



# OXFORD STREET SAFETY STRATEGY 2007-2010

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oxford Street Safety Strategy documents key strategies to address the issue of safety and perceptions of safety and public amenity in the Oxford Street entertainment precinct and surrounding areas.

The Strategy acknowledges the complex relationships which impact upon safety in and around the Oxford Street area and provides a set of actions to address this in a holistic way which looks beyond the issue of violence and abuse. The Strategy identifies key issues which impact on safety and the perception of safety and provides strategies to address this which are measurable and achievable.

The key objectives of the Strategy are to:

1. Improve the perceptions of safety
2. Address the incidence of homophobic violence and abuse
3. Reduce the incidence of alcohol related violence and antisocial behaviour
4. Strengthen the role of licensed premises in making Oxford Street safer
5. Increase the activation of public spaces

The Strategy will achieve these outcomes through

- Improving design, active surveillance, cleansing and appearance of public spaces
- Building cooperation between key enforcement agencies
- Improving gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) reporting of homophobic violence
- Enhancing business and licensed premises ability to respond to crime and safety
- Delivering public education initiatives
- Advocating for increased police resources

The City of Sydney and its key partners acknowledge the international reputation of Oxford Street as a gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender meeting place and that it is a safe place for all who live in, work in and visit the area.

Implementation of the plan will be overseen by the Oxford Street Safety Strategy Working Group, comprised of representatives from NSW Police, NSW Attorney General's Department, Surry Hills Licensing Accord, AIDS Council of NSW (ACON) and the Lesbian and Gay Anti Violence Project (AVP).

The Working Group was formed to respond to issues raised by local media, community forums and stakeholder meetings, The Working Group has the responsibility of overseeing the implementation, review and evaluation of the Oxford Street Safety Strategy. This involves consultation with key stakeholders and the community to identify, address and monitor issues which affect safety and the perception of safety in and around the Oxford Street precinct.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The City of Sydney is committed to creating a City that is safe and welcoming for all members of our diverse communities. Despite Sydney's reputation as a safe city, crime and the fear of crime continues to be a concern in some of our entertainment precincts. Late trading entertainment precincts add to the excitement and vibrancy of the City and make a great contribution to the City's night time economy. Unfortunately, adverse amenity impacts occur in these precincts. This Strategy outlines the key safety issues in the Oxford Street Precinct, and key actions to address them.

Oxford Street is an iconic Sydney destination with an international reputation as an entertainment, shopping, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) heartland. Conversely, Oxford Street is also characterised by begging, street drinking, drug use and dealing.

The City of Sydney recently completed a \$24 million upgrade to enhance the social, cultural and economic life of Oxford Street, and supported the inaugural Oxford Street Retail Festival in March/April 2006 as part of the City's retail strategy for Oxford Street in 2006. The challenge now is to improve Oxford Street's safety and amenity for a host of stakeholders, while retaining its local heritage and character. The role of the Oxford Street Safety Strategy is to reduce crime and improve perceptions of safety.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Oxford Street Stakeholder Meeting**

In February 2006 the City of Sydney convened a stakeholder meeting to respond to increasing community concerns about public safety on Oxford Street. The timing of this meeting corresponded with an increase in the level of media reports about crime and homophobic violence in this area. Representatives from the following agencies were invited to attend the stakeholder meeting:

- AIDS Council of NSW
- ADCAD Protection Services (provider of security staff at several licensed premises on Oxford Street),
- Lesbian and Gay Anti Violence Project
- Bligh Electoral Office
- Darlinghurst Business Partnership
- Kings Cross Police Local Area Command
- NSW Attorney Generals Department – Crime Prevention Division
- Rogues Nightclub (Licensed Venue)
- Slide Lounge (Licensed Venue)
- Surry Hills Licensing Accord Representative (The Midnight Shift)
- Surry Hills Police Local Area Command
- City of Sydney staff

At that meeting, it was resolved that an Oxford Street Safety Strategy should be prepared, and that immediate steps should be taken to address community concerns about homophobic violence in the Oxford Street Precinct.

## 2.2 Homophobic Violence Community Forum

A community forum was held at Slide Lounge an Oxford Street venue on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2006 to discuss violence and abuse in and around Oxford Street and to offer possible solutions to the problems. Approximately 40 people attended the community forum. The community forum and stakeholder meetings identified the following as key issues of concern:

- Homophobic violence & abuse
- Safety and perceptions of safety
- Alcohol consumption, intoxication and antisocial behaviour around licensed premises
- Street drinking and its resultant problems – begging, harassment, antisocial behaviour
- Homelessness

## 2.3 Oxford Street Strategy Working Group

As an outcome of the Community Forum and the Stakeholder meeting, a working group of key government and non-government agencies was formed to progress the development of an Oxford Street Safety Strategy. The Working Group identified the impacts arising from street drinking, begging and homelessness in and around Oxford Street as a key concern, but acknowledged that these issues needed to be addressed in a comprehensive manner that was outside the scope of this Strategy. These issues are however being addressed in the City's Draft Street Drinking Strategy and Draft Homelessness Strategy.

## 2.4 Legislative and Policy Context

### State

The *Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act (1997)* provides a statutory basis for the development of community safety or crime prevention plans with Local Governments taking the lead agency role. The Act recognises the importance of community safety activities that draw upon local knowledge and services in adopting a strategic partnership approach to addressing local community safety issues.

The City's Charter under the *Local Government Act (1993)* requires Council to take responsibility for managing public land. By implication, this can mean that Councils have a duty of care in relation to people who use public land. The Local Government Act gives Councils the power to issue and enforce orders that aim to prevent activities that place members of the public at risk.

