

Attachment A

**Alternative Sound Criteria – Special
Entertainment Precincts Management Plan**

Special entertainment precincts management plan



Contents

Introduction	2
Trading hours	5
Sound plan	10
Governance and engagement	21

Table of figures

Figure 2. Special entertainment precincts map	4
Figure 2. Late night management area trading hours	6
Figure 3. City living area trading hours	7
Figure 4. Local centre trading hours	7
Figure 5. Extended trading hours – approval is required	9
Figure 6. Sound category areas	14
Figure 7. Sound criteria – measured externally	15
Figure 8. Sound criteria – measured internally	16
Figure 9. Non-residential receiver sound criteria adjustments	17
Figure 10. Optional third octave band assessment criteria external	19
Figure 11. Optional third octave band assessment criteria internal	19

Introduction

The purpose of this plan

This plan aims to provide balanced management of nightlife by supporting late-night activity and live music and performance while also protecting local amenity and managing potential impacts.

The plan should help establish operational certainty for existing and future businesses and residents.

The purpose of the plan is to set trading hours and sound levels for businesses within special entertainment precincts.

How this plan applies

This plan applies to special entertainment precincts identified in [\[add section\]](#) of the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 and shown in figure 1 and at [\[add link\]](#).

In terms of sound, the plan:

- **does** regulate sound from entertainment activity from premises within a special entertainment precinct
- does **not** regulate other types of sound, such as mechanical ventilation, construction or waste management
- does **not** address sound from temporary events in public space, for example a parade in the street, market in a square, concert in a park, or busking
- does **not** regulate sound from private homes.

In terms of trading hours, the plan:

- **does** set trading hours for all premises in the special entertainment precinct including both licensed and unlicensed businesses
- **does** override trading hours set by condition in a development consent
- does **not** derogate from existing approved trading hours where they are longer than those available under the plan
- **does** provide 'extended' hours with development consent
- does **not** set or override liquor licence trading hours – these continue to be regulated by Liquor & Gaming NSW.

In terms of management and compliance, the plan:

- **does** set our approach to governing, monitoring and evaluating the special entertainment precincts
- **does** establish processes for Council-led regulation of premises within a special entertainment precinct, including regulating trading hours and managing noise complaints for unlicensed premises

- does **not** establish processes for managing noise complaints for licensed premises – these processes are managed by Liquor & Gaming NSW.

The plan does **not** apply to adult entertainment, sex services and restricted premises. This is a restriction imposed by the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Objectives

The objectives of the special entertainment precincts are to:

1. Enable businesses to invest in and offer more live music, culture, entertainment and performance as part of their regular activities
2. Foster vibrant, inclusive, mixed-use neighbourhoods that support local community amenity
3. Improve quality, safety and diversity of the late-night offering
4. Enhance economic outcomes, supporting businesses to thrive
5. Streamline the process for businesses and the City of Sydney to make it easier and more affordable to operate late night trading premises

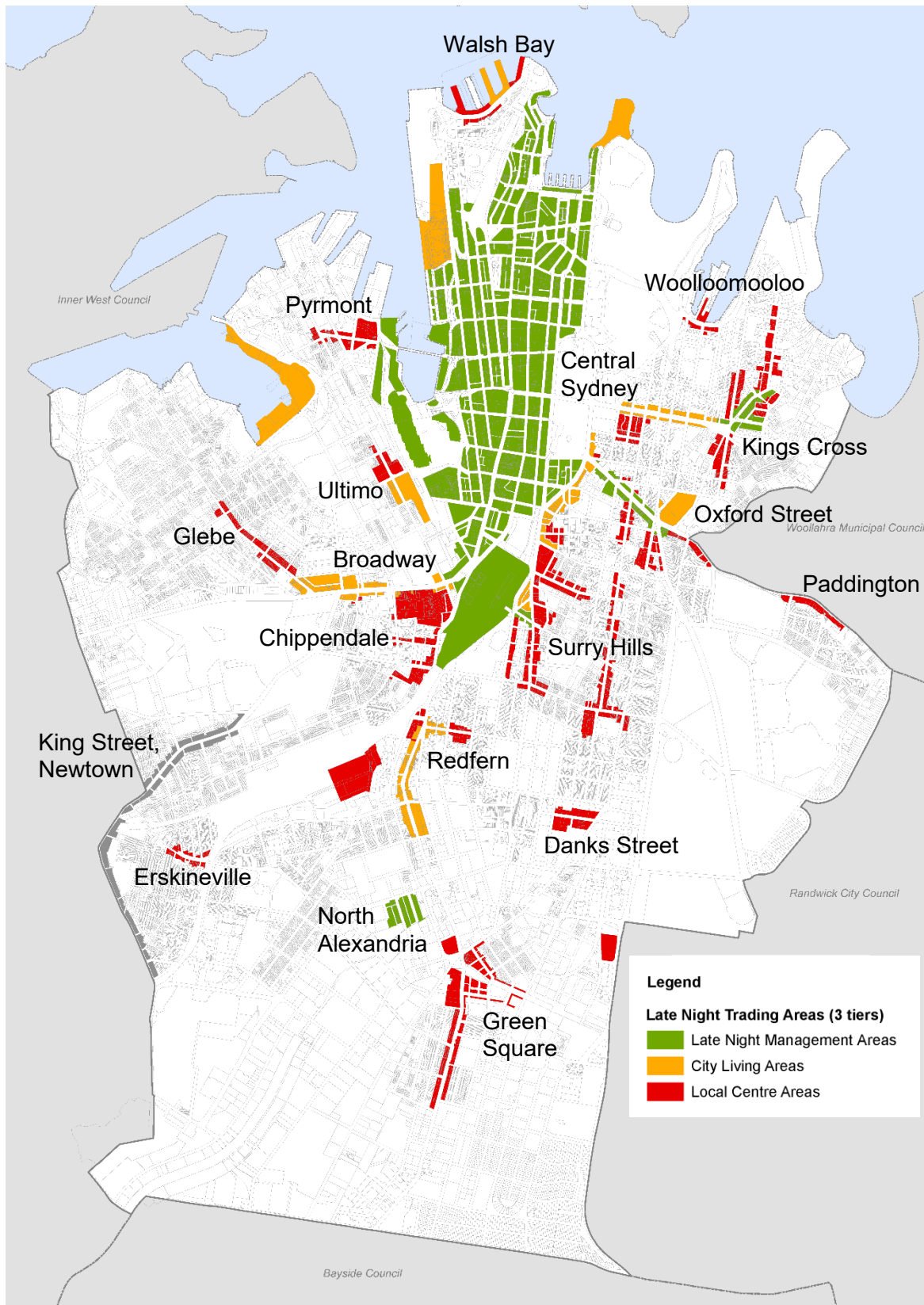


Figure 2. Special entertainment precincts map

Trading hours

How businesses can trade later

More flexibility for businesses

Businesses in a special entertainment precinct may trade up to the hours shown in figures 2 to 4.

These hours override any condition for trading hours on a development consent.

The plan does not apply to adult entertainment, sex services and restricted premises.

Businesses with existing approvals to trade later than the hours listed in figures 2 to 4 may continue to do so.

Businesses may lodge a development application for extended hours available under the Sydney DCP 2012, with renewals and further extensions under the existing trial period process.

Liquor & Gaming NSW establishes liquor licence trading hours

Premises that are licensed to sell alcohol will have 2 sets of trading hours:

- DA trading hours in their conditions of consent
- Liquor licence trading hours – not affected by this plan.

Businesses with a liquor licence that is more restrictive than the special entertainment precinct hours in figures 4 to 6 must contact Liquor & Gaming NSW to amend their licence conditions.

Identifying the trading hours that apply to a business

Three late night trading tiers

There are 3 tiers of late-night trading with their own trading hours. To check which tier applies, use the map at figure 1 or [\[link\]](#).

- Late Night Management (green areas) – see trading hours in Figure 2
- City Living (yellow areas) – see trading hours in Figure 3
- Local Centres (red areas) – see trading hours in Figure 4

Three business categories

Trading hours also vary for different categories of business. Lower impact venues can trade a bit later. The categories are:

- **Category A – High impact premises:** These are venues that sell alcohol and have capacity for more than 120 patrons. Examples include hotels, pubs, nightclubs and karaoke venues. This category also includes dedicated performance venues like theatres or concert halls with a capacity for more than 250 patrons.
- **Category B – Low impact premises:** These venues may sell alcohol and have capacity for less 120 patrons, or any commercial premises that may trade late and have the potential to impact on local amenity or safety. Examples include bars, small bars and some pubs and restaurants. It also includes unlicensed premises such as gyms in residential buildings, takeaway food shops and convenience stores. This category is for dedicated performance venues with a capacity for up to 250 patrons.
- **Category C – Unlicensed premises:** These include any retail premises or business premises that does not sell, supply or allow the consumption of liquor on or off the premises or hold any licence under the *Liquor Act 2007*. Examples include grocery stores, clothing stores, bookstores, homewares, dry cleaners, banks and hairdressers. This category does not include takeaways, cafes and restaurants, convenience stores, gyms in residential buildings and convenience stores.

Figure 2. Late night management area trading hours

		Category A Larger venues and nightclubs		Category B Small bars, clubs and restaurants		Category C Unlicensed shops and hairdressers
		Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor
Late Night Management areas Including Central Sydney, Oxford Street and Kings Cross	SEP hours – no approval needed	6am to midnight	9am to 10pm	6am to 2am	7am to 10pm	6am to 2am
	Program incentive*	To 1am	–	To 3am	–	–
	Dedicated venue*	To 2am	–	To 4am	–	–

*Businesses must meet eligibility requirements and be on Liquor & Gaming NSW's approved list to access incentive hours. Please see 'How to access live music and performance incentives' below.

Figure 3. City living area trading hours

		Category A Larger venues and nightclubs		Category B Small bars, clubs and restaurants		Category C Unlicensed shops and hairdressers
		Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor
City Living areas Including Barangaroo, Broadway and William Street	SEP hours – no approval needed	7am to 11pm	9am to 10pm	7am to 1am	7am to 10pm	7am to 1am
	Program incentive*	To midnight	–	To 2am	–	–
	Dedicated venue*	To 1am	–	To 3am	–	–

Figure 4. Local centre trading hours

		Category A Larger venues and nightclubs		Category B Small bars, clubs and restaurants		Category C Unlicensed shops and hairdressers
		Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor
Local Centre areas Including Crown Street, Glebe Point Road and Chippendale	SEP hours – no approval needed	7am to 10pm	9am to 10pm	7am to 11pm	7am to 10pm	7am to 11pm
	Program incentive*	To 11pm	–	To midnight	–	–
	Dedicated venue*	To midnight	–	To 1am	–	–

*Businesses must meet eligibility requirements and be on Liquor & Gaming NSW's approved list to access incentive hours. Please see 'How to access live music and performance incentives' below.

How to access live music and performance incentives

We want more live music, performance, and cultural programming across our local area.

Liquor & Gaming NSW offer incentives for putting on live music and performance:

- 80% discount on liquor licence fees
- on the night of a performance, a 2-hour trading extension (see dedicated venue hours in figures 2 to 4)
- with regular performances, 1-hour trading extension every day (see program incentive hours in figures 2 to 4)

To access these incentives, businesses need to meet Liquor & Gaming NSW's eligibility criteria and be on their published [list of approved venues](#). Businesses can apply to be added to the list on the [Liquor and Gaming NSW website](#).

Once a business is on Liquor & Gaming NSW's approved list of venues, the incentive hours in figures 2 to 4 can override an existing development consent. This means a DA modification is not required to access the dedicated venue or program incentive hours.

How to apply for extended trading hours

Businesses may be able to trade later than the hours in figures 2 to 4 by applying for extended hours shown in figure 5 through a development application.

Businesses must apply to renew extended hours after the first 2 years, and then every 5 years. This allows us to work with venue operators to make sure late trading continues to be well managed.

To access 'extended' trading hours businesses will need to apply with:

- an application to modify an existing development consent
- a statement of environmental effects
- an updated plan of management that covers the proposed extended hours
- a noise impact assessment may be required, depending on the business type and activity.

Extended hours are governed by Section 3.15 Late Trading Management in the Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 at [\[add link\]](#)

For advice, you can speak to a duty planner [\[add link\]](#).

Figure 5. Extended trading hours – approval is required

		Category A Larger venues and nightclubs		Category B Small bars, clubs and restaurants		Category C Unlicensed shops and hairdressers
		Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor
Late night management	Extended	24 hours	9am to 1am	24 hours	7am to 1am	24 hours
City Living	Extended	7am to 5am	9am to midnight	6am to 5am	7am to midnight	24 hours
Local centre areas	Extended	7am to midnight	9am to 10pm	6am to midnight/2 am*	7am to 10pm	6am to 2am

*Proposals for extended indoor hours may be approved to 2am but only where entry and exit of all patrons will be on a main street and not a laneway, or mainly residential area.

Sound plan

This section outlines sound criteria for the regulation of sound from entertainment activity in commercial premises in special entertainment precincts.

In terms of sound, the plan:

- **does** regulate entertainment sound from premises within a special entertainment precinct
- does **not** regulate other types of sound, such as mechanical ventilation, construction or waste management
- does **not** address sound for temporary uses, for example events in public space or busking
- does **not** regulate sound from private homes.

Liquor & Gaming NSW is the lead regulator for entertainment sound from licensed premises.

The City of Sydney is the lead regulator for entertainment sound from unlicensed premises.

This sound plan overrides the existing noise rules in development consents and liquor licences with one simpler, consistent approach for all special entertainment precincts.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Entertainment sound	Includes sound from music, other types of entertainment such as karaoke or trivia and patron noise.
Venue	A business of any type (including food and beverage, entertainment, retail) which is or could be the source of entertainment sound.
Receiver	A property affected by entertainment sound. Most often the receiver is a residential property, but it could also be medical facilities, hotel or visitor accommodation or education facilities.
Decibel (dB)	Decibel (dB) is the unit used for measuring noise levels.
dBA	A-weighted decibels (dBA) measure in way that reflects how the human ear hears different frequencies. This scale matches well with how people experience loudness. An increase or decrease of about 10dB sounds roughly twice as loud or half as loud, while a change of 2 to 3dB is barely noticeable.

Term	Definition
Frequency	The rate of repetition of a sound wave. Frequency is measured in Hertz (Hz), or cycles per second. Human hearing ranges from around 20Hz to 20kHz (2000Hz).
Octave band	The most used frequency bands are octave bands, in which the centre frequency of each band is twice that of the band below it.
Low frequency	Long wavelength sound associated with low musical notes, bass and rumble. The audible low frequency octave bands of interest in room acoustics and sound insulation reviews are usually from 31.5Hz to 125Hz or 250Hz.
Background noise level	The background level is the baseline sound level in an area or the 'urban hum'. It is roughly the level of the quietest periods during breaks between intermittent sounds such as passing cars or birds. It is usually measured using L90.
Ambient noise level	The ambient noise level is the existing sound level in an area, usually measured using the equivalent continuous sound level (Leq). It includes the background sound and intermittent sounds.
L10 (period)	This is the sound level that is exceeded for 10% of the measurement period. This is commonly accepted as the typical maximum noise levels.
L90 (period)	This is the sound level that is exceeded for 90% of the measurement period. This is commonly accepted as the background noise level or typical minimum noise level.
LAeq (period)	This is the average noise level over a measurement period, adjusted to reflect how the human ear hears sound. It represents the total sound energy over that time and expresses it as one continuous average level.

Principles and approach

Objectives of the sound plan

- To protect reasonable neighbourhood and residential amenity while supporting businesses that provide live music and entertainment
- To provide operational certainty and protect venues from unreasonable noise complaints
- To ensure the management of special entertainment precincts recognises and responds to their unique context and future desired character
- To have sound criteria which are measurable and easily applicable for regulators

Approach and key principles

The sound plan establishes fixed sound levels for different neighbourhoods, recognising that background sound levels vary across the local area. It creates 4 sound category areas (SCA1–SCA4), from the loudest to the quietest, each with its own noise criteria.

Sound limits change across 3 daily time periods:

- day and evening (7am to 10pm) – more flexible to support entertainment
- early night (10pm to midnight) – a transition period
- late night (midnight to 7am) – stricter sound criteria to protect residential amenity.

Sound levels are measured outside, at the façade of the receiving property. External criteria also apply to non-residential receivers, with limits that are less strict than for homes.

Internal sound criteria are only used when external measurements don't reflect how sound is transmitted, such as when a venue and receiver share walls or are in the same building.

Guidance for managing entertainment sound

The City of Sydney local area is a lively mixed-use place. Our approach to special entertainment precincts aims to balance more live music, activity and nightlife with the reasonable expectation of residential amenity.

This plan provides sound level limits for compliance and regulation. It also sets expectations to proactively manage sound. Everyone has a role to play in keeping this balance.

Venues

Venues in special entertainment precincts are expected to take proactive and reasonable steps to manage entertainment sound and minimise impacts on nearby residents. This includes:

- maintaining well configured sound systems
- keeping doors and windows closed after 10pm where possible
- adding acoustic seals to doors and windows
- monitoring sound levels
- actively managing patron behaviour at entry and exit points
- setting up outdoor dining so people sitting together are close and tables are small to help reduce sound levels
- adjusting performance or operational settings when issues arise
- responding promptly and constructively to concerns raised.

Venues that already have plans of management, development consents or acoustic reports with recommended operating conditions, such as using sound limiters and closing windows after midnight, are expected to continue using these measures to minimise disturbance.

The best way to manage sound is at the source. If you're renovating, consider acoustic upgrades that support long-term compliance, improve the experience for your customers and help maintain a lively, well-managed nightlife environment.

New or significantly changed venues must manage sound in line with section 3.18 of the Sydney DCP 2012.

If you're opening a new venue or relocating, it helps to think about this sound plan early when choosing a site. Picking the right location can reduce how much acoustic treatment you need and may allow more entertainment activity. Suitable sites for more intense entertainment activity are usually:

- further away or well shielded from homes
- in louder sound category areas (SCA1 and SCA2) and away from quieter areas (SCA3 and SCA4)
- have entry and exit points on main streets rather than residential streets

- close to good public transport
- in buildings with strong acoustic performance
- located in basement spaces.

Residents affected by entertainment sound

In a busy global city, it's normal to hear some entertainment activity. Our sound management approach changes with the time of day:

- 7am to 10pm – flexible to support live music and activity
- 10pm to midnight – a transition period
- after midnight – stricter setting to protect residential amenity.

Residents are also expected to take reasonable steps to manage everyday entertainment sound in their homes. Practical options include:

- using a fan, air conditioner or white/pink noise device to help mask sound
- adding acoustic seals to doors and windows
- closing windows when it makes sense to do so.

When renovating, residents are encouraged to consider the acoustic performance of windows, façades and other building elements to improve long-term sound insulation.

New homes built in and near special entertainment precincts may need sound-attenuating measures in line with section 3.18 of the Sydney DCP 2012.

If you're seriously or unreasonably disturbed by entertainment sound:

- get more information about making a noise complaint for a **licensed venue** by visiting the Liquor & Gaming NSW website
- get more information about making a noise complaint for an **unlicensed venue** by visiting the City of Sydney website.

[Exhibition note: Links will be added when this document is finalised]

Sound category areas

Four sound category areas (SCAs) are defined (see figure 6) based on the existing noise levels in the area. These include special entertainment precincts and a buffer area.

The categories range from SCA1 for the loudest areas to SCA4 for the quietest areas. Each SCA has its own sound criteria.

The criteria that apply are based on the SCA of the receiver, not the SCA of the venue creating the sound.

If a receiver is in a grey area (other areas in the map below), a line should be drawn between the noise source and the receiver. The SCA closest to the receiver along that line would apply.

While a buffer area is mapped, this plan only applies to venues located within the special entertainment precinct boundaries.

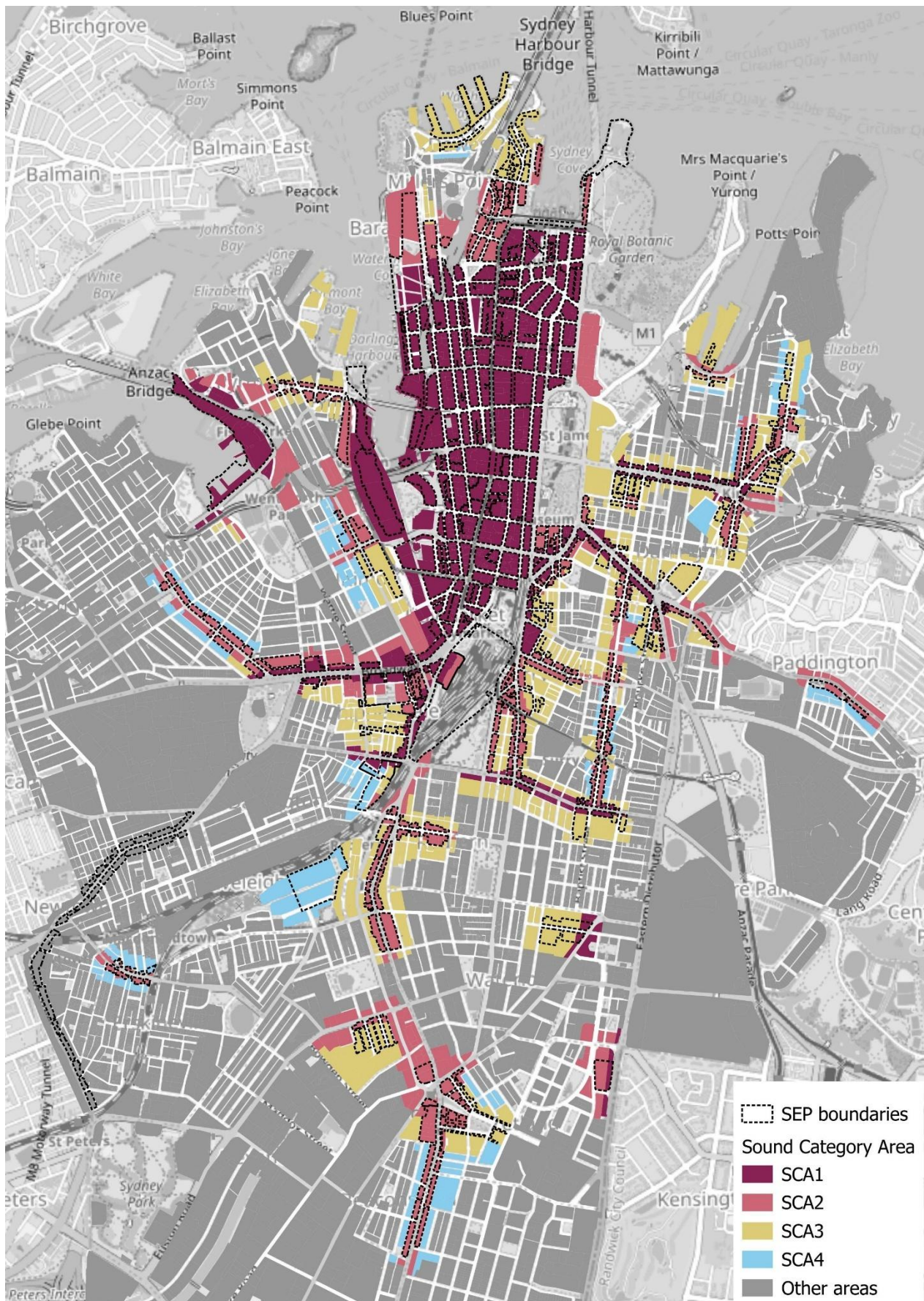


Figure 6. Sound category areas

Sound criteria for venues

The sound criteria that apply depend on the location and type of receiver.

Entertainment sound from venues in a special entertainment precinct must not exceed the sound criteria in figures 7 or 8, as measured at a residential receiver.

The criteria apply to the total sound emission from patrons and music (amplified and unamplified) both inside the venue and within designated outdoor areas.

The criteria apply to the cumulative level of all venues. In areas with multiple venues, the contribution from each individual venue should be at least 5dB below the values in figures 7 or 8.

The sound criteria do not apply to outdoor patron sound during the day/evening period when this is the only source of sound. This includes patron sound from outdoor dining on public streets, and from outdoor areas within a premises. The criteria do apply to outdoor patron sound during early night and late night times.

If the assessment location is not accessible for measurement, or if the entertainment level at the assessment location cannot be measured due to extraneous noise, the sound level can be calculated by a qualified acoustic consultant based on measurements at the venue and at interim locations.

If the receiver is not residential, entertainment sound from venues must not exceed the sound criteria in figures 7 or 8 with the adjustments in figure 9. If the adjustment results in a value which exceeds 75dB, then 75dB should be used as the applicable criteria. In areas with multiple venues, the minus 5dB adjustment should be made before the adjustments in figure 9.

Measured externally

The criteria in figure 7 apply 1m outside the most-affected window of a habitable room at 1.5m above the floor. Habitable rooms include living rooms and bedrooms, but not garages, kitchens, bathrooms or hallways.

The criteria are based on sound levels without façade reflection, so a –2.5dB façade correction should be applied to any direct measurement before comparing it with the criteria.

Figure 7. Sound criteria – measured externally

Cumulative levels, L_{Aeq} for dBA and L_{Zeq} for octave bands

Sound category area (SCA)	Days of the week	Day/Evening (7am–10pm)					Early night (10pm–midnight)					Late night (midnight–7am)				
		Octave bands – dB					Octave bands – dB					Octave bands – dB				
		dBA	31.5	63	125	250	dBA	31.5	63	125	250	dBA	31.5	63	125	250
SCA1	Sun 6pm–Thu 6pm	68	67	69	69	69	60	63	64	64	64	50	59*	52	52	50
	Thu 6pm–Sun 6pm	68 70	67 68	69 70	69 70	69 71	63	65	67	67	67	50 52	59*	52 54	52 54	50 52
SCA2	Any day Sun 6pm–Thu 6pm	63	61	61	61	61	55	56*	55	55	56	45	56*	46*	44	44

Special entertainment precincts management plan

	Thu 6pm– Sun 6pm	<u>65</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>56*</u>	<u>46*</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>44</u>
SCA3	Any day Sun 6pm– Thu 6pm	58	60	60	59	58	50	56*	52	52	51	37 40	56*	44 [±] 46*	35 43*	32 38*
	Thu 6pm– Sun 6pm	<u>60</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>56*</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>56*</u>	<u>46*</u>	<u>43*</u>	<u>38*</u>
SCA4	Any day Sun 6pm– Thu 6pm	53	56	56	53	53	45	56*	49	46	46	32 35	56*	44 [±] 46*	30 [±] 43*	25 31
	Thu 6pm– Sun 6pm	<u>55</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>56*</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>56*</u>	<u>46*</u>	<u>43*</u>	<u>31</u>

* If these levels are exceeded, an optional third octave band assessment may be carried out to demonstrate compliance (see figure 10).

Sound criteria where internal measurement is required

Internal sound criteria in figure 8 are only used when the external criteria aren't suitable. This includes situations where the receiver is structurally connected to the venue (for example, sharing a wall or located in the same building) and noise travels mainly through internal structures

The internal criteria apply inside the most-affected area of a habitable room of the receiver, 1.5m above the floor and at least 1m from any surfaces.

Windows and doors should be closed for internal criteria assessment.

Figure 8. Sound criteria – measured internally

Cumulative levels, L_{Aeq} for dBA and L_{Zeq} for octave bands

Sound category area (SCA)	Days of the week	Day/Evening (7am–10pm)					Early night (10pm–midnight)					Late night (midnight–7am)				
		Octave bands – dB					Octave bands dB					Octave bands – dB				
		dBA	31.5	63	125	250	dBA	31.5	63	125	250	dBA	31.5	63	125	250
SCA1	Sun 6pm–Thu 6pm	53	62	60	57	55	45	58	55	52	50	35	54*	43	40	36
	Thu 6pm–Sun 6pm	<u>53</u> <u>55</u>	<u>62</u> <u>63</u>	<u>60</u> <u>61</u>	<u>57</u> <u>58</u>	<u>55</u> <u>57</u>	48	60	58	55	53	35	54*	43	40	36

Special entertainment precincts management plan

SCA2	Any day Sun 6pm– Thu 6pm	48	56	52	49	47	40	51*	46	43	42	30	51*	37*	32	30
	Thu 6pm– Sun 6pm	50	57	53	50	49	43	53	49	46	45	30	51*	37*	32	30
SCA3	Any day Sun 6pm– Thu 6pm	43	55	51	47	44	35	51*	43	40	37	22 25	51* 51*	32* 37*	23 31*	18 24
	Thu 6pm– Sun 6pm	45	56	52	48	46	38	51*	46	43	40	25	51*	37*	31*	24
SCA4	Any day Sun 6pm– Thu 6pm	38	51	47	41	39	30	51*	40	34	32	17 20	51* 51*	32* 37*	18* 31*	12 17
	Thu 6pm– Sun 6pm	40	52	48	42	41	33	51*	43	37	35	20	51*	37*	31*	17

*If these levels are exceeded, an optional third octave band assessment may be carried out to demonstrate compliance (see figure 11).

Figure 9. Non-residential receiver sound criteria adjustments

Receiver type	Basis	Adjustment (relevant to basis)				
		Broadb and L _{Aeq} criteria	Octave band L _{Zeq} criteria			
			dBA	31.5 Hz	63 Hz	125 Hz
Tourist and visitor accommodation (including hotels, motels, backpackers' accommodation and serviced apartments)	Sound criteria the relevant time period and SCA	+ 8dB	+ 4dB	+ 6dB	+ 6dB	+ 8dB
Hospitals (as measured from a ward or sleeping room)	Sound criteria the relevant time period and SCA	+ 5dB	+ 2dB	+ 3dB	+ 3dB	+ 5dB
Schools (as measured from a classroom)	Only the day/evening criteria in the relevant SCA	+ 0dB	+ 0dB	+ 0dB	+ 0dB	+ 0dB

Receiver type		Adjustment (relevant to basis)				
		Broadb and L _{Aeq} criteria	Octave band L _{Ze} criteria			
			dBA	31.5 Hz	63 Hz	125 Hz
Basis						
Commercial premises (including business, office and retail premises)	Only the day/evening criteria in the relevant SCA	+ 10dB	+ 5dB	+ 7dB	+ 7dB	+ 10dB
Places of public worship, educational establishment, and health services facilities and other land uses (other than those stated above)	Only the day/evening criteria in the relevant SCA	+ 5dB	+ 2dB	+ 3dB	+ 3dB	+ 5dB

Optional third octave band assessments

Figure 10. Optional third octave band assessment criteria external

SCA	25 Hz	31.5 Hz	40 Hz	50 Hz	63 Hz	80 Hz	100 Hz	125 Hz	160 Hz
SCA1	73	65	57	-	-	-	-	-	-
SCA2-4	70	62	54	49	45	44	<u>44</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>41</u>
SCA3-4	70	62	54	49	44	39	36	31	28

Figure 11. Optional third octave band assessment criteria internal

Time period	25 Hz	31.5 Hz	40 Hz	50 Hz	63 Hz	80 Hz	100 Hz	125 Hz	160 Hz
SCA1	69	60	51	-	-	-	-	-	-
SCA2-4	66	57	48	41	36	34	<u>32</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>28</u>
SCA3-4	66	57	48	41	35	29	24	19	15

Compliance measurement guidance

Compliance measurements should be conducted at a time and day considered to be representative of the typical worst-case impact. A valid measurement should be at least 15 minutes long, with allowance for post-processing to exclude data samples affected by extraneous noise. This may result in reporting a shorter duration L_{eq} for measured venue sound.

Measuring venue sound output in real conditions can be difficult because of other sources of sound. This is especially true at night, when the criteria focus on protecting residents' acoustic amenity. In most cases, an experienced acoustic specialist will need to establish methods to estimate the venue's noise contribution.

An L_{eq} criterion is used because it's consistent and can be used in calculations, such as adding or subtracting noise sources. At the same time, existing ambient noise – such as traffic, rail, ferries, aircraft and mechanical plant – can influence the readings at the receiver.

Measurements taken at the receiver will often need to be supported by further measurements closer to the venue. These can be used to develop transfer functions that help identify how much of the sound at the receiver is coming from the venue.

A sound level meter will usually record L_1 , L_{10} and L_{eq} . Looking at L_1 and L_{10} can help distinguish steady, music-type sounds from other background noise. An experienced operator will

also note which sounds are dominant during the measurement and which ones are likely to influence the Leq reading.

In the case where external criteria apply but direct measurement is not possible at the assessment location, the calculation of sound level at the assessment location can be done by measuring at the venue and/or interim locations and calculating sound reduction of the airborne propagation (e.g., distance, shielding, air absorption).

Sound criteria for build and construction

The City of Sydney's planning controls require new development to manage entertainment sound effectively.

- **New residential development** in certain locations must be designed and built to protect new residents from entertainment sound in the neighbourhood. This helps reduce the risk of sound complaints that could affect long-established venues, while also protecting the amenity of new residents.
- **New and substantially changed venues** must meet design and construction standards that provide reasonable sound attenuation for existing residents. These requirements only apply when a venue proposes changes that would significantly increase its sound emissions, as defined by specific activities and thresholds in the planning controls.

The required sound criteria are broadly aligned with this sound plan. This means new developments will be designed to suit the sound conditions of the area. Over time, these acoustic improvements will support a well-managed, sustainable nightlife that balances activity with residential amenity.

See section 3.18 of the Sydney DCP 2012.

Governance and engagement

Special entertainment precincts working group

Nightlife and Creative Industries Advisory Panel

The City of Sydney's Nightlife and Creative Industries Advisory Panel acts as the special entertainment precincts working group. It supports the establishment, day-to-day operation and ongoing monitoring of these precincts.

The panel includes key nightlife partners, such as industry associations, cultural institutions, creatives, live music and performance venues, small bars and festivals. They provide high-level, independent expert advice to support a strong, inclusive and culture-led nightlife.

The panel is an advisory body only. It does not have regulatory powers and cannot commit the City of Sydney to actions or change planning controls. Its role includes monitoring potential issues, advising on communication with residents and businesses, and recommending practical adjustments to help the precincts achieve their intended outcomes.

The panel meets 3 times a year, with local police and relevant NSW Government representatives invited when needed.

Where to get help

Our business, creative and nightlife concierge

This service is a dedicated City of Sydney team that provides tailored guidance for businesses and creatives. The team helps people to navigate our systems and processes, including planning approvals, licensing, venue hire and funding applications.

The concierge is a quick and effective way to hear from businesses and the community. It helps us track feedback, identify new trends and issues, and address recurring challenges, including barriers caused by systems or policies.

Regular updates on the special entertainment precincts are available on the City of Sydney website [Exhibition note: Link will be added when this document is finalised]

Contact the concierge team on 02 9265 9909 or at businesscreativenightlifeconcierge@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Monitoring and evaluation

We will regularly monitor and evaluate the success of special entertainment precincts.

Reporting and data collection

We'll monitor changes in special entertainment precincts at least each year using a range of existing data sources, including:

- our floor space and employment survey, pedestrian counts, planning information and health and building compliance reports
- data from external agencies such as the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner, Transport for NSW and Liquor & Gaming NSW.

We may also survey businesses and the community from time to time.

Data sources and methods may be updated over time to ensure the approach stays effective.

Objectives and outcomes

The objectives and outcomes are used to assess the performance of special entertainment precincts over time.

Objective 1: Enable businesses to invest in and offer more live music, culture, entertainment and performance as part of their regular activities

Desired outcomes

- Businesses stay open later
- Venues host more live music, performances or events
- More employment opportunities for performing artists

Objective 2: Foster vibrant, inclusive, mixed-use neighbourhoods that support local community amenity

Desired outcomes

- Local communities can access a range of businesses and services, day and night
- Premises comply with sound limits

Objective 3: Improve quality, safety and diversity of the late-night offering

Desired outcomes

- Nightlife reflects the local character of the precinct
- Diverse business types trade later
- Everyone safely enjoys nightlife in the city

Objective 4: Enhance economic outcomes, supporting businesses to thrive

Desired outcomes

- Improved economic activity in special entertainment precincts
- More visitors in special entertainment precincts

Objective 5: Streamline the process for businesses and the City of Sydney to make it easier and more affordable to operate late night trading premises

Desired outcomes

- Fewer development applications for late night trading
- Less regulatory complexity, administrative effort and costs for businesses

Suspending or revoking special entertainment precinct status

The City of Sydney recognises that special entertainment precincts play an important role in supporting a safe, vibrant and diverse night-time economy. Suspending or revoking a precinct is a **serious and exceptional action** and will only occur when all reasonable options to resolve issues have been tried.

Under the NSW Special Entertainment Precinct Guidelines, both the City of Sydney and Minister for Planning and Public Spaces must follow mandatory procedures before a precinct can be suspended or revoked.

This section explains when we may consider taking this action, and the evidence and governance requirements that must be met.

When suspension or revocation may be considered

We'll only consider suspension or revocation when significant, ongoing issues cannot be resolved through usual compliance approaches. These may include education, engagement, negotiated agreements, improvement actions or regulatory enforcement. Action will only be considered when issues pose a long-term risk to public amenity, safety or the effective functioning of the special entertainment precinct.

Suspension or revocation may also be considered when there is confirmed evidence – provided by the City of Sydney, Liquor & Gaming NSW or NSW Police – showing repeated non-compliance with the precