Committee
for
Sydney

Safety after dark:
Creating a city for women living and working in Sydney

March
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Foreword

NAB are pleased to support *Safety after dark: Creating a city for women living and working in Sydney*, developed by the Committee for Sydney, XYX Labs at Monash University and Plan International.

While Sydney is generally considered a safe city, this compelling research highlights the lived experiences of harassment and assault of women and girls living and working in our city.

As an employer of 33,000 people, with more than 2000 women in Sydney, NAB is sponsoring this research to support and contribute to the development of sustainable and safe infrastructure in our community.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Personal Safety Survey (PSS), found that one in two women (53%) over the age of 18 had experienced sexual harassment during their lifetime. Any number is too many, and this number is certainly far too many.

Previous work from Plan International identified that 90% of young women surveyed said they felt unsafe on the streets of Sydney at night and 92% felt uncomfortable taking public transport alone after dark.

As we work hard to make long term changes to social and cultural norms to protect against harassment and assault, it is also necessary to view our city through the lens of gender. While Sydney may have originally been developed and built by men, as we continue to design and plan our growing city, we need to engage women and girls as co-designers in this process and understand the experience through a gender lens.

Safety after dark: Creating a city for women living and working in Sydney presents compelling data and individual lived experiences from women and girls living and working in our city. It outlines key recommendations aimed at developing a holistic and strategic approach engaging key stakeholders and decision makers in creating an equitable and inclusive Sydney.

I encourage you to read this report, consider the challenges faced by women living and working in our city, and how we might come together to continue our commitment to creating a safer city for all.

Ann Sherry AO – Board Member, NAB

Introduction

For many years, the Committee for Sydney has been committed to considering Sydney through the lens of the experiences of women. This is based on an understanding that too often cities are designed (primarily) for men and by men and that changing this will lead to better experiences for women. At the same time, we are firmly of the belief that a city that works better for women would be a city that works better for everyone.

This is not to minimise the concerning picture that we are finding in relation to the lived experiences of women in Sydney. The Sydney Community Foundation and the Sydney Women's Fund recently captured a snapshot of women's experiences of Sydney across many different areas of life.[1] The overwhelming picture is of women not feeling like this city is working well enough for them, whether it is in relation to retirement, getting into work or spending time with family.

This research is based on analysis of the data by XYX Lab, part of Monash University, and dives deep into one aspect of the negative experiences of women in Sydney – that of being in public spaces during the hours of darkness. This research draws on the data collected as part of the Free to Be project run by Plan International Australia in 2018.

Women's responses to harassment describe various 'coping mechanism' for avoiding unwanted attention – such as talking on the phone while walking or walking the 'long way around' to bypass perceived danger areas. That these techniques are needed would be enough of a problem, but as the January murder of Aiia Maasarwe in Melbourne reminds us, this is not sufficient to avoid harassment and violence.

We encourage you to read the recommendations for change in this paper, but equally, it is important to absorb the experiences and stories of the women captured in this research – voices too often not in our public discourse or debates on the future of Sydney.

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1   Sydney Women's Fund, "Portrait 3 Research", https://mailchi.mp/
    sydneycommunityfoundation.org.au/swfportraitiiiresearchscorecard

Key Insights

In this research, sexual harassment was the main issue impacting on women in Sydney at night.

Typically, women described particular locations as well-known for harrassment and assault. While behaviour by men made a place unpleasant, the physical conditions of a location also had a deep effect on perceptions of safety.

Women commuting for work at night warned of areas that were consistently bad and should be avoided.

> *Never felt safe walking in this area, even if I am not alone. The lighting is terrible and the design of the walkways leaves a lot spots hidden from view.* (Central Station, Age 19)

One in five people that participated in this study said that they never returned to a location where they experience harassment or violence. However, only 6% of those commuting for work at night used this avoidance-of-danger tactic. This likely reflects the fact that when it comes to getting to and from work, women often have few other options.

> *I was cat called while waiting at the bus. I catch this bus everyday but whenever it becomes darker, I immediately feel unsafe. I instantly become on object of desire for people to sexualise or treat with disrespect.* (Gardyne Street, Bronte Beach, Age 20)

Groups of men were often the source of harassment – 20% of those respondents travelling to and from work at night were the subject of group harassment and nearly one-third of those out in the city recreationally. This is especially distressing when the woman is on her own, which was the case for more than two-thirds of respondents.

> *I no longer walk home from work due to theft reportings, intoxicated people/drug users and feeling unsafe when men walk closely behind me, especially in the unlit, dark parts. I have to drive to the bus stop 5 minutes down the road (which is quite inconvenient for me) to avoid walking alone.* (Late night, Age 20)

In many instances, women changed their public transport travel patterns as a result of harassment and violence, ranging from avoiding certain stations and bus stops to more dramatically buying a car or catching taxis/Ubers home from work after dark.

> *I have a rule that I cab it home any time after 9pm. The $30 from the city is fully worth it for peace of mind.* (Evening, Age 43]

> *You have to either choose between being poor or being safe* (Sydney Reflection Workshop)

A lack of bystander intervention is a compounding factor. Where intervention does occur, it tends to happen in areas described as having a strong sense of community, with locals described as friendly. These places however, tended to be out in the suburbs rather than close to the city centre.

This report outlines a number of key recommendations (page 26). These recommendations outline ways in which we can come together to improve safety in our city. In particular, key opportunities for:

- NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Women NSW
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment
- Transport for NSW
- Local government
- Major employers
- Night-time businesses and industry

About Free to Be

Free to Be is a project of Plan International that provided an online mapping tool for women to identify and share the location of public spaces that make them feel uneasy and scared, or happy and safe, and detail the reasons why. Based on Plan International's extensive experience through their Safer Cities programme, the project sought to understand more about the experiences of girls and young women in cities. Free to Be was designed in collaboration with Crowdspot, Monash University XYX Lab and young women within the selected cities following a pilot project in Melbourne. It was implemented in Delhi, Kampala, Lima, Madrid and Sydney in April-May 2018. The survey results were analysed by the XYX Lab and their findings were supplemented by reflection workshops held in each city with young people trained by Plan International as expert spokespeople and advocates. In October 2018, Plan International released individual city reports and an overall report outlining the findings.[2]

This report has been prepared for the Committee for Sydney who were supporters of the Free to Be project during its implementation. Following the launch of this project, the Committee became interested in what the data might say about the experiences of women in Sydney at night. While the map may not indicate any 'hotspots' that are unknown to authorities and those concerned with safety in Sydney, hundreds of 'pins' and their comments give nuance and texture to why these places might be deemed good or bad and the kind of incidents that women experience.

The specific questions concerning the Committee for Sydney are:

1. Do women who work in Sydney experience harassment/assault and/or feel unsafe travelling home from work after dark?

    – Are there particular types of locations where this is felt most strongly? (i.e. bus stops, parks etc)

    – Are there particular useful insights from the comments and stories told?

2. Do women who are out for recreation in Sydney at night experience harassment/assault and/or feel unsafe?

    – Are there particular types of businesses or locations where they are most likely to experience this (i.e in bars/clubs, while travelling on public transport).

    – Are there particular useful insights from the comments and stories told?

Limitations

Crowdmapping is a means for gathering impressions and stories from a wide range of people. However, it is not a probability sample. This means that any percentages generated will be indicative, rather than representative. That said, when many stories are gathered, common themes can be discerned and this report considers those themes for the experiences of women in Sydney at night.

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2   Plan International and Monash University, *Unsafe in the City: The Everyday Experiences of Girls and Young Women, Free to Be Delhi, Free to Be Kampala, Free to Be Lima, Free to Be Madrid, Free to Be Sydney* (Woking: Plan International, 2018).

Methodology

Free to Be recorded over 2,700 valid pins across the Greater Sydney area over the six-week period that the survey was open. Note that the number of pins does not represent the number of people who engaged with Free to Be, as participants were able to place as many pins as they chose. For the previous reports for Plan International, only the posts and comments by those aged 30 and under were considered. For this report, some 677 participants over the age of 30 have been included.

Some of the placed pins only denote good or bad locations without any additional information beyond the selection of tag choices provided by the survey tool, but many were also annotated with comments giving details of the reasons for the pinning. There was, in general, a higher rate of comments for the bad pins.