The Strategy is also consistent with the vision of the NSW Attorney General's Department '*Strategic Framework 2006-2011: Working Together to Prevent Prejudice Related Violence against Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender People.*'

### Local

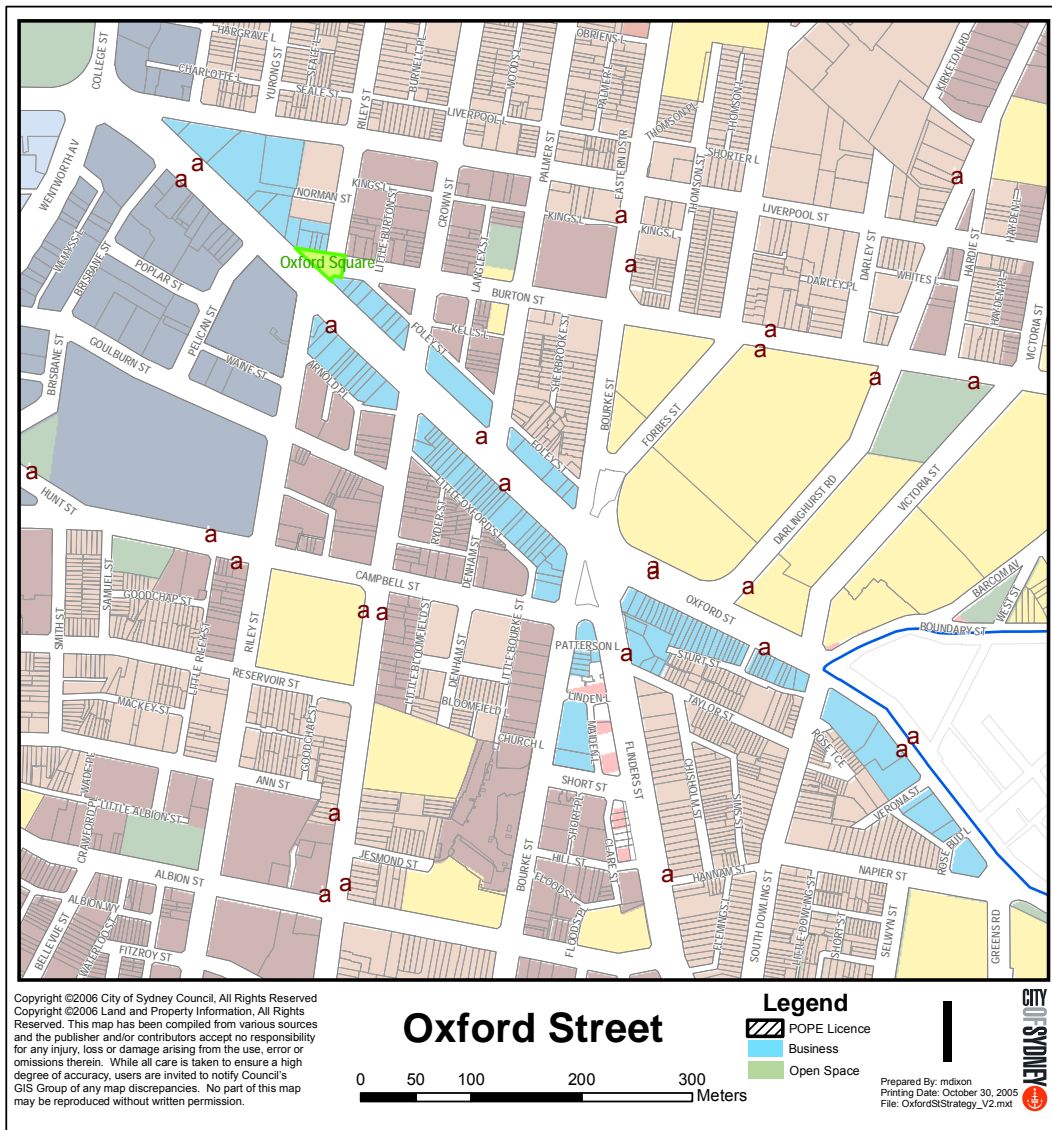
The Oxford Street Safety Strategy has links to the following City of Sydney documents: Social Plan 2006-2010, Local Action Plans, Open Space and Recreation

Needs Study, Oxford Street Retail Strategy, Late Trading Premises Discussion Paper, Draft Safe City Strategy, Draft Drug & Alcohol Strategy, Draft Street Drinking Strategy, and the Draft Homelessness Strategy. At the time of writing October 2006, some of the above documents are under review or are in their development phases.

### 3. OXFORD STREET PRECINCT PROFILE

The 'Oxford Street Precinct' is defined as the area bound by College Street and Wentworth Avenue to the west, Liverpool Street to the north, Albion Street to the south and Greens Road to the east. This area falls within the suburbs of Surry Hills and Darlinghurst.

#### Oxford Street Precinct Map



### 3.1 Residents and Visitors

Surry Hills and Darlinghurst are the two suburbs in which the Oxford Street Precinct is situated. Based upon 2001 Census<sup>11</sup> data:

- The ratio of males to females in these suburbs is 60/40 as compared the state average of closer to 50/50.
- Adults 18-64 are over represented compared to NSW data – approximately 80% compared to 62% for NSW.
- Children 0-17 are underrepresented comparatively.
- With an average household size of 1.8, couples without children represent 20% and lone person household represent 37.5%, suggesting that a sizeable GLBT population may live in this area.

Below is a summary of key 2001 Census statistics for the area:

	Darlinghurst	Surry Hills	City of Sydney LGA	NSW
Area	0.87km <sup>2</sup>	1.33km <sup>2</sup>		
Population	9055	14171		
Males	60.8%	59.1%	53.8%	49.4%
Females	39.2%	40.9%	46.3%	50.6%
Indigenous Population	0.7%	1.0%	1.5%	1.9%
CALD	14.8%	21.8%	22.8%	16.2%
Adults 18-64	81%	80.4%	78.8%	61.9%
Children 0-17	9.1%	9.7%	11.5%	25%
Average Household Size	1.73	1.88		
Couple without children	19.6%	21.3%	20.7%	
Lone Person Household	40.4%	34.6%	35.1%	
Group Household	10.1%	13.3%	11.0%	
Household income < \$300/week	12.9%	15.8%	15.3%	12.2%
Household Income >\$1500/week	34.3%	32%	30.9%	21.1%
Highest Level of Schooling – Year 12 or equivalent	57%	56.3%	56.5%	56.5%
Highest qualification – Bachelor degree or higher	27%	25%	25.2%	12.3%
Total Unemployed	5.9%	6.9%	6.5%	

<sup>11</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) *National Census of Population and Housing*

## **Overnight Visitors**

There are 122 hotels, hostels and bed and breakfasts providing overnight accommodation for visitors in the City of Sydney. Of these, approximately 12 are located in the Oxford Street precinct.

Oxford Street and the surrounding area also host a range of refuges and shelters providing overnight accommodation to the areas significant homeless population. Within a 2km radius of Oxford Street, there are 9 homeless shelters, with 429 beds.

