



Mobile Voluntary Services Guidelines

Guidelines
2020

Green Global Connected

CITY OF SYDNEY





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FOOD

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FOOD

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Contents

04	Introduction
06	Service delivery targeted to need
10	Specialist support and safety
14	Safe and nutritious food
19	Responsible use of public places
26	Key contacts
27	More information
28	Definitions
31	References

Introduction

Mobile voluntary services

Mobile voluntary services are an important element within the range of services provided to people facing disadvantage, including people experiencing homelessness in the City of Sydney's local area.

They operate at times when many other services are unavailable. They also represent an opportunity to engage with disadvantaged people and provide the opportunity to link them with appropriate supports that can lead to potential pathways to secure housing.

The City of Sydney recognises the valuable role of mobile voluntary services in supporting disadvantaged people.

Mobile voluntary services typically provide food and material support, social contact, and access to spiritual support to people who are experiencing homelessness as well as people experiencing other disadvantage.

Mobile voluntary services refers to services that are not provided from a building or other fixed places but are provided from vans or similar types of vehicles.

Services are typically volunteer led. However, some services have professional oversight or are provided by professional not-for-profit organisations working in the homelessness sector.

Purpose of guidelines

These guidelines provide mobile voluntary services with information about their legislative obligations and best practice approaches to meet the needs of the people they aim to support.

They also outline the compliance framework in which these obligations are enforced, and describe the City's approach to managing homelessness in public spaces while balancing the needs of all users of public space.

The City expects that mobile voluntary services will operate in ways that:

- are safe and lawful
- are targeted to need
- respect the dignity and autonomy of service users
- offer safe and nutritious food
- can provide people with relevant information about specialist services
- minimise any impacts of the service operations on local residents and businesses
- are provided in line with legislation for parking, road rules, temporary structures, noise and waste, and with appropriate permits or authorisations.

Where these guidelines apply

These guidelines apply to the operation of mobile voluntary services in any public place owned and/or managed by the City of Sydney within the City's local area, as defined by the *Local Government Act 1993*. Note: public places may include public reserves, public roads, Crown reserves, and public land.

These guidelines should be read together with the City of Sydney's *Mobile Voluntary Services Policy*.

Legislative and regulatory framework

Mobile voluntary services, like any individual or organisation, must comply with the legislation below in all circumstances:

- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Protection of the Environment Act 1997*
- *Roads Act 1993*
- *Road Transport Act 2013*
- *Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Penalties and Other Sanctions) Act 2018*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 No 10*
- *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017*

Mobile voluntary services require approvals for the use of public land managed by local government if they:

- engage in a trade or business
- direct or procure a theatrical, musical or other entertainment for the public
- construct a temporary enclosure for the purpose of entertainment
- for fee or reward, play a musical instrument or sing
- set up, operate or use a loudspeaker or sound amplifying device
- give a public address or hold a religious service or public meeting.

Outdoor permits may be required when the operation of mobile voluntary services on land owned and managed by the City of Sydney involves:

- temporary infrastructure (including tables, chairs, BBQs, lighting and marquees)
- amplified sound
- exclusive use of a space
- an activity that restricts access to a space or area
- access for any vehicle in an off street public space
- activities seen as commercial in nature.

Public land owned and managed by other landowners and agencies may also require authorisation.

Non-compliance or breaches of legislation

If the City identifies breaches of relevant legislation, we may take enforcement action, including the imposition of fines. For more information see our [*Compliance Policy*](#)¹ and [*Prosecution and Civil Enforcement Policy*](#).²

Service delivery targeted to need

Provide services in areas and times where there is a need

Mobile voluntary services should operate where there is a known need for the service in the area, and be provided in a way that upholds the dignity of service users.

Services should not operate in conflict with the existing range of specialist homelessness services operating in the inner city.

Specialist homelessness services provide a range of services to support people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless with the aim of breaking the cycle of homelessness.

Things to consider

Before establishing a mobile voluntary service in the inner city, consider:

- Is there an actual need for your service in the area you wish to operate?
- Are there other mobile voluntary services operating in that area?
- Are there homelessness services in that area that provide similar services and supports?
- Are there any partnership opportunities with existing homelessness services or service gaps that need filling?
- If there doesn't appear to be a need in the inner city, are there similar opportunities in your local area?

Approvals

Depending on how, when and where you offer your service, you may need to seek appropriate permissions from the land owner or manager whenever you operate.

The needs and circumstances of people using mobile voluntary services

Before providing new mobile voluntary services, it is important to understand the needs and circumstances of the people you want to assist, and to take into account their preferences.

Research conducted in 2019 provides a picture of the needs and circumstances of the people who access mobile voluntary services in the City's local area.³ At the time:

- 46% were living in social housing
- 32% were sleeping rough
- 15% were staying in crisis accommodation, emergency temporary accommodation, or staying with family or friends.

Almost half of the people surveyed who were using mobile voluntary services were sleeping rough, staying in crisis accommodation, emergency temporary accommodation, or staying with family and/or friends. These people rely on mobile voluntary services for food and other supports and have limited options for obtaining these in other ways.

However, more than half were people who have stable accommodation, and are more likely to be accessing mobile voluntary services because they cannot afford food, have difficulty preparing meals, do not have access to adequate kitchen equipment to cook and enjoy the social aspect of sharing meals.

Targeting services to people living in social housing

Mobile voluntary services can play an important role in supporting people living in social housing to access food and connect with their community.

Social housing is secure and affordable rental housing for people on low incomes with housing needs. It includes public and community housing and housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Social housing provides the largest supply of affordable and secure housing for people on pensions or benefits, or on low incomes.

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice and the City of Sydney can assist to identify ways in which volunteers can support people to have meals closer to home, as well as making meals more affordable, and in providing opportunities for social connection within local communities.

This could range from:

- hosting a meal at a local community centre, to
- enabling group shopping trips and cooking in groups to make meals more affordable, to
- meal preparation classes to address skills gaps, to
- mobile voluntary food services operating in and around social housing precincts.

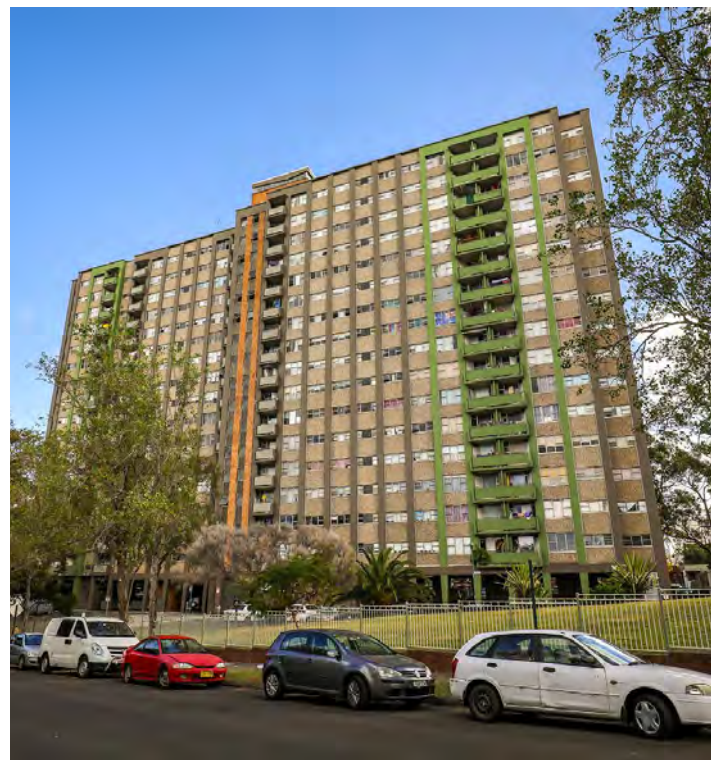
To speak to someone about how your service can support people living in social housing, you can contact:

NSW Department of Communities and Justice

Phone: 02 8303 7600

Website: facs.nsw.gov.au

There are nearly 9,700 social housing tenancies in the City of Sydney local area. The major social housing estates are in Redfern, Waterloo, Surry Hills, Woolloomooloo and Glebe.



Redfern. Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney.

Targeting services to the needs of people experiencing homelessness

Mobile voluntary services can play an important role in supporting people experiencing homelessness across greater Sydney.

Homelessness can affect people of all ages, from any section of the community. While for some it may be a temporary situation, for others it can last many years or a lifetime.

A person who is experiencing homelessness may not necessarily be living on the streets. While not as visible, there are an increasing number of people who are experiencing other forms of homelessness. They are living in crisis accommodation, emergency temporary accommodation, boarding houses, or staying with family and/or friends.

Homelessness has traditionally been considered an inner city problem. Historically, numerous homelessness services and charities have operated in the inner city and in areas like Woolloomooloo.

But the face of homelessness is changing. People experiencing homelessness are living in areas all over greater Sydney, as well as in rural and remote areas of NSW, not just the inner city.

In 2016, it was estimated that almost 38,000 people in NSW were experiencing homelessness, with 5,000 or 13% residing in the City of Sydney area.⁴ Of those, less than 10% were sleeping rough.

The City of Sydney's Homelessness Unit has information about the needs of people sleeping rough, including places and times where there is need for mobile voluntary services. While need can change, some parts of the city have enough services in place.

Mobile voluntary services should consult with our Homelessness Unit to determine how to offer support in the most effective way and to avoid over-servicing, waste and duplication.

To speak to someone about how your service can support people experiencing homelessness, contact:

The City of Sydney Homelessness Unit

Phone: 02 9265 9333

Email: homelessness@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Website: cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/community/community-support/homelessness



Sydney CBD. Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney.

Other volunteering opportunities

There are a range of services that exist to assist people experiencing homelessness. You could consider supporting one of these through volunteering or donating goods or money. Our website provides a Volunteer and Goods Donation Directory for people who would like to make a contribution.

Volunteer and Goods Donation Directory

Website: cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/community/community-support/homelessness/volunteer-and-goods-donation-directory

Homelessness NSW

Homelessness NSW is the peak homelessness body and works with its members to prevent and reduce homelessness across NSW.

