc (bathurst st and george st)”

"It would be far safer for buskers and pedestrians if the busker was closer to the light rail tracks, as the busker is not moving around, equipment can be kept out of the way, and the general public can stay on the pathway with no obstructed flow."

Why people do not support them

Residents at George/Bathurst Street raised issues with noise from amplified busking not only at Bathurst Street but also from St Andrews, Woolworths and Town Hall on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

Several residents noted issues with non-compliant, high-impact buskers who continue to busk in restricted areas on George Street:

"In recent days, particularly from Thursday to Saturday nights, high-impact buskers along George Street have repeatedly violated the Sydney Busking Code's strict curfews by performing with bass-heavy low speakers and amplified music well into the early hours, continuing unabated until midnight, creating relentless noise pollution that reverberates through nearby residences and severely disrupts quiet sleep."

Alternatively, several submissions argued for the reinstatement of busking on George Street from Bathurst to Liverpool streets, noting it is a great location with ample space for pedestrians and public seating.

"the ban on "Either side of George Street between Goulburn and Liverpool Streets" is excessive. This area is safe for busking and instead of a blanket 24/7 ban, putting a time limit (e.g. 10am-10pm) is more appropriate."

"I think the majority of updates are positive. I do have a strong belief that there should be at least dedicated hours where busking in the Liverpool St/Goulburn St section of George Street should be permitted. I think it's ridiculous that people can move into an apartment on the busiest street in the centre of a city of 5.5 million people and complain about noise during the middle of the day. No issues with making sure it finished before the evening, but to ban it completely when that spot is one of the few viable spots in the city with space from the footpath and steps for people to sit on and listen/watch is sad."

There were mixed responses about removing amplification as a criterion for a high-impact act. Several submissions oppose the removal because amplification is the greatest impact for surrounding homes, businesses and pedestrians. It was suggested that any act using electronic amplification be automatically classified as "high-impact".

Several concerns were raised about buskers using "extreme" amplification, particularly in Pitt Street Mall.

"i support the changes made, but i feel there should also be stronger volume control. the volume at which some buskers perform is almost deafening. it feels as though there is a large concert in the middle of pitt st. i work in one of the retail stores and it is extremely disruptive as we cannot hear customers and customers cannot hear us. many customers complain to us about it but there is nothing we can do ourselves. i cannot ask the buskers themselves to lower the volume as that feels rude to them personally."

"Busking can be great and the flexibility in the new code is welcome. But, the levels of amplification - especially in Martin Place and Pitt Street Mall - ruin Sydney's amenity. The loud electric amplification carries more than 100 metres and puts me off shopping or buying food/drinks in these areas. Use the new rules to compel a softer, acoustic culture to busking. Otherwise, the loud music will empty out the streets."

Another submission raised concerns about high-impact busking occurring between midnight and 2am near residential buildings on Oxford Street (especially between Riley and Crown Streets).

There was some mixed feedback regarding the reinstatement of a 2 hour time limit for low-impact acts on George Street, with one resident requesting this is changed back to 1 hour, whilst a submission from a busker urged 2 hours is required to allow enough time for buskers to set up and pack down. Pitt Street Mall was mentioned as a location where the 1 hour limit is favourable, as a 2

hour limit for low impact acts can be monopolised by particular buskers, making it hard for other buskers to busk there.

A question was raised why Martin Place Fountain is no longer deemed a busking spot, with a busker noting it is a good alternative to Pitt Street:

“It’s not as popular as Pitt St Mall and is usually available anytime. I’ve personally busked there after finding that Pitt St Mall spots are occupied.”

Another questioned whether it is ok for 1 busker to perform outside Woolworths Town Hall at the same time as another busker performing outside QVB Southern Forecourt - *“I’m not sure as to whether we would be 100m apart or not... I think we are so I’d personally busk if that scenario occurs.”*

There was a request for a booking system for all Special Busking Sites to help buskers organise their day (especially those that travel long distance) rather than turning up to the city and finding that all spots are occupied.

Q. 3 Please provide any other feedback on the updated policy and code

There was some confusion in responses to this question with some referring to information in the previous policy and code.