The number of pins does not represent a significant proportion of Sydney's female population, but the stories encapsulated in the comments are highly indicative of women's experiences, and comparisons between data set selections from Free to Be are especially useful for teasing out nuances in experiences from the two scenarios under investigation in this report. In particular, Free to Be gives insight into incidents – especially those involving sexual harassment – that would seldom be formally reported. Many forms of harassment are not illegal, are difficult to report or document when they do meet criminal thresholds of behaviour, and sexual offences more broadly face low levels of reporting and successful convictions.[3] Consequently, over 80% of sexual crimes against Australian women are quite simply not reported.[4]

Data selection

Although there were nearly 2,000 pins marking bad incidents/places and almost 800 good ones placed on the Greater Sydney city map, only certain pins were relevant to the issues that are the subject of this report. Over half of the bad pins found the hours of darkness to be more challenging. Another 18% stated that the time of day was not relevant, that 'Anytime' of the day the location was bad.

For Question 1 (working after dark), pins were selected as follows:

- Pins where the respondent used the tag options provided by Free to Be of 'Evening' or 'Late night' and 'On the way to or from work'. (Note, 20% of all Sydney's bad pins were tagged 'On the way to or from work' while 25% of all the good pins fell into the same category)

- However, because tagging was not always used by participants, comments on all pins were checked to see if they might refer to travel to or from work in the dark, specifically:

  – 'Anytime', 'I don't remember when' and 'Morning' pins

  – Comments from participants who identified as 'In work'.

This yielded 273 bad pins, 249 of which (91%) had comments attached to them detailing the incidents or reactions. There were 121 good pins that met the selection criteria. However, only 15 of these were tagged evening or night, the rest were 'Anytime' pins. Seventy of the good pins (58%) had comments.

To consider Question 2, (the experiences of women who are out recreationally after dark), pins were selected as follows:

- Pins that were tagged occurring at night and 'Out socially'. (Note, 15% of all Sydney's bad pins were tagged 'Out socially' while 24% of all the good pins fell into the same category)

- Other pins checked in a manner similar to that for Question 1.

- Participants who tagged their activity location as 'At the shops', 'In a park or garden' and 'At a public event' were assumed to be out for recreation purposes, unless the comment made it clear otherwise.

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3   Kathy Daly and Bridget Bohours, "Rape and attrition in the legal process: a comparative analysis of five countries," *Crime and Justice* 39, no. 1 (2010): 564–650.

4   Cindy Tarczon and Antonia Quadara, *The nature and extent of sexual assault and abuse in Australia, ACSSA Resource Sheet* (Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2012).

This yielded 385 bad pins, 336 of which (87%) had comments attached to them detailing incidents or reactions. There were 171 good pins that met the selection criteria, and a higher number of these were tagged for after dark times than for Question 1 (70 or 41%). 141 of the good pins (82%) had comments.

There were a higher proportion of pins eligible for Question 2 than for Question 1 – 19% of the total number of bad pins versus 14%, and 22% compared with 16% for the good pins. The number of appropriate posts was therefore not especially high, but certainly high enough to give a sense of the issues that face women in Sydney at night.

Respondents also often used more than one tag and comments on a pin sometimes detailed a location where, whether in the city at night for work or pleasure, the chances of bad (or good) incidents were high. Therefore, there were also some overlaps between the two data sets where participants tagged both 'Out socially' and 'Going to and from work' (see Table 1). 35% of the selected good pins for Question 2 and 40% of those for Question 1 also appeared in the other data set. However, the overlap for the bad pins was much less with proportions of 14% and 12% respectively.

Demographics of participants

Figure 1: Age ranges of participants
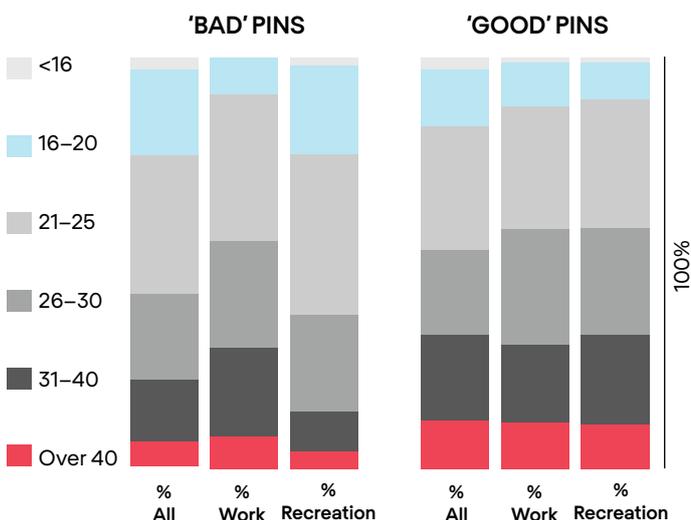
The majority of pins for incidents, both good and bad, for the survey as a whole were posted by those aged 21 to 30 – 51% and 55% respectively. This proportion increased for incidents occurring during the hours of darkness (58% and 61% for those travelling to and from work, and 58% and 62% for those out for recreational purposes. This suggests that this age group is perhaps more likely to be using the city at night.

General location of incidents

Free to Be offered tagging options for the location of incidents – Table 1. Some of these pins triggered more than one location; for example, walking to and from a public transport hub might trigger both 'On the street' and 'Public transport'.

Table 1: Location/activity of incidents (from tags)

	'BAD' PINS			'GOOD' PINS		
	% All	% Work	% Recreation	% All	% Work	% Recreation
On the street	60%	63%	48%	44%	72%	61%
Public transport	19%	32%	16%	24%	55%	38%
In a park	18%	18%	16%	36%	26%	33%
At the shops	10%	8%	12%	25%	41%	30%
At a public event	3%	1%	12%	10%	21%	–

'On the street' was identified as the most common location for incidents for all the bad pins and all the good ones. It was also the location where a high proportion of at night incidents occurred, particularly for those going to and from work – both good and bad. Not unexpectedly, 'Public transport' was a high-rating location for those travelling to and from work for both good and bad pins, but it was also high for those out recreationally. This will be discussed in more detail later in the report.

Experiences of sexual harassment

Pins tended to discuss the 'vibe' of a place as either threatening or simply not feeling safe. The presence of certain kinds of people and environmental factors (such as the physical design, lighting and layout of a space, decor, and cleanliness) can contribute towards a positive or negative 'vibe'. These are discussed more later in the report. Less than 2% of bad incidents recorded by comments at night were about theft.

Sexual harassment

In the research, overwhelmingly sexual harassment was the main problem experienced by women in Sydney at night. Sexual harassment, of course, does not just happen at night, 65% of all bad pins for Sydney recorded such harassment.

> *I have just left Sydney after 5 years living and studying here. Both love and hate for the city, as a female, especially an Asian female with curves, I never felt safe in this city. I get sexual harassment (catcalling, swears, pervert stares) almost everywhere I go in Sydney. No matter how much I cover myself with hideous clothes, this never stops. Every time I go out, harassment from men happens. (Anytime, Age 23)*

However, for those commuting at night for work, the incidence of sexual harassment was slightly higher than the rate for all pins at 69%, and a significantly higher 80% for those women in the city at night for recreation. The sharp uptick in sexual harassment for those out enjoying the city is notable and discussed later in the report.

> *Poorly lit, few people around. Have been catcalled and leered at by men on many occasions. Used to work nearby, and would take a longer route when dark after work. (CBD, Evening, Age 25)*

> *Regularly honked and yelled at by male drivers when crossing via the footbridge. Can be very shocking early in the morning or at night as you feel exposed on the bridge. (Lilyfield, Anytime, Age 27)*

Sexual harassment exists on a continuum from incidents that are typically shrugged off or 'accepted as part of life' to violent sexual assault. As noted earlier, it is only the latter that are likely to be reported to the authorities. In any sexual harassment incident there is often a power imbalance between perpetrators and their targets due to a complex array of social and cultural factors – including gender inequality, social structures, and men's greater access to resources. The *effect* of sexual harassment of any kind, however, is that it serves as a reminder of women's social and physical vulnerability, and therefore has a significant role in increasing the fear of more serious violent attack and thereby controlling and restricting access to the city.[5] Harassment can be directed at women of any age, although research suggests that younger women may be particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment in public spaces.[6]

Existing research also suggests that the impacts of street sexual harassment are far reaching, and extend beyond fear of violent attack and limiting movement in the city. It is also linked to increased self-objectification,[7] increased depression and anxiety, lower self-esteem and confidence, and emotional impacts such as feeling anger, shock, and a sense of violation.[8] While men often tend to excuse incidents less invasive than groping – such as catcalling – as 'compliments', the effect on women is much stronger and lasts much longer. Canadian research by Lenton and colleagues found that these impacts could persist for days, months, and, in some cases, years after a particular impact of public harassment, illustrating the substantial and long-term effects this behaviour can have.[9]

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5   Carolyn Whitzman, "Women's safety and everyday mobility," in *Building Inclusive Cities: Women's Safety and the Right to the City,* eds. Carolyn Whitzman, Crystal Legacy, Caroline Andrew, Fran Klodawsky, Margaret Shaw and Kalpana Viswanath (London: Routledge, 2013).