Members include small, locally based community organisations, multiservice agencies with a regional reach and large state-wide service providers.

Homelessness NSW can provide information on homelessness, as well as guidance on appropriate volunteering opportunities.

Phone: 02 8354 7600

Website: homelessnessnsw.org.au

Aside from *Homelessness NSW*, you can also talk to *NSW Department of Communities and Justice* and other community groups in your area about other volunteering opportunities.

DO

- ✓ Consider existing services and existing mobile voluntary services operating at particular places in relation to levels of homelessness, before offering a new service
- ✓ Work cooperatively with the City's Homelessness Unit in establishing agreed times and places to operate your service
- ✓ Where a social housing location is being considered, work cooperatively with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and NSW Police when operating a mobile voluntary service
- ✓ Operate where there is actual need
- ✓ Consider other volunteering opportunities that lead to better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness and food insecurity
- ✓ Respect a request from someone to be left alone or decline your service
- ✓ Respect the physical, social and cultural spaces your service may be operating in

DON'T

- ✗ Wake people up to give them food or other items
- ✗ Leave food next to someone who is sleeping. They may not want it, and it can attract vermin while they sleep
- ✗ Leave food or items out for people to collect
- ✗ Place conditions on people accepting food or donations
- ✗ Photograph or film people accessing services without informed consent
- ✗ Operate late at night – consider the needs of people to have quiet time and sleep
- ✗ Operate at times and places that are already serviced by other mobile voluntary food services
- ✗ Operate without appropriate approvals

Specialist support and safety

Linking service users with specialist support

Helping people with food, practical and material support and social connection is important, but it does not address homelessness, because it does not address the causes of homelessness.

Ultimately, access to secure and affordable housing, with appropriate specialist support, are the biggest factors that will lead to people exiting or avoiding homelessness.

Research conducted in 2019 shows that almost half of the people accessing mobile voluntary services were experiencing homelessness.⁵

Mobile voluntary services can play an important role in providing accurate information and referral pathways to supported and secure housing for vulnerable service users of mobile voluntary services.

Mobile voluntary service staff and volunteers must familiarise themselves with the *Link2home Homelessness Information Line* (Link2home).

Link2home

Link2home is a free NSW Government state-wide telephone service providing information and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

Link2home also provides information about homelessness services across NSW for specialist homelessness service providers and homelessness advocates acting on behalf of clients.

Eligibility: Homeless or at risk of homelessness

Phone: 1800 152 152

Website: facs.nsw.gov.au/housing

Link2home is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. It has trained staff who can provide information, assessments and appropriate referrals to homelessness support and accommodation services across NSW.

For referral cards please contact *Link2home*.

Responding to complex needs

Research conducted in 2019 highlights a high level of vulnerability among mobile voluntary service users.⁶

At the time, almost half of all people surveyed reported experiencing mental health issues (46%), and a third identified as living with disability (36%). A further third reported they had an alcohol or drug addiction (35%).

It is important that people working and volunteering with mobile voluntary services:

- improve their understanding of mental health issues and appropriate responses
- know how to refer service users to health and/or specialist homelessness services for support
- know how to keep themselves and their service users safe
- know how to report safety issues or concerns to the relevant authorities.

Mental Health First Aid Training

Mobile voluntary services should consider training staff and volunteers in the identification of distress or mental health issues through courses such as Mental Health First Aid.

Mental Health First Aid teaches participants how to assist people who are developing a mental health problem, experiencing a worsening of an existing mental health problem or in a mental health crisis, until appropriate professional help is received or the crisis resolves.

Such training will ensure mobile voluntary services are able to recognise when someone is in distress, and/or in need of support, and know if and how support should be provided, where it is safe to do so.

Mental Health First Aid Australia also provides a series of free guidelines.

First Aid Training

Mobile voluntary services are encouraged to train staff and volunteers in general first aid.

The Australian Red Cross offers a First Aid Training course designed give you the skills and knowledge required to provide first aid response, life support and management of casualties in a range of situations until medical or other assistance arrives.

Safety

It is in everyone's interests to maintain a safe environment when carrying out volunteering work.

Mobile voluntary services must also adhere to relevant public health orders and restrictions issued by NSW Health and the Australian Government. Adherence with public health orders is enforced by NSW Police.

The City recommends that all mobile voluntary services comply with the NSW work health and safety (WHS) legislation as your standard for health and safety.

In some circumstances, work health and safety laws apply to volunteers and volunteer associations. But this isn't always the case.

It is still a good idea for all volunteers and volunteer associations to comply with WHS laws by taking reasonable care for:

- their own health and safety
- the health and safety of others.

For more information about your WHS obligations, please contact *SafeWork NSW*:

Phone: 13 10 50

Email: contact@safework.nsw.gov.au

Website: safework.nsw.gov.au/contact-us

Mobile voluntary services are also encouraged to adopt best practice volunteer management practices where volunteers' contributions are valued and respected.

For more information about volunteering, contact *Volunteering Australia*:

Phone: 02 6251 4060

Email: admin@volunteeringaustralia.org

Website: volunteeringaustralia.org

Reporting safety concerns

All safety concerns should be reported to relevant authorities and services.