Submissions reiterated the importance of free music in the city and the need for buskers to have more flexibility and choice where to busk including not have designated pitches on George Street. Other responses called for tighter restrictions on George Street – extending the restricted area 50 metres past the Liverpool Street corner to reduce the ‘bounce effect’ of noise on buildings.

Another suggested that the intersection of George and Market Street (outside Myer) also be made an area that is outside of the permitted locations due to congestion and lack of pedestrian space at this location.

Numerous submissions raised concerns around protesters and preachers in the city centre who use loudspeakers and cause offence and impact the community. Respondents mentioned:

“The updated policy and code should also state that preachers and homeless people playing instruments are not buskers and must have some sort of permit to do what they do. The public think that preachers are buskers but they’re not, and they seem to have more freedoms in making a nuisance in the city particularly Town Hall.”

“I think some consideration needs to be given to the street preachers outside the church and town hall. Their presence and the noise pollution - both in level and content - is far more unpleasant and, sometimes, quite offensive.”

Responses to this question also raised concerns about non-compliant, high-impact busking at Pitt Street Mall:

“Please maintain to keep the area in front of Mid-City with acts who do not engage in loud music/amplifier/speaker. We have spoken to other businesses around and they share the agreement.”

Other issues raised include: only applying time limits if there are buskers in the queue, allowing busking on the light rail tracks when light rail is not running, including buskers in City-funded street activations and festivals, allowing busking at Martin Place during Christmas period, and allowing busking on George Street at KFC and World Square.

Clarity was sought on several things including what time buskers should finish at the end of a day, a table of definitions, who polices the busking code / who one should contact / how to get in contact when there is a dispute between buskers, or between residents and buskers.

It was noted that where venues such as pubs have their own musical acts performing for alfresco dining customers, buskers should allow a 100-metre buffer zone from the venue, so they do not sing on top of each other.

Written submissions

46 people provided written submissions received via email – including 9 from buskers/musicians, 21 from city residents, 2 from city workers and one from a previous Light Rail driver. The remainder of email submissions were from people who did not mention their connection to the project.

Key themes, issues and locations raised in these email submissions are summarised below.

General support

Submissions generally supported creative expression and busking done responsibly, with some noting efforts made by the City of Sydney in the updated policy and code to support busking while balancing the safety, amenity and accessibility of shared public spaces.

“I am writing this email firstly to thank the City of Sydney for the efforts it has made to support and strengthen the busking scene in Sydney. I have been performing on the streets of Sydney for around two and a half years now, and thanks to this opportunity, I have had some of the best experiences of my life and have been able to build a solid solo career as a professional musician... I have read through the newly proposed busking code and, overall, I find it fair and well thought out..” Busker comment

“I love that I can take my kids down and listen to live music and experience culture and a lovely area. It is the very reason we moved to the city. If busking is not allowed then it really changes the attraction to the city. It adds a “nightlife” for families with kids and gives access to free entertainment. Otherwise, it will feel like a ghost town which Sydney city already feels like during the weekday - it’s a sleepy city.” Community comment

“I support busking done responsibly. The City could improve outcomes by reinstating Busking Street Wharf or other curated performance locations, encouraging busking for charities or community causes, using Hyde Park, Wynyard Park, or Belmore Park (near Central) more actively for performances, but only allowing any of these benefits for performers who demonstrably cause no disruption. These options promote artistic culture without subjecting residents to prolonged harm. Safe and compliant buskers have my full support, especially extended duration buskers.” Community comment

There was also a suggestion for structured busking programs, noting the importance of harmonious, curated music into the fabric of our city, and on people’s wellbeing.

“Music has a measurable effect on the nervous system. The right genre — harmonious, balanced, melodic — can lower stress markers, stabilise mood, and improve overall emotional wellbeing. In a time where urban populations experience chronic stress, this is not decorative; it is preventative health infrastructure.

This initiative could include:

- *Low-volume, strategically placed public speakers in key pedestrian areas*
- *Carefully curated playlists prioritising harmonious and grounding compositions*
- *Designated busking zones to encourage live performance*
- *Opportunities for emerging local artists to participate*
- *Pilot testing in selected precincts to evaluate behavioural and wellbeing outcomes*

It is essential that the music be intentional. Not intrusive. Not chaotic. The emphasis must be on beauty, harmony, and tonal balance — sound that supports the nervous system rather than overstimulates it.” Community comment.