6   Fiona Vera-Gray, *Men's intrusions, women's embodiment: a critical analysis of street harassment* (London: Routledge, 2016)*;* Molly Johnson and Ebony Bennett, *Everyday sexism: Australian women's experiences of street harassment, Briefing Note* (Melbourne, The Australia Institute, 2015).

7   Kimberly Fairchild and Laurie A. Rudman, "Everyday stranger harassment and women's objectification," *Social Justice Research* 21 (2008): 338–357.

8   Rhonda Lenton, Michael D. Smith, John Fox and Norman Morra, "Sexual harassment in public places: experiences of Canadian women," *Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 36, no. 4 (1999): 517–540.

9   Lenton et al. "Sexual harassment in public places."

I got cat called by construction workers on my way to a job interview. Threw me off for the rest of the day :(Being cat called makes you want to cover yourself in heaps of layers and hide. (Waterloo, Age 18, Morning)

I, at 16, was groped in the groin as I walked down busy George Street in broad daylight with my friends by an older teenager walking in the other direction. I am still traumatized by this experience many years later. Why did someone feel they had the right to touch my body like that? I was just walking down the street. (George Street, Afternoon, Age 51)

This last comment is an example of the long fallout from sexual harassment incidents. An action that might be quickly forgotten by the perpetrator can linger for a long time with the target, affecting her sense of safety, trust and willingness to engage with the public sphere.

Research has shown that there is a generally accepted culture of sexual harassment.[10] Its prevalence is reflected in the use of the tag option 'Happens so often that I'm used to it' offered to Free to Be participants. For the overall survey the rate was 36%, but it was much higher 49% for those commuting at night, and 42% for those out for leisure. This suggests higher levels of resignation for those women out at night for whatever reason; they expect and have learnt to tolerate greater amounts of harassment.

International and Australian research on sexual violence in the night-time economy supports these findings. This research suggests that women routinely encounter sexual harassment and sexual violence when out in the city at night and particularly when accessing licensed premises.[11] The cultural and social norms of the night-time economy further works to normalise the occurrence of this behaviour. For example, many licensed venues have a highly sexualised culture, and some research suggests that many young women view sexual harassment as "the price they have to pay" for socialising in venues, or seeking out consensual sexual interaction in these spaces.[12] Cultures of alcohol and drug consumption in the city at night also contribute here, and we return to this point later in the report.

Some women, particularly younger ones reported being 'frozen' by harassment. They lack the personal resources (or resignation) developed by older women to avoid or escape harassment, or at the least to not let it affect them strongly. However, any harassment can be intimidating especially if the woman is on her own, as was the case for most of the incidents recorded by comments (71% for those commuting for work and 68% for those out recreationally). Even more frightening are incidents where perpetrators operate in groups; 20% of those respondents travelling to and from work at night were the subject of group harassment and a high nearly one-third of those out in the city recreationally.

10 Bianca Fileborn, *Reclaiming the night-time economy* (London: Palgrave, 2016); Fiona Vera-Gray and Bianca Fileborn, "Recognition and the harms of 'cheer up'," *The Philosophical Journal of Conflict and VIolence* 2, no. 1 (2018): 78–96.

11 Fileborn, Reclaiming the night-time economy; Juliet Watson, *The right to party safely: a report on young women, sexual violence and licensed premises* (Melbourne: CASA House, 2000); Kathryn Graham, Samantha Wells, Sharon Bernards & Susan Dennison, "'Yes, I do but not with you': qualitative analyses of sexual/romantic overture-related aggression in bars and clubs," *Contemporary Drug Problems* 37 (2010): 197–240; Kathryn Graham, Sharon Bernards, Antonia Abbey, Tara M. Dumas & Samantha Wells, "When women do not want it: young female bargoers experiences with and responses to sexual harassment in social drinking contexts." *Violence Against Women* 23, no. 12 (2017): 1419–1441; Philip R. Kavanaugh, "The continuum of sexual violence: women's accounts of victimization in urban nightlife," *Feminist Criminology* 8, no. 1 (2012): 20–39.

12 Fileborn, *Reclaiming the night-time economy.*

After dark

One of the Sydney Reflection Workshop youth activists argued that nightfall made little difference to harassment levels: "My experiences from leaving work at 11pm or at 5pm, it's the same." However, for most of the participants who contributed to the Sydney Free to Be survey, night time heightened their sense of needing to be careful in the public spaces of the city. There is a cultural expectation that bad things happen at night learnt from stories, television and movies.[13] As another of the youth activists put it:

> I always correlate darkness with bad stuff happening. Even the places that I like, I probably wouldn't go there late at night.

This changeability of a place with nightfall was strongly noted in survey comments. One participant praised the Royal Botanic Gardens then questioned that praise: "Love being here! Beautiful! Only, I'm not sure what it is like at night." Such comments were repeated across the map.

> Bus stop felt perfectly safe during the day, but I would not like taking the bus from here at night. (Mitchell Road, Age 22)

> I pass through here twice a day to get to work and am routinely verbally abused by men. I feel unsafe and would never go through here at night. (Belmore Park, Anytime, 25)

This means that areas that are deemed 'safe' during the day may become off-limits when darkness falls, and suggests that different strategies and responses may be required for improving safety during the evening. The sense that the night is a time of danger is also reflected in comments about incidents where there is a degree of outrage if they occurred in 'broad daylight'.

> I, at 16, was groped in the groin as I walked down busy George Street in broad daylight. (George Street, Afternoon, Age 51)

This comment illustrates the ways in which both being and feeling safe are shaped temporally. Whether women are in the city at night for employment or recreation, the fear of incidents and the alertness to dangers are similar. They are, however, also differences in the experiences.

Types of sexual harassment experienced

The kinds of sexual harassment that women experienced are summarised in Table 2. Some incidents triggered more than one category – such as being followed whilst being catcalled.

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13 Phil Hubbard, "The geographies of 'going out': emotion and embodiment in the evening economy," in *Emotional geographies,* ed. Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), 117–134; Robert Williams, "Night spaces: darkness, deterritorialization, and social control," *Space and Culture* 11, no. 4 (2008): 514–532.

Table 2: Commented pins – Sexual Harassment

# commented pins	'BAD' PINS			
	Q1 Work 249		Q2 Recreation 336	
Verbal sexual harassment	89	36%	133	40%
Cat-calling, lewd comments	53	21%	78	23%
Propositioning, aggressive	49	20%	67	20%
Non-verbal, no-touch harassment	37	15%	42	13%
Staring/ Leering	27	11%	24	7%
Flashing / Public masturbation/ Lewd gestures	1	0.4%	10	3%
Public urination/ Spitting	4	2%	6	2%
Physical Intimidation	80	32%	86	26%
Following	49	20%	56	17%
Way blocked/ Approached	7	3%	21	6%
Chasing	5	2%	8	2%
Stalking	3	1%	4	1%
Circled/ Surrounded	-	-	5	1%
Physical Contact	27	11%	103	31%
Sexual Touch, incl. groping	5	2%	50	15%
Physical Assault (and threat of)	15	6%	43	13%
Creepy Contact	9	4%	17	5%
Rape/ Penetration	-	-	4	1%

There is a difference between those respondents to the survey who were out at night for work and those for recreation. Physical intimidation was somewhat more prevalent for those working, although 'Following' was common for both. And verbal harassment was more common for recreational users of the city at night. The major difference was in harassment that involved touch, which occurred in 31% of recreational incidents recorded, markedly more than the 11% for those commuting to work at night. Groping and assault were the most frequent of this kind of incident.

The impact of the harassment itself can be amplified by the perpetrator's behaviour or reaction if their target calls them out. In particular, laughing at discomfort or anger is especially common and frustrating.

> *2.00-3.00am in morning. Waiting with girlfriends outside Town Hall (George St) for nightride bus after a night of drinking. A group of drunk, young guys walked past and one blatantly grabbed and squeezed my ass. I screamed at him (fuelled by liquid courage), but he and his friends walked away laughing. It was disgusting.* (Age 28)

Some incidents, such as catcalling, do not last for long; but others (like being followed) can last for some length of time. This latter kind of event, which tends to ratchet up tension and fear, was reported in approximately one in five incidents for both groups in the city at night, although there was a slightly higher incidence for the commuters (22% compared with 19% for recreational users). Also slightly higher for commuters were reported locations where harassment was repetitive or frequent – 25% compared with 22%. The noting of locations where harassment is a regular occurrence will be discussed more later in the report.

Responses to harassment

	'BAD' PINS		
	% All	% Work	% Recreation
Never went back there	13%	6%	20%
Avoid coming here alone	45%	49%	44%
Stopped going to school or work	1%	2%	1%
I reported it and authorities did something	4%	4%	3%
I reported it but authorities did nothing	7%	7%	7%

The consequences of incidents were recorded under a series of tag options in Free to Be – Table 4. Overall, 13% of all bad pins tagged 'Never went back', but that dropped to just 6% for those commuting to work at night, reflecting the fact that when it comes to getting to and from work women often have few choices. This lack of choice may also be compounded for younger women and women from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who may be unable to afford other means of

transportation such as a personal car or taxi/Uber. Likewise, certain groups of women may experience varying levels of choice over when and where they work, while certain industries such as hospitality may require higher levels of night-time work. On the other hand, of the women who were out for recreational purposes, a high one in five (20%) never went back to a locale after their experience, demonstrating that they had some choice and exercised it. This is consistent with previous research suggesting that street harassment leads to women avoiding specific locations and venues, particularly at night and in the context of accessing the night-time economy.[14]

Reporting

Very few incidents recorded by Free to Be were reported, despite their sometimes profound effect on individual women. Table 3 records just one in ten were reported and of those less than a third resulted in action of any kind. This resonates with the wealth of research suggesting that reporting of street harassment is rare, including that which occurs at night-time.[15] This level of lack of positive response means that reporting is reserved for more serious incidents although, as noted earlier, all incidents set a climate of fear. Lack of reporting means that there is a lack of data about the frequency and consequences of harassment. One of the strengths of Free to Be is that it offers alternative means of gathering this data.

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14 Fileborn, *Reclaiming the night-time economy*; Vera-Gray, *Men's intrusions, women's embodiment*; Johnson and Bennett, *Everyday sexism*.

15 Bianca Fileborn, "Naming the unspeakable harm of street harassment: a survey-based examination of disclosure practices," *Violence Against Women*, online first (2018): 1–26; Watson, "The right to party safely."

Factors that influence

Women's experiences in the city and perception of locales are shaped by the kind of men who might be perpetrating the harassment and the physical attributes of the place. In general, bad pins placed on the overall map constituted either direct warnings to be cautious in particular locations, or salutary tales that had the same effect. Most commonly, women were describing a particular location known for problematic conduct behaviour or where they had experienced such behaviour. Recreational respondents warned about certain restaurants/cafés or bars/pubs, and those commuting for work at night warned of areas that were consistently bad and should be avoided. Many of these were located around public transport locations.

People

Unpredictable people

While harassment can come from random men in random places, the survey highlighted the issue of the presence of unpredictable people. These people were sometimes groups of men (young and old) 'on the hunt' and/or hanging out looking for free entertainment, those who were drug or alcohol-affected, the homeless, or a combination of these.

For groups of men 'on the hunt' sexual harassment comprises 'entertainment.' As a phenomenon of group behaviour, members will perform acts that they might not do as an individual in order to be seen or accepted as one of the group.[16] This can lead to diminished personal responsibility in order to preserve the collective identity. For groups of men specifically, this can work to normalise the use of street harassment as a means of achieving group identity.[17] In this process, women can be viewed as minor, albeit necessary, catalysts in a greater game, that of competitive male bonding. She is incidental, and her level of fear is irrelevant. This particular kind of harassment was most commonly experienced by women who were out in Sydney at night for their own entertainment.

The presence of people 'under the influence' was offered as a tag in the Free to Be survey. The full survey tagged 24% of all bad pins, but for those commuting for work at night the figure was 33% and for recreational users of the city at night an even higher 37%.

Table 4: Kind of people

# commented pins	'BAD' PINS			
	Q1 Work 249		Q2 Recreation 336	
All people factors	59	24%	42	13%
Drug/alcohol affected	54	22%	50	15%
Loitering 'shady'	26	10%	19	6%
Homeless	14	6%	9	3%

Table 4 details what the comments attached to bad pins noted – they likewise discuss drug and alcohol although to a lesser extent than the tagging records. Nonetheless, drug and alcohol affected people were the most likely to cause concern for both groups of respondents. Those affected might be individuals or in groups and were mainly men, but not exclusively. When in groups, such people meant that places could feel unsafe even during daylight hours:

A lot of very drunk and or drugged up people hang around this spot next to the railway bridge and just down from Beach Burrito. If I use the Newtown train station I have to walk through this spot... Doesn't have to be night time to be intimidating. (Bedford St, Anytime, Age 28)

There's always groups of creepy drunk guys that loiter around there and make me feel very uncomfortable in the evenings/night. Lots of cat-calling and guys occasionally follow me to places that I am going (bus stop/bar/club). (Wynyard Park, Late night, Age 21)

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16 David Grazian, "The girl hunt: urban nightlife and the performance of masculinity as collective activity," *Symbolic Interaction* 30, No. 2 (2007): 221–243.
17 Alberto Godenzi, Martin D. Schwartz and Walter S. Dekeseredy, "Toward a gendered social bond/male peer support theory of university woman abuse," *Critical Criminology* 10 (2001): 1–16.

Alcohol and drug use at all times of the day outside the entrance of the station, a lot of homelessness, have witnessed many fights, catcalling and unpleasant interactions take place here... Try to avoid coming this side of the station when I can. (Elizabeth Street by Central Station, Anytime, Age 23)

Drug and alcohol use is often normative behaviour within the city at night, part of the night-time economy. While intoxication may to some extent be considered part of the 'fun' of a night out, alcohol and drugs are also strongly associated with sexual violence. For example, intoxication can be used to diminish perpetrator's responsibility for their action, while victim-survivors who have consumed alcohol or drugs are often viewed as bearing some responsibility for the violence perpetrated against them. Women who consume alcohol in public settings may be (erroneously) viewed as 'wanting' or 'asking for' sexual attention, which may again facilitate the occurrence of harassment in the city at night. Alcohol and drugs can also be intentionally deployed by perpetrators to incapacitate a victim/potential victim.[18]

The second group of concern were those who hung out at particular locations described in the comments as "shady" or "sketchy". Some were also drunk or drug-affected, or involved in the sale of drugs:

This park has very dim lighting at night and groups of people lurk here in the dark. I always walk around the park instead of using it as shortcut as the groups, of mostly men, often show signs of heavy drinking and make me feel unsafe. I also just don't trust people who lurk in the dark! (Redfern Park, Late night, Age 24)

Lots of shady characters around at all hours – catcalling, propositioning, trying to look up girls' skirts, swearing and following. This place is feral and full of uneducated, lecherous oxygen thieves. (Bankstown Station, Anytime, Age 25)

Sometimes there are gangs of teenagers, sometimes there's someone shooting up. It's pretty much not lit all of the time and makes for a horrific walk home after work. I have to be on the phone to someone as I go through here to make sure I get home safe. (Anzac Park near West Ryde Station, Evening, Age 25)

The third group of unpredictable people identified were the homeless, although to a much lesser extent than the other groups. They could also be drug and alcohol affected, but not necessarily. Instead, they are presumed to be risky because they may harass for money, or might be mentally unstable.

Homeless people have been setting up homes just outside Circular Quay Station. It's the unpredictability of these individuals that make me feel very uncomfortable. (Alfred Street, Age 25)

However, we should also be wary here about the extent to which marginalised people might also be particularly salient to participants as 'likely' perpetrators and sources of harm or fear. For example, research illustrates that we tend to associate perpetration with the 'other' – groups who are socially and culturally distinct from ourselves – whilst downplaying the extent to which those who are 'like' us may also cause harm.[19] This is not to deny the extent to which these marginalised groups may have perpetrated harassment against women, but to recognise that their identification in the Free to Be survey is also a function of (and consolidates) their marginalisation and stigmatisation.

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18 Antonia Abbey, Tina Zawacki, Philip Buck, A Clinton, and Pam McAuslan, "Alcohol and sexual assault," *Alcohol Research & Health* 25, no. 1 (2001): 43–51; Fileborn, Reclaiming *the night-time economy;* Liz Wall and Antonia Quadara, "Under the influence? Considering the role of alcohol and sexual assault in social contexts," *ACSSA Issues No. 18* (Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2014).

19 Fileborn, *Reclaiming the night-time economy.*

Scarcity of people

While the presence of the above groups might cause varying degrees of unease, the absence of people (and the presumed oversight they might provide) was also a cause for concern and contributed to a place feeling unsafe.

> *Walking around that area makes you think if something fatal happens to you, no one will see, listen or hear of what happened.* (Monterey, Evening, Age 32)

> *I was followed walking home from a bar around 11pm. He followed me all the way from Oxford St to 10 mins away, down past the police station – trying to talk to me all the way. There was no one around and I felt frightened and threatened. I eventually took off running and lost him.* (Oxford Street, Late night, Age 30)

Scarcity of people was, then, an indicator of lack of safety for respondents. In particular, some respondents observed that this 'scarcity of people' had increased in parts of the inner-city as a consequence of the lockout laws.

> *I always feel safe walking around King St. There are well lit main streets and shops open until late should anything happen and you need to get to safety. The fact people go out here more also makes me feel safe, more than inner city that is affected by lockout laws and is empty.* (King St, Anytime, Age 25)

The Plan International youth activists also noted the emptiness of parts of the central city due to lockout rules: "Now I can walk through Kings Cross there on Friday night and there's like no one there – like the Kings Cross hotels are just basically empty." The lockout has also placed many drunk men on the streets wanting to continue to party but with no venue accepting them, additionally adding to the sense of a lack of safety.

While these laws were introduced to protect one part of the community, they have unintentionally increased pressure on others by shaping movement through the city at night in particular ways that increase the likelihood of encountering harassment in specific locations, and create perceived and actual risks to women's safety. This reveals how complex the maintenance of safety in the city is, but also how important it is to obtain a wide ranges of perspectives and feedback in evaluations of any interventions or proposed interventions.

Bystanders

The presence of people did not, however, necessarily mean that bystanders would indeed assist in a situation. A bare handful of comments spoke of bystander intervention, more often they recorded the lack thereof.

> *I was standing on the street with a female friend of mine. A highly intoxicated (likely drugs) man groped my friend, I told him to stop and not touch her. He then grabbed my inner thigh and told me he can do whatever he wants. I yelled at him to leave us alone, a large group of young men overheard us but rather than help they just mocked us.* (Near Kings Cross Station, Evening, Age 22)

> *I got off a train at Carlton one weeknight. I heard an angry voice saying "Look at this f***ing stuck up n*rk faced b!tch." When I looked to see who he was referring to, it was me! He was drunk and he continued to hurl abuse at me the whole way up the stairs. Other people turned around to look, including several men and not one person helped me. I would have reported it but there are no staff at stations later in the evenings anymore.* (Carlton, Age 50, Evening)

> *Two men and a woman followed me up this street, shouting insults at me. It was around 7pm, lots of people out and about in the area but no one stopped to help.* (Swanson St, Erskineville, Age 23, Evening)

More alarmingly, 7% of comments for those 'out socially' recorded an escalation in harassment if the perpetrators were challenged or rejected. Some perpetrators became more aggressive:

> *In the club there are lots of gross men who will creep on you, follow you or abuse you verbally if you turn them down.* (Oxford Street, Anytime, Age 22)

> *A man came up to me at the Bank Hotel bar, said I was beautiful then asked if I would go to the back alley with him. He got aggressive when I said no. My friend pretended he was my boyfriend & our group left. Him & his friends followed us along King St for 10 mins yelling horrible things they said they would to do to me, until we got in a taxi.* (Late night, Age 35)

> *Had men repeatedly harass me and when I told them to leave me alone, they proceeded to tell me to fuck off and abuse me.* (Late night, Age 19)

Other research has found that, for this and other complicated reasons, bystander intervention is not common.[20] However, staff in a business, venue or on public transport with appropriate training can make a significant difference, which will be discussed later.

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20 Bianca Fileborn, "Bystander intervention from the victims' perspective: experiences, impacts and justice needs of street harassment victims," *Journal of Gender-Based Violence* 1, no. 2 (2017): 187–204; Shawn Meghan Burn, "A situational Model of Sexual Assault Prevention through Bystander Intervention," *Sex Roles* 60, no. 11–12, (2009): 779–792.

Environmental factors

While unquestionably it was mainly people and their behaviour that made places unsafe or feel unsafe, comments also noted that environmental or physical factors strongly contributed to the experience of safety. Such comments are reinforced through previous research on safety in the night-time economy, which suggests that the general 'atmosphere' of a venue or precinct, together with the sense of belonging an individual feels in a particular space, can play an influential role in perceptions of safety.[21] Previous studies have also indicated that environmental and physical factors are associated with the prevalence of violence within the city at night.[22]

Table 5: Environmental factors – 'Bad' pins

# commented pins	'BAD' PINS			
	Q1 Work 249		Q2 Recreation 336	
All environmental	74	30%	51	15%
Poor Lighting	65	26%	35	10%
Poor Infrastructure	17	7%	7	2%
Lack of security	10	4%	14	4%
Rubbish	4	2%	1	0.3%

Environmental factors were identified by commuters twice as frequently as they were for those out at night recreationally. While the lack of obvious security either by CCTV or personnel were mentioned, the main environmental aspect highlighted by participants in both groups was the level of lighting.

> It's just very dark and not well lit in this area, makes me feel unsafe. (Glebe, Late night, Age 22)

Low lighting levels can exacerbate other physical environment design factors such as the possibility of places where people can hide not just in the shadows but behind walls or vegetation or around corners (blind spots). The ability to be able to see what is ahead and to the side is important for a sense of safety as women move through the city.[23]

> Never felt safe walking in this area, even if I am not alone. The lighting is terrible and the design of the walkways leaves a lot spots hidden from view. (Central Station, Anytime, Age 19)

> I can't walk up this street at night anymore. A man was on one side of the street up ahead and I crossed the street, he ran ahead on the other side of the road, crossed the street and sat and waited for me to walk past. The street has very bad lighting and too many blind spots. I feel lucky that something didn't happen to me – my heart was rock solid and I felt lucky I wasn't attacked. WHAT KIND OF REALITY IS THAT! (Near Rockdale Station, Late night, Age 25)

Also important is a sense that, should something happen, there is a means of escape rather than a sense of entrapment.

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21 Fileborn, *Reclaiming the night-time economy.*
22 Fileborn, *Reclaiming the night-time economy;* Kathryn Graham, Sharon Bernards, D. Wayne Osgood and Samantha Wells, "Bad nights or bad bars? Multi-level analysis of environmental predictors of aggression in late-night large-capacity bars and clubs," *Addiction* 101 (2006): 1569–1580; Ross Homel, Russell Carvolth, Marge Hauritz, Gillian McIlwain and Rosie Teague "Making licensed venues safer for patrons: what environmental factors should be the focus of interventions?" *Drug and Alcohol Review* 23 (2004): 19–29.

23 Leon van Rijswijk and Antal Haans, "Illuminating for Safety: Investigating the Role of Lighting Appraisals on the Perception of Safety in the Urban Environment," *Environment and Behavior* 50, no. 8 (2018): 889–912.

Walking around that area makes you think if something fatal happens to you, no one will see, listen or hear of what happened.
(Monterey, Evening, Age 32)

It is a dead frontage area. A lot of drunk people gather there. Not a nice place to walk through after 6pm. It's my only way home. Some days are worse than others. (Bedford St, Newtown, Evening, Age 24)

The 'dead frontage' in the above comment describes a stretch of street where there is no activity and unoccupied buildings. Such frontages may often act as an invitation for unpredictable people to gather, but they also mean that there is no possible oversight from within the buildings, no way to escape attention and nowhere to go, all of which greatly contribute to the perception of a dangerous space.

Safety in Sydney requires a multi-faceted approach that does not only consider lighting, but the overall local environment as the comments above describe. Poor lighting was also sometimes an indicator of places that were run down or not cared for, contributing to a sense that the place did not have a community. As criminologist Bianca Fileborn has suggested in relation to venues, this may be because these physical environments convey an attitude of 'anything goes' and suggests to patrons that venue staff and management may be lax in intervening in anti-social or otherwise problematic behaviour.[24]

Previous research has found that street lighting in and of itself is not sufficient to deter street harassment, but does contribute to surveillance deterrence, informal social control and improves community pride.[25] Suzanna Lee and colleagues conclude that "Higher levels of reported pedestrian/traffic safety, crime safety, aesthetics, land use mix–diversity, land use mix–access, and nearby park access were related to more neighbourhood satisfaction."[26]

Another way of understanding what makes a physical place seem unsafe is to consider the converse: what makes a place feel safe. Table 6 collates the comments associated with 'good' pins to see how respondents described the places where good things happened.

Table 6: Environmental factors – 'Good' places

# commented pins	'GOOD' PINS			
	Q1 Work 249		Q2 Recreation 336	
Feels safe	41	59%	66	47%
Busy, people around	15	21%	53	38%
Sense of community	21	30%	25	18%
Good lighting	15	21%	32	23%
Presence of security	9	13%	13	9%
Attentive/active staff	2	3%	18	13%
Open	-	-	4	3%

Most frequently, the respondents to the Free to Be survey simply said that they felt 'safe' in a place or that nothing bad had ever happened to them in the locale, with little detail as to why they felt that way. When they did give detail, the results were in contrast to the bad spots. So, for example, lighting in these areas was usually considered good.

Always busy, well lit and Police presence. (Sutherland Station, Anytime, Age 28)

Friendly people, always well lit, local neighbourhood charm. (Erskineville/Newtown, Anytime, Age 30)

24 Fileborn, *Reclaiming the night-time economy*; see also Kerry Ann Armstrong, Hanna Thunstrom and Jeremy Davey, *Young women's drinking experiences in public drinking venues* (Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology, 2011).

25 David Farrington and Brandon Welsh, "Improved street lighting and crime prevention," *Justice Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (2002): 313–342; Josephine Hazelton, "The shocking connection between street harassment and street lighting," *The Establishment,* July 24, 2017, https://theestablishment.co/the-shocking-connection-between-street-harassment-and-street-lighting-5db8497ef653/

26 Suzanna Lee, Terry L Conway, Lawrence D Frank, Brian E Saelens, Kelli L Cain, and James F Sallis, "The Relation of Perceived and Objective Environment Attributes to Neighborhood Satisfaction," *Environment and Behavior* 49, no. 2 (2017): 136–60.

Also, in contrast to bad areas, good areas were populated and busy (although they were not crowded, which sometimes meant men could grope under cover of anonymity). A place being busy or buzzy was a particularly important factor for those out at night for recreation (38%). Such places are lively and supportive of 'a good night out'. In addition, the presence of people meant that respondents felt that someone would at least witness, if not intervene, should something happen.

> *Lots of shops and restaurants trading late at night give me a sense of security to know there can be people to help me in sticky situations.* (World Tower, Anytime, Age 25)

Notwithstanding the earlier comments about the lack of bystander activity, that same sense of people who might support or intervene is reflected in comments that alluded to a strong sense of community, with locals being friendly.[27] These places however, tended to be out in the suburbs rather than close in to the city centre.

Respondents commuting to work at night appreciated 'obvious security' (such as police or public safety officers) and this was important to their sense of safety. But those out for entertainment valued attentive and active venue staff who could make a significant difference to the experience of a night out. Some comments describing bad events were highly critical of staff in some bars/nightclubs for their lack of intervention or active dismissal of women's concerns and complaints.[28] Even worse were those venues where security staff perpetrated harassment:

> *I've had lots of bad experiences here…. Have seen bouncers leer or make inappropriate comments to women, managers did nothing when reported. Last week I was groped. The bouncer saw and told me not to be upset but said nothing to the attacker.* (Newtown, Evening, Age 25)

The complete opposite was the case in those places with good staff:

> *Ramblin Rascals – Great place but excellent staff if anyone is ever out and feeling uncomfortable they will help.* (Elizabeth St, Anytime, Age 26)

> *Pleasant bar with understanding and sympathetic staff and security, who are always there to help in bad situations. I feel very safe coming for a night out drinking here.* (New Brighton Hotel, Manly, Anytime, Age 21)

> *Staff are always quick to deal with anyone that makes you uncomfortable.* (Hunter St, Late night, Age 18)

Environmental factors (such as lighting, design and inactive frontages) and the important role of active staff point to the critical role of businesses in the production of safety in the city, as well as the more generally acknowledged role of local authorities and other public service providers. The making of places safe for women is key to increasing patronage to such businesses and is a collective project involving private and public enterprises.

Public Transport

Table 2 identified public transport as one of the most frequently tagged locations for bad pins for both groups of women using the city at night. 19% of all bad pins tagged public transport but this leapt to 32% for those commuting to work at night (as might be expected), and 16% of recreational selected this tag. Analysis of comments from those commuting identified public transport as an issue in 40% of incidents. This drops to 27% for those out for entertainment.

> *Two guys on a bus watched me the whole way to my stop then got off at my stop with me. I ran.* (Age 27, Evening)

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27 See also Fileborn, *Reclaiming the night-time economy*.
28 See also Fileborn, *Reclaiming the night-time economy*; Bianca Fileborn and Fiona Vera-Gray, "'I want to be able to walk the street without fear': transforming justice for street harassment," *Feminist Legal Studies* 25, no. 2 (2017): 203–227.

To some extent, buses were considered safer than trains to travel on because the driver was visible and accessible. Visible and active staff was the main reason why the exception to public transport woes were the ferries at Circular Quay:

> I catch the Manly ferry everyday. One night I was the only girl on the last ferry home and there was a creepy guy staring at me, the crewman asked if I was okay after noticing him, and let me ride upstairs with the captain while they kept an eye on the creeper! When we got in they walked with me to my mum's car! (Manly Ferry, Late night, Age 18)

> I catch the ferry to work most days and home late at night, sometimes there's a few drunks going home on a Friday/Saturday night but the boat staff are usually walking around keeping an eye on them! Never really felt unsafe, unlike the trains and buses. (Circular Quay, Anytime, Age 18)

> I travel late nights by ferry and I can honestly say this is the safest transport option in Sydney, I've never encountered any harassment and the deckhands who work on them are extremely helpful. And I've notice them particularly look out for women traveling by themselves! (Circular Quay, Late night, Age 20)

The obvious presence of staff both when waiting and on the ferry made the most significant difference to perceptions of safety for ferry users, especially as they appear to actively keep a close eye on the passengers (the attentive staff identified as a key factor for safe spaces discussed above). In addition, ferries have space to move around and are generally not as crowded as either trains or buses. Previous research has also found that a lack of staff on public transport at night is associated with a decreased sense of safety.[29]

Waiting for transport placed women in a vulnerable position for harassment. This was particularly so for buses because bus stops are simply part of the general streetscape. In addition, late at night, the frequency of public transport declines, which increases waiting times and therefore also the potential for women to be harassed.

> I was cat called while waiting at the bus. I catch this bus everyday but whenever it becomes darker, I immediately feel unsafe. I instantly become on object of desire for people to sexualise or treat with disrespect. (Gardyne Street, Bronte Beach, Age 20)

Moving from or accessing a public transport location was another point of vulnerability for women in the city at night.

> Eventually I have to catch the bus to go to work in the evening by myself. I literally run from home to the bus stop to feel slightly less vulnerable. I wear baggy clothes to hide my body & look as shapeless as I can. (Monterey/Brighton-Le-Sands, Evening, Age 32)

> I would get honked at and cars would purposely speed up as they drove next to me to intimidate me as I walked. I would try to get picked up [by] a friend. But it would happen almost every single night for 2 years. (Near Warrawee Station, Late night, Age 21)

> Very dark side laneway connecting two streets – no decent lighting or Security cameras. Feels unsafe – have heard of people being chased or harassed in this area over the years. Would avoid at night. Would be good if City of Sydney Council / Transport NSW addressed this. (Copeland Ave to Leamington Lane, Macdonaldtown Station, Evening, Age 43)

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29 Armstrong et al. *Young women's drinking experiences in public drinking venues.*
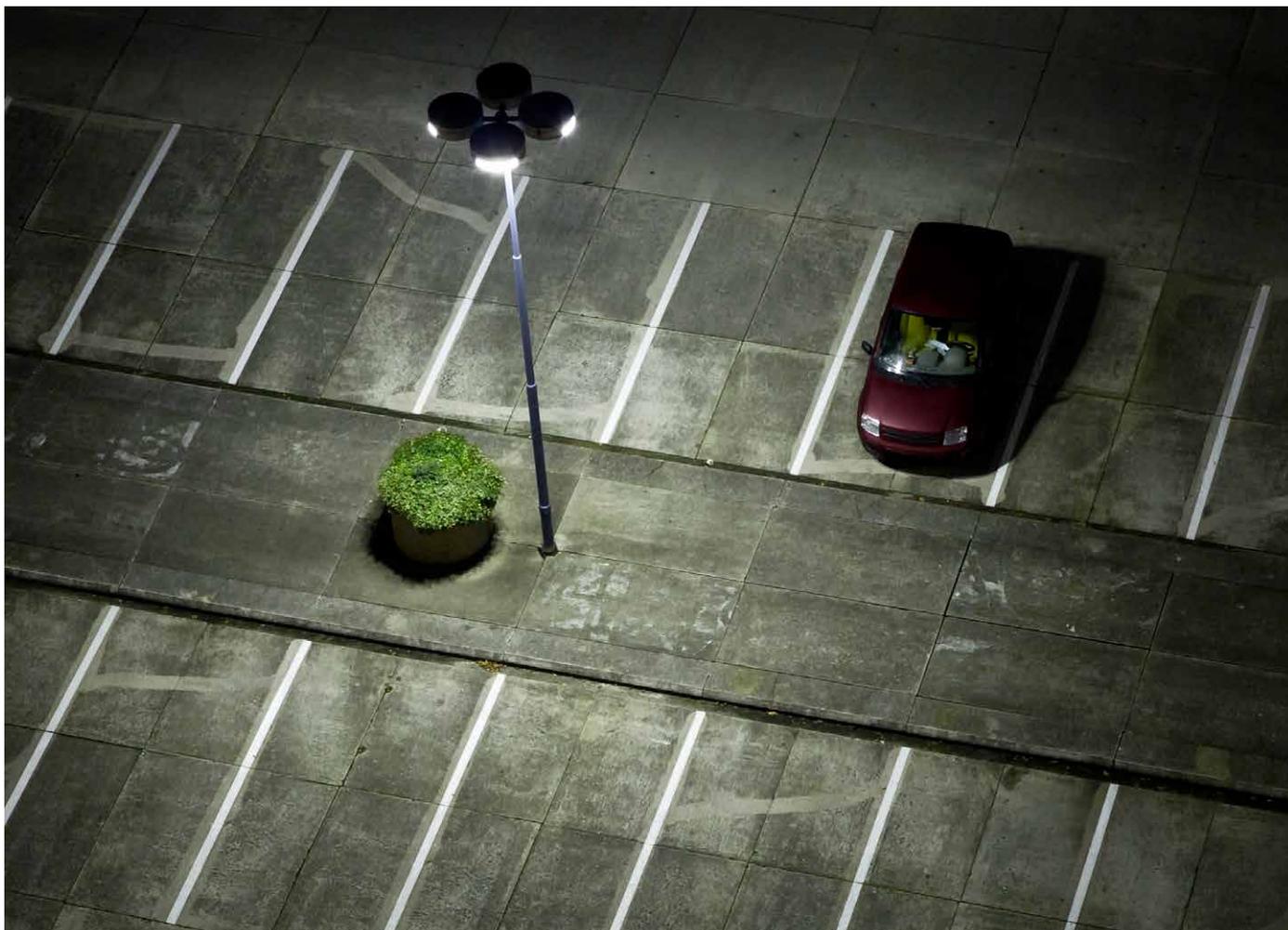
One woman respondent now drives to the bus stop to avoid the walk:

> Stanmore Road (between the 7/11 and up until about Newington College is poorly lit, which feels extremely unsafe at night. I no longer walk home from work due to theft reportings, intoxicated people/drug users and feeling unsafe when men walk closely behind me, especially in the unlit, dark parts. I have to drive to the bus stop 5 minutes down the road (which is quite inconvenient for me) to avoid walking alone. (Late night, Age 20)

For another respondent, an incident caused her to cease using public transport, despite the financial cost. As one of the Sydney Reflection Workshop participants reflected: "you have to either choose between being poor or being safe":

> There was an older, intoxicated man who touched me inappropriately. This was a number of years ago. There was security there who saw it and did nothing. I was in the bus interchange, waiting for a bus to get home from work. I bought my first car the next day. I couldn't afford it, but I refused to be put back in that same position. (Blacktown, Late night, Age 21)

On and around bus and rail stations were also places where, in particular, unpredictable people tended to congregate.

> Train station is always full of derros and feral who have no issue yelling obscene things at you, or approaching you aggressively. Eyes down, make no eye contact. Defo no night time travel. (Blacktown Station, Evening, Age 37)

Central Station and associated bus hubs were the locus of many bad pins as might be expected for a critical and busy part of the public transport network in Sydney. The bus stops were noted as the site of catcalling, leering and groping in the evenings. The train station itself had not only such incidents, but the design of the walkways and Belmore Park in front were described as problematic, as were the persistent presence of unpredictable people and too many hidden spots where attacks might be possible.

> I won't change trains here anymore, there's always scary looking people around and the tunnels are so dingy and dirty (Anytime, Age 29)

A man in his 60s would regularly make me feel uncomfortable in Central Station and on this street on my way to work at around 5.30am (when it was dark). Started to make me quite scared after, so I changed routes or made sure others were around. (Morning, Age 22)

Often harassed here when I pass through after work. It's a renowned area to avoid, especially when it gets darker. (Belmore Park, Evening, Age 21)

Other public transport locations included:

- Blacktown Station
  - "I never feel safe walking through this station day or night because of the people at the station. This is the scariest station in Sydney."
  - Multiple pins from women followed, groped, catcalled regularly and at any time of the day
- Hornsby Station and surrounding streets
  - Presence of drug/alcohol affected men being abusive, aggressive and threatening
- Parramatta Station
  - Presence of drug/alcohol affected men being abusive, aggressive and threatening

- Around St Leonards Station
  - Presence of drunk and aggressive people at night
  - Tunnels and carparks dark and intimidating

The area around rail stations included the car parks for those parking and then taking the train into the city, and were also an identified problem:

Regularly stared at, sometimes commented on by men when walking from train station to car at night. (Meadowbank Station, Late night, Age 24)

While this area is generally safe, the train station car parks are very poorly lit and so when travelling back late at night I always walk quicker than usual to get to my car and look over my shoulder while walking. I don't know what to do to try and make this better. (Edmondson Park Station, Evening, Age 26)

What do women do?

Most of the women in the city at night participating in Free to Be did not respond to the harasser – less than 2% of comments noted response. They did, however, institute a series of tactics to attempt to prevent or mitigate a similar occurrence in the future. Women taking responsibility for their own safety is a common solution, given what seems to be the intractability of sexual harassment in wider society.[30]

Tactics included:

- Never returning to the location. See Table 4 for the use of the tag for this outcome, which was one in five (20%) for those in the city at night for recreation. This, of course, has profound consequences for the viability of businesses in the locale.

- Being hyper-aware and/or cautious of surroundings – this was implicit in all the comments and explicit in at least one-quarter of them.

  I have to be on the phone to someone as I go through here to make sure I get home safe. (ANZAC Park, Evening, Age 25)

- Avoid being in a location when they are on their own (Table 4). 45% of all Sydney city pins tagged this response, which jumped to 49% for those commuting at night but held relatively stable for those out for recreation (44%).