A significantly higher proportion of these beds are available to men than they are to women or transgender people. There are also several volunteer services for homeless people.

## **Day and Evening Visitors**

There are approximately 5,696,000 visitors to Sydney annually, and estimated 3,414,000 of these visit the City of Sydney Local Government Area, which includes the Oxford Street Precinct. Overnight visitors to the City of Sydney average 24,553 for the year ending March 2006.

On Census night 2001, there were 1887 visitors from overseas and other parts of Australia staying in the Oxford Street precinct, complementing the 7021 people who were counted at home. This suggests that over 20% of all people counted in 2001 were visitors to the area.

For evening entertainment alone, anecdotal evidence suggests that around 10,000 people visit the Oxford Street area on Friday and Saturday nights. The number of visitors swells dramatically during major events.

## **3.2 Built Environment**

### **Oxford Street Upgrade**

The \$24.4 million upgrade of Oxford Street was completed early 2006. The upgrade included widening of footpaths, installation of street furniture and smart poles for improved lighting and banner displays.

### **Land Use Mix**

The Oxford Street Precinct has a diversity of land use mixes including residential, commercial, recreational, entertainment and service provision.

In the surrounding streets there are government and non-government organisations including St Vincent's Hospital, Sacred Heart Hospice, Caritas (inpatient psychiatric unit), community health, HIV/AIDS services, GLBT community service, services for the homeless including refuges, hostels and boarding houses, alcohol and other drug services, pastoral care service, East Sydney TAFE, and the Supreme Court Complex at Taylor Square.

Oxford Street in particular had a unique combination of retail shops – clothing, convenience, restaurants and cafes, bars, clubs, pubs, sex on premises venues, fast food/take away shops, banks and ATMs. However with time, the trend has been for

the unique nature of this shopping strip to become less of a 'destination' shopping area and more of a thoroughfare to the CBD and Paddington shopping precincts.

Oxford Street's reputation as a late night entertainment destination attracts visitors internationally, nationally and from across the Sydney metropolitan area. The area has a high concentration of late and 24 hour trading licensed venues.

There are 91 licensed premises in the Oxford Street precinct:

- 50 are restaurants/cafes,
- 30 are hotels /clubs / nightclubs, and
- 11 are retail/wholesale liquor outlets.

The portion of hotels/clubs/nightclubs is higher in Oxford Street when compared with King Street Newtown, which has 58 licensed premises, 18 of which are hotels/clubs/nightclubs. However the portion of hotels/clubs/nightclubs in Oxford Street is lower than Kings Cross which has 65 licensed premises, 28 of which are hotels/clubs/nightclubs.

### **Public Spaces**

Public space in Oxford Street is minimal, and the precinct accommodates three small but crucial public spaces. All spaces provide pedestrian access to and from Oxford Street and are all co-located with licensed premises. The following lists the three public spaces and the number of licensed premises which directly open out onto these public spaces:

- Taylor Square North (1)
- Taylor Square South (4)
- Oxford Square (2)

### **3.3 Night and Day**

Oxford Street changes significantly between night and day and this is particularly the case on weekends.

During the day, Oxford Street is popular amongst shoppers who live locally or in the surrounding areas. The area also attracts shoppers and visitors from across Sydney, Australia and internationally – particularly on the weekend. As the surrounding refuges and shelters empty, the public spaces in Oxford Street are activated by the significant homeless and transient populations. Street drinking by these groups is an activity that also occurs in these spaces during the day. Active and occasionally aggressive begging occurs mostly during the daylight hours.

Local cafes and restaurants fill up during the day, and those with outdoor dining footway licences occasionally become targets for street drinkers and people who are begging.

At night, the demographic changes and a more transitory population visit the area for entertainment and dining. Oxford Street becomes very active from 11pm onwards when visitors and locals flock to the numerous nightclubs. Pavements and public spaces on "the strip" become crowded with pedestrians and people queuing to get into clubs. Whilst Oxford Street is still seen as the heart of the GLBT community in Sydney, the mix of visitors is very diverse, with the majority of entertainment venues

not catering specifically to the GLBT market. There are however venues that target the GLBT community and attract large GLBT crowds, especially during key events on the GLBT community calendar such as the Mardi Gras Festival (February) and Sleaze Ball (October Long Weekend).

### **3.4 Transport**

Due to its central location and proximity to the Central Business District, (CBD), Oxford Street is a well used pedestrian route and is one of the major pedestrian corridors to and from the City centre, Paddington, Potts Point, Surry Hills and the Moore Park Entertainment Precinct. As the range of transport options decrease during the night, an increasing number of visitors walk to the City to find transport home.

The closest train station to Oxford Street is Museum Station, located on the corner of Liverpool and Elizabeth Street. Most trains from Museum Station do not operate between midnight and 4.30am. After midnight, the closest public transport is the Nightrider Bus Services operating from the CBD on the corner of George and Bathurst Streets. These generally operate on an hourly basis.

Major bus services such as the 380 – Circular Quay to Bondi operate overnight, generally on an hourly basis after midnight. There are several stops on Oxford Street.

Whilst there are no taxi ranks on Oxford Street, taxis are generally able to be flagged down at all hours.

The parking capacity of Oxford Street and the surrounding area is limited. There are no parking stations in the precinct, and parking is mostly metered. On weekends and after hours many people park illegally in the lanes and streets filtering from Oxford Street.

### **3.5 External Events**

Oxford Street hosts major events of international significance such as the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras parade and festival, held annually in between February and March. The parade regularly attracts over 300,000 spectators, with the festival bringing large numbers of visitors into Oxford Street on a daily basis.

Oxford Street and the surrounding areas also act as an egress point for major events at the Sydney Football Stadium, Sydney Cricket Ground and The Entertainment Quarter. This has an impact on pedestrian and road traffic and patronage at licensed venues, cafes and restaurants in the area.

## 4. CRIME AND SAFETY

Nationally, there has been a decline in actual crime and fear of crime between 2000 and 2004.<sup>2</sup> In NSW recorded rates of crime across many categories are at their lowest levels in 15 years (i.e. since 1990). However recorded rates of sexual assault and assault have more than doubled over this period<sup>3</sup>.

Recorded crime trends in the Surry Hills Local Area Command (LAC) (in which Oxford Street is located) are consistent with national and NSW patterns. Despite declining crime rates, crime such as assault and other alcohol related offences continue to generate concern. A significant portion of all crime in the LAC is clustered in Oxford Street and in the public domain.

### 4.1 Location of Crime

Between June 2005 and July 2006, Surry Hills LAC reported that:

- Over 59% of the recorded incidents in the Command occurred in Oxford Street.
- Almost 25% of all incidents in the Command occurred in Bourke Street.

This data confirms that Oxford Street and Taylor Square are key crime 'hotspots' in the Surry Hills LAC.

Reported crime is also particularly high along Oxford Street at key intersections. Those intersections with the highest levels of recorded crime between June 2005 and July 2006 were:

- Bourke Street (287 incidents)
- Flinders Street (264 incidents)
- Crown Street (111 incidents)
- Riley Street (65 incidents)
- Brisbane Street (42 incidents)

During this period, Oxford Street itself had a total of 1138 recorded incidents of crime.

### 4.2 Type of Crime

In the period July 2005 to June 2006, there were 1930 recorded crimes in the Oxford Street area. The key crime categories with the highest number of recorded incidents were:

- Stealing (723 incidents) or 37% of all incidents
- Assault (294 incidents) or 15% of all incidents
- Powers – Person Search (233 incidents) or 12% of all incidents
- Powers – Move On (173 incidents) or 9% of all incidents

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<sup>2</sup> Johnson, H. (2005) Crime Victimization in Australia: Key findings of the 2004 International Crime Victimization Survey. Australian Institute of Criminology

<sup>3</sup> Moffatt, S. & Poynton, S. (2006) Long Term Trends in Property and Violent Crime In New South Wales: 1990-2004. Crime and Justice Bulletin, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

- Drug Detection (170 incidents) or 9% of all incidents
- Malicious Damage (114 incidents) or 6% of all incidents
- Street Offence (66 incidents) or 3% of all incidents

### 4.3 Crime Trends

For the five year period from July 2001 to 30 June 2006, the following increases in crime were recorded for the postcodes 2010 (Surry Hills) and 2011 (Darlinghurst/Kings Cross).

<b>2010 Surry Hills</b>	
Criminal Intent	↑ 5.1%
Possess/and or use amphetamines	↑ 13.7%
Possess/and or use ecstasy	↑ 23.2%

<b>2011 Darlinghurst / Kings Cross</b>	
Prohibited and regulated weapons offences	↑ 13.7%
Possess/ and or use narcotics	↑ 11.3%
Possess and or use other drugs	↑ 27.6%

### 4.4 Place of Crime

In the Surry Hills LAC during June 2005 – July 2006, a significant amount of all crime occurred in public domain with 3464 incidents occurring outdoors.

There were 1922 criminal incidents on Oxford Street June 2005 – July 2006, of which:

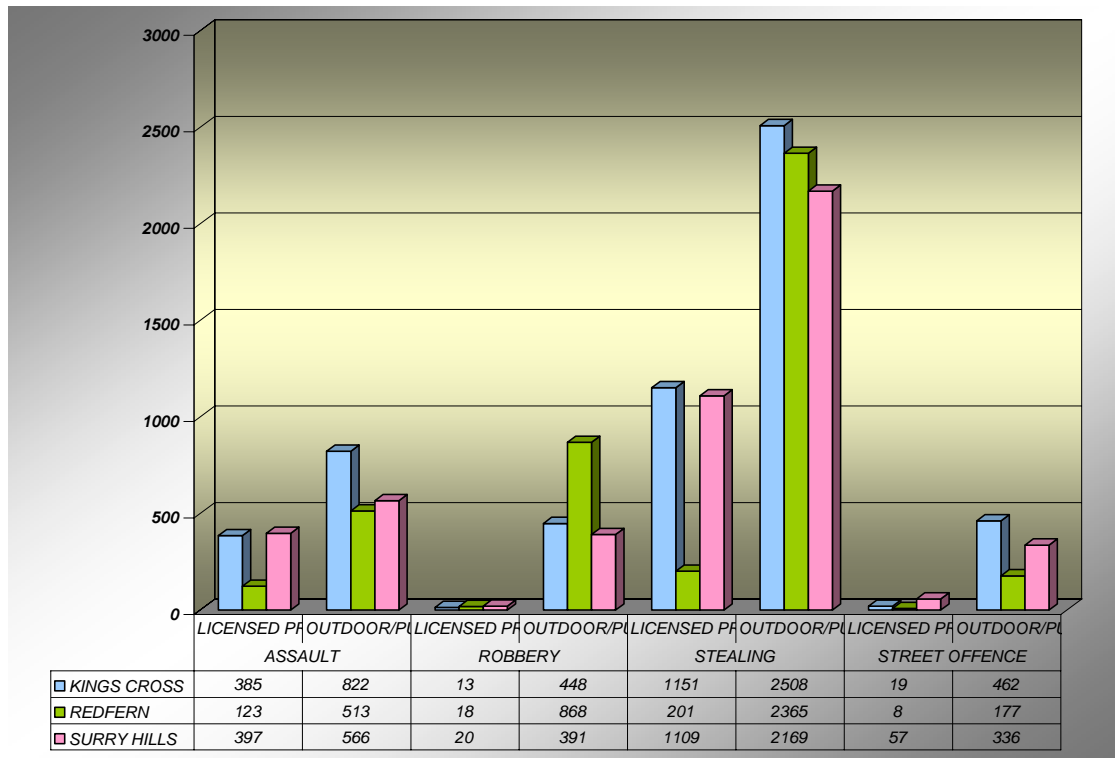
- 791 were in an outdoor / public place
- 665 were in a licensed premise
- 246 were in a business / commercial premise

Police indicate that many of the criminal incidents along Oxford Street occur in the doorway of licensed venues when intoxicated patrons are being refused entry or removed from venues.

Police also report moderate levels of crime in the streets and laneways adjacent to Oxford Street. Some of this crime is related to drug dealing and supply from vehicles parked near clubs.

The table on the next page provide a comparison amongst the Surry Hills, Redfern and Kings Cross Local Area Commands.