Amplification

Excessive noise from amplification was a major issue raised in many submissions. People called for clearer noise rules, stronger enforcement, and for the 1-hour time limit for amplification to remain.

Specific mention was given to George Street at Bathurst Street and at Hay Street and next to the light rail, and at Pitt St Mall, where amplification causes distractions to pedestrians and residents.

Amplification limits and impacts

There were concerns that the draft changes weaken existing safeguards, reduce the clarity of enforceable standards, and propose expanding amplification allowances without introducing adequate controls.

“The current 1 hour limit for amplified busking should remain. Extending to 2 hours means too much exposure to amplified sound that carries far beyond the pitch which often results in hearing the same songs repeatedly when the same performers return regularly. They create crazy volumes I can hear from 100 metres away and frequently stay three hours despite complaining to council..” Community comment

“I do not agree to remove amplification from both low- and high-impact acts, especially when they perform in residential areas.” Community comment

“At present, buskers and religious preachers frequently use loudspeakers at all hours of the day and night. Even with our windows closed, the amplified sound carries directly into our home. It often drowns out our music or television, and regularly disrupts our ability to rest. This has a significant impact on our household. I work as a nurse and often sleep during the day after night shifts, yet I am repeatedly woken by amplified preaching or music. My husband and I are also disturbed late at night, sometimes past midnight, by buskers using speakers on George Street and Bathurst Street. This level of noise intrusion is unreasonable and has become genuinely distressing.” Community comment

“I am writing to formally object to the proposal allowing buskers two hours of amplified performance time. In my view, the council should consistently classify the use of loudspeakers as high impact, given the disruption it can cause. Limiting amplified performances to one hour with only a single speaker, especially near tram tracks, would be a much more sensible approach.” Community comment

“I object to changing the 1 hour limit for amplified busking. So many buskers are already staying three hours at a time despite people complaining and their volume is so bad that I can hear them from two streets away. Hearing the same very loud songs over and over again every couple days by the same people is draining.” Community comment

“My only request is that all busking happens without amplification.” Community comment

Classification of high-impact and low-impact acts

There was concern about removing amplification as a criteria for high-impact acts and confusion about how acts would be classified. Submissions noted some performers operating under low-impact permits produce sound levels that are actually “high-impact” and the current policy relies on self-declaration and permit category rather than actual measured output.

“a performer can claim low-impact status while producing high-impact sound, and enforcement action becomes harder to initiate because the permit category does not match the observable behaviour and Rangers often hesitate when seeing incorrect permits, claiming they can’t enforce wrong permits.” Community comment

Clarification was sought on how amplification will be treated under the low-impact classification.

“Could you confirm whether the intent is that any use of amplification automatically classifies an act as high impact? In practice—particularly in Pitt Street Mall—amplification is clearly present in settings that would otherwise be considered low impact. Modern battery-powered amplification is capable of producing significant volume regardless of its physical size, which makes this distinction increasingly important to define clearly.” Community comment

Concerns were raised from people living and working in high-rise buildings with using a 50-metre distance to determine acceptable volume as it does not seem to account for vertical impact.

“In locations like Pitt Street Mall, sound carries directly into upper-level offices and residential spaces, where it can remain intrusive even if it is less noticeable at street level or at a distance. Is there any consideration being given to how noise impacts adjacent buildings vertically, particularly in high-density mixed-use areas?” Community comment

Recommendations

Residents called for clear, enforceable limits on the use of amplification for both buskers and religious preachers.

“I ask Council to prioritise the needs of residents and ensure that any final policy includes strict controls on amplified sound, hours of operation, and enforcement mechanisms.” Community comment

“I believe 10pm for amplification in non designated busking zones should not be allowed due to malicious noncompliance so that children and other residents can sleep without disruption.” Community comment

Requests included:

