

**THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF DEALING  
WITH DISORDER - THE KINGS CROSS  
POLICE EXPERIENCE**

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## Introduction

Good public servants should always be chasing 'bang for their buck'. It's a crass term, that can be attributed to that, 'banana republic' Prime Minister, but it is a term that will be the foundation stone for this presentation. In their quest for 'bang for their buck' public servants responsible for provision of community services should be very cautious in responding to the phrases 'public disorder' and the close cousin, 'fear of crime'. Yet we are bound to respond, for we are all aware that if the community feel unsafe, those perceptions present as reality and in the minds of those people that is all that counts. Unless we are able to effectively deal with both the reality of disorder and what people perceive as reality, our efforts in one area will be cancelled out by the other. The trick is, to get the balance right!

It is very tempting for us to reach into our pockets (interpret that term to mean budget), and spend money and resources, addressing what we hopefully believe will reduce 'public disorder' and 'fear of crime' in the community. For those that don't pause to think about their responsibilities of public office, there is a temptation to look for the 'quick fix' in response to the community's concerns. For those who take their jobs seriously they should be feeling anguish before they commit the resources, for they are aware there is no real way of knowing the effectiveness of our efforts.

In this room there are representatives from many organisations that are collectively spending millions on attempting to reduce 'public disorder'. In my command alone a seven figure sum will be spent this year focussing on this issue. In the interests of 'bang for our buck' there is a very strong onus on us to ensure that we have done everything possible to appreciate the nature and scope of disorder in our patch and from that knowledge develop a suite of strategies that will hopefully reduce disorder in our community.

From our experience disorder can be comprised of a whole host of real and perceived issues relevant to the community. In our local patch the key elements of disorder at this present time are, the presence of the homeless and drug dependant persons, visible drug dealing on the streets, visible alcohol related crime particularly in the form of street assaults, street prostitution, youth related crime, street cleanliness and poor lighting.

Whilst I'll spend time later describing how we arrived at these issues of disorder as a priority, the key point that I want to make is that to address these 'grab bag' of issues, many of which have little to do with policing, requires a very collaborative and integrated working relationship with other state, local government and non-government service providers, particularly at practitioner level.

What is noticeably absent from these key identified elements of disorder in my local patch is graffiti. That has not always been the case and it is only in recent years it has reduced in its priority for the community. That observation brings me to my next point. Disorder is a dynamic phenomenon, and a key driver is waxing and waning community perceptions. It would be comforting to think those changes are in response to some initiative that we have implemented, but that doesn't have to be the case. That's a scary thing about 'disorder', it has a very strong component of perception that is vulnerable to the activities of the media, catastrophic events, social trends, political lobbying, and a whole host of other factors. It becomes scarier at that time of the year when we are developing our business plans and setting our direction for the next financial year and are considering allocating resources to dealing with an issue that may not pay dividends for our efforts.

The final point I want to raise, is that the community doesn't necessarily know what is good for them. These are not the words of an arrogant public servant, but in the absence of information and education many in the community may come to a conclusion based on preconceptions that are completely incorrect. A strong example of this in Kings Cross is that many in the community believe all homeless people that are dirty and dishevelled are dangerous and that simply is not the case.

The effort that I place in realigning perceptions in public meetings is increasing significantly as the pressure of gentrification begins to make its presence felt. Some new residents, many of whom are paying a small fortune to live in the area, simply do not understand the unique qualities of Kings Cross. It is quickly becoming a full time job realigning their expectations of an area that contains many extreme examples of social disadvantage.

In this paper I will be sharing with you the highs and lows of our experiences in managing disorder in Kings Cross. The paper is quite lengthy and has been written as a series of individual case studies. I would strongly urge the reader to pick items of interest for printing in preference to printing the whole of the document. The final pages contain a number of colour maps that are in landscape format.

Internet addresses of key practitioners that have been instrumental in turning ideas into reality at the 'coal face' are also provided.

### **Measuring Disorder in Kings Cross**

To understand the level of disorder we refer primarily to reported crime, observations of staff, and feedback from the community in both formal and informal settings and to a lesser degree communication with other government and non-government agencies. The command also relies on community safety audits and most recently we have begun trialling Community Safety Mapping. These sources are useful but each has its own fallibilities and one has to be very cautious to ensure some 'triangulation' occurs between these reference points before committing resources or redirecting the command's focus. It is worthwhile then to briefly touch upon the pros and cons of some of these key reference points.

**Reported crime** is a deceptively simple figure that can be relatively easily graphed and the meaning of results appear, on face value, to lend themselves to easy interpretation. The problem with using this type of measurement in Kings Cross is that many of the key issues for disorder for the community are not easily measured, and if any measurement is provided it doesn't tell you much.

For example, figures related to street level drug dealing are generated by police activity, particularly the Drugs Unit. These figures can vary enormously depending on the focus of the Drugs Unit at the time. If we are targeting an upper level dealer we may divert all of our resources to arresting one offender for the month. On other occasions the use of Drug Detection Dogs may reap three lower level dealers in one night.

Another example is alcohol related violence. We would not be surprised if up to 50% of these offences are not reported to police. Just recently I have experienced this first hand whilst patrolling the main street where a violent fight erupted outside a licensed premises involving four young men some distance away. By the time I arrived they had limped off in different directions licking their wounds. This is not an uncommon event that is observed by the local community and such overt violence on a public street significantly contributes to reducing public amenity, makes people feel unsafe and is a significant issue of disorder.

**Community Consultation:-** Upon taking command of Kings Cross I very quickly learned the community is intensely passionate, articulate, and demanding of services. There is also the presence of a healthy scepticism of government service providers and a willingness to challenge those representatives. I should know, I've been on the end of those challenges on the odd occasion!

Generally consultative meetings organised by police attract between 40 and 120 participants. Attendance fluctuates depending on the nature of current issues with a small core of persons who attend nearly all meetings. Although we have spent considerable effort developing an effective consultation process that will be presented later in this presentation, the key weakness of this method of gaining an understanding of the nature and scope of disorder is the relatively small sample size of the population of 35,000 residents that are present at these meetings. This figure, in the absolute best case scenario, equates to approximately 1% of the population.

In these circumstances, a responsible public servant, paused to spend large amounts of money addressing disorder, would seriously question the efficacy of relying too heavily on this form of information before prioritising those key issues contributing to disorder and subsequently committing resources.

Despite my reservations the community meetings provide relatively effective assessments of disorder for the issues of street prostitution, homelessness and street level drug supply and we take community feedback seriously. However on occasions there is a tendency for some residents to embellish their problems to get police attention.

In terms of street level drug supply, some residents use the yard stick of the frequency at which they are asked to 'get on' that is, to purchase drugs, as they are walking to and from their units for work, to assess our capacity in disrupting drug supply networks.

The key fallibility of consulting with the community to gain an appreciation of disorder is associated with alcohol related violence and offensive behaviour with the peak crime time for these types of offences being between 12am and 4am on Friday and Saturday nights in a very small area of the command about 200 metres in radius, out of sight and mind of vast majority of residents who are safely tucked in bed asleep.

### **Assessments of Disorder by Staff**

Our police are excellent crook catchers, but without reference to the community through effective consultation, will prioritise what they think is important which may not match with community priorities. Effective policing demands well developed consultation and collaboration strategies with the community.

I experienced a powerful example of this first hand immediately following a successful raid on a high level heroin dealer and a large number of his runners<sup>1</sup>, where large quantities of drugs and a very large amount of money was seized. Walking around the streets I spoke with a number of residents who complained bitterly about the resurgence of the presence of overt drug dealing on the streets. I informed the residents about the great arrests but they were not interested in the success and my own observation the drug dealers they were now observing were only small time user/suppliers of cannabis. The lesson I learned was that it was irrelevant to the community what drug was being sold, what made them feel unsafe was the overt nature of the drug supplying.

<sup>1</sup> Subordinate drug suppliers who receive drugs from the main supplier and a proportion of the profit of drug supply

My understanding of the Kings Cross community's expectations and assessment of overt drug supply activities in contributing to disorder has been reinforced at many community meetings. Out of this experience emerged the philosophy that has been adopted for policing drugs supply in Kings Cross:- 'Attack all drugs at all levels of the distribution chain.' (More on enforcement of drugs later in the presentation.)

**Community Safety Audits** are another effective method that is relied upon for gaining an appreciation of the nature and scope of disorder and its relationship to reported and unreported crime and the community's fear of crime. Safety audits involve members of the community walking around their local area with their local and state government and non-government service providers identifying issues that make them feel unsafe or contribute to reducing the amenity of their local area.

On successful audits there can be up to fifty participants and issues identified broadly fall into the categories of physical appearance and utility or social issues. In terms of physical issues these would reflect those commonly identified in many audits conducted throughout Australia and include, graffiti, poor lighting, cracked footpaths, poor rubbish removal and broken glass and, with a committed Local Government, significantly addressed relatively quickly. Social issues of homelessness, street prostitution, street level drug supply and youth related crime, would most likely not be as common in being identified in most audits conducted through out the country and are more problematic in resolving.

The strengths of the safety audits are that they assist our command in developing a more holistic understanding of the nature of disorder and its relationship to crime in the audited area. Safety Audits also clearly identify issues that other agencies must address and highlights issues that require a collaborative effort between service providers.

However due to the relatively low participation rate it is highly likely the view of the participants may not accurately reflect the views and priorities of the community at large. This is not particularly problematic for the physical issues that are relatively easy to repair or make good but comes particularly challenging for the social issues where significant resources and combined effort is required to seek a resolution or at least a mitigation of the issue<sup>2</sup>.

### **Community Safety Mapping<sup>3</sup>**

Community Safety Mapping is a method we are currently experimenting with to improve the validity of community consultation. Utilising the latest hand held computer technology and geo-positioning software, large numbers of residents and visitors to Kings Cross are being asked to identify locations where they feel unsafe and safe and what factors contribute to their feelings. The demographics of those surveyed are also collected for analysis. The purpose of the study is to build our knowledge of the local community in terms of community safety and crime prevention and more thoroughly identify the underlying causes of fear of crime and disorder and better understand the relationship between those maps and maps of reported crime. The seamless technology will allow for automation of analysis of the results and allow for the taking of regular snapshots to gain an appreciation of changes taking place.

<sup>2</sup> A challenging example relating to homelessness is provided later in this presentation.

<sup>3</sup> The Community Safety Mapping project is jointly funded by Kings Cross Police and the Kings Cross Liquor Licensing Accord. We are also very grateful for the assistance of Associate Professor Julie Stubbs of the Sydney University Law School who assisted in the design of the questionnaire and Masters of Criminology students who volunteered their time to interview respondents.

The long term goal is to develop a consultative process that reaches very large numbers in the community, and that will hopefully overcome the issue of small sample sizes that are experienced in other community consultative mechanisms.

Preliminary findings of results of Community Safety Mapping are provided at the end of this paper.

## **Kings Cross Police Model of Community Consultation**

### **Police Accountability Community Teams (PACT)**

In New South Wales, it is a requirement of each Local Area Command to conduct a Police Accountability Community Team (PACT) meeting every three months. Members of PACT include the Local Member of Parliament, the Mayor, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, and other well respected community members that are representative of key community groups. PACTS generally consist of about 10 members.

The role and responsibilities of PACT members are to;

- hold the Local Area Commander to account for police service delivery and focus
- to inform the Local Area commander about emerging issues in the community
- to lobby the Local Area Commander for improved service delivery
- to provide timely advice and guidance on how to deal with sensitive community issues.

The Kings Cross PACT is slightly different from most PACTS in New South Wales in that all PACT meetings are held in public. The Kings Cross community is intensely passionate and very sceptical about any government initiatives, and it was felt this process ensured transparency and true accountability. It is a robust process that in the long term ensures the community view PACT as a legitimate and valued mechanism for consultation.

The meeting is divided into two parts. Firstly the Commander provides a presentation detailing current crime rates and trends, police activity and emerging issues. The commander then reports back to PACT on issues raised at the previous meeting by both the community and PACT members and the actions taken to address them.

The second half of the meeting is known as 'Question Time'. A short recess is taken that allows community members to meet with their PACT representatives who may accept questions on their behalf. The meeting is reconvened and PACT members are provided the opportunity to ask questions of the Commander who will also respond to questions previously taken on notice. Question time is then opened to all community members in attendance.

Another unique element of PACT in Kings Cross is at the end of the meeting, the Commander presents a short to medium term plan of policing focus and seeks endorsement of the PACT members for that plan. At this stage on every occasion the PACT members have endorsed the plan without modification.

Attendance at PACT meetings ranges from 40 to 120 persons.

### **Police Community Consultative Committees (PCCC)**

In the week leading up to PACT a number of PCCC meetings are held in the three identified communities of Kings Cross Local Area Command. They are Woolloomooloo, Darlinghurst/East Sydney and Kings Cross (held on the same night as PACT). Some may find this excessive but I learnt from experience the residents in these areas very strongly believe they are separate communities that are unique and in reality that is confirmed in terms of policing issues.

Darlinghurst/East Sydney's key issue is street sex work. Woolloomooloo is youth related crime, steal from motor vehicle offences and street level cannabis suppliers. Kings Cross has a myriad of challenges as this contains the heart of the adult entertainment strip.

At these meetings the Commander presents reported crime maps and control charts of reported crime and police activity for that specific area and will generally not speak in terms of the whole Local Area Command. During the presentation community members are invited to discuss the results.

The second half of the meeting is reserved for questions and requests by community members to address specific issues that may be affecting them collectively or individually. All requests, concerns and commitments made by the Commander are recorded and are followed up prior to the next meeting.

The quarterly meeting frequency is designed to allow police to listen to concerns of the community, develop operational strategies to address their concerns and report back to the community on what has been achieved. The other advantage is that this process fits perfectly with two six week roster cycles and allows commitments to the community to be planned into the operational planning calendar, thus improving efficiency.

The other advantage of having these meetings before PACT is that we can gain a strong understanding of current or emerging issues or concerns of the local communities and these can be factored into the development of the short to medium term policing plan presented to PACT for endorsement.

### **Other Key Community Consultation**

Other key community groups of which the Commander attends include;

- Community Drug Action Team
- The Kings Cross Licensing Accord
- The Medically Supervised Injecting Centre Community Liaison Group

### **Reducing Disorder Associated with Youth**

**Situation:-** Kings Cross has a small population of youth many of whom are socially disadvantaged that reside in a Department of Housing estate in Woolloomooloo. For many years local police have watched small numbers of these children being introduced to criminal enterprise, primarily stealing from motor vehicles and low level cannabis supply. Children as young as eight years of age are used as 'look outs' for older children committing these crimes. They are paid what they consider handsome sums of money to carry out these duties and they also quickly learn the tricks of the trade and progress into full scale criminal activity. A small number of these children quickly enter the criminal justice system resulting in them having lengthy criminal records by their late teens.

From our perspective, we needed to do everything we could to prevent socially disadvantaged kids entering the criminal justice system. The efficacy of passively standing back and watching kids enter that conveyor belt of crime is questionable and ultimately wastes considerable public resources.

Over the past eighteen months we have steadily built a suite of strategies both internally and collaboratively with other government and non-government partners that are designed to reduce the likelihood these kids will become locked into a life dominated by crime.

What struck me when I first took command of Kings Cross was that whilst walking through Woolloomooloo I couldn't help but notice that children avoided contact with police. From my perspective we had lost their trust and were losing it at a very early age. One of the primary reasons being that these kids only saw police interacting in an enforcement role either with their parents, siblings or their peers, there was no room for positive interaction.

From feedback at community meetings where the issues of large quantities of broken glass left following car break ins and the participation of very young kids in overt drug supply, there was a primary concern the participation of these kids in crime was indicative of a general malaise of the area. These concerns were reinforced by their observations of poor street cleaning, graffiti and homelessness.

### **Our Response**

**'Country style' policing:-** Nestled in the heart of Sydney, literally within metres of the CBD, the Woolloomooloo community, despite displaying some of the symptoms of social disadvantage, is relatively tightly knit and very passionate about their area and committed to its improvement. That commitment, combined with the village feel of the housing estate helped facilitate the development of the notion of 'country style' policing. It's nothing new, but in a city environment an interesting challenge to implement.

Upon arrival at the command many residents complained to me that they didn't know their local police and the police that did attend to their calls for service were from Kings Cross and weren't familiar with the area or some of the local kids who were behind the majority of the problems. They reminisced about some local cops who knew the community and were always around solving problems. These cops had moved on and things had never been the same.

The philosophy of 'country style' policing was about reinvigorating relationships between the community and police. It was about the community knowing the face of their police, knowing their first name and knowing they could approach them with any difficulty or concern. Conversely it was about police developing a very detailed knowledge and understanding of their patch and knowing the people, the good and the bad. In terms of youth related crime my expectation was that they would be able to not only identify children at risk but have an appreciation of their family backgrounds and the difficulties they faced. I expected they would develop strong collaborative working relationships with other government and non-government service providers and work as advocates for the community.

Sergeant Howard Fox was placed in charge of Woolloomooloo Police Station and given the 'brief to get to know and understand the community, in particular the youth of the area. Police numbers were doubled at the station from four to nine and a specialist Youth Liaison Officer was transferred from Kings Cross to Woolloomooloo.



Although over the past eighteen months there has been significant gains in police community relations the old adage that 'You're only as good as your last innings' rings particularly true. During the summer early 2003 cannabis dealing and youth related crime and homelessness were not effectively addressed as promptly as the community expected. There were a number of reasons for us taking our eye off the ball, but frankly there are no excuses and the ninety members of the community let us know at the Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCC) meeting. It took considerable amount of effort to regain the community's satisfaction with services. However in the following PCCC over one hundred residents attended and once again voiced approval of our improvements. It was confirmation we were back on track and a stark reminder as to how quickly things can deteriorate if you are not listening to the community.

### **NRMA Insurance Street Retreat**

Street Retreat is a program developed by Woolloomooloo Police to improve relationships with the local youth. Whilst it targets kids at risk between the ages of seven and twelve that have been identified by the local police, Department of Education and Department of Community Services, other children who live in the area are also invited. On each program twenty children are selected to attend a four day adventure camp with their local police, the Navy and Department of Community Services. Each child is provided a 'buddy' whose role it is to mentor and establish a positive relationship with the child.

The initial camps were very well received by both the children and the community but upon reflection we felt we could improve and use these camps as a foundation stone to further develop positive relationships and linkages with activities of the Police Citizens Youth Club, the local public school and after school day care and Wullamulla Community Centre, ostensibly a support service offering drug, alcohol and family support counselling.

The Street Retreat preparation also had the unintended consequence of developing very strong working relationships at practitioner level with other agencies. It allowed us to compare notes and openly discuss issues that disturbed us. For example I recalling voicing my concern at one of these meetings that many of the children had severe tooth decay of the equivalent you would see in a third world country. I wasn't the only one who'd noticed this and the Principal from Plunkett Street School, instituted a Breakfast Program focussed on improving nutrition, hygiene, concentration and learning ability and involves kids being provided a hearty breakfast followed by thorough brushing of their teeth, with tooth brushes and tooth paste supplied by Colgate.

Street Retreat attracted well appreciated sponsorship from NRMA Insurance which has allowed us to continue and enhance the program over a longer term.

Contact. Constable Gary Groves, Crime Prevention Officer Kings Cross  
[grovgar@police.nsw.gov.au](mailto:grovgar@police.nsw.gov.au)

### **Regular Patrols of Police with Kings Cross Adolescent Unit**

Recently regular joint patrols by the Kings Cross Adolescent Unit and Woolloomooloo police have commenced. This highlights the recognised advantages of our 'country style' policing as other agencies, such as the Kings Cross Adolescent Unit of the Department of Community Services can draw on the local knowledge of police and compare notes on kids at risk. This collaborative effort greatly enhances the efficiency of the provision of services in this very challenging area.

Contact: Marian Booler Director, Kings Cross Adolescent Unit  
[marian.booler@community.nsw.gov.au](mailto:marian.booler@community.nsw.gov.au)

### **Enhancements to the Woolloomooloo Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC)**

Though staff shortages initially hampered the developments of linkages with the PCYC, the transfer of an additional officer from Kings Cross, who had a detailed local knowledge of about twenty kids at risk from Woolloomooloo, eventually provided handsome dividends.

Recently there was expansion of opening hours, most importantly Saturday, when the majority of motor vehicle offences occur.

Two key programs recently developed have been;

**1. Strike Three:** - a sporting program identifying the kid's talents in various sports and streamlining their participation in those identified sports. There are over 20 participants on a weekly basis.

**2. Fit Kids:** - a program designed to educate the kid's knowledge of nutrition and eating habits and involved a Department of Health Dietician. This program commenced in May and is of 25 weeks duration and is fully funded by the Premiers Department.

The effective integration of our efforts are proving fruitful and the attendance of our kids at risk continuing to increase in frequency. The opportunities for one on one interaction between PCYC staff and kids at risk have increased markedly in recent times.

Contact: [Cityofsydney@pcyc.org.au](mailto:Cityofsydney@pcyc.org.au)

### **Big Brother Big Sister**

Big Brother Big Sister, initiated by the Young Women's Christian Association, is a mentoring program that has received funding from the Premier's Department and will commence shortly. This program involves selected members of the community conducting one on one mentoring of children at risk over a sustained period of time. We eagerly look forward to working with this group whom we believe will make a significant contribution to reducing criminal activity of Woolloomooloo youth.

Contact: [linal@wca-sydney.com.au](mailto:linal@wca-sydney.com.au)

### **Improved Interagency Service Coordination and Integration**

In recent days a workshop facilitated by City of Sydney council brought together the key service providers for youth in Woolloomooloo to improve interagency coordination and integration. Key issues for the workshop were the improvement of interagency communication with the development of an E-group, a standardised referral program that can be used across all agencies, closer liaison with Plunkett Street School and the commencement of development of programs for 10 to 17 year olds.

Agencies involved include, Police Citizens Youth Club, Woolloomooloo Police, Baptist ministries, Junita Neilson Community Centre, Wulla Mulla Centre, Plunkett Street School, City of Sydney and the Kings Cross Adolescent Unit (Department of Community Services).

### **Our Assessment**

Despite the recognition that social development strategies are unlikely to reap immediate benefits, we believe the long term rewards are enormous and definitely worthwhile. At present we continue

to enjoy very strong community support for our initiatives. However I suspect this support could be jeopardised if we didn't also focus our efforts on good old fashioned police work and bringing kids to task that have committed crimes.

The spins offs to these social development strategies combined with 'country style' policing I suspect have a synergistic effect in improving relations between the community and police. For example in recent times Sergeant Fox has observed an enormous shift in the attitudes of parents who have children arrested for committing offences. Parents are now more willing to accept police intervention where previously police frequently met with scepticism and hostility. Recently there has been a tendency for parents to become willing to take responsibility for their children's behaviour and more willing to work with police to prevent similar behaviour.

Police now spend a considerable amount of their time experiencing positive interactions with local kids in their daily duties. It is now not uncommon for kids to be seen visiting the local police station to say hello or to see police playing football with students in the grounds of Plunkett Street School at lunchtime. The NRMA Insurance Street Retreat has proved to be the key catalyst for this change with about 80 students having now participated in the program.

One of the key challenges for us is the infiltration of kids from other suburbs in particular Redfern and Glebe who come into the area to break into motor vehicles. These children, who are poorly supervised at home, move freely about between these suburbs. Their anonymity to our local police makes investigation of offences difficult and even when a child is arrested, the parents are from a distant suburb and are unfamiliar with our efforts and long term goals. Further, all the community see is broken glass on the road, and many come to the conclusion that it is the local youth and these misguided assumptions have the potential to derail our efforts. I suspect that if Woolloomooloo was in an isolated country town, where mobility of young children was difficult, we wouldn't have this problem.

In terms of reducing criminalisation rates of Woolloomooloo's kids, it's too early to say as most have not reached the transition age where they would enter the criminal justice system. I look forward to assessing our progress in the next year or two.

Finally one can't underestimate the usefulness of a vibrant community consultative process. Woolloomooloo PCCC meetings are well attended and this provides an opportunity to discuss issues associated with youth related disorder in detail and explain to the community our long term goals whilst presenting recent police activity and patterns in crime trends. There is little doubt this consultative process has significantly contributed to empowering the community to be aggressive in their demands for services. This robust forum, in an area that has many challenges, significantly reduces the community's apprehension of youth related disorder. However all of our good work can quickly be jeopardised by a significant and sustained out break of steal from motor vehicle offences.

Contact: Sergeant Howard Fox, Commander Woolloomooloo Police  
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## **Reducing Alcohol Related Disorder**

### **Situation**

From our perspective alcohol related disorder, particularly in the forms of assault and offensive behaviour, is by far and away the most damaging issue for the Kings Cross community. Despite

significant reductions in alcohol related violence in recent months, particularly in licensed premises, Kings Cross continues to have an unenviable reputation as place for 'punch ups.' The majority of assaults occur in the adult entertainment strip along Darlinghurst Road approximately 300 metres in length that has a ridiculously large number of licensed premises, primarily the legacy of the Vietnam days when the area was a popular haunt for American servicemen.

The following quote pretty well encapsulates alcohol related violence in Kings Cross,

*'The primary source of violence in the city is drunk young men. . . . Alcohol, testosterone, impulsiveness and being the fittest and strongest they 'll ever be in their life, form a volatile combination. Mix with this cocktail overcrowding on a public street, unfamiliar faces, the odd racial taunt and unwelcome advances on another's girl and a couple of knives and you've got real problems.'*<sup>4</sup>

Reported assaults in licensed premises for 2001 and 2002 has remained steady at 165 incidents per year or 13.75 per month. However in the first seven months of this year there appears to have been improvement with 70 assaults reported up until July or an average of 10 per month.

Since January 2001 568 knife searches have been conducted and in 48% (273) of cases a knife has been located. Stabbings are not an uncommon event in Kings Cross and a causal factor behind this violence is usually excessive alcohol consumption.

Outside of licensed premises and on the street, the distribution of assaults almost exactly overlays the distribution of licensed premises in this adult entertainment strip with the majority of alcohol related offences occurring between 12 am and 4 am on Friday and Saturday nights. The majority of assaults involve intoxicated young men aged between 17 and 26 with the underlying causes effectively summarised in the above quote. It is not uncommon for these 24 hour premises to have queues of persons waiting to gain entry at 6am the following morning.

Another source of conflict involves intoxicated argumentative patrons being refused entry to licensed premises by bouncers. Poorly trained bouncers can quickly inflame what is already a difficult to manage situation and there is a tendency for them to become excessively aggressive without exploring other options.

Victimisation of intoxicated persons making their way home from venues in Kings Cross through isolated streets and laneways is also a concern, with a substantial proportion falling victim to robbery offences, but as with other crimes, in recent months the frequency of robberies has reduced.

## **Our Response**

### **Zero Tolerance to Licensees Breaching Regulations**

Aware of a number of studies that indicated that alcohol related disorder, particularly in the form of assaults, could be significantly reduced by vigorous enforcement of licensing laws, we set on a course of an enforcement strategy of zero tolerance for licensees breaching regulations.

However a quick skills audit revealed we were significantly lacking in staff with specialist knowledge and also lacking was the proficiency of general duties police to be able to patrol through pubs and clubs and enforce the basics of licensing.

<sup>4</sup> David Darcy 'Strategy to cool the hot spots' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday 18 June, 1998

I was very fortunate to obtain the transfer of Senior Sergeant Ric Walton to the command. Ric had a reputation as a very 'hard hitting' knowledgeable licensing officer and he took on a mentoring role of the Licensing Unit staff where staff numbers were increased from one to four officers.

As the Licensing Unit quickly gained knowledge and practical application of licensing laws we turned our attention to the general duties police and provided structured training utilising the old military training philosophy of explain, demonstrate and practice. Police were provided training in their powers and the things to look out for and were then buddied with specialist officers from the licensing unit for operations. This hands on experience with experts working closely beside them in the field quickly improved both their competence and confidence in applying the laws.

The rebuilding of the capacity of the command to effectively respond to licensing issues took a number of months and there is little doubt we wouldn't have progressed that far that quickly without the presence of Senior Sergeant Ric Walton. As a result of Ric's efforts and commitment I now have three highly competent licensing officers.

### **Reinvigoration of the Kings Cross Licensing Accord**

My initial assessment of the Kings Cross Licensing Accord in January 2002 was that it was not a particularly useful tool for driving down alcohol related disorder.

In early March 2002 we met with the Licensing Accord President Mr Doug Grand who informed me that attendance at the accord meetings comprised of about five to ten licensees and that local police interest was also low. We expressed concerns to Doug that we were very interested in an Accord that had robust debate and that was collaborative in achieving reductions in alcohol related disorder. We also indicated that we would publicly hold to task those licensees that didn't 'lift their game' and reduce alcohol related violence.

We informed Doug that in the coming days that we were going to commence a 'zero tolerance' strategy for licensing enforcement and there would have to be significant improvements if some licensees were going to avoid feeling substantial 'pain' (that can be read as fines). I agreed to attend all subsequent meetings with the Licensing Sergeant and issues that were concerning the Licensing Unit would be discussed in that forum. Doug spread the word and the first Kings Cross Licensing Accord meeting following this declaration was very well attended by about 70 licensees. Since that time, Doug and other executive members of the Kings Cross Licensing Accord have in a very practical way demonstrated outstanding leadership and a strong commitment to making the Licensing Accord a success. Over the past 18 months a string of initiatives have been implemented the success of which has convinced me that Licensing Accords can make a significant contribution to reducing alcohol related disorder. The following are a number of examples of initiatives that have been introduced at the Kings Cross Licensing Accord.

### **Public Presentation of Assault Rates in Licensed Premises**

On a regular basis and generally monthly the assault rates of each licensed premises is presented and ranked, highest to lowest. At times this presentation has been the subject of vigorous debate with licensees challenging the figures. An unintended positive outcome of this debate is that licensees with high rates regularly contact the licensing unit to discuss in detail the offences and the causes for those offences.

It is also well known amongst licensees that a high figure will result in them being summoned to the Licensing Unit to have a 'little chat' about reducing their figures and that if standards were not met, consider the strong possibility the Licensing Sergeant would apply to have more conditions placed on their licence or take other action.

In recent months there have been significant reductions in assaults on licensed premises and at the next accord meeting scheduled in late August, we have been asked to present the assault rates of licensed premises in adjacent police commands. There is a genuine interest by participants to compare their performance.

### **Training of Bouncers and Security Personnel**

At times licensees will request further analysis of the data to establish underlying causes of assaults. In one very positive discussion it was identified that poorly trained bouncers were the catalyst for a large proportion of assaults. It was acknowledged that some security personnel did not have sufficient communication skills or an appreciation of a graduated response to aggressive intoxicated patrons.

Training days for security personnel have been initiated by the Licensing Accord and Kings Cross Police. The training days focus on managing intoxicated patrons and police expectations. At this stage a succession of training days have been held over the past eighteen months and about one hundred security officers have been trained.

### **Initiation of Security Industry Audits**

Due to the economic strain of gentrification on businesses in Kings Cross associated with alcohol sales, some have lowered their standards concerning the hiring of private security. Kings Cross Police have proposed the Licensing Accord and City of Sydney sponsor Security Industry Audits for those companies operating in Kings Cross. It is hoped these audits will minimise the likelihood of organised crime influencing the industry and ensure high standards of training of security staff when dealing with intoxicated persons.

This project has been supported in principle by the Licensing Accord and discussions with City of Sydney are progressing.

### **Our Assessment**

We have continued our focus on compliance with very high numbers of licensing breaches to licensees. We believe this strategy has played a significant role in reducing alcohol related disorder and there has been a significant and sustained reduction in assaults in the Kings Cross Local Area command. Curiously though, the big gains have been made in the public street and not in licensed premises where assault offences up until 2003 had remained stable at 165 per year or 13.75 offences per month. However, in the past seven months there has been a down turn in assault rate in licensed premises that up until July was running at a total of 70 offences or 10 per month.

There is little doubt the results were enhanced by the significant reduction in tourism during the past twenty months with a number of large hotels being converted, or in the process of being converted, into residential complexes.

To maintain those reductions will require a sustained effort on our part in enforcing compliance. I draw that conclusion from the observation that in December 2002, the assault rate almost tripled and a subsequent examination of licensing police activity in the previous month was almost nil. One can't help but suspect that some licensees noticed the sudden down turn in licensing enforcement and in the interests of profitability dropped their standards of responsible serving practices. There is no other evidence to support my hunch but one needs to be vigilant.

From our perspective, the licensing accord has been successfully revitalised and is very worthwhile in contributing to reducing alcohol related disorder. One of the strengths of our accord is that we have maintained professional distance. Many of the issues we have addressed have been carried out collaboratively but it is not uncommon during heated discussions for police and licensees to become adversaries.

We see our role in the accord as being advocates for the community, in ensuring standards and continued improvement in work and trading practices, with the ultimate goal of reducing alcohol related disorder. For many of the licensees profit is the key concern. Despite this observation a number of licensees have demonstrated their commitment to improving the amenity of the local area.

One such example that emerged from rigorous debate on the underlying causes of disorder in the local community was the 'Community Safety Mapping Project'. Jointly funded, with intellectual assistance from the Sydney University Law School, this project aims to help us identify some of the underlying causes of disorder and fear of crime in the local community.

A key challenge for the August meeting will be discussion associated with 'lock outs', a proposal raised by police, where at a nominated time the licensed premises declines to admit any further patrons, but those already inside the premises can continue drinking. 'Lock outs' have proved extremely successful in reducing alcohol related disorder in country towns. Kings Cross suffers from having a reputation for being the last place to visit after a night out on the town and it is not uncommon to see highly intoxicated persons arriving on public transport in the early hours, staggering around spoiling for a fight or vulnerable to victimisation. We sincerely hope we can influence the licensees to voluntarily take part in a trial of 'lock outs' as the cost benefit of slightly reduced profits might be outweighed by a substantial reduction in alcohol related disorder.

If there was one improvement we could make to our licensing accord it would be the invitation of the local community to participate and become equal partners in setting the direction and focus of the Licensing Accord. After all it is the community that is ultimately on the receiving end of alcohol related disorder and this would do much to alleviate what could be seen as an imbalance in outlook.

## **Reducing Disorder Associated with Homelessness**

### **Situation**

A consistent issue that is raised at community meetings that causes significant concern and apprehension in the community is homelessness, particularly in the areas of the adult entertainment strip in Kings Cross and Woolloomooloo. Preliminary data from fear mapping also confirms homelessness as the key issue of concern for the community.

Depending on the location and type of homeless people different strategies are used to minimise the concern of the community. However we do have a preference and that is not to be involved at all as we believe there are more socially just ways of addressing the issue.

Most challenging are a small group of about twenty Aborigines, the majority of whom suffer from alcohol related illnesses, who have frequently occupied the primary adult entertainment strip of Kings Cross. This group tend to gather at locations that allow them to aggressively beg for money and include the entrance to the Kings Cross Railway Station, Springfield Plaza, on the Main Street and a park in Woolloomooloo known as Wullmulla Park.

These persons are frequently observed drinking alcohol, usually from wine casks and, or, methylated spirits and become intoxicated in the street, swear loudly and fight amongst themselves. There are many complaints from the community concerning the real and perceived intimidating actions and inappropriate behaviour of this group.

It is a particularly challenging issue for police as the favourite area of congregation, Kings Cross Railway Station, is also the key public transport node for the local community and services the most densely settled area in Australia. If left unchecked, daily commuters run the gauntlet of foul language, street fights, high levels of intoxication and most troubling, aggressive begging known on the street as 'coal biting'.

Just the other day I witnessed this first hand, when out of uniform I went to the handy teller to withdraw money. Sitting on the step of the handy teller was a female who belonged to this group. As I withdrew the money from the teller machine she shouted at me in a very loud voice, "Give me some money for some smokes." When I declined she stood and waved her hand at me, "You've got lots of money. Give me some." I again declined her request and eventually she gave up. However the stand off lasted for some minutes and there was little doubt in my mind that her aggressive behaviour would have been extremely confronting for many in the community. It was not that long ago that I saw the same woman approach two people sitting in an alfresco café drinking coffee. She approached them in a similar manner to my experience and demanded money. The only difference being that on that occasion I could see a knife handle sticking out from the belt of her dress. I promptly attended and quickly took from her a thirty five centimetre bladed razor sharp boning knife. This woman continues to float in and out of the criminal justice system despite her obvious mental illness that presents as highly antisocial and dangerous behaviour.

About eighteen months ago it was not uncommon to see about sixty homeless people bunking down for the night in front of the Woolloomooloo Police Station which is located amongst a small group of shops and shop fronts providing services. Many Woolloomooloo residents were concerned about the presence of these homeless and complaints ranged from public urination, sexual activity and persons exposing themselves. For the local community, it made the simple task of going up to the local corner store for the milk a potentially very unpleasant and challenging experience.

This group can be loosely divided into elderly mentally ill clients and young frequently drug and, or alcohol dependant males, many of whom are mentally ill. The elderly homeless are rarely any trouble and, from our perspective, the challenge is in effectively managing the young men. These persons have a tendency to be unpredictable in their behaviour and are genuinely fearful of being a victim themselves. In response to this fear they on occasion arm themselves with a range of potential weapons. In the last six months police have seized from these young men approximately 40 weapons that range from 30 cm long knives, claw hammers, spears, pieces of water pipe and blocks of timber. These weapons have been secreted on them or in their bedding. In the last couple of months a very powerful stimulant commonly known as 'Ice' has become popular with this group. The combination of the effects of that drug, mental illness, social disadvantage and fear is a potent mix, that concerns us greatly.

## **Our Response**

### **Operation 'Clearway'**

Upon my arrival at the command it quickly became apparent the presence of homeless, particularly the small group of about twenty aborigines in the main street, were a key issue of concern for the community. Initially we tried to seek assistance from a range of government agencies to manage



this extremely challenging issue. We strongly felt that it was inappropriate for police to be the primary agency to respond to this issue and I feared that engagement with these persons would only lead to confrontation with police and ultimately the criminalisation of aborigines for the foreseeable offences of offensive behaviour, assault police and resist arrest, commonly known as the 'trifecta'. For approximately eight months we continued our efforts to find a more socially just way of successfully dealing with this issue. However despite our efforts this did not eventuate and due to consistent high numbers of complaints from the community we very reluctantly went down the path of police focussing on the behaviour of these homeless.

Operation 'Clearway' relies on managing public space by enforcement of alcohol free zones in a way that minimises the criminalisation of this group. The primary operational strategy was from early morning approach the aborigines who were invariably drinking alcohol in the alcohol free zones and warn them that if they didn't leave the area that their alcohol would be confiscated.

The other important element of the operation was that the same police were used to interact with the homeless, some of whom rely on loudly shouting obscene language when voicing their displeasure at being challenged. On the odd occasions these persons can become very physically aggressive. The beauty of having the same officers carrying out this very challenging task was that they focussed on the key outcome which was to move these persons away from the key pedestrian traffic routes without utilising enforcement of criminal law. The other advantage of using the same police was that they applied their demands consistently and expectations between both groups became clearer over time. Involved police also became aware of the dynamics of the group and built relationships with individuals.

We still would prefer this matter to be dealt with by other agencies and feel very uncomfortable with this operational strategy but in the short term it has provided respite for the local community. The other advantage is that it has significantly reduced calls for service associated with offensive conduct and street fighting. These incidents would usually be dealt with by a myriad of police that may not have appreciated the key outcome we were trying to achieve, nor would they have known in any great detail the history of the persons and as such may have responded by arrest and charge.

### **Reducing the Access to Alcohol**

Two strategies were adopted to reduce the accessibility of alcohol. Firstly, local bottle shops were encouraged to raise the price of cask wine. This had immediate benefits of reducing the amount of alcohol consumed by this group and had the unintended benefit of reducing the numbers of thefts and verbal abuse that occur in those takeaway licensed premises.

The local Seven eleven, 24 hour convenience stores agreed to stop selling methylated spirits and they too benefited from reduced numbers of thefts and verbal abuse.

### **'Country Style' Policing in Woolloomooloo**

'Country style' policing, as previously described in the 'Youth related disorder' has been very effective in providing short term respite to the community of Woolloomooloo whilst simultaneously minimising confrontation between police and the homeless.

Upon Sergeant Fox taking command of Woolloomooloo approximately twenty months ago, he has worked collaboratively with local government to move the homeless away from areas frequented by the local community, in particularly the vicinity of the local corner store. In recent months these persons have congregated primarily in Mathew Talbot Lane, a short distance from the local square.

### **Regular Clean up of Mathew Talbot Lane**

On a regular basis police conduct operations in and around Mathew Talbot Lane that assists City of Sydney Council workers in removing dirty and unkempt bedding that poses a fire and health threat. During these clean ups weapons are found secreted in bedding.

### **Homeless Action Team Support and Outreach Service (HATSOS)**

HATSOS is a program sponsored by the Department of Housing and Local Government that focuses on long term case management of homeless people. Police activity and council clean up activity provide encouragement for these persons to engage that HATSOS team.

Contact: [freynold@citysydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:freynold@citysydney.nsw.gov.au)

### **Our Assessment**

In the last couple of months the complaints from the community concerning the small group of aborigines has decreased markedly. These persons have simply moved out of this area to another command in an area that is less conspicuous and less likely to cause concern with the community. However, we do not see this as an acceptable outcome and would prefer for other agencies to participate in resolving this very challenging issue in a more positive way.

Although some may say 'Clearways' has merely moved a problem, it has reduced community concern without further criminalisation of an already significantly disadvantaged group. Whilst we tentatively regard this outcome as positive we are not comfortable with our actions.

The homeless in Mathew Talbot Lane and surrounds is a far more challenging problem with a long term solution a distant wish. In summer, the population of homeless increase substantially, and despite these multi-agency efforts, that provide some respite in the short to medium term, ultimately the long term solution is reliant on a complete overhaul of mental health admission procedures and management of mentally ill in the community.

In the absence of a complete overhaul of the focus and capacity of mental health services the management of the discontent and concerns of the community will rest with police. The ongoing resource intensive nature of our focus merely maintains the status quo. It is a cross we very reluctantly bear.

### **Reducing Disorder Associated with Street Level Drug Supply**

Kings Cross has a particularly challenging illegal drug problem the breadth and depth of which is best appreciated by reviewing illegal drug seizures. In 2001<sup>5</sup> Kings Cross had the highest rates of seizures in the State for cannabis, cocaine, and ecstasy, third highest for heroin and fifth highest for amphetamine.

Whilst we recognise that we can't stop the supply of illegal drugs we believe that our philosophy to, 'Disrupt the supply of all drugs at all levels of the distribution chain,' that underpins our operational strategies, is very effective in managing the disorder associated with street level drug supply.

A key element for our drugs enforcement strategies and one that I will now briefly focus on is to, 'Listen to the community and focus on street level drug supply that reduces amenity and makes people feel unsafe.' The success of this strategy is highly dependant on our community consultative processes as previously described. At these meetings and through other methods, the community can voice their concern about active street level drug dealers and we give an undertaking to return to the following meeting and report back on our activities.

<sup>5</sup> At the time of writing this presentation I couldn't easily gain access to the latest figures

For example in Woolloomooloo there is an area called Sydney Place where local young men distribute cannabis. To avoid detection they secrete the drug in an adjacent community vegetable patch. It is not uncommon for police to be observed rummaging through the vegetable patch on an 'Easter egg hunt' which can be very costly for these small time suppliers.

The activities of these young men, their intimidating presence and the clients they attract are of great concern to many in the local community. On a regular basis we arrest a number of these persons for drug supply and related offences. It provides a temporary respite for the community and they are grateful for our activity. However it doesn't take long before some one else takes up the role of local drug supplier and the enforcement cycle starts again. I call it, 'Pruning the hedges'.

The community have clearly articulated they do not find drug dealing in their street acceptable and expect us to take action. However they also appear sympathetic to the difficulties of completely eradicating the problem. The key issue is that we listened, that we did something about it and they know that if they request help, we will be there to 'prune the hedges' once again. If feedback from community meetings is anything to go by, then the Woolloomooloo community are very satisfied with this response at present. But, the saying 'you are only as good as your last innings' rings particularly true and there has been the odd occasion when we were focussing on higher level drug dealers, a particularly demanding exercise, and the community have held me to account for taking what they perceive as taking my eye off the ball.

One of the most important things I have learnt from community meetings in managing disorder associated with drug supply is that the drug type is irrelevant and the key issue for the community is being approached by a drug dealer and offered drugs. In fact some community members gauge our effectiveness by the number of times they are asked to 'get on'<sup>6</sup> whilst walking to work. It is the overt nature of the drug supply, an illegal activity, that if frequently observed on the streets, by its very presence, implies police have lost control.

However I also have a responsibility in terms of harm minimisation and to reap the most reward in that area it is critical that we focus on disrupting the supply of heroin. Our focus with this drug, are very active dealers who have a number of runners<sup>7</sup> working for them. These persons are out of sight of the community, and don't draw attention to themselves in such an overt manner as the cannabis dealers in Woolloomooloo or Roslyn Street. And so develops a healthy tension between addressing community concerns and feelings of disorder versus our responsibilities to reduce the accessibility of a particularly dangerous drug that regularly kills on the streets of Kings Cross.

### **Reducing Disorder Associated with Street Sex Work<sup>8</sup>**

Upon taking command in January 2001 it quickly became apparent that street sex work in the Darlinghurst and East Sydney area was a key concern for the local community. At that time community members were threatening to form vigilante groups to rid their area of street sex workers. Residents were holding small public protests in the streets and there were occasional fights and breaches of the peace between street workers and residents. The residents complained bitterly of the incessant car traffic late at night, girls screaming, sex occurring on their verandas, with used condoms and syringes being left behind.

<sup>6</sup> Be offered illegal drugs

<sup>7</sup> Runners are low level dealers that ostensibly 'work' for the higher level supplier and are paid in heroin or a percentage of their drug sales.

<sup>8</sup> This is a description of one of a number of strategies that are applied to this issue

In response to community concerns we conducted undercover operations where police would either pose as prospective clients, to arrest street workers, or as street workers to arrest the kerb crawlers. Despite huge numbers of arrests<sup>9</sup>, these costly resource intensive operations provided little if any sustained improvement in amenity and within weeks the residents would be complaining once again. Particularly troubling was a kerb crawling circuit that encircled a girl's high school.

In recognition street prostitution was heavily reliant on kerb crawling circuits, we proposed to local government the temporary closing of some key back streets that were pivotal to sustaining street prostitution. Following extensive community consultation, a small number of road blocks were installed that had an immediate effect in almost completely removing street sex work from those areas. The other effect of the closures was to displace street work into a much smaller area that is much less resource intensive to police.

In recent months the closure of Bourke Street for construction of the Cross Sydney Tunnel has brought further relief for the local community.

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### **City of Sydney's Graffiti Removal Services**

City of Sydney was at the forefront of efforts to give councils around the state the ability to remove graffiti from publicly accessible private property. As part of its commitment to a safe, clean and attractive environment the City of Sydney inspects graffiti hotspots every twenty four hours and removes graffiti within 24 hours of identification or owners consent. Graffiti from all other areas will be inspected very five days and graffiti removed within 24 hours of identification or owners consent.

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### **City of Sydney's Cleanliness Program**

City of Sydney believes that improved cleanliness encourages the community to take pride and ownership of their area. The council provides a 24 hour response to remove any reported rubbish and also constantly monitors problem locations.

The recent Community Safety Mapping results reveal that of the 231 respondents that stated they felt safe in Kings Cross 17% (40) reported 'street cleanliness' was the reason behind feeling safe. A further 19% (44) reported 'improved areas' and a further 5% (11) respondents reported 'improved services' as the key reason.

These three issues nominated by the survey participants, totalling 41% of responses for feeling safe, appear to strongly endorse City of Sydney's commitment to improving the amenity of the street scape and hence very strongly contributing to a reduction of disorder.

Contact: David Low, City of Sydney [dlow@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:dlow@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au)

<sup>9</sup> Arrests were so prolific that I recall in one instance the female undercover officer posing as a street worker left her car on stood on the footpath for only two seconds before attempt was made by a kerb crawler to solicit sex.

## City of Sydney's Street Improvement Program

City of Sydney will shortly commence an up grade of the street scape of the entertainment strip of Kings Cross. Key factors in that improvement that should contribute to a reduction in alcohol related disorder will be footpath widening and improved lighting. City of Sydney has consulted closely with us on this development and discussions are still taking place as to the locations of taxi stands and bus stops. Poorly located taxi stands can be an ongoing source of alcohol related disorder and conflict, if not located in appropriate areas.

Contact: Geoff Brew, Senior Project Manager , City Development and Projects Dvision, City of Sydney. [gbrew@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:gbrew@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au)

### Preliminary Results of the Community Safety Mapping Project<sup>10</sup>

During the last three months 603 respondents have been interviewed. Of those respondents 372 (62%) stated they felt unsafe in the Kings Cross Local Area Command. The distribution of the areas where those respondents felt unsafe very closely aligns with the distribution of reported crime in the command (See maps at end of presentation). This area, approximately 200 metres in length is ostensibly focussed on adult entertainment with a very large number of licensed premises, four strip clubs and associated brothels. The top ten reasons for feeling unsafe in Kings Cross are listed in table 1.

Reason	Count
Junkies/Homeless	67(18%)
Prostitutes	50 (13%)
Spruikers/Intoxicated persons	31(8%)
Dark Laneways	28 (7%)
Vulnerabilities	23 (6%)
Intimidation	22 (6%)
Lighting	19 (5%)
Lack of Cleanliness	17 (5%)
Laneways	15 (4%)
Loitering	15 (4%)

Table 1: Top ten responses to those respondents that felt unsafe. Total respondents 372.

Of those 603 respondents 231 (38%) stated they felt safe in the Kings Cross area. The distribution of those locations where respondents felt safe was very different to the distribution of reported crime. The two key areas nominated by respondents are located on the southern side of William Street that is about 70 metres from the adult entertainment strip. It is an area dominated by alfresco dining and despite very high pedestrian activity has very low reported crime rates.

There are many in the Kings Cross community that share my vision that in the not too distant future the business mix will become more diverse in the adult entertainment strip and a similar environment to that found on the southern side of William Street, relatively free from crime and disorder, will be achieved in the heart of Kings Cross.

<sup>10</sup> In this last week we finally achieved what I would consider a reasonable sample size of 603 respondents. Appreciating that many conference participants would be interested in this form of community consultation I have very hurriedly cobbled together some preliminary findings that in some instances raise more questions than they answer.

Particularly puzzling is the observation there is also an area nominated as being safe by these respondents in the heart of the adult entertainment area in exactly the same location as described as being unsafe by the other set of respondents. These respondents may be less confronted by homeless, drug dependant persons and prostitutes. I suspect these persons may be residents. Hopefully further analysis of the data will clarify the reasons for this observation.

Another issue that initially drew my attention was that for those persons who felt fearful in the area that the second highest issue of concern is prostitutes. In the past eighteen months I cannot recall a complaint about prostitutes in the adult entertainment strip at any community meetings. They are rarely involved in overt forms of crimes on the public street and are generally involved in more inconspicuous crimes such as supplying highly pure forms of heroin or cocaine to clients and credit card fraud. I find this result surprising and it warrants further investigation.

Since the take over by City of Sydney there has been a significant increase in effort to clean up the street scape of Kings Cross particularly in the areas of street sweeping, garbage collection and graffiti removal. The top ten reasons listed for respondents feeling safe are dominated by improvements in local government services and are a strong message the community is appreciating the benefits of City of Sydney's cleanliness strategies.

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Count</b>
Improved areas	44 (19%)
Cleanliness	40 (17%)
Streetscape	31(13%)
Gentrification	27 (12%)
Improved services	11(5%)
Use of public space	10 (4%)
Impression of crime	10 (4%)
Decrease in drugs/prostitutes/homeless	8 (3%)
Behaviour of locals	8 (3%)
Improved behaviour	7 (3%)

Table 1: Top ten responses to those respondents that felt safe. Total respondents 231.

The maps provided at the end of this paper come in two forms, point mapping and thematic mapping. Please note that with point mapping one point can represent many responses. The maps are in landscape format.

For the purposes of thematic mapping we have divided Kings Cross into 100 metre by 100 metre squares, and a colour grading is given to that square depending on the number of responses.

Upon completion of Community Safety Mapping project it is likely other mapping analysis tools will be utilised to fully exploit the data. We also look forward to the independent analysis and interpretation of the data by the Master of Criminology students from Sydney University Law School.

### **Where we are Heading with Community Safety Mapping**

We are steadily working towards the development of a system that will allow us to take regular 'snapshots' of our Local Area Command. Our aim is that by the end of the year to have a robust data collection system based on palm pilots that any community group could use that allows collected data to be seamlessly downloaded and easily analysed.

These data sets would be made available to researchers willing to assist in expanding our knowledge<sup>11</sup>.

In this initial trial of the technology there were a few glitches, particularly with ensuring 'clean' data was downloaded. We believe that in the next month or two these glitches will be overcome.

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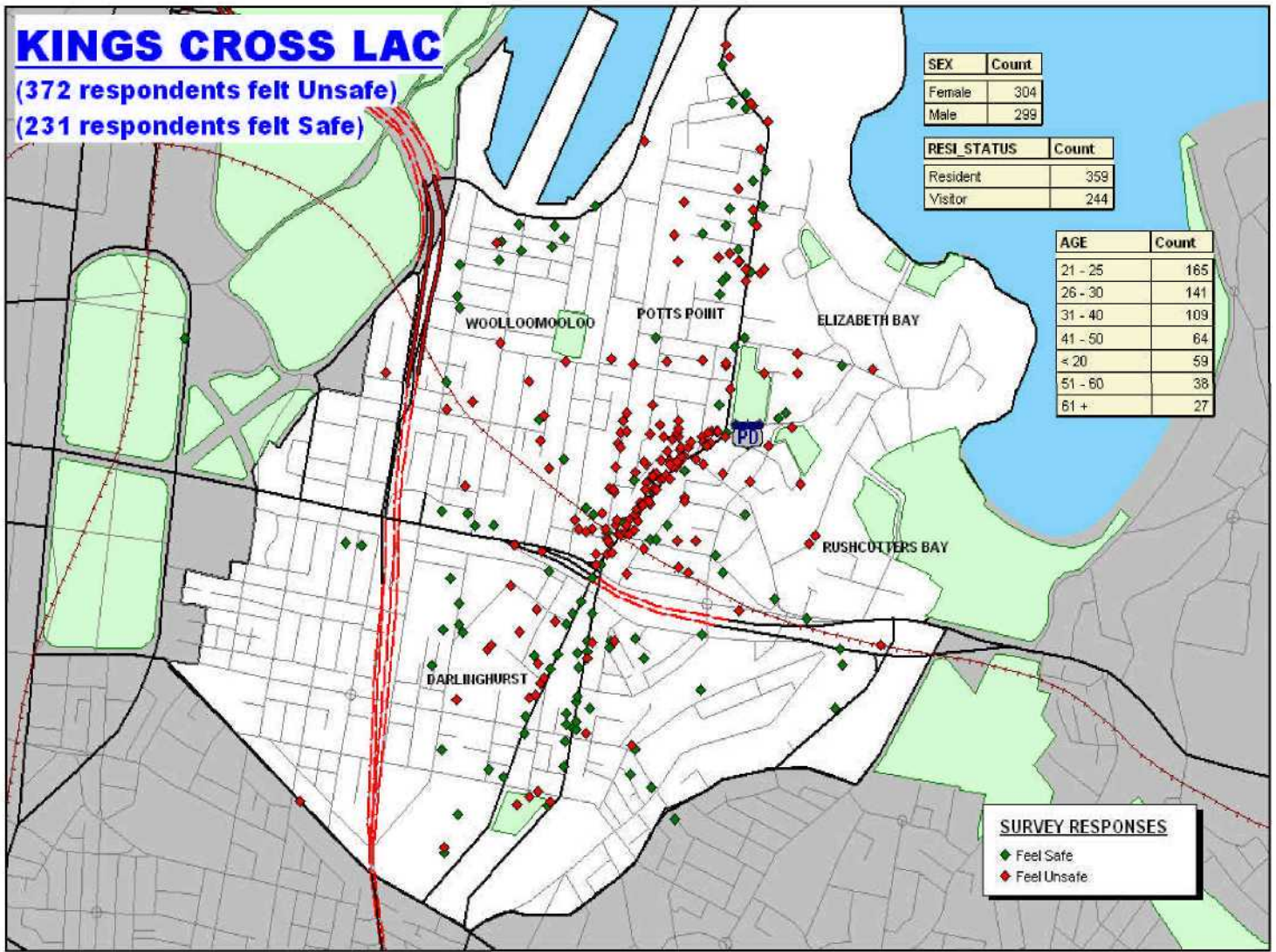
<sup>11</sup> I strongly urge researchers interested in this field to contact me by e-mail. I am also interested in providing the data set to undergraduates or graduates under supervision for a research topic.



# KINGS CROSS LAC

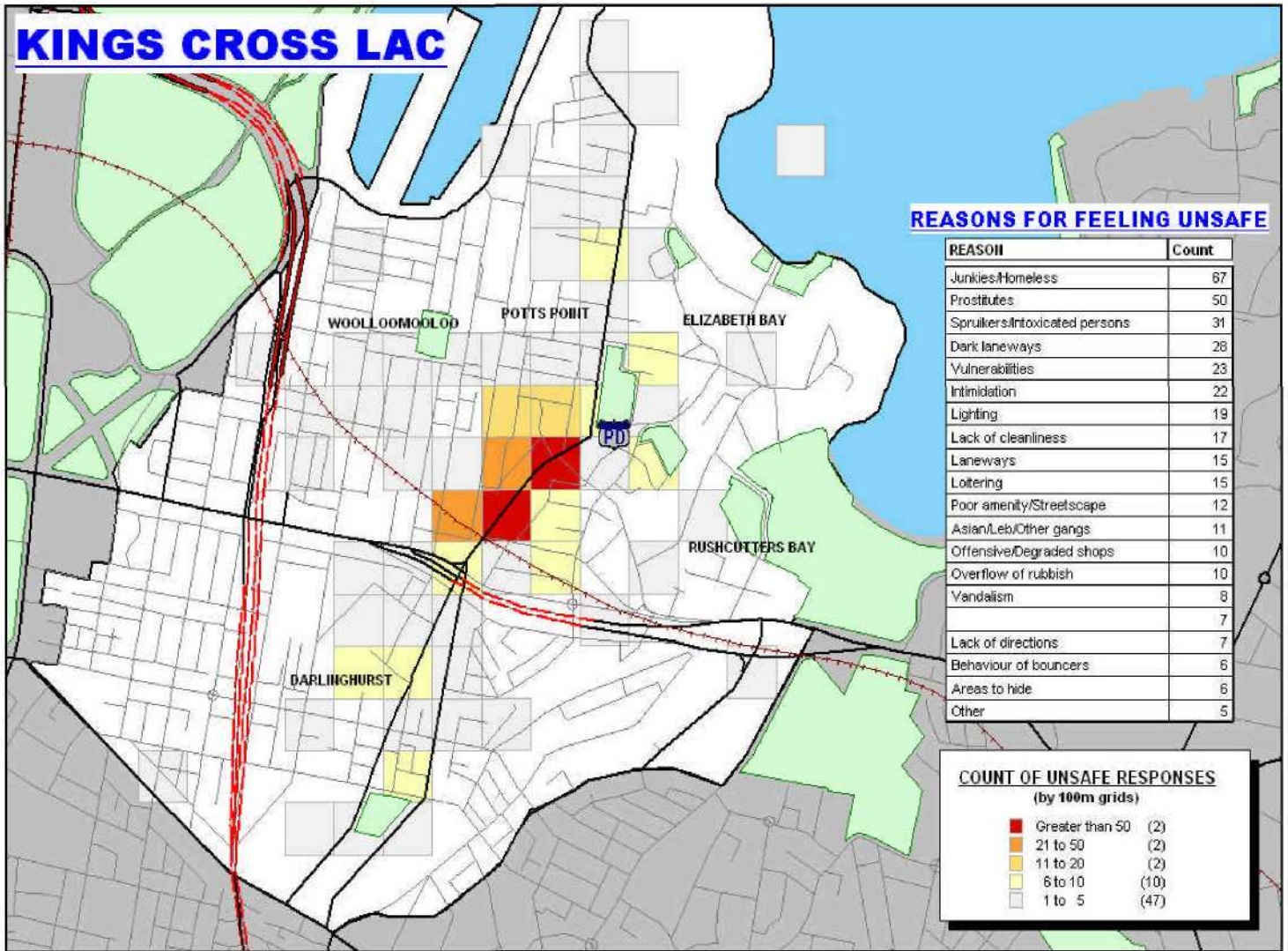
(372 respondents felt Unsafe)

(231 respondents felt Safe)





# KINGS CROSS LAC



## REASONS FOR FEELING UNSAFE

REASON	Count
Junkies/Homeless	67
Prostitutes	50
Spruikers/intoxicated persons	31
Dark laneways	28
Vulnerabilities	23
Intimidation	22
Lighting	19
Lack of cleanliness	17
Laneways	15
Loitering	15
Poor amenity/Streetscape	12
Asian/Leb/Other gangs	11
Offensive/Degraded shops	10
Overflow of rubbish	10
Vandalism	8
	7
Lack of directions	7
Behaviour of bouncers	6
Areas to hide	6
Other	5

## COUNT OF UNSAFE RESPONSES (by 100m grids)

Greater than 50	(2)
21 to 50	(2)
11 to 20	(2)
6 to 10	(10)
1 to 5	(47)

# KINGS CROSS LAC