**Table: Comparison of nearby LACs for Incidents in Licensed Premises & Outdoor Places for July 2005 – June 2006**

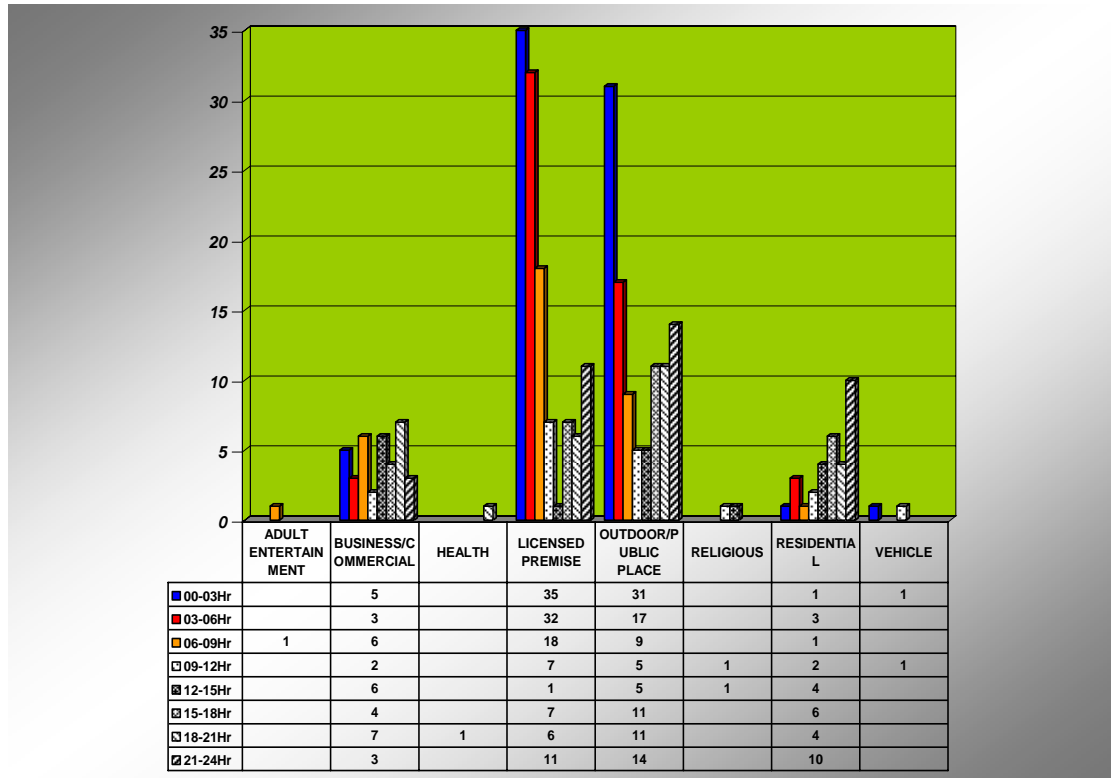


#### 4.5 Time of Crime

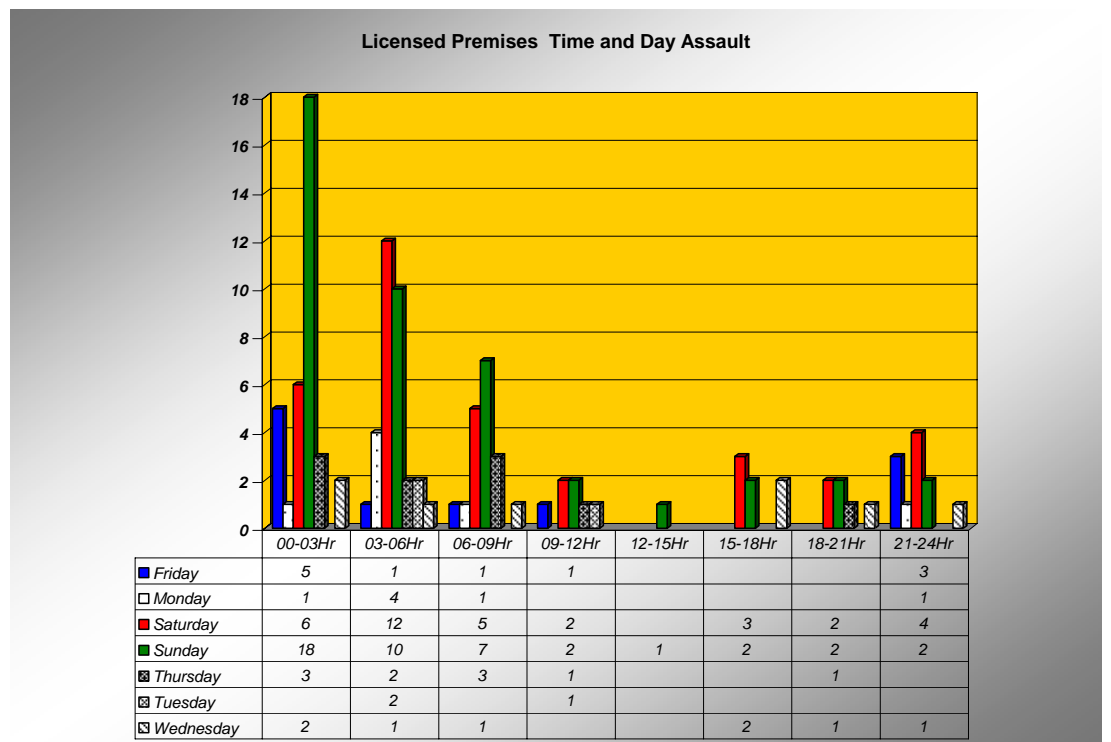
The majority of crime in the Oxford Street Precinct occurs between 11pm and 4am, Friday to Sunday. This corresponds with the times when late trading licensed venues are the most active, and when the volume of visitors to the area is at its highest. The tables on the following page depict type, location and time of crime.

**Table: Assault Premise Type and Time of Incidents for July 2005 – June 2006**

This graph highlights the place and time of assaults, indicating that most incidents occur between the hours of 11pm and 6am in licensed premises and outdoor/public places.



**Table: Licensed Premises - Time and Day of Assault**



#### 4.6 Perceptions of Safety

Despite the level of concern in the media about crime in Oxford Street, residents in the City East area (which includes Surry Hills and Darlinghurst) enjoy a higher level of perceived personal safety when compared to the rest of the City of Sydney local government area. In the City's 2005 *Customer Satisfaction Survey*, only 16% indicated that safety in public areas "requires improvement" compared with 24% across the City of Sydney.