Triple zero (000) – calls are free

If you observe a person is in need of urgent medical attention, is at risk of harming themselves or others, or if you have witnessed a serious incident or crime, or a person is behaving in a threatening manner towards you or someone else, you should contact the appropriate emergency service – NSW Police, Ambulance, or Fire Brigade on 000.

The NSW Police Assistance Line 131 444

If you are a victim of a crime, other than life threatening or time critical emergency situations, you should contact the Police Assistance Line.

The Police Assistance Line operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phoning 131 444 allows you to report crime over the phone. Once your report is completed by a customer service representative, your information is immediately available to your local police.

When a police response is required, the Police Assistance Line will arrange for police officers to attend.

Child Protection Helpline

If you observe a child or young person at risk of harm, or you are concerned for the safety or welfare of a child or young person, you should contact the Child Protection Helpline.

The Child Protection Helpline is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, state-wide call centre staffed by professionally qualified caseworkers to receive and screen all reports about suspected abuse or neglect of a child or young person or those at risk of harm from abuse or neglect.

Any person can report the homelessness of a child under 16 years to the Child Protection Helpline and that of a young person aged 16 to 18 years with their consent.⁷

Phone: 132 111

Website: facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/reporting-child-at-risk

Mental Health Triage Line

If you or someone you know needs help, the Mental Health Line offers:

- professional help and advice
- referrals to local mental health services.

The line is staffed by mental health professionals. They will ask questions to determine if you or, the person you are concerned about, needs ongoing mental health care and how urgently it is needed.

They can put you in contact with the most relevant mental health service for children, teens, adults and older people.

The Mental Health Line is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phone: 1800 011 511

Website: health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/Pages/Mental-Health-Line.aspx

DO

- ✓ Familiarise staff and volunteers with the Link2home Homelessness Information Line. Make appropriate referrals on behalf of service users to Link2home when required
- ✓ Report any safety concerns via Triple Zero and or the Child Protection Helpline
- ✓ Conduct relevant risk and safety assessments
- ✓ Investigate work health safety obligations under SafeWork NSW
- ✓ Train staff and volunteers to adequately respond to complex needs
- ✓ Ensure your personal belongings are secure in a vehicle and not left out
- ✓ Ensure you are operating with at least two people, never volunteer alone
- ✓ Look out for one another

DON'T

- ✗ Intervene in antisocial behaviours such as arguments, fights or physical altercations
- ✗ Drive or park in an unsafe or illegal way
- ✗ Perform unsafe lifting activities
- ✗ Leave sharp knives and other utensils about
- ✗ Box yourself in when setting up a serving area, allow a route out
- ✗ Offer support where you are unable to meet the needs of the service user
- ✗ Always maintain professional and personal boundaries
- ✗ Preferably, don't bring young children to the service locations

Safe and nutritious food

Safe food means that it has been produced, manufactured, handled and transported in a way that does not cause physical harm to a person who consumes it.⁸

Safe and nutritious food

Food must be handled, transported, stored and served in a way that does not increase the risk of microbial growth to unsafe levels or increase the risk of contamination. Unsafe levels of microbial growth can negatively impact people's health status.⁹

Everyone, regardless of their social status and circumstances, should be entitled to safe food.

Food safety and vulnerable people

Someone experiencing poor health can be more susceptible to foodborne illness than a person experiencing good health. Foodborne illness occurs when an infective dose of a pathogenic bacteria or virus is present in food that is consumed.¹⁰

People experiencing homelessness are at greater risk of infection and gastrointestinal illnesses, as they often have poorer general health.¹¹

Illnesses such as food poisoning can be catastrophic. They are particularly difficult to manage in an unstable environment such as living on the street, when couch surfing, or staying in crisis or temporary accommodation.

This risk is increased dramatically for people experiencing homelessness as a result of their poorer general health and limited access to health screening and preventive medicine.¹²

Vulnerable populations that have limited access to healthy, whole foods are at higher risk of numerous chronic health issues that can be exacerbated by poor nutrition.¹³

People who are experiencing homelessness are at significantly higher risk of long term, harmful health complications resulting from malnutrition and poor dietary intake.¹⁴

Providing unsafe food and unhealthy food can have serious long-term health implications for people experiencing homelessness.

Leaving food next to sleeping people or out for people to collect can create health hazards. It attracts bird life and vermin, in turn creating unsanitary conditions for people sleeping rough. Unwanted items frequently become litter, making the City's public places unpleasant and potentially unhealthy.

All mobile voluntary services must adopt safe food practices and endeavour to provide nutritious food options to their service users.



BBQ. Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney.

Complying with NSW Food Regulations

The City of Sydney expects that mobile voluntary services will follow the NSW Food Authority's advice on donating or providing free food and keeping food safe.

Requirements for donating/providing free food

The Food Standards Code and *NSW Food Act 2003* requires that, any group or individual that sells food (whether for charity or not) must follow good hygiene and food handling practices, including proper construction and maintenance of the food premises. This ensures the food being served is as safe as possible.

