

The Sydney Busking Code

Your guide to
street performance
in the City of Sydney

CITY OF SYDNEY 

We the buskers of Sydney,

recognise and respect that we perform on Gadigal Land. We share our busking spaces with practitioners of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture who experience and share their cultural heritage through dance, song and storytelling.

The Busking Code is our guide to busker etiquette and pitch sharing arrangements in the City of Sydney area.

Sydney has a thriving busking culture and is home to some of the most lucrative busking pitches in the country. We welcome street performers from across Australia and the world to share their performances on Sydney's streets alongside our local talent.

All buskers in Sydney are to follow this code.

The basics

In Sydney, busking acts are grouped in three categories. Each category has its own set of performance conditions.

Low Impact Act

If your act does not:

- Need more than 2m² performance space
- Require an audience to gather, wait and watch
- Include “naturally loud” instruments such as drums, bagpipes, pan pipes or brass instruments
- Include higher risk activities like acrobatics or juggling sharp objects

You have a Low Impact act and may busk for up to 2 hours per location per day.

Extended Duration Act

If your act:

- Is quiet, non-amplified and non-musical, and
- Involves creating a work of art continuously over a long period of time such as pavement art or durational performance art

You have an Extended Duration act. As long as your pitch isn't restricting other people from using the area around you, you can perform for up to 8 hours per location per day.

High Impact Act

If your act:

- Needs more than 2m² performance space;
- Encourages an audience to gather, wait and watch;
- Uses “naturally loud” instruments such as drums, bagpipes, pan pipes or brass instruments;
- Includes higher risk activities like acrobatics or juggling
- Features 5 or more performers

You have a High Impact act and may busk for up to 1 hour per location per day. You'll need to speak to the City of Sydney about an act assessments before you can get a permit to busk.

High Impact acts often need more space, hence there are less places where they can perform. Keeping acts to 1 hour duration provides more performers with access to limited larger performance spaces and breaks up the impact of louder acts on neighbours.

We look out for each other, welcome newcomers, and keep fellow buskers in check if they're over-stepping the expectations and obligations of buskers in Sydney.



Where to busk

You can establish a busking pitch on any public land in Sydney that meets these criteria:

- There is enough open space for you to conduct your performance plus a further two metres for pedestrian flow on at least two sides of your pitch;
- The site is not being used by an approved event or gathering;
- You are at least 100 metres from another busker or an approved event or gathering;
- Your pitch and your audience does not block access to the entry or exit of any building, street, carpark or thoroughfare
- If the location is a Special Busking Site with set pitches and a booking or queuing system, you observe the conditions of the site (see Special Busking Sites on page 12).

We have a right and an opportunity to actively engage in monitoring and improving busking regulations and busking culture in Sydney.



Making and managing your pitch

The pitch is your stage – keep it looking clean, well laid-out and professionally put together.

Minimise clutter or any unnecessary items that might be a trip hazard.

For Low Impact Acts, keep your equipment near to you and encourage your audience to gather close.

For High Impact Acts, consider laying a rope on the ground to show the audience where you want them to gather.

You want them as close as they can be, while still safely outside your performance area.

For Pavement Artists, use chalk that is entirely removable by water or draw onto a removable canvas placed over the pavement. Make sure there are no slip hazards and no trip hazards by taping down any edges.

We work in cooperation with each other, local government and the police to manage any issues that arise from a busker's performance or behaviour. We understand that the way we conduct ourselves may affect the reputation and livelihood of all buskers in Sydney.

Volume

Performing too loudly can negatively affect neighbouring homes and businesses and drive your audience away.

Buskers who play too loudly earn less money as crowds keep a distance from the performance. Pushing your audience away with high volume also adds to congestion and crowding in pedestrian zones, so people are less likely to hang around and watch your performance.

Ensuring that your performance cannot be heard at 50 metres from your pitch is essential. Busking pitches can be 100 metres apart, and the sound of your act should not affect another busker's performance.

The following are guides to help you monitor if your act is at the right volume. Be aware that an authorised person from the council or police can tell you to lower your volume or stop performing at any time and you must follow their instruction.

- If you cannot hear any background noise during your performance, you are playing too loud.
- If your audience is gathering more than 3 metres from you, you are playing too loud.
- If you can see that your audience is shouting to speak to each other, turn it down.

- If your performance can be heard 50 metres from your pitch, you're playing too loud. Get a friend or fellow busker to walk 50-60 paces from your performance and see if they can still hear you. If they can, turn it down.
- If you find that no one is paying you any tips, try reducing your volume and see if people become more comfortable approaching you.
- If somebody living or working in a building near you complains that they can hear your performance over their own conversation, you are playing too loud. Remember, you can reach a compromise but you could have your permit reviewed if you refuse to turn your volume down when directed to by the police or the City.

We are ambassadors
for the cultural life of
Sydney and its diverse,
harmonious communities.



Content of your act

Sydney buskers are ambassadors for the cultural life of the city and values we celebrate: diversity, generosity, respect and inclusion.

Buskers do not tease, humiliate or harass anyone.

Sydney buskers are some of the best in the world. We have innovative, original, expertly performed acts.

We have a varied repertoire and never repeat the same material during a set. If you don't have enough content to fill your time at a pitch without repeating anything, then trim your set to the amount of material you have and move to another pitch.

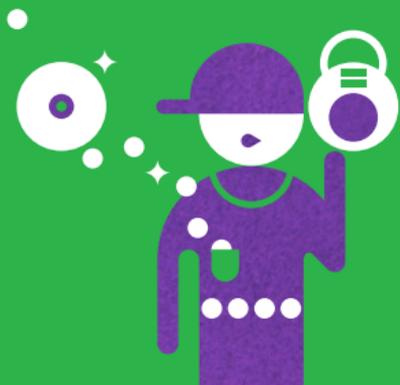
We perform in public places to contribute something positive to those spaces. If our performance is having a negative effect on anybody, we do our best to remedy it.





Sales

The sale of a busker's own music, video, artwork or merchandise is encouraged, but it has to be supplementary to your performance. You can't spruik your products or get someone else to sell them on your behalf. You are at a busking pitch to busk, not to conduct a market stall, and if somebody happens to approach you to buy your music or merch, it's a bonus.



Special Busking Sites

Special Busking Sites have additional conditions or operating systems.

H High

L Low impact

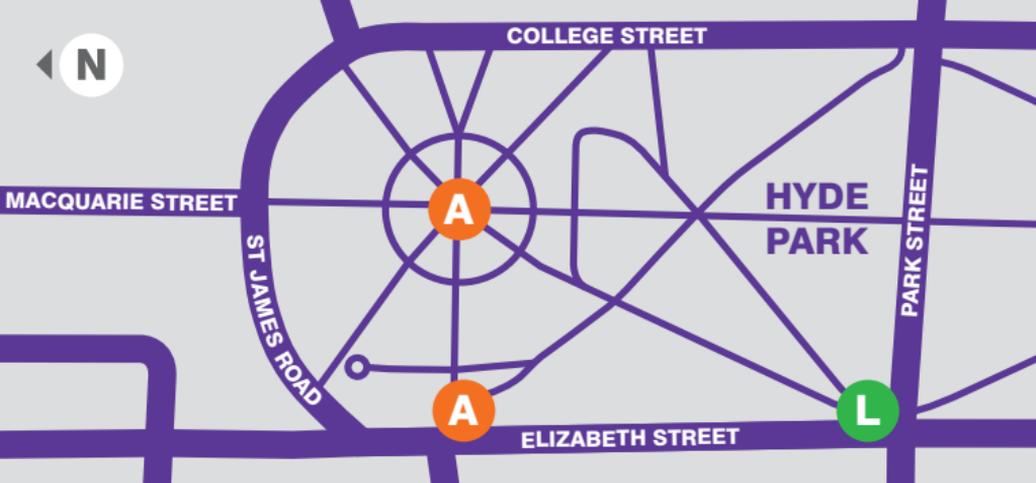
E Extended duration

A Any act



Martin Place

There is one pitch in Martin Place on the eastern side of the Pitt Street intersection, facing Pitt Street. All acts are limited to 1 hour duration.



Hyde Park

There are three busking pitches in Hyde Park North. On the paved area facing Market Street, adjacent the St James Station entrance. On the paved area surrounding Archibald Fountain. And one Low Impact pitch by the monument on the corner of Elizabeth and Park streets.



QVB Forecourt

The southern forecourt of the QVB may be occupied by one Extended Duration Act and either one Low Impact Act or one High Impact Act at any one time.



Pitt Street Mall

There are three pitches in Pitt Street Mall

North, near the King Street intersection. Middle, half way between North and South pitches, near Mid City Centre. South, near the Market Street intersection under the Westfield sky-bridge.

The North and South pitches are for Low Impact and High Impact Acts only.

Buskers may perform in the North and South pitches for a maximum of one hour, per pitch, per day.

The Middle Pitch is available for Extended Duration Acts and Circle (Physical Theatre) Acts.

The Middle Pitch is allocated on a first-in basis.

No acts incorporating fire allowed.

Busking is limited to 11am–10pm, 7 days a week.

Amplified sound must be effectively managed due to the close proximity of residents and businesses.



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Team Hall

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For more information

For permit enquiries or to report busking issues, please contact City of Sydney Customer Service on (02) 9265 9333 or council@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Buskers wanting more information about the rules for busking in the City of Sydney can email busking@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au
city.sydney/busking