The *City of Sydney Crime Snapshot Report 2006*<sup>4</sup> analyses research from the City of Sydney's 2006 Household Survey. The top two issues that respondents liked least about their suburb are outlined below:

Suburb	Issue No. 1	Issue No. 2
Surry Hills	Drug & Alcohol Abuse	Noise – General & Street Cleaning
Darlinghurst	Drug & Alcohol Abuse	Street Cleaning & Traffic
LGA Wide	Drug & Alcohol Abuse 4 <sup>th</sup>	Crime 6 <sup>th</sup> Community Safety 7 <sup>th</sup>

#### 4.7 Homophobic Violence and Harassment

As a destination for the GLBT community, Oxford Street has also unfortunately been a location attracting perpetrators of homophobic violence.

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) data for the period 2001-2005<sup>5</sup> is useful in determining the number and percentage of incidents of crime associated with sexual preference prejudice. When analysing this data however, it is important to bear in mind that this type of crime is significantly underreported. This occurs for several reasons. Unless highlighted by the victim as 'sexual preference prejudice', this information will not necessarily be recorded by local police; victims may not report to the police station where the crime occurred; victims may not report the crime at all; victims may report the crime to the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project but not the police; victims may not feel comfortable reporting to police unless they can report to a Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer (GLLO). Surry Hills LAC does not at present have a full time GLLO.

BOCSAR data highlights the following for the years 2001-2005: Of the state totals, a higher percentage of sexual preference prejudice crimes occurred in the Surry Hills Local Area Command than in the neighbouring Kings Cross and City Central Local Area Commands. This is highlighted in the table on the next page.

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<sup>4</sup> Clancey, G., Bolitho, J., Robertson, D., (2006) City of Sydney LGA Crime Snapshot Report 2006, Australian Centre for Security Research, University of Western Sydney

<sup>5</sup> 1 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research, *NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 2001-2005*

2 Australian Centre for Security Research, University of Western Sydney, City of Sydney LGA, Crime Snapshot Report 2006, p12.

**Table: Number of Recorded Sexual Preference Prejudice Crimes**

	<b>Surry Hills</b>	<b>Kings Cross</b>	<b>City Central</b>	<b>State</b>
<b>2001</b>	33 (10%)	29 (8.9%)	5 (1.5%)	323
<b>2002</b>	34 (9.7%)	21 (6%)	6 (1.7)	349
<b>2003</b>	19 (6.8%)	15 (5.4%)	5 (1.8%)	278
<b>2004</b>	20 (8.2%)	12 (4.9%)	6 (2.5%)	243
<b>2005</b>	22 (7.6%)	19 (6.6%)	7 (2.4%)	288

More detailed qualitative information about the nature and extent of homophobic violence and harassment is available from the following key sources outlined as follows:

### **You Shouldn't Have To Hide To Be Safe (2003)**

The NSW Attorney General's Department report *You Shouldn't Have To Hide To Be Safe: A Report on Homophobic Hostilities and Violence Against Gay Men and Lesbians in New South Wales* (2003) include qualitative information about Oxford Street.

Several respondents felt that the Oxford street area was no longer particularly safe for lesbians and gay men, because of the large numbers of heterosexual people (especially young men) who now went there – at least partly because of the opportunities offered them to abuse and harass lesbians and gay men. What had previously been something of a refuge for gays and lesbians had thus become 'a spectator sport for straights'.

*'On Oxford Street you're a target. Too easily identified. I always walk with other people on Oxford Street.'*

People said that verbal abuse or the like (whistles, catcalls, offensive gestures) were quite common. Being yelled at from cars in the Oxford Street area was a fact of life – these were 'things we have to accept'. Almost one third of all reports involved a passing vehicle.

*'Constant threats and shouts from passing straights in cars around Darlinghurst/Oxford St/Hyde Park. Makes you not want to hold hands anymore with (your) boyfriend in these areas. Easier elsewhere.'*

Often the 'drive-by' abuse was said to be perpetrated by carloads of young men. Reports of such abuse sometimes involved missiles such as eggs – for example respondents being hit by eggs thrown from passing cars or apartment buildings. This suggests that the abuse is often planned to some degree – although not necessarily aimed at a particular individual.

### **Lesbian and Gay Anti Violence Project (AVP) Report line**

The AVP, a project of the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON) provides a reporting, referral and information service for victims of homophobic abuse, harassment and violence. All incidents of homophobia reported to the AVP are recorded on a database.

The following information is based on reports to the AVP since 2003.

One caller described being approached by someone driving a van, who pulled up next to the caller saying he was 'curious', when asked what he was curious about, the driver winked and replied 'you know, curious', inviting the caller into the van. The caller said he wasn't into that kind of thing and carried on walking, as the van drove away the driver yelled a barrage of homophobic abuse and laughter could be heard coming from the back of the van. The caller believes he was being lured into the van so that he could be assaulted. **2006**

One case involved a sustained attack by 5 men in which the victim's head was stamped into the ground. The victim spent several days in hospital, with several fractures to the jaw and nose. Some of his teeth were removed, and he has lost his sense of smell. **2005**

One incident involved security personnel from a licensed venue throwing a bucket of water over 2 men who had kissed each other on the street outside the venue. **2004**

In one attack a wooden bat was used as a weapon, in one another the nose piercing was ripped from the victim. **2003**

## 5. OXFORD STREET SAFETY STRATEGY

The **Aim** of the Strategy is:

*To increase public safety and amenity for those who live in, work in and visit the Oxford Street Precinct.*

To achieve this aim, the **Objectives** of the Strategy seek to

1. Improve the perceptions of safety
2. Address the incidence of homophobic violence and abuse
3. Reduce the incidence of alcohol related violence and antisocial behaviour
4. Strengthen the role of licensed premises in making Oxford Street safer
5. Increase the activation of public spaces

### **Principles Underpinning the Plan**

The Oxford Street Safety Strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

1. A commitment to shared responsibility – working in partnership with a variety of government and non-government agencies and key community stakeholders to address the issue of safety and perceptions of safety in the Oxford Street Precinct
2. A commitment to a safe and vibrant city environment
3. A commitment to the promotion of the Oxford Street Precinct as an internationally recognised meeting place for the GLBT community
4. A commitment to the promotion of public amenity which is available for all members of the community to be utilised in variety of different ways by a diverse cross section of the community
5. A commitment to inclusiveness which takes into account the needs of all people who frequent the Oxford Street precinct

## **OBJECTIVE 1. IMPROVE THE PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY**

### **Key Actions:**

#### **Improve active surveillance and visibility**

*Rationale: People feel safer and criminal behaviour is moderated when they know they are being watched or if there is an active police or uniformed presence.*

- Install seven new CCTV cameras on Oxford Street.
- Improve “uniformed” visibility via joint patrols of City Rangers and NSW Police
- Advocate for increased Police resources for Surry Hills LAC
- Implement the “City Lights” Lighting Upgrade strategy for rear lanes running off Oxford Street.
- Undertake joint City Ranger/NSW Police parking operation to target illegal parking and related illegal activity occurring in parked vehicles, especially in laneways around Oxford Street.

#### **Improve cleansing and appearance**

*Rationale: Improved cleansing and appearance will encourage and support community ownership and guardianship of the Oxford Street Precinct.*

- Promote City’s rapid response graffiti removal service.
- Continue the City’s enhanced cleansing regime for Oxford Street.
- Continue the “Living Colour” scheme, an outdoor planting of spring and summer flowers and hanging baskets to providing flowers to beautify Oxford Street.
- Continue City of Sydney display of Rainbow Flag banners in Oxford Street and Taylor Square to improve a sense of GLBT community ownership.

#### **Improve Responses to Street Drinking / Homelessness**

*Rationale: Visible homelessness, active begging and street drinking by this group have engendered a perceived decrease in safety. The Strategy acknowledges that homeless people are more likely to be the victims of crime rather than the perpetrators of crime on Oxford Street.*

- Promote the Inner City Homeless Outreach Support Service.
- Support the employment of a new position “Public Space Liaison Officer” at the City of Sydney to improve coordinated responses to homeless people in the public domain.
- Implement the Draft City of Sydney Street Drinking Strategy
- Implement the Draft City of Sydney Homelessness Strategy

#### **Promote visible safety messages**

*Rationale: A GLBT presence on Oxford Street will highlight the sense of community and promote safety*

- In partnership with the AVP and the Darlinghurst Business Partnership create a biannual display in shop windows using the AVP “Report Line” campaign posters during Mardi Gras and leading up to the Sleaze Ball..
- Investigate the potential of using banners and JC Decaux bus shelters to promote safety messages produced by the AVP.

- Through the Surry Hills Licensing Accord, encourage the display of sexual health promotion material and related education materials in licensed premises and around Oxford Street

### **Promote active assessment of safety and perceived safety**

Rationale: *A coordinated and periodic assessment will assist in determining community perceptions and the appropriateness and success of existing strategies. It will also inform the development of new strategies.*

- Pilot bi-annual safety audits which include participation from key stakeholders, including the NSW Police, City of Sydney, Lesbian & Gay Anti Violence Project, business and resident groups. This will allow all participants to understand the key issues in the Oxford Street Precinct and promote greater participation from the community in the process of reporting crime and antisocial behaviour.

## **OBJECTIVE 2. ADDRESS THE INCIDENCE OF HOMOPHOBIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE**

### **Key Actions:**

#### **Increase reporting of homophobic violence by GLBT community**

Rationale: *Rates of reporting of homophobic violence remain extremely low, compared to anecdotal reports of homophobic violence.*

- Develop an education and publicity campaign on how to report homophobic violence to the Police and the AVP
- Educate GLBT community about the need to request “Sexual Preference Prejudice” marker when reporting homophobic violence.
- Advocate for a full-time Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer at Surry Hills LAC.
- Support NSW Police and the AVP to build the capacity of Duty Officers from Surry Hills Police to respond to the issues of homophobia and
- Promote the distribution of AVP reporting campaign material – posters, postcards, magnets etc.

#### **Provide safe locations for GLBT community**

Rationale: *People who live in, work and visit the Oxford Street Precinct should feel safe and part of a community*

- Continue to extend the “Safe Place” program to businesses in Oxford Street, providing a safe physical location for the GLBT community when actual or threatened violence occurs.
- In conjunction with the AVP, run a series of “Street Smart” self defence workshops for the GLBT community.

#### **Educate the broader community about homophobia**

Rationale: *Raising awareness in the broader community about homophobia will have a positive impact in the GLBT community, including the Oxford Street precinct*

- Assess the need for a campaign that addresses attitudinal change, as per the 1996-2000 “Homophobia – What are you Scared Of?” initiative and work with the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project to source funding.
- Use major events in the precinct, such as the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras to promote good crowd behaviour. Add public behaviour education strategies as a condition of consent for major events in and around the Oxford Street area.
- As part of the NSW government patron education campaign to be released in 2007, the City will work with the Surry Hills Licensing Accord, ACON, NSW Police and other partners to deliver localised promotion of this campaign to highlights appropriate behaviours for the Oxford Street Precinct.

### **Create a Supportive Environment for Reporting**

Rationale: *Creating a shared responsibility for reporting of homophobic violence and abuse*

- Promote support services available for victims of homophobic violence and abuse.
- Support the AVP to advertise and promote reporting of homophobic violence to the Police and to the AVP Report Line.
- Support Surry Hills Police to encourage reporting of homophobic violence and abuse by working with the AVP and NSW Police Headquarters.

## **OBJECTIVE 3. REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF ALCOHOL RELATED VIOLENCE AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

### **Key Actions**

#### **Improve management of alcohol related crime in public places**

Rationale: *Management of alcohol related crime in the Oxford Street Precinct will improve perceptions of safety and reduce incidences of violence.*

- Continue to enforce the 5 Alcohol Free Zones and 28 Alcohol Prohibited Areas in the Oxford Street Precinct.
- Install 7 new CCTV cameras to improve Police response times.
- Improve “uniformed” visibility by piloting additional City Ranger patrols to complement patrols by Surry Hills Police during peak crime periods.

#### **Enforcement and Compliance in Licensed Premises**

Rationale: *Supporting licensed premises to comply with regulations will assist with the management of alcohol related crime and violence in the Oxford Street precinct.*

- Undertake joint compliance operations in licensed premises with NSW Police, City of Sydney, Office of Liquor, Gaming & Racing and NSW Fire Brigades.
- Invite the Lesbian and Gay Anti Violence Project to participate in joint compliance audits.
- Request regular Alcohol Linking updates from the Surry Hills LAC.
- Coordinate improved information sharing between City of Sydney, NSW Police and OLGR regarding problematic premises.