To ensure the provision of safe food, the City expects mobile voluntary services to meet the same requirements in their service delivery.

The NSW Food Authority outlines the following areas where food safety requirements must be met:

- temperature control
- protecting food from contaminants
- hand washing
- food handler hygiene
- cleaning and sanitising
- pest control

Keeping food safe

Whether you are a business donating food to a charity or a charity distributing food to individuals, always follow standard food safety practices when processing, handling, storing, packing and transporting food:

- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food, especially when handling raw higher risk foods, and after toilet or smoking breaks
- Check the food for spoilage to ensure the food is safe and fit for human consumption
- Check the date marking on food packaging and throw away any food that is past its use-by date
- Observe temperature control requirements of potentially hazardous food. If the food must be kept below 5°C or above 60°C, tell the recipient of the required temperature
- If the food will only be safe to eat for a limited time, tell the recipient of that time period
- Cook food thoroughly
- Store food in clean, covered, food-grade containers
- Separate raw and cooked food and don't use the same utensils for both
- Keep utensils and kitchen areas clean

“They were giving out sweets only. I am diabetic and would like healthy food, like a salad”
– Service user

NSW Food Authority: Resources

The NSW Food Authority have a range of online resources available at: foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/resource-centre

‘Use-by’ and ‘best before’ dates

The NSW Food Authority recommends that food must not be donated or eaten after its ‘use-by’ date because it may be unsafe to eat, even though spoilage may not be visible.

Mobile voluntary services that receive food that will pass its use-by date before distribution are urged to throw the food away.

Food marked as ‘best before’ can be given away after the best before date has passed, provided the food is not damaged, deteriorated or perished.

There may be some loss of quality in food after its best before date but as long as it is otherwise fit for human consumption, it is not illegal to sell or distribute this food, nor should there be any safety risk from eating the food.

Nutritious food and vulnerable people

The provision of safe and nutritious food supports increased physical and mental functioning and is paramount to good health and wellbeing.¹⁵

Food with poor nutritional content, that is high in salt and carbohydrates and low in protein, can present flow on affects in the management of diabetes and oral health needs, as well as increasing risks of heart disease, stroke and kidney disease, all of which can lead to significant disability and death.¹⁶

It is important that mobile voluntary services provide a wide range of nutritious food options when operating.

In addition to providing nutritious food, mobile voluntary services should provide a range of food options that are appropriate to the varying health needs of service users. For example, poor dental health and hygiene is prevalent among vulnerable populations. It is therefore important to offer food that someone with poor dental health and hygiene can eat.



Innutritious Food. Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney.



Healthy Food Options. Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney.

Nutrition and food safety training

Research shows that food provided by emergency food relief organisations to vulnerable people can be lacking in nutritional quality and potentially inappropriate for consumption.¹⁷

Mobile voluntary services are encouraged to have appropriate food safety and food handling skills. They should consider training staff and volunteers in nutrition and food safety.

Food safety and nutrition training may improve the capacity of mobile voluntary services to respond appropriately to the varied nutritional and dietary needs of individuals. This also helps ensure that food offered is healthy, safe and adequate.

Food safety and nutrition training courses are offered through:

- local TAFE colleges
- Australian Institute of Food Safety

Available food nutrition courses include:

- the *FoodREDi Community Nutrition Education*
- *Nutrition Education Sustenance Training* (NEST) by OzHarvest, and Nutrition Australia, and the Wholesome Collective.

The NSW Food Authority's website has a comprehensive contact list of registered training organisations in the Sydney region and across NSW.

DO

- ✓ Ensure that healthy, safe and adequate food options are available
- ✓ Comply with the NSW Food Authority requirements and follow food safety practices when processing, handling, storing, packing and transporting food
- ✓ Train staff and volunteers with appropriate food safety and food handling skills

DON'T

- ✗ Leave food out unattended for people to collect and eat later
- ✗ Provide excess food that cannot be stored or kept safely
- ✗ Serve food with poor nutritional content, that is high in salt and carbohydrates and low in protein



Martin Place. Photographer: Brendan Read City of Sydney.

Responsible use of public places

Our role in managing public places

The City aims to ensure that public places in our city can be accessed and enjoyed by everyone including people who are experiencing homelessness.

The City aims to:

- ensure that all people can enjoy public places
- balance the needs of all users of public places
- minimise the impacts of the use of public places on pedestrians, local residents and businesses and preserve their right to unobstructed pathways, clean neighbourhoods and quiet enjoyment.

We encourage responsible behaviour by all people in our public places whilst acting to ensure that disadvantaged people are not discriminated against and are treated with compassion and respect.

We support the guidelines of the NSW Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places.¹⁸ We acknowledge that, like all other members of the public, people experiencing homelessness have a right to be in public places at the same time respecting the right of local communities to live in a safe and peaceful environment. We seek to take a compassionate approach to responding to homelessness in Sydney.

The protocol acknowledges the equal rights of all members of the community to access public places. However, people who use public places must do so responsibly, including mobile voluntary services.

Your responsibilities

Mobile voluntary services operating in the City of Sydney's local area must comply with the requirements below and relevant legislation and be responsible operators in the public domain.

Operating in residential areas

To minimise negative impacts on people sleeping rough and residents, the City encourages mobile voluntary services to operate at times that respect the surroundings.

If operating in residential areas, such as Woolloomooloo, the City encourages mobile voluntary services to restrict their operating hours to:

- Monday to Friday: 6pm to 8pm
- Saturday and Sunday: 5pm to 8pm

Mobile voluntary services should plan to be packed up and vacated from the area they are operating by 8.30pm.

Operating in high pedestrian volume areas

If operating in high pedestrian volume areas, such as Martin Place and Central station, mobile voluntary services are encouraged to be respectful of all people using the space, including people sleeping rough. They are encouraged to operate at times other than peak pedestrian times such as peak hour.



Martin Place. Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney.

Noise

Neighbourhood noise can give rise to serious environmental amenity issues and can have an impact upon human health.

The Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 sets out the definition and the main legal framework for the regulation of unacceptable noise.

Mobile voluntary services should keep noise to a minimum and act in a way that respects local residents and businesses. This includes:

- No amplified sound. Note: the use of amplified sound may require an approval by the City of Sydney under the *Local Government Act 1993*
- Mobile voluntary services are encouraged to pack up and vacate the area of operation by 8:30pm.

The City together with other regulators including NSW Office of the Environment and Heritage, NSW Police, Property NSW, and Roads and Maritime Services have a key role in managing local and neighbourhood noise complaints by providing an impartial and fair assessment of what level of noise is reasonable, taking into account the average person.

The City has the power to take compliance action, including the issuing of abatement orders, directions or penalties if offensive noise is being caused.

For more information on noise and understanding what your rights and responsibilities are, contact NSW Environment Protection Authority.

Phone: 131 555

Website: epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/noise/neighbourhood-noise/preventing-neighbourhood-noise

Good giving – donations that make a difference

Instead of leaving donated goods in public spaces, have a look at the City's [volunteer and goods donation directory](#).

There are many organisations in the local area committed to helping people experiencing homelessness. Many accept goods if you would like to donate non-perishable items to one of these groups.

Even well intentioned donations such as food, blankets, bedding or clothing become waste when they are left in public spaces unattended or without confirmation from those they are intended for that they are needed or wanted. Waste is defined in the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* to include any discarded, rejected, unwanted, surplus or abandoned substance.

These items are often left without consultation with people sleeping rough. Rough sleepers regularly discard these items or identify them as unwanted.

Each year, the City removes a substantial amount of unwanted items left in the public domain.

Rubbish, waste and littering

Mobile voluntary services must not litter or dump rubbish, waste or leave donations of goods in public spaces.

Mobile voluntary services must use available bins. Where there are no bins available or bins are full, services must take all rubbish with them, and not leave anything behind – including leftover or surplus food.

The dumping of food, clothing, blankets and bedding attracts bird life and vermin, creating unsanitary conditions for people sleeping rough. Unwanted items frequently become litter, making the City's public places unpleasant and potentially unhealthy.

Under the *Protection of the Environment Act 1997*, the City has the authority to issue penalties for littering or dumping.



City Cleansing and Waste. Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney.



City Rangers. Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney.

Parking

Mobile voluntary services must act in line with the road rules and street signs at all times.

At all times mobile voluntary services must park legally and not mount kerbs or footways, even when setting up or packing up.

City Rangers and NSW Police can issue fines for breaches of the *Road Rules 2014*.

Follow signs in public places

Mobile voluntary services must follow the signs erected in public places. For example, if a sign states that no fires or barbecues are allowed in a particular space, this must be followed.

Under the *Local Government Act 1993*, the City can issue penalty notices to mobile voluntary services that do not act according to signs erected by the City of Sydney in public places.

Maintaining access

Mobile voluntary services must respect all people's right to clear and accessible pathways and safe exit from buildings in an emergency.

Mobile voluntary services must not:

- place items on the footway or road in a way that obstructs the footway or road or part thereof
- block or impede pathways
- block emergency and fire exits.

Under the *Local Government Act 1993*, the City can issue penalty notices to mobile voluntary services that place items, such as tables and chairs on the footway or road.

The City can also issue an order requiring mobile voluntary services to remove a public nuisance or impound goods in the public space that are deemed as a public nuisance.



Community BBQ. Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney.

Events

Some activities carried out by mobile voluntary services may be considered an event and would require approval by the City, or the relevant landowner.

On land owned and managed by the City, approval is required to hold a festival, street parade, charitable collection, event, or commercial activity which engages the general public.

Outdoor permits may be required when the operation of mobile voluntary services involves:

- temporary infrastructure (including tables, chairs, barbecue, lighting, marquees)
- amplified sound
- exclusive use of a space
- an activity that restricts access to a space or area
- access for any vehicle in an off street public space
- activities seen as commercial in nature.

In these cases, mobile voluntary services must submit an event application form to operate in a park, open space, footway or street in the City of Sydney local government area.

Outdoor event permits are subject to fees.

If approval is granted, mobile voluntary services must comply with the City of Sydney's event guidelines.

For more information, please contact the Outdoor Venues team:

Phone: 02 9265 9333

Email: openspacebookings@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Website: cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/business/regulations/outdoor-permits



City Cleansing and Waste. Photographer: Katherine Griffiths City of Sydney.



City Cleansing and Waste. Photographer: Brendan Read City of Sydney.

DO

- ✓ Limit hours of operation to recommended times
- ✓ Consider pedestrian volumes
- ✓ Minimise noise
- ✓ Place all rubbish and waste in bins or take with you
- ✓ Adhere to all road rules and street signs in public places
- ✓ Ensure all foot and roadways, and fire and emergency exits, are clear at all times
- ✓ Seek and obtain appropriate event approval permits where required

DON'T

- ✗ Leave rubbish or waste behind after service delivery
- ✗ Leave excess or left over food or food products unattended for people to collect
- ✗ Leave excess clothing, bedding or donations unattended for people to collect
- ✗ Disturb local residents with loud or offensive noise
- ✗ Park contrary to or operate in conflict with road rules or street signs
- ✗ Mount kerbs or gutters or park on foot and pathways
- ✗ Block fire and emergency exits
- ✗ Operate without appropriate event approval permits
- ✗ Set up trestle tables, chairs or barbecues on foot or pathways without appropriate permission



The City aims to ensure that public places in our city can be accessed and enjoyed by everyone including people who are experiencing homelessness.

Key contacts

City of Sydney

The City of Sydney is responsible for responding to homelessness and managing the public domain. In doing this work, City staff work across a range of areas.

Homelessness Unit

The City of Sydney's Homelessness Unit works 7 days a week to reduce homelessness and its impact in Sydney.

If you would like more information about the City's homelessness projects, the issues facing people who are homeless, or wish to operate a mobile voluntary service in our local area, please get in touch:

Phone: 02 9265 9333

Email: homelessness@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Website: cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/community/community-support/homelessness

Venue management for outdoor events permits

Approval is required to hold a festival, street parade, charitable collection, sporting or team event, commercial activity or product sampling which engages the general public.

In some circumstances, mobile voluntary services may require an event permit to operate in public spaces.

For further information, please contact the City:

Phone: 02 9265 9333

Email: openspacebookings@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Website: cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/business/doing-business-with-us/regulations/outdoor-permits

Department of Communities and Justice

The Department of Communities and Justice works with children, adults, families and communities across NSW and is responsible for responding to homelessness.

Phone: 02 8303 7600

Website: facs.nsw.gov.au

Link2home Homelessness Information Line

Eligibility: Homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Phone: 1800 152 152

Website: facs.nsw.gov.au

Land and Housing Corporation

The NSW Land and Housing Corporation is responsible for the management of the NSW Government's social housing portfolio. Contact them before operating a mobile voluntary service on land owned or managed by the NSW Government such as a social housing precinct.

Phone: 02 8753 9000

Website: facs.nsw.gov.au

Emergency services

If you observe a person is in need of urgent medical attention, is at risk of harming themselves or others, or if you have witnessed a serious incident or crime you should contact the appropriate emergency service – Police, Ambulance, or Fire Brigade on 000.

Phone: 000

More information

Child Protection Helpline

Phone: 13 21 11

Website: facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/reporting-child-at-risk

Homelessness NSW

Homelessness NSW works with its members to prevent and reduce homelessness across NSW. Members include small, locally based community organisations, multiservice agencies with a regional reach and large state-wide service providers. Homelessness NSW can provide information on homelessness, as well as guidance on appropriate volunteering opportunities.

Phone: 02 8354 7600

Website: homelessnessnsw.org.au

Mental Health Triage Line

If you or someone you know needs help, the Mental Health Line offers:

- Professional help and advice
- Referrals to local mental health services.

It is staffed by mental health professionals who will ask questions to determine if you or, the person you are concerned about, needs ongoing mental health care and how urgently it is needed.

They can put you in contact with the most relevant mental health service for children, teens, adults and older people.

The Mental Health Line is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phone: 1800 011 511

Website: health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/Pages/Mental-Health-Line.aspx

Needle Clean Up Hotline

If you see a needle in a public place call the hotline.

The hotline is staffed – Monday to Friday: 9am – 4pm – with an answering machine at other times.

Phone: 1800 633 353

NSW Food Authority

The NSW Food Authority regulates and monitors food safety across NSW, and can provide useful resources regarding food safety, including education, training and technical information, and useful on line fact sheets.

Phone: 1300 552 406

Website: foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry

Police Assistance Line

If you are a victim of a crime, other than life threatening or time critical emergency situations, you should contact the Police Assistance Line.

The Police Assistance Line operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phone: 131 444

SafeWork NSW

SafeWork NSW regulate work health and safety in NSW. They can provide advice on improving work health and safety

Phone: 13 10 50

Email: contact@safework.nsw.gov.au

Website: safework.nsw.gov.au/contact-us

Definitions

Term	Definition
Accessible pathway	<p>The area of the footway maintained for safe and equitable pedestrian circulation. An accessible pathway is free from obstructions and assists in wayfinding and navigation. Also sometimes referred to as the continuous assessable path of travel or clear path of travel.</p> <p>Source: City of Sydney, Inclusive and Accessible Public Domain Draft Guidelines</p>
Amenity	<p>The features and advantages of a locality or neighbourhood which it is considered desirable to preserve or encourage such as beauty or tranquillity.</p>
Food insecurity	<p>Food insecurity occurs whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire acceptable food in a socially acceptable way, is limited or uncertain.</p> <p>Source: Bazerghi, Chantelle, McKay, Fiona H., & Dunn, Matthew. (2016). <i>The Role of Food Banks in Addressing Food Insecurity: A Systematic Review</i>.</p>
Footway	<p>Means that part of a road as is set aside or formed as a path or way for pedestrian traffic (whether or not it may also be used by bicycle traffic).¹⁹</p> <p>Source: NSW Government, Roads Act 1993</p>
Littering	<p>It is an offence under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 to deposit litter in or on any place not used as a lawful receptacle for waste. This applies whether or not the material has any value when or after being left in the place.</p> <p>Source: NSW Government, Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</p>
Mobile voluntary service	<p>A service, group or program that provides food and material support, social contact, and access to spiritual support to people who are homeless as well as other disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>Services are typically volunteer led, however some services have professional oversight or are delivered by professional not-for-profit organisations working in the homelessness sector.</p> <p>Mobile voluntary service refers to the fact that these services are not provided from a building or other fixed place but are provided from vans or similar types of vehicles.</p>

Term	Definition
Offensive noise	<p>Means noise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) that, by reason of its level, nature, character or quality, or the time at which it is made, or any other circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) is harmful to (or is likely to be harmful to) a person who is outside the premises from which it is emitted, or (ii) interferes unreasonably with (or is likely to interfere unreasonably with) the comfort or repose of a person who is outside the premises from which it is emitted, or (b) that is of a level, nature, character or quality prescribed by the regulations or that is made at a time, or in other circumstances, prescribed by the regulations.²⁰ <p>Source: NSW Government, Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</p>
Public place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) a public reserve, public bathing reserve, public baths or public swimming pool, or (b) a public road, public bridge, public wharf or public road-ferry, or (c) a Crown reserve comprising land reserved for future public requirements, or (d) public land or Crown land that is not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a Crown reserve (other than a Crown reserve that is a public place because of paragraph (a), (b) or (c)), or (ii) a common, or (iii) land subject to the Trustees of Schools of Arts Enabling Act 1902, or (iv) land that has been sold or leased or lawfully contracted to be sold or leased, or (e) land that is declared by the regulations to be a public place for the purposes of this definition.²¹ <p>Note that public reserve is defined to also include public parks as outlined in the Local Government Act 1993.</p> <p>Source: NSW Government, Local Government Act 1993</p>
Public road	<p>Means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) any road that is opened or dedicated as a public road, whether under this or any other Act or law, and (b) any road that is declared to be a public road for the purposes of this Act.²² <p>Source: NSW Government, Roads Act 1993 No 33</p> <p>Means a road the public are entitled to use.</p> <p>Source: NSW Government, Local Government Act 1993</p>

Term	Definition
Risk of harm (child or young person)	<p>Risk of harm refers to the likelihood that a child or young person may suffer physical, psychological or emotional harm as a result of what is done (physical, sexual or psychological abuse) or not done (neglect) by another person, often an adult responsible for their care.²³</p> <p>Source: NSW Government, Family & Community Services, Child at risk of harm and neglect</p>
Safe food	<p>Safe food means that it has been produced, manufactured, handled and transported in a way that does not cause physical harm to a person who consumes it.</p> <p>Source: NSW Government, Food Act 2003</p>
Service provider	<p>Refers to individuals or groups that deliver a service that is a mobile voluntary service. They may be paid employees or volunteers.</p>
Service user	<p>Refers to people who access mobile voluntary services. Some service users may be homeless and sleeping rough. Some may be seeking support because they face other forms of disadvantage, such as low income, rental stress and or job insecurity.</p>
Specialist Homelessness Service	<p>Specialist homelessness services are community agencies that provide a range of services to support people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless with the aim of breaking the cycle of homelessness. Services provided include prevention and early intervention, crisis or transitional accommodation, assistance to sustain housing, and support for people experiencing homelessness as a result of domestic and family violence, mental health or alcohol and other drugs.</p>
Waste	<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) any substance (whether solid, liquid or gaseous) that is discharged, emitted or deposited in the environment in such volume, constituency or manner as to cause an alteration in the environment (b) any discarded, rejected, unwanted, surplus or abandoned substance (c) any otherwise discarded, rejected, unwanted, surplus or abandoned substance intended for sale or for recycling, processing, recovery or purification by a separate operation from that which produced the substance (d) any processed, recycled, re-used or recovered substance produced wholly or partly from waste that is applied to land, or used as fuel, but only in the circumstances prescribed by the regulations (e) any substance prescribed by the regulations to be waste. <p>A substance is not precluded from being waste for the purposes of this Act merely because it is or may be processed, recycled, re-used or recovered.²⁴</p> <p>Source: NSW Government, Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</p>

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