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Sent: Friday, 31 August 2018 1:04 PM
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Subject: Community safety action plan - Feedback

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the City of Sydney Draft Community Safety Action Plan, which is below.

We want to acknowledge the great work undertaken to date by the council's Safe City team and on your development of this strategy. We thank you for seeking input from the community in its development.

Counterpoint Community Services Inc. provides a wide range of community support services in the Inner City and South East Sydney LGAs. We have operated in the heart of Waterloo since 1977, with a particular focus on working with social housing tenants.

We operate The Factory Community Centre in Waterloo, Multicultural Centre in Alexandria, Poet's Corner pre-school in Redfern and act as the lead agency for many local grass-root groups and services including the Redfern and Waterloo Social Housing Neighbourhood Advisory Boards.

We have had a long-standing, productive and positive relationship with the City and in particular the Safe City team. We are well aware of the complexity of issues involved in creating a safer city for all and here, we would like to accentuate that there are many areas of the City's work to date and future plans (including this) that you should be congratulated on.

Still, we are writing this submission based on our experience and feedback from our diverse service users and community groups which we serve providing some additional suggestion for areas that could be considered that we believe will contribute and strengthening the plan. Note that some of the comments are directly from stakeholders and may not necessarily be our own.

We hope you will consider the points in the manner in which there are intended, and feel free to contact us should you require any further information on any of the issues raised.

We look forward to working with you and other stakeholders' in continuing to improve policies and practices on community safety improvement strategies for all Sydney residents.

Note we happy for our comments to be publicly available; however, any sensitive comments regarding third parties/Groups which may be perceived to be sensitive should be redacted. (highlighted below in red)

Yours Sincerely

Mike

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Overall, your priority areas for Sydney's Community Safety Action Plan are to be commended. Here, we would like to suggest consideration for the following additions:

- 1) Supporting people and communities and in particular, where there is a high level of disadvantage.** We are aware that the City already deliver this through several existing programs. However, we also believe that the City can have a more proactive leadership role in ensuring, facilitating, brokering and resourcing an integrated place management approaches across all areas of the City of Villages. Particular it has a potential role as an impartial stakeholder in bringing together potentially siloed government departments and other stakeholder's who also have a significant role in delivering a safer city for all, through holistic human service interventions.
- 2) Approach; Community Safety Task Force.** We suggest that consideration should be given to the establishment of a Community Safety Task Force, covering the City to receive inputs from more localised groups and relevant stakeholders to assist in the monitoring and implementation of the Safe City strategies. We will also argue that each stakeholder has a role to play in delivering this collaborative community safety plan should have their contributions, successes and challenges documented and as such an MOU or a Compact statement with public commitments from all relevant stakeholders and have agreed on shared performance measures. This would ensure accountability and continuous improvement.
- 3) Evidence-based.** There appears to be a lack of coordinated approaches in collecting, sharing and analysing data that relates to community safety. The City could develop mechanisms in conjunction with others to ensure the correct data is being collected and responded to promptly. While there is much data on acute crimes committed or people perception of safety, other information is harder to obtain; such as issues of suicide and suicide attempts, accidental drug overdose, anti-social behaviour reported but no action taken, eviction rates, mental health call outs, false fire alarms; all related to a safer city. We were aware that there is duplication in some data collection systems and lack of streamlining of the data which could be addressed through community portals that stakeholders can contribute too.

4) Social housing. There are 9,700 (approximately) social housing properties in the City boundary, and there was previous consideration given to developing a separate Safe City plan specifically for social housing estates; as far as we know this was never completed. Counterpoint argue that social housing estates should be given a standalone priority within the Safe City Strategy. A recent report (August 2018) from the Audit Office of NSW confirmed that strategies addressing anti-social behaviour within social housing estates have been woefully inadequate and is a high priority issue for the social housing community. As a local service primarily servicing social housing tenants, especially those residing in Redfern and Waterloo, we also received a high number of complaints in this regard.