- Review of Minors Function Authority License Consent for Licensed Premises holding underage events in Oxford Street.

### **Greater Patron Responsibility**

Rationale: *Recognition of personal responsibility will improve perceptions of safety and reduce the incidence of alcohol related crime and violence*

- Work with the NSW Premiers Department to develop and deliver an education campaign, targeting patrons about responsible behaviour in licensed premises.

### **Strengthen Council's Role as a Planning and Consent Authority**

Rationale: *To support planning and development controls at the consent stage in order to reduce the incidence of antisocial behaviour in and around licensed premises*

- Work together to create a safer entertainment precinct with appropriate planning and development controls via the delivery of a Late Night Trading Development Control Plan.
- Continue to encourage pubs and clubs to become members of the Surry Hills Licensing Accord as a standard condition of consent.
- Investigate appropriate planning controls for the management of queues outside of pubs and clubs on Oxford Street.

## **OBJECTIVE 4. STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF LICENSED PREMISES IN MAKING OXFORD STREET SAFER**

### **Key Actions**

#### **Surry Hills Licensing Accord**

Rationale: *The Licensing Accord supports members to assist in making Oxford Street safer*

- Improve membership of and attendance at the Surry Hills Licensing Accord.
- Through the Accord, support training annually for security staff at Oxford Street venues which highlights the key issues of concern for licensed premises in the Precinct. Including awareness of GLBT specific issues.

#### **Venue Responsiveness**

Rationale: *Improved responsiveness and responsibility by licensed premises will improve perceptions of safety and community ownership of the Oxford Street precinct.*

- Improve capacity of licensed premises to respond to drug overdose and intoxication by holding regular information sessions at Surry Hills Licensing Accord meetings.
- Improve capacity of licensed premises to respond to drink spiking via the dissemination of a new drink spiking campaign.

- Promote the use of the City of Sydney's Incident Register to ensure that all refusal of entry, criminal and anti-social incidents are appropriately recorded by security staff.
- Investigate greater role of security staff in responding to crime.
- Support the Surry Hills LAC and the Surry Hills Licensing Accord to run an annual security industry training day for security providers along Oxford Street.
- Through the Surry Hills Licensing Accord, recommend installation of condom vending machines at venues to improve access to condoms.
- Through the Surry Hills Licensing Accord, support work with licensed premises to install community sharps disposal facilities in order to minimise the impact of discarded injecting equipment

## **OBJECTIVE 5. INCREASE THE ACTIVATION OF PUBLIC SPACES**

### **Key Actions**

#### **Taylor Square North**

Rationale: *Improved guardianship of public spaces will enhance perceptions of safety*

- Install a JC Decaux public toilet. At present there are no public facilities available in the Oxford Street area.
- The City has called for expressions of interest for use of the substation building and underground toilet for commercial use.
- The City is considering a special busking zone.
- Consider community cultural events in Taylor Square eg art exhibitions.
- Progress markets for Taylor Square North.

#### **Taylor Square South**

Rationale: *Improved guardianship of public spaces will enhance perceptions of safety*

- The City will undertake a review of design elements in Taylor Square south in order to reduce antisocial behaviour, crime and violence and to encourage positive activation of the space.
- Consider the extension outdoor footway dining licensed areas further into Taylor Square
- Considering special busking zone.
- Consider the installation of new public art to celebrate the area's GLBT community.
- Take into account recommendations from NSW Police Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Report for Taylor Square South (such as extension of outdoor footway licences, redesign and greater activation of the space through busking and other activities).

#### **General**

Rationale: *Improved guardianship of public spaces will enhance perceptions of safety*

- The City will continue to support the iconic Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade and Festival.

- The City will continue to support community, cultural and business development grants for the GLBT community and members of the Oxford Street Precinct community.
- Council will develop a self-guided Oxford Street History Walk to be launched during Mardi Gras 2007.
- The City will consult on the restoration of the Mary's Place memorial adjacent to the Beresford Hotel. Mary's Place is a memorial to a lesbian who was the victim of a violent homophobic motivated sexual assault in the 1990s.

## **6. EVALUATION**

Evaluation of the Oxford Street Safety Strategy will occur through a process of ongoing monitoring and review. Key outcomes will be measured against the stated aims and objectives of the Strategy. The Strategy will continue to be responsive to changing needs and reflect the nature of a dynamic community and precinct.

The Oxford Street Strategy Working Group will monitor the progress of the stated objectives and actions and ensure that the Strategy is implemented effectively and efficiently in a timely and appropriate manner.

Feedback will be sought from the key community and key stakeholders at various times as stated in the Strategy.

It is important for the community to retain some sense of ownership over the Strategy and its key objectives and that the plan supports the community to reach the stated goal of achieving a safe and GLBT friendly Oxford Street, which is recognised locally and internationally as the heart of the GLBT community in Sydney.

## 7. APPENDIX

### Key Terms

ACON	AIDS Council of NSW
AGD	NSW Attorney Generals Department
AVP	Lesbian & Gay Anti-Violence Project
BOCSAR	Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
CoS	City of Sydney
CPTED	Crime Prevention through Environmental Design
OLGR	NSW Office of Licensing, Gaming & Racing
GLBT	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender
LAC	Local Area Command
LGA	Local Government Area
OSSSWG	Oxford Street Safety Strategy Working Group
'Safe Place'	Auspiced by the Lesbian & Gay Anti Violence Project. The 'Safe Place' program aims to provide a network of business and community organisations that gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people can use if fearful of street based homophobic violence.
Street drinking	Where excessive consumption of alcohol leads to anti-social behaviour in public spaces such as parks and streets. This is distinct from the activities of drinkers who congregate on footways outside licensed venues who create a distinct set of alcohol related issues that is addressed through the City's Draft Drug and Alcohol Strategy to which this document is linked. Street drinking is addressed in the City's Draft Street Drinking Strategy 2006-2011.
Public amenity	The right of members of the community to enjoy public space unhindered.
Criminal incident	An offence punishable by law.
Alcohol Free Zones	It is an offence to drink alcohol on any street or footpath where an Alcohol Free Zone exists, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for a period of up to three years.
Alcohol Prohibited Areas	Alcohol Prohibited Areas relate to public places that are parks. These locations are indicated by the presence of standard ordinance signage prohibiting the consumption of alcohol.