- Prohibiting high-volume acts near residences at nighttime
- No amplification beyond 9pm on nights when rangers are unavailable
- No subwoofers for City-run events in or near residential areas
- One loudspeaker per act to limit noise spread and acoustic layering
- Enforcing 200m-per-day move-on rule: The Code must clarify that buskers must relocate at least 200 metres away from their original pitch for the remainder of the day. This is already listed in policy, but often ignored and not enforced, especially by repeat offenders.
- Discouraging daily repetition of amplified acts in the same area: as amplified acts returning to the same location every day and repeating the same few songs creates “an unbearable environment for nearby residents”. Unless they’re unamplified and non-disruptive, acts should be encouraged to rotate pitches or vary content if returning regularly.
- Clearly stating why volume limits exist, such as to protect health, uphold residential strata and other stakeholder rights with already existing noise ordinances to prevent sound tunnel amplification in George Street and because 50m audibility is routinely exceeded by high-impact acts.
- Clarifying when and how NSW Police may be contacted by residents and when public nuisance or prolonged breaches become police matters

Non-compliance and enforcement

Buskers who repeatedly breach the rules was another major issue raised in submissions along with the need for greater enforcement.

Ongoing breaches

Ongoing breaches by repeat-offending buskers include exceeding the 1-hour limit for amplified acts, breaching volume restrictions and performing at prohibited locations (eg. within 5 metres of Light Rail tracks and at restricted George Street locations)

“I oppose a policy that allows continued harm from a small number of high-impact buskers who repeatedly breach the rules, face no or seriously delayed consequences or continue harm for months or years, and disproportionately affect residents, workers, and vulnerable groups in high-density areas.” Community comment

Although there was appreciation for compliance officers who enforce the busking code, it was noted that enforcement can be inconsistent – issues raised included rangers arriving too late due to workload, and a perceived lack of internal communications and coordination which enables buskers who break the rules to continue doing so.

Complaint management process

It was noted that currently enforcement appears reactive and requires residents to monitor performances, record breaches and report incidences, placing the burden on them.

There was a call for more proactive monitoring of known non-compliant locations, and a process for council to initiate when a pattern of repeat complaints against the same performer is identified.

Suggestions to improve enforcement and accountability included – thresholds that trigger formal warnings, fines or bans, a system that flags repeat offenders, and a clearly communicated escalation protocol.

“Please allow the Rangers’ app to flag repeat offenders and update the current system to ensure consistency from Rangers.” Community comment

Terminology in updated draft policy and code

An issue was raised about terminology used in the policy that may not be enforceable. Two examples were given:

“First, the proposal distinguishes between musical and non musical performances, but seems to rely on (non-presented) definitions of music that are not defensible with reference to contemporary musical scholarship. To give one example - famously, John Cage composed a piece entitled 4'33, which involves a performer sitting at a piano for four minutes and 33 seconds without playing a note. Musical scholarship considers this to be music - yet it seems the code might not. Aside from this extreme example, there are other cases of innovative performance art that do not fit into codes rigid though poorly defined demarcations between types of performance. It is easy to imagine that performers, with the weight of expert evidence from successful scholars could defend any breaches based on the code, because its categories of performance art are arbitrary rather than based on a sound understanding of it. If a code cannot be enforced, what is the point in having it?

Second, other poorly defined terms in the code limit its relevance and enforceability. As one example, I note the use of the term amplification. A didgeridoo, a flute, or even an unaccompanied voice involve (from a scientific perspective) amplification. The cylindrical tubes of a didgeridoo or flute and the vibrating muscular folds of the oropharynx amplify sound waves. If the Council is referring to electrical amplification, they should make this clear.” Community comment

George Street

George Street was the location that attracted the most comments in submissions, for reasons summarised below.

Pedestrian access, safety and light rail

A submission from a former light rail driver highlighted the challenges drivers face on George Street with people spilling on to the tracks while watching buskers and not able to hear vehicle warning bells, in particularly between Bathurst Street and Goulburn Street.

“I am a former light rail driver, and I just want to emphasise how challenging buskers were on George Street for light rail operators. I know you are aware of this and have incorporated a number of measures into the plan. However, I just wanted to reiterate how dangerous it often was when popular buskers were performing on George Street, particularly in the corridor from Goulburn St to Bathurst near the cinemas and KFC. I note the KFC area has been designated as not permitted, however it would be ideal if this stretched a bit further down George Street.

It would also have been helpful if there was more ranger enforcement in this area in addition to the above. It was very common to have to virtually bring the tram to a stand due to audiences spilling over the tracks and not noticing bells/horns from the tram.” Former Light Rail driver comment

Concerns about pedestrian access and safety due to busking near light rail tracks were also raised in numerous other submissions.