5) Regular Community Safety Audits. Counterpoint has been coordinating and resourcing several community safety audits in the area over many years including the latest in Redfern as highlighted in your plan but as we believed unintentionally omitted in your acknowledgement. We would suggest some thought need to be given about safety audits and streamlining the process across the City, in terms of approach, timing, and monitoring of the implementation of the report. At the moment, recommendations from safety audit reports were done on an ad hoc basis and most often left to be led by an NGO who are not funded, or/ and the Police, or sometimes the City and as such the methodology and quality can be varied. Also, comments documented in any safety audit should also be retained in its entirety (especially those from the community) and should not be edit out by any agencies, for political or any other reasons. This is important for transparency and ensuring community ownership. This is also important for identifying perceptions, whether they are perceived or of actuality.

In terms of the specific priority areas:

Safe streets and spaces.

- Increase actual and perceived public safety in city streets and spaces to ensure they are well-lit and attractive.
- Promote creative and vibrant nightlife to reduce alcohol-related anti-social behaviour.
- Improve road, public transport and pedestrian safety.

Despite reductions in the levels of crime across the Redfern Waterloo area, our community through clients' feedbacks appears to have little or no change in perception of these issues. We receive complaints about inadequate responses to individual and community group concerns as it relates to community safety particularly around the perceived inability of various authorities to deal with anti-social behaviours, challenging tenancies and street disturbances including street-drinking.

Petty crimes are our client biggest presenting complaints, however often low on the police priorities and can be challenging in terms of time, detection and prosecution. Addressing petty crime can be seen by enforcement agencies as a mundane, thankless task, yet it the issue that increases the fear of crime and negatively impacts safety perception.

We will argue strategies that increase timely and proactive responsiveness to minor complaints would have a significant impact in given assurances to residents that their concerns are treated seriously. In addition, we will argue the need for continuous and enhanced investment in early intervention project that increases social bonds, reduce social isolations, create diversionary projects, and strengthens community trust and ownership. All these would go a long way in improving the community sense of safety.

Also, ensuring that access to holistic support, capacity building programs and rehabilitation programs for perpetrators of crime is also essential and more activities are needed to be done, for current and ex-offenders.

In terms of streets, there is a need to for improvement on universal design and continuous improvements on wayfinding in terms of signage.

There is also a perception that there is a disparity in service provisions that requires further unpacking and discussion with implementable actions. Here, private housing complexes such as Meriton in Waterloo/Zetland are seen to receive more attention in terms of street upkeep. For example, daily street cleaning, regular parking ranger attention, etc. with less frequent servicing of the street's surrounding the Waterloo/Redfern social housing estates. While there have been upgrades to such highway in Redfern and Waterloo, their upkeep has been lacking, inconsistent or infrequent. Also, illegal waste dumping is a growing concern and issues along with the problem of hoarding and squalor with few services having the resources needed to respond.

Crime prevention and response

- Reduce the opportunities for crime to occur
- Contribute to reducing domestic and family violence, and sexual assault
- Contribute to preventing child abuse and supporting effective responses

We welcome the strategy to build the capacity of businesses and the community to prevent crime. Here, this leads to; we believe a division between two kinds of crime prevention: social prevention and situational prevention.

Social prevention seeks to compensate for deprivation through programs that, for example, at an individual level, early intervention programs such as teach parenting skills and offer youth leisure or employment schemes. On the other hand, situational prevention seeks to analyse and remove the opportunities for specific forms of crime through the physical design of the environment such as housing estates, the management of facilities such as parks and, product redesign such as letter containing credit cards. Again, the City can take a leadership and coordinating role working with both businesses and communities. Still, safety audits without a commitment from stakeholders to resource and improve safety will be ineffectual exercises as experienced by Counterpoint leading both the Redfern and Waterloo public housing estates safety audits.

Strategies outlined in the action plan for reducing DV and sexual assault has been a continuous effort by all levels of government with little return on investment. We believe that more programs for the perpetrator should also be part of this

strategy. While we understand support is another somewhat contentious term in perpetrator's behaviour, this can be done with accountability measures program.