- Women walked different routes, got out at different stops and/or essentially adjusted their mode and route of transportation to avoid certain locations:

  Very dark lane connects Womerah and Barcom Avenue with William St which is where the bus stop is. It feels very unsafe at night and I'll walk the long way around to avoid it. (Darlinghurst, Evening, Age 45)

The path from the light rail goes through a park and there's no lighting at night, I avoid getting off here if I'm alone at night even though it's much closer to home. (Hawthorne Station, Late night, Age 29)

I have a rule that I cab it home any time after 9pm. The $30 from the city is fully worth it for peace of mind. (Evening, Age 43)

Now I get an expensive Uber instead. (Barangaroo, Late night, Age 23)

There were a number of respondents who declared that they no longer go out into the city at night because of the anticipated levels of harassment. As noted earlier, the impacts that harassment can have on young women's use of public space is profound and this outcome is consistent with previous research.[31] A small number of women in the Free to Be survey quit their job or moved because of harassment. One even physically altered her appearance because of the severity of threats she received:

A stranger tried to get into a taxi I was getting in but the taxi driver asked if I knew him. I said no. The taxi driver told him to get out. He wouldn't, so the taxi driver then dragged the man out. As we drove away the man screamed abuse and that he knew what I looked like and would kill me if he saw me again. I changed my appearance, hair colour. (Hornsby Station, Late night, Age 19)

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30 Johnson and Ebony Bennett, *Everyday sexism*.

31 In particular: Vera-Gray, *Men's intrusion, women's embodiment;* Fiona Vera-Gray, *The right amount of panic: how women trade freedom for safety* (Policy Press, 2018).

Recommendations

Free to Be gave women, including young women, an opportunity to identify and share public spaces that make them feel unsafe and uneasy, or happy and safe. It empowered them to call out unsafe experiences and identify spaces where change needs to occur.

Some respondents offered ideas to change the situation:

> *I wish the police or government would listen to women's stories and do something about this place. (Belmore Park, Anytime, 25)*

> *After 10pm it would be great to have staff that could make younger girls feel safer in this area. There is an uncomfortable feeling if you are a woman that is by herself or even in a pair. Having staff or volunteers that would show their presence and be able to take initiative if men leer or make girls feel unsafe. Especially nightriders. (Railway Square, Late night, Age 24)*

To improve safety at night-time in Sydney, the research suggests that there must be better consideration of the varying experiences of different groups of night city users when planning and designing venues, policy and projects. This research also reveals that it is likely that the experiences of women in the city at night are not well factored into decisions that affect the urban environment – this must be changed at all levels of government as well as in decisions made by individual businesses.

Street harassment is interconnected with other forms of gender-based violence and abuse. It is important to recognise that the efforts suggested here must complement and work alongside efforts to tackle gender-based violence more broadly, including those aiming to change community attitudes towards violence, and respectful and ethical relationships education. In particular, gender-sensitive design practices and strategies have been shown to be successful in making spaces safer for all.

Cultural change

While there are some useful interventions that can be made in relation to how we design and manage public space, or how we create safe venues and improve response and reporting, these are dealing with the symptoms of a larger underlying issue – men's attitudes towards women and other disadvantaged groups. We must redouble our efforts to change a culture that allows men to think that harassment and assault are acceptable.

Without addressing gender norms and power relations to create a societal and cultural shift, even implementing every one of the interventions below will not solve this problem.

Women's voices

Consistent across many of the issues this paper has identified is an ongoing lack of women's perspectives in how we plan and manage public space. It is a simple fact that women, especially young women, are generally not included in conversations about the shape of our city.

We must work to strengthen girls', young women's and women's agency over decisions that affect them, and specifically their ability to fully participate in public life.

To address this, Local and State Government should apply a 'gender lens' to all considerations of changes to the city – developing policy in consultation with young women and experts in gender-based safety/city-planning.

This includes any future night-time entertainment related policy such as future reviews of the lockout laws or the recently considered City of Sydney draft planning controls for late night trading.

Businesses can also benefit from applying this approach to consulting with their staff. For instance, engaging with female staff on operational changes that would affect work hours, location, office layout and access.

Specific recommendations:

NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet and Women NSW

- Fund public education campaigns targeting cultural change, especially with regards to:

  – Bystander tactics.

  – What sexual harassment is and its deleterious, lingering impacts on women.

- Develop a more sophisticated mechanism to encourage reporting of both 'minor' and 'serious' incidents. This may appear as a mobile-friendly version of the *Free to Be* app. Given current low levels of reporting, this should be accompanied by campaigns encouraging women and others impacted by harassment to report, and the implementation of training to officers who would respond to these reports.[32]

Local government

- Use data collected from women (through new online reporting mechanisms or advisory groups) to identify problem areas. When designing public spaces, specifically aim to address these issues.

- Audit the appropriateness of lighting and other design features that contribute to safety across local government areas, giving priority to places considered 'hot spots' on the *Free to Be* app. Engage with girls and women to unpack how items such as street furniture can improve safety and reporting through technology like phone charging or emergency call buttons, and embed these requirements in the procurement process.

NSW Department of Planning and Environment

- Develop design guidelines for public space that improve safety. This should draw on research on both gender-sensitive design and programs such as Queensland Government's Crime Prevention through Environmental Design guidelines.[33]

Transport for NSW

- Audit the appropriateness of lighting and other design features that contribute to safety around public transport nodes. This should include not just the stations or stop itself, but the areas around it. With identified problem areas, fund a 'Black Spot'-style program to address the most problematic areas immediately.

- Where possible, increase the availability of public and other transport in the city at night to reduce long wait times and increase the number of physical staff on night-time services, stations, platforms and waiting area.

- Considering the significant amount of construction underway in the city and its impact on the public realm, assess the impact of hoardings, street closures and other construction impacts on women's safety through reduced lighting, surveillance and visibility. Invest in design features that increase lighting and/or sightlines to reduce this impact.

Major employers

- Based on the understanding that safe, happy staff are central to the success of an organisation, survey your staff, especially junior female staff, on their experiences commuting to and from work.

- Use this information to develop 'safe travel to work' programs with staff.

- Where concerning hot-spots of areas of repeated negative experiences exist, use this information to advocate to government to fund well designed, well-staffed transport options for staff to feel and be safe travelling to and from work.

- Male Champions of Change should champion this program internally to Human Resources departments as an important step in improving staff wellbeing.

Night-time business and industry

- Train venue staff to recognise sexual harassment when it occurs, to act as positive bystanders, and to respond appropriately to any reports made.[34] This could include the roll out of programs such as 'Ask for Angela' in more suburbs across Sydney.

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32 The British Transport Police 'Report it to stop it' campaign provides a good example here.

33 Queensland Government 2007, *Crime Prevention through Environmental Design,* <https://www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/cscp/safetypublic/documents/cptedparta.pdf>.

34 There are already examples of such training that has been implemented in Australia and internationally, such as the Good Night Out campaign developed by anti-street harassment group *Hollaback!* in the UK, the 'Safe Bars' initiative implemented in the United States, and the current Victorian government 'Taskforce on Sexual Harassment and Assault in Live Music Venues,' which is currently piloting and evaluating venue training and promotional materials.

Our partners

About Plan International

Plan International is a global independent development and humanitarian organisation. As one of the oldest, largest and most experienced organisations in our field we work alongside children, young people, supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the injustices facing girls and the most marginalised children around the world.

About Monash University XYX Lab

XYX – Gender and Place research lab is a team of experienced design researchers led by Associate Professor Nicole Kalms exploring gender-sensitive design practices and theory. The work operates at the intersection of gender, identity, urban space and advocacy. Through the research, they bring together planners, policy makers, local government and stakeholders to make tangible the experiences of underrepresented communities in urban space and planning. The XYX Lab analysed the data from the first iteration of Free to Be, and the 2018 Safer Cities project investigating women's experiences of safety in public places in Lima, Madrid, Kampala, Dehli and Sydney. These research projects laid the groundwork for this current report, Safety after dark: Creating a city for women living and working in Sydney

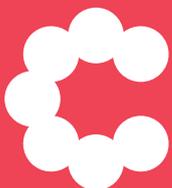# With special thanks to our sponsors

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