“I have family and friends who live in and spend time in the city, including elderly people and those with prams, and the crowding caused by buskers makes it harder to move around safely. This is especially problematic near tram lines along George Street and Hay Street, where crowds can form near crossings and tracks, reducing pedestrian flow and blocking access. Removing the 5 metre safety distance puts people at risk and it is confusing why council values buskers over safety and peace.” Community comment

“Performers continue to ignore: 5m clearance rules for tram lines, George Street pitch bans, Crowd control hazards near transport and walkways, Keeping thoroughfares open and free from trip hazards, Direct Compliance Officer directions, even multiple times. This poses a direct risk to public safety, especially at night when visibility is reduced. Despite repeated complaints, no enforcement or policy adjustments have addressed this. Please consider including the tram intersection of Hay and George St as a no busking zone as there are FOUR tram tracks in this area.” Community comment.

“Relaxing safety rules for the tram lines due to congestion on the streets and buskers cause safety problems. Please keep the previous version of the code. If anything, there needs to be better management of buskers for volume and safety.” Community comment

There was acceptance of the restricted busking areas on George Street due to safety and amenity concerns:

“Regarding the available pitches along George Street, I am completely comfortable with them and fully understand that the red-marked areas where performances are not permitted are due to the significant sound impact and potential disturbance to residents.” Busker comment

However, some buskers made suggestions about this, including:

“allowing musicians to play closer to the light rail tracks will allow their audiences to not block footpaths... As far as I know there is tactile paving to indicate where is safe to walk along the full length of the light rail tracks, if you specify they the performer must be on the footpath side of the tactile paving then they will consistently be in a safe position for the rails and the best possible position for their audiences.” Busker comment

“I believe the proposed amendments do not properly consider pedestrian flows at all. Being at least five metres from Light Rail tracks would place performers in the centre of the pavement and impede pedestrian flow far more than the old system did. Additionally, the two-square-metre rule does not provide ample space for buskers at all. Many buskers need to set up a camera stand for streaming too and that is not going fit within two square metres.” Busker comment

“The council has now had over 6 months to gather that data on what the impact would be of getting buskers to stand 1m, 2m and 5m away from the tracks. You could have paid a small stipend and observed the results. You have a dozen buskers who would have agreed to participate. It would have been an inexpensive and collaborative approach.” Busker comment

Bathurst Street – Liverpool Street

George Street at Bathurst Street (outside KFC) was consistently raised as problematic in numerous submissions due to ongoing non-compliant, late-night buskers who use amplification for longer than 1 hour and draw large crowds near the light rail.

“I strongly support the proposed restriction on busking along George Street between Goulburn Street and Liverpool Street. Busking noise in this section has had a significant impact on residents for a long time. The sound frequently travels directly into our apartments, to the point where we often cannot open our windows during the day. On many occasions the amplified music and repeated performances continue for extended periods, affecting our ability to work from home, rest, and enjoy reasonable residential amenity.” Community comment

“I am writing to formally complain about the ongoing and persistent issue of illegal busking along George Street between Bathurst Street and Liverpool Street. Buskers are setting up along this entire stretch daily, well beyond any reasonable interpretation of approved

performance zones. The situation has now escalated to consistent late-night noise, with performances continuing into the evening and creating an unacceptable impact on nearby residents. This is not an occasional issue - it is continuous, predictable, and worsening.

What is most concerning is the apparent lack of enforcement. The City of Sydney has clear rules governing where and how busking may occur, yet there is little to no visible action taken to uphold them.” Community comment.

“The current level of illegal and late-night busking on this stretch of George Street is unacceptable” Community comment

“Furthermore, this duo had attracted a large crowd which has been hazardous, crowds spilling over onto the light rail tracks, crowds dancing... “This is very problematic with over amplified busking out of control, nearly nightly.” Community comment

“As my apartment faces George St., near the corner of Bathurst St., we are often disturbed by buskers' noise, particularly in the early evening and late at night. My son is a university student who needs to concentrate while doing his homework. Even with the window closed and the air conditioner on, the noise makes it difficult for him to focus.” Community comment

“We all deserve a peaceful evening or night with open windows for fresh air. Children need time to concentrate on their homework and studies without noise. we hope council can solve the matter as soon as possible” Community comment

“While I support busking as part of Sydney’s cultural life, the current situation at this location is having a significant and ongoing negative effect on residential amenity. Despite the draft Code clearly identifying the southwestern corner of George Street and Bathurst Street (outside KFC) as a location where busking is not permitted due to safety and residential impacts, busking activity continues to regularly occur in this exact area. This suggests a lack of enforcement.” Community comment

“Noise levels are frequently excessive and extend well beyond reasonable hours. The Code states that performances should not be audible beyond 50 metres and that buskers must reduce volume if residents are impacted. However, in practice, amplified performances can be clearly heard in apartments late into the night, often past midnight, and there appears to be little active monitoring or enforcement.” Community comment

“The proximity of buskers to one another is also contributing to the issue. Although the Code requires a minimum distance of 100 metres between performers, this does not appear to be consistently followed. When buskers operate too close together, they compete for attention by increasing volume, which significantly escalates overall noise levels and undermines the intent of the Code.” Community comment

Submissions requested busking not be allowed at the George Street/Bathurst Street corner based on safety and ongoing community impact. Comments included:

“I want to draw attention to the proposed zone at the corner of Bathurst Street and George Street. The document itself acknowledges that this location is problematic, referencing safety concerns and a high number of complaints, and then merely states that buskers are “encouraged” to choose another site.

This approach is fundamentally flawed. Encouragement is not a control mechanism. It is entirely unrealistic to expect compliance in a high-traffic, high-visibility location where performers are clearly incentivised to remain. The current situation on George Street demonstrates exactly this failure - buskers do not self-regulate when there is no enforcement.”

“There are a number of nearby areas that are more suitable for busking due to lower residential presence and reduced impact on apartments. These include the QVB forecourt, The Galleries, and Martin Place, where busking activity can be better accommodated without directly affecting residents.”

Several recommendations regarding this location were suggested including:

- Stronger enforcement of prohibited busking zones, particularly at the George and Bathurst Street intersection
- Extending the areas where busking is not permitted to both sides of George Street between Goulburn Street and Bathurst Street
- Requiring buskers to clearly display their permit
- Better enforcement of the 100-metre minimum distance between buskers
- Consideration of an earlier evening cut-off time in mixed-use and residential areas, such as 8pm, to ensure residents can enjoy a reasonable level of quiet and privacy at night
- Encouraging busking in less residentially sensitive locations, including areas such as the QVB forecourt, The Galleries, and Martin Place
- Increased monitoring and enforcement of amplified performances
- Withholding permits/temporary bans for buskers who continue to break the rules
- Clearer exclusion zones in very high pedestrian traffic areas
- Improved waste management in locations with high levels of busking activity

Hay Street and Thomas Street

George Street at Hay Street and Thomas Street were other locations specifically raised in several submissions as problematic and unsafe, where buskers often arrange 'large performance spaces' in front of them, attracting crowds near the light rail and generate a lot of noise.

"I strongly urge the council to designate Thomas and Hay Street as a no busking zone. These areas are often highly congested, and allowing buskers there poses safety risks. People watching or being distracted by buskers can inadvertently find themselves in dangerous situations, particularly with the proximity to tram tracks. Buskers often force pedestrians onto the tracks, increasing the risk of accidents. Current restrictions, such as the 50m rule from Hay and George, do not adequately cover the safety concerns at Hay and Thomas." Community comment

"Council MUST always classify loudspeaker use as High Impact (not negotiable). One hour is more than enough with just ONE speaker only, especially near tram tracks. City rangers rarely attend in time which lets the worst offenders return to create the same problems week after week... Buskers should also not be allowed on Thomas and Hay Street because it's unsafe and we don't want people being distracted by buskers within the tram corridor." Community comment

"The Hay/ Thomas Sts busking location is very different - and dangerous. There is a tram line running down Hay St. There can be a big crowd over a large area - either watching the busker or trying to get past that crowd. The tram drivers are constantly hitting the horn hard, because of the pedestrian crowd. Pedestrians topple into the path of the tram quite regularly.

Another concern raised at this location was buskers with dogs.

"There are often 'attack dogs' with the busker on the corner of George St and Hay St. I have been attacked by dogs three times in the last 5 years and do not feel at all safe when buskers have what appear to be pretty ferocious dogs with them." Community comment

There was a request that Thomas and Hay be designated a 'no busking zone' to ensure pedestrian safety near the light rail tracks in an already congested area.

Pitt Street Mall

Pitt Street Mall was the second most commented on location raised in submissions. It was noted that busking at Pitt Street Mall liven up the area, but issues were raised around excessive noise to nearby residents and businesses.

"The busking on the whole is delightful and adds beautiful sound and colour to the cityscape. We generally enjoy, really appreciate, like and are entertained by it. Otherwise the city / mall is a bit flat." Pitt Street Mall worker

Corner of King Street and Pitt Street Mall

A submission from a Pitt Street Mall worker indicated that buskers with a short duration (1-2 hours) work well at this location such as professional singers, magicians and K-pop dancers. However loud rapping, drumming and saxophone playing for extended periods is too loud for the location. Loud religious preachers are also an issue.

Amplification and high-impact acts

As already mentioned in the 'Amplification' section above, the use of excessive amplification in Pitt Street Mall is an issue, particularly buskers who frequently do not follow volume rules.

"Buskers very frequently do not follow amplification rules (although in the new rules, it seems there are only suggestions). Let's also admit that over-loud amplification is not frequently policed by Council rangers. On average, in Summer, twice a week in Pitt Street Mall I find the volume way too high completely obliterating the idea of Pitt Street Mall being a busy but pleasant place to be. I sometimes think how hard it must be for salespeople to conduct business with such loud sound penetrating their stores. The use of amplifiers should be banned or the maximum level of decibels specified (that which cannot be measured cannot be easily policed)." Community comment

"In locations like Pitt Street Mall, sound carries directly into upper-level offices and residential spaces, where it can remain intrusive even if it is less noticeable at street level or at a distance. Is there any consideration being given to how noise impacts adjacent buildings vertically, particularly in high-density mixed-use areas?" Community comment

However, disappointment was expressed in a busker's submission at the removal of high-impact pitches from Pitt Street Mall.

"Opening Pitt Street mall back up to high impact acts would be a boon not only to the entertainers, but to the pedestrians, tourists and businesses along the mall. High and low impact acts have coexisted for all this time, especially as high impact acts would often move on before their hour was finished..."

I performed a low impact act, and sharing the pitches with these great high-impact entertainers was only ever a positive experience, and their ability to create an audience would assist all the other buskers on the street (including me!)" Busker comment

"From my perspective and genuinely thinking about what could be beneficial for everyone involved, I believe it is important to consider that some acts work better in larger pitches due to crowd size. For example, the North Pitch is considerably smaller, which can limit certain performances."

Consecutive day rule

Clarification was sought on how the rule of not performing on consecutive days at the same pitch would be supervised. Reference was made to Rundle Mall in Adelaide where rangers are present on a daily basis, supervising both the area and the buskers.

"If a shop has concerns about volume, or if there is a conflict between performers, a ranger is called and is able to assist in resolving the situation. This was something I appreciated greatly and found very effective." Busker comment.

Another suggestion was to make the restriction only apply on weekdays when footfall is lower than weekends and so busking appears more noticeable.

"My suggestion would be to allow consecutive-day performances at the same Pitt Street Mall pitch on weekends, while limiting performances to alternating days during weekdays." Busker comment

Martin Place

A question was raised about no busking in Martin Place between Pitt Street and Castlereagh Street because of regular events. This submission suggested:

“CBRE busking code allows Busking in Palm Grove despite it being regularly used for events because they have made it clear that we’re not allowed to work there during events. I think a better code would allow busking on that site but indicate that it’s not allowed while events are on.” Busker comment

Hyde Park (at St James Station)

One submission requested removing Hyde Park at the St James train station entrance as a busking site due to noise impacts on residents from a non-compliant busker at this location.

“I’d like to suggest the busking site be removed at the St James train station entrance. There are two more busking sites in Hyde park, one more just 100 meters away from the St. James train station entrance.” Community comment

Other

Other issues raised included the desire for less regulation, including unbanning fire acts, for example:

“it would be ideal if fire acts were fully unbanned but I understand that there have been complications in Pitt Street Mall in the past.” Busker comment

“Just let the buskers busk for God sake. Sydney’s vitality is being strangled by over engineered regulations. Let the scene develop organically with a minimum of intervention and interference. There was no problem to solve, so respectfully, just butt out and leave them alone!”, Busker comment

“We need a good amount of budding artists to be permitted to busk around the city which will make it more attractive and interesting for locals and tourists. Busking on George Street is not a good idea because of the metro noise. Busking in small side streets can make buskers easy targets for theft and crime. Let the buskers perform on main streets and preferably in place where they won’t obstruct pedestrians. Let common sense and the love of music and art prevail.” Community comment

Other issues included frustration at e-bikes, frustration at buskers and beggars with dogs, people with clipboards “interfering” with buskers performing, and at not being permitted to busk at Transport for NSW managed sites such as at Metro stations.

“These changes are great, One more thing though.. After setting up it is really unacceptable to buskers to have people with clip boards doing surveys in front of me. Do these people have a license to do this without repercussions in front of buskers or very near them. Many time I have to pack up and leave, as they talk in front of me and completely ruin the ACT” Busker comment

“Last year I spent 6 months trying to get permission to busk outside my local metro station. Ultimately the bureaucracy won and I was forced to abandon the attempt.” Busker comment

“I was recently in Vienna in Austria. There I found-out that it has been made illegal in Vienna to beg or busk with dogs accompanying the person. This is because Vienna found out the dogs were being tranquilised. On my return to Sydney, I noticed how lethargic the dogs are here in Sydney. I am certain some are drugged. Sydney should follow Vienna’s humane policy.” Community comment

Face-to-face meeting

One member of the busking community requested to meet with City of Sydney staff in person to provide feedback. Below summarises feedback received at this meeting on 26 March 2026.

Changes to the policy and code

Feedback indicated the updated policy and code is much better than the previous version (adopted in 2025).

The busking member felt positive about the following changes:

- Arrangements in Martin Place, Hyde Park and Pitt Street (including 1hr limit), noting the impact of loud buskers on shops
- Time limit being lifted to 2hrs elsewhere
- George Street not being limited to specific pitches

However, disagreed with the 3 restricted areas on George Street because these pitches are important and favourites for several buskers. The busking member did not believe the Bathurst and Hay Street intersections were a safety risk and did not agree with noise complaints from residents on George Street between Liverpool and Goulburn Street.

Feedback suggested residents who live in the city must accept a certain level of noise and should consider double glazing.

Implementation:

The busking member noted positive experiences busking in Melbourne and suggested we look at Melbourne's approach including:

- Busking officers who provide clear instructions
- Protecting buskers' safety and right to busk
- Filtering complaints from residents who make constant, unjustified complaints

Additional concerns:

Additional concerns raised at this meeting included:

- Beggars who pose safety risks to buskers and other vulnerable people and take up busking pitches but don't pay for permits. Feedback requested beggars should have a permit.
- Regulating and limiting Ebikes in the city as they are a huge safety concern in Sydney.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Stakeholder notification emails

CITY OF SYDNEY

Your say on our updated busking policy and code

We invite your feedback on our updated busking policy and Sydney busking code. These documents guide busking in our area and outline the rules for using popular sites.

The policy and code have been updated following a review to consider new busking sites for George Street, Pitt Street Mall and other busy parts of the city centre.

Visit [Sydney Your Say](#) to view the updates and have your say.

[Take our online survey](#)

You can provide feedback by completing our [online survey](#) by 7 April.

Your feedback will help finalise the busking policy and code.

Contact us

If you would like to speak with us, contact Lex Davidson on 02 9265 9333 or at sydneyyoursay@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

[Read more about the busking review](#) requested by Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore AO.

CITY OF SYDNEY

Reminder: have your say on our updated busking policy and code

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[Read more about the busking review](#)

Appendix 2: Flyer

CITY OF SYDNEY

Have your say

Tell us what you think of our updated busking rules.

Following feedback, we've considered new busking sites for George Street, Pitt Street Mall and other busy parts of the city centre.

We invite you to provide feedback on our updated busking policy and code.



Take the online survey or email us by 5pm, 7 April 2026

Feel free to contact us on 02 9265 9333 or sydneyyoursay@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Thanks for helping us make busking in our area better.

cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

