



Sydney2030/Green/Global/Connected



# Street Count Volunteer Manual

*city of villages*



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# 1. Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to take part in the City of Sydney Street Count. This manual provides the information you need to know about preparing for and taking part in the event.

The Street Count is coordinated by the City of Sydney Homelessness Unit. The City of Sydney invests \$2.2 million every year, and employs a dedicated team, to reduce homelessness and its impact in Sydney. The team help people experiencing homelessness into safe and sustainable accommodation with support. The City provides \$1.4 million every year to NSW Family and Community Services to fund specialist homelessness services to reduce the risk and break the cycle of homelessness for adults and young people in Sydney.

The City employs four Public Space Liaison Officers, PSLO's who work across seven days engaging people who are sleeping rough in the city and connecting them to services. PSLO's also engage with local residents and businesses to increase understanding and resolve problems before they reach conflict.

The City's Homelessness Unit takes a leadership role in providing and coordinating responses to homelessness in the public domain. The City works in partnership with NSW Family and Community Services, NSW Police, Neami National, Launchpad Youth Services, Innari Housing, Aboriginal Housing Company, St Vincent's Homeless Health, Mission Australia and other specialist homelessness services to reduce homelessness and its impact in Sydney. The collaborative approach enables sharing of skills, knowledge and resources resulting in better outcomes for both vulnerable individuals and the wider community.

To read more about the work of the City in responding to homelessness, or to find out about other opportunities to help please see our website:

<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/community/community-support/homelessness>

## 2. About

The City of Sydney Street Count started in 2008 and occurs twice a year in February and August to measure the number of people sleeping rough and staying in crisis accommodation in Sydney LGA. The Street Count provides ‘point-in-time’ data that is collected between 1am-3am to identify the number of people who are sleeping rough in the LGA.

The Street Count uses an established methodology for monitoring the impact of homelessness policy and service responses in countries such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Street Counts are also conducted in other Australia cities including Melbourne and Adelaide. Street Counts vary in methodology across regions, states and countries, but all are consistent in their focus of maintaining a baseline of people sleeping rough in the designated counting areas. The methods used by the City of Sydney have been adapted and refined in consultation with people sleeping rough to ensure sensitivity and accuracy.

On average over 200 volunteers are engaged in Street Count events each year. Volunteers are made up of residents, local business employees, City staff, homelessness services, other Government organisations and university students. The volunteer’s role involves recording a head count of people sleeping rough in a designated geographic area. People with lived experience of homelessness are also engaged as advisors. Their role is to provide advice on the implementation and delivery of Street Count, share experiences where they feel comfortable, participate as experts on the night of the count and to also share results broadly within the community.

Data collected is used to inform strategies and responses to homelessness issues through monitoring trends including seasonal changes tracked over time. Data is publicly available and is used by a range of stakeholders to measure the effectiveness of current homelessness strategies and to advocate for the resources necessary to create sustainable solutions to homelessness. Previous results have been used to inform policy development and to address homelessness in the LGA, including advocacy to other levels of government.

# 3. Statement of ethics

The City of Sydney is committed to using the information gathered from the Street Count for the benefit of people who are homeless in the City of Sydney. Results are to be used to inform work carried out by the Homelessness Unit and to incorporate in advocacy campaigns aimed at resourcing initiatives to end homelessness.

All information collected is non-identifying and only be used in a way that empowers and promotes the wellbeing of homeless people.

No information regarding the location of people sleeping rough will be released in the results of the count except where agencies are required to respond to the needs of the people sleeping rough.

Volunteers have a duty of care to respond to people in need of urgent medical attention or at risk of significant immediate harm but will not be asked to provide non-critical assistance. Requests for assistance can be directed to support agencies during business hours. See section on emergency procedures to follow where urgent assistance is required.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the City of Sydney Street Count please contact:

**Katie Phillips**  
**Homelessness Project Coordinator**  
**Phone: 02 9265 9667**  
**Email: [kphillips@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kphillips@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au)**

# 4. Important notes

## Registration

All participants must have registered before the night of the count. Registration can be accessed on the [City's Street Count page](#) or by contacting Katie Phillips on 9265 9667 or [kphillips@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kphillips@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au).

## What to bring to the Street Count

- A charged mobile phone. For safety reasons, each volunteer pair should have at least one mobile phone.
- Weather appropriate clothing and comfortable, closed, sturdy walking shoes.
- Wet weather gear if rain is predicted. The count will still go ahead if it is raining.

## What you'll be provided with

- A reflective safety vest
- Water.
- Each counting group will receive a carry bag containing a clipboard, pens, torch and counting sheets.
- Cards with contact details for Link2Home- the statewide information and referral service to assist homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

## What not to bring

- Valuables including large sums of money, jewelry and handbags.
- Extra people who have not registered as volunteers.
- Any recording devices including cameras.

## You will not be permitted to participate in Street Count if you:

- Have not completed registration prior to participating
- Arrive later than midnight as it will be too late to participate in the Street Count.
- You are intoxicated or suspected to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- You are under 18 years old
- You are abusive, threatening or intimidating to staff or other participants

# 5. Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by their workplace insurance or by the City of Sydney Volunteer Insurance.

If your employer is supporting you to participate in the Street Count, you will need to ensure that your organisational insurance will cover you during your participation in the Street Count.

Volunteers will need to follow all procedures described in this manual in order to receive coverage by the City of Sydney Volunteer Insurance. Failure to comply will result with a volunteer not covered by insurance. Volunteers covered by their own organisational insurance should check that they fulfil the insurance requirements of those policies.

# 6. Safety Protocol

## General Safety

The safety of all participants and people sleeping rough is paramount. Volunteers are expected to behave in a responsible manner and not put themselves or others at risk of harm or injury. If a person is suspected to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs they will not be permitted to participate in the Street Count.

Please adhere to the instructions of the Headquarter staff and Team Leaders failure to do so may result in you being prevented from participating in Street Count. NSW Police are aware of the Street Count and the Safety Protocol and are available to attend if required. Use common sense and good judgment to assess the safety of each situation.

## During the Count

Always stay in pairs, and do not separate under any circumstance. You must be in sight of your partner at all times. Volunteers are not permitted to use their own cars, motorbikes or bicycles during the count. Once counting is complete, all volunteers are instructed to regroup with the rest of their team to travel back to Headquarters. If a counting pair has completed their area ahead of their team members they can inform their Team Leader and request return to headquarters early. Team leaders must notify Headquarters staff.

## Communication procedure

- The Team Leader will contact each counting pair upon commencement of the Street Count at 1.00 am and then again every half hour.
- The Headquarter Coordinator will contact the Team Leaders every hour to confirm the safety of all teams.
- Volunteers are responsible for communicating with their Team Leader every half hour. If the pair haven't heard from the Team Leader within 10 minutes of the scheduled time they are required to ring their Team Leader. If there is no answer they are to contact their Headquarters Coordinator straight away. Headquarters will dispatch a vehicle to the counting area immediately. If volunteers are not located within a further 10 minutes, the Police will be contacted to locate the volunteers.
- Team Leaders will contact headquarters to advise that they are ready to be transported. Those on foot will regroup and return together.

## Emergency procedure

If Volunteers observe a person is in need of urgent medical attention, or is at risk of harming themselves, or others, they should contact the appropriate emergency service:

- In the first instance contact Police, Ambulance, or Fire Brigade for emergencies on **000**. Volunteers are to then contact Team Leaders and Headquarters
- For any non-critical concerns or situations, Volunteers are to call their Team Leaders. Wait for further instruction.
- If a Volunteer encounters someone who is under 18 years of age they must call their Team Leader immediately. A Child Protection Report will be made by the Street Count Coordinator.

If a Volunteer is involved in an incident a full report and debrief will need to be completed on return to Headquarters.

## Incident management

All incidents must be reported to Team Leaders as soon as practical. Incidents may include:

- Accidents involving participants
- Verbal abuse or threats
- Physical abuse
- Person sleeping rough disclosure of self-harm, intention to cause of harm to others, or harm to themselves by others

## Incident Response

- 1) Assess seriousness of incident.
- 2) Follow emergency procedures.
- 3) If the safety of any volunteer is under threat, leave the situation as quickly as possible.
- 4) Call the team leader to report the incident and discuss if any follow up is required. The team leader will then contact headquarters.
- 5) Continue the count once everyone is safe.
- 6) If the situation becomes unsafe, then cease the count and go directly to your headquarters. Inform your team leader of this and if transport is required, let your team leader know.
- 7) All incidents must be reported at check- in after the completion of the Count and an Incident Form completed.

- 8) Support and debriefing will be provided at headquarters after the Count. Counselling will be arranged if required.

### Safety Do's and Dont's

Do's	Dont's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep your voices down.</li><li>• When you are in phone contact with other count members try to do it in areas where there are no people sleeping.</li><li>• Respect that you are potentially intruding in someone's personal space and take all steps possible to minimise disruption.</li><li>• Avoid surprising or startling people.</li><li>• Explain your presence to anyone who asks or who is disturbed by your presence.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wake any one up.</li><li>• Shine light into areas where people are sleeping.</li><li>• Approach anyone who is behaving erratically or in a dangerous manner. Use emergency procedures if necessary.</li><li>• Enter buildings or enclosed areas that have single exit points.</li><li>• Enter squats</li><li>• Use your own car as transportation during the count.</li></ul>

# 7. Pre-Count

## Street Count Headquarters

All volunteers will be allocated to a specific headquarter meeting point prior to the night of Street Count. There are three headquarter meeting points:

- Lower Town Hall, Sydney Town Hall (Entry via Druitt street)
- Ultimo Community Centre (40 William Henry St, Cnr Bulwara Rd Ultimo)
- Ron Williams Community Centre (5-11 Kepos St Redfern)

Volunteers will be required to arrive at the headquarters no later than midnight on the night of Monday the 14 August (12am Tuesday morning).

## Arrival

- Please arrive at your assigned headquarters on time in weather appropriate clothing
- Sign in to register your attendance
- You will be advised of your counting area, team leader and quadrant- use this to find your table.
- Volunteers are to report to their Team Leader after registering.
- Volunteers will count in a minimum pairs (counting team). A Team Leader is assigned to approximately every five counting groups (a quadrant).
- Each pair will receive a Count Pack that includes: a carry bag, clipboard, pens, a torch, a map and counting sheets.
- A safety vest and a bottle of water will be provided to each participant. Safety vests must be worn.
- Once all of the team arrives the Team Leader will brief them on the counting procedures, use of the counting tools and safety protocols.
- Departure times will be determined by the distance of the counting area from the headquarters.
- Headquarter staff will deliver a short briefing before commencing the count
- Counting will commence at exactly 1.00 am and finish at 3.00 am.



### Transport to count area

- The headquarters are located in central areas within the Street Count boundaries.
- Your team leader will advise you of when your group are leaving
- Most count areas are within walking distance from their headquarters and volunteers in those areas will walk in team groups to the count area.
- Transportation by vehicle will be provided to those teams who are counting in areas that take longer than 20 minutes to reach on foot from the headquarters
- Please observe all usual traffic and pedestrian road rules.

# 8. On the Count

## Who to count

It is not always accurate to assume from a person's appearance that they are rough sleeping; however some level of judgment is required. If unsure please consult with your partner and record a detailed description on your count sheet.

Count all people who:

- Are carrying substantial belongings and who appear to have no accommodation.
- Are sleeping, laying or sitting on the pavement, street, parks, shops/business fronts, parking lots, road or railway underpasses
- Are inhabiting a tent or a makeshift structure
- Are obviously sleeping in cars
- Indicate to volunteers that they are homeless

## Use of torches

Do not flash the torch in anyone's eyes or use it intrusively. Use the torches to walk safely and to fill in the counting tools.

## Hotspots

Hotspots are places that have a known population of people sleeping rough. These hotspots will be marked in pink on the appropriate maps.

## Squats

Do not enter squats. If someone is outside the squat and are awake they may be able to tell you how many people are inside.

## Maps

Each team will be given a map for their area. The Map will outline the team's counting area (boundaries identified with a red line.) While most streets, lanes, avenues and roads have been named there are some lanes within counting areas that do not have names. These lanes should be recorded by identifying the nearest cross street.

## Counting tools

Each team will be issued with two counting tools: a <sup>1</sup>**counting form** and a <sup>2</sup>**map**. Volunteers will be shown how to use the tools at training prior to the count or by their Team Leaders on the night if they are unable to attend the training. The tools are designed to record information when a

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 pg- Count Form example

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2 pg- Map Example

homeless person has been sighted. It is the responsibility of all volunteers to ensure that they understand how to use the tools. Team Leaders should be consulted if people are unsure.

As many people will be covered up it will not be necessary to record details of gender, ethnicity, age etc. Up to 5 new sightings can be recorded on each counting form.

Details of the location of people sleeping rough should also be recorded on the appropriate place on the form with sufficient detail to identify the location. A mark indicating the location should also be made on the maps provided. Areas COUNTED should also be marked on the map with the highlighter provided.

The use of these tools will assist us in ensuring all areas have been covered and accounting for those that have not been. See Appendix 3 for examples of completed tools at the end of this manual).

### **Approaching people sleeping rough**

If you observe a person walking around and you are unsure if he/she is sleeping rough you can attempt to find out if they are experiencing homelessness. We suggest that you first introduce yourself and then ask questions such as “Do you have anywhere to stay tonight?” rather than “Are you homeless?” as this can be insulting to both people sleeping rough and others.

When you are interacting with anyone who may be a rough sleeper be: polite and respectful; position yourself at the person’s eye level (sit or stand) as this will encourage an equal communication; and do not encroach on their personal space.

### **Assisting people**

The central aim of the Count is to count homeless people in the inner city area to establish the number of people sleeping rough in the City’s LGA. It is not to provide outreach assistance unless there is an urgent need for it.

Each volunteer will be given cards that include contact details for Link 2Home. These cards can be given to people sleeping rough who require assistance in housing or other support. If an emergency is witnessed contact emergency services on 000. Volunteers are required to report any child at risk to the Community Service helpline (133 627). If a child is observed to be sleeping rough the volunteer should contact their Headquarter Coordinator for guidance.

Missionbeat will be available to transport any person who is experiencing homelessness to accommodation or to hospital (if an ambulance is not required). If you require Missionbeat please call headquarters and they will arrange for them to meet you at your location.



# 9. Post Count

## Finishing the Count

All participants are to cease counting by 3.00 am. If, by that time, participants have not completed a count of their allocated area, they are to mark the areas not counted on their maps and notify a headquarters staff member.

Once an area has been completed, teams can regroup at an agreed area and make their way back to headquarters. All groups must return to headquarters on or before 3:30 am.

If a counting pair has completed their area ahead of their team members they can inform their Team Leader and request return to headquarters early. Team leaders must notify Headquarters staff.

## Signing back in

Participants must sign in upon return to headquarters. Volunteers are required to return safety vests, and the Count Pack with all materials. Participants are asked to check that completed counting forms are filled out correctly (noting team number) and submit to Headquarters Coordinator. A debriefing will take place as volunteers return.

If an incident has been reported to a Team Leader the volunteers involved are required to complete an incident form that will be provided. Counselling will be arranged if required after an incident or if any volunteer feels that they need it.

## Feedback

The City kindly asks you to complete an evaluation survey to give feedback about your experience at the Street Count, a link will be emailed to you. The City of Sydney is committed to continuous improvement of our services and our programs. Your feedback will help us continue to recruit volunteers and sustain the Street Count in future years.

## Results

The results of the Street Count will be emailed to you once they become publically available.

# 10. Checklist

- Complete registration online to participate in Street Count
- Read and understand Volunteer Manual and Safety Protocol prior to Street Count
- Bring this manual to the Street Count,
- Weather appropriate clothing and bring a charged mobile phone (with credit) if you have one
- Arrive at your designated headquarters by Midnight Monday night the 14 August February (12am Tuesday morning.)
- Sign in on arrival
- Locate your team table and meet your Team Leader, counting partner and team
- Put on your safety vest and ensure you have all materials- count forms, maps, pen, torch
- Ensure that you have recorded all necessary phone numbers in an easily accessible location.
- Walk or be transported to your counting area with your team. Volunteers cannot use their own car during the count.
- Walk each street and park of your count area and record any sightings of people sleeping rough on the counting tools provided.
- Ensure your Team Leader has contacted you every half hour. Follow communication procedure with Team Leader (page 5) if this has not happened.
- Finish counting by 3:00 am
- Make your way back to your Headquarters.
- Sign in at the Headquarters and return Count Pack and all other materials provided to your Team Leader.
- Complete incident forms if necessary.
- Complete evaluation Forms online

# 11. Appendix 1- Count Form

Your Name: Jo Wall  
 Area Number: 53  
 Team Leader: Liz Giles

Address/ Description of location	How many were...	Pets	Other comments
CROWN ST RESERVE, CORNER OF CROWN + ROBISON ST	mobile asleep 2 awake static 1		
How many were counted in this location: 3			
BOURKE ST PARK	mobile 1 asleep awake static		MALE SEEN LEAVING PARK WITH SLEEPING BAG. 50's LONG GREY BEARD, RED HOODIE + BLUE JEANS. (AMBULANCE + 4 POLICE CARS PRESENT)
How many were counted in this location: 1		1 dog	
41 CROWN ST, NEAR BROUGHTON ST	mobile asleep 4 awake static		
How many were counted in this location: 4			
CORNER OF BOURKE ST + BLAND ST	mobile asleep 2 awake static		2 PERSON TENT ALSO SEEN AT THIS LOCATION, UNKNOWN IF ANYONE INSIDE
How many were counted in this location: 2			
			How many were counted in this location:

# 12. Appendix 2- Count Map