We also believe that there needs to a focus and allocation of funds on gender-based violence against women. Gender-based violence correlates with domestic violence and is the cause of different types of abuse. Like the report stated, domestic violence incidents remained stable, we believe this is an urgent matter and more needs to be done to keep Sydney a safe city. Our recommendation is more resources for early intervention and programs with individuals that are at high risk of committing gender-based violence—also partnering with local services, schools and community groups to educate individuals on gender-based violence and how to get help if at risk of being a perpetrator or victim.

Women's services can be rightfully wary of practices that centralise perpetrator's change journeys over the needs of victim and children. Robust coordinated or integrated systems can place family violence services at the centre or hub of the system, with other systems agencies accountable both to the DV's service and to each other. This involves more than establishing a partnership approach, but rather processes and structures that enable victim's advocates, and the victim and children they represent, to be central to the workings of the system. The question here becomes not so much about whether DV perpetrator programs change behaviour, but the more wide-ranging consideration of to what extent do they add to, or contribute towards, coordinated community responses focusing on victim and children's safety, well-being and human rights.

Also, solidarity elements programs with domestic violence offenders to encourage social movements to consider different points of intervening, that is through community mobilisation, media-friendly stunts, lobbying campaigns (where we understand the City's leadership and has been most active) plus non-violent direct action.

Here, the City can also act as coordinator or facilitator of resources to focusing on possibilities for interventions at the points of destruction (with our Police, justice system, and FaCS-Child Protection), "consumption" - calling out bad cultures and educating corporations and other large institutions which contribute towards embedded patriarchy within their organisations, decision (lobbying governments), and "assumption" (continuous community education with awareness services such as White Ribbon Australia and NSW Elder Abuse).

Ready and resilient

- Ensure Sydney knows how to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies
- Build resilient and connected communities to increase safety
- Reduce harm from drugs and alcohol

We are pleased to see that Sydney is part of the 100 Resilient Cities Initiative.

Typically, emergency plans are designed by emergency services for the community in which they serve. Interestingly, the people in which these plans are made for are not usually involved during the design phase when making the plans; a limitation that places the responsibility of maintaining emergency preparedness with the emergency

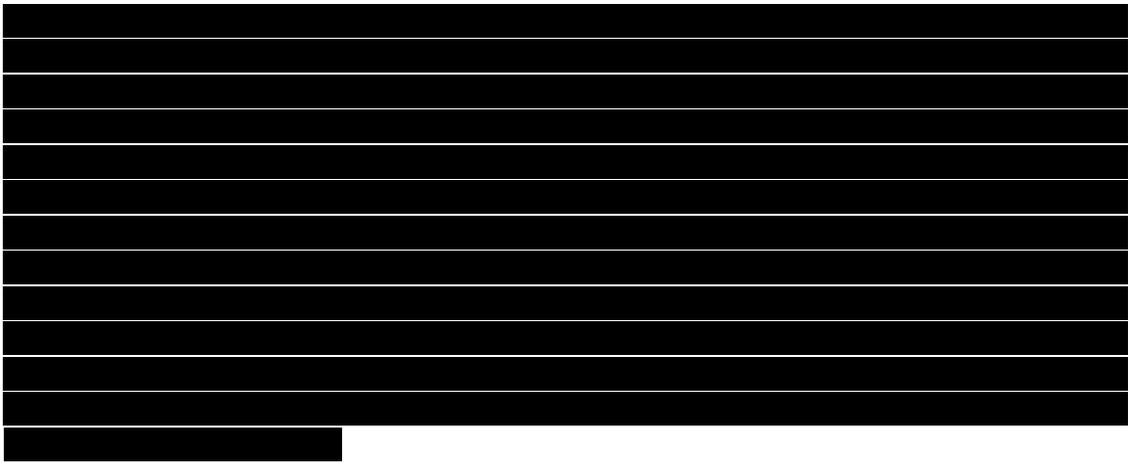
services and not the community at large. However, the complex nature of disasters means that dealing with them is often beyond the reach of emergency services.

Recognising that an all-of-society approach is needed to share the responsibility of disaster resilience building. Here, Counterpoint would like to commend the work of the Redfern and Surry Hills Community Resilience Committee (CRC) in which the City is a member that has been established to lead this change and coordinated effort in the local area led by Inner Sydney Voice. This Committee strengthens partnerships between seventeen stakeholders from the emergency services, government agencies, community organisations, and social housing tenants to build disaster resilience within social housing communities.

CRC explores the timeline of before, during and after a disaster and identify areas where the work of NGOs interfaces with disaster preparedness, relief and recovery activities. Therefore, we are advocating for more resources to fund Initiative such as CRC to be replicate the program City-wide, and we devise their work should be part of your Action plan.

Homelessness and housing affordability are some of the most significant issues the City and country are facing at the moment. We applaud the City's dedication to helping people experiencing homelessness access long-term housing with support and City's continuous investment and leadership in a range of initiatives in this regard.

We believed that the City could play a more active role in your work with the social housing communities, and we would support the call for extra resources for the public housing liaison role.



Harm minimisation initiatives while is great should also be complemented by Demand Reduction initiatives to create positive mental attitudes, values, behaviours and social skills. Here, funded activities that supporting an individual's right to become abstinent, or to not use drugs unlawfully, is a significant component of any approach. Counterpoint has excellent results through our 'Beyond Walls' project; however, came to an abrupt end when further funding could not be secured beyond its pilot.

A safe global destination

- Ensure visitors feel safe and welcome in Sydney

- Help international students to live, study and work safely in Sydney
- Promote Sydney's safety globally

In addition to the initiatives the City has implemented, we are recommending other vital actions, especially for international students.

International students are more at risk of being exploited by workplaces by having income withheld, underpaid and being paid by accommodation or food. Some students may know what services to access if they believe they are being exploited but site fear from their employer as the reason they do not report. Many international students do not know their work rights. This October, Sydney Chinese Services Interagency will hold the first Employment Expo auspices under Counterpoint through the City's Matching Grant program in partnership with Ultimo TAFE.

Here, we recommend regular outreach programs to international students to inform them of their rights in Australia. Such as a seminar program before the start of the university where students are told what they are entitled to, what to do if they believe they are being exploited and what to look out for before starting a job. Students can be reached through collaborations with tertiary institutions and other social groups such as university societies.

Again, another issue is the lack of affordable housing and in the City for international students. International students are competing with other students for housing in areas with a high density of students such as Chippendale, Ultimo, Glebe and Redfern. This has led to many international students living in squalor, unsanitary and unsafe situations. International students have been the target of online scams, where they end up living in dangerous conditions.

It has been found that international students are less likely to be helped by the Police when they do make a complaint. We recommend tighter regulations on landlords and companies which exploit students. We also recommend resources to support and advice for international students when they need to find accommodation.

Our final recommendation is training workers such as Police and tertiary institutions in responding if a student has a complaint against a landlord.

We at Counterpoint believe that it is vital to support international students so that we can continue to be one of the world's leading destinations for international students to study. Ensuring international students reside in safe and livable conditions allow them to have a positive lifelong connection to the City and become our 'unofficial' ambassadors.

Final thoughts

the information and strategies outlined in this submission drawn from the early intervention and prevention framework. Overall, we at Counterpoint believes that more early intervention and prevention activities with a sufficient and continuous pool of resources from all stakeholders should be part of the City's plan for a safer and more resilient world-class globalised city.

We also would like to acknowledge that the City's Community Safety Action Plan 2018-2023 is timely as we at Counterpoint as part of Groundswell is undergoing and

working towards Waterloo (and Redfern) Human Services Plan with the state government.

We welcome the City's plan and will like to contribute to the place-based (especially Sydney area south) planning and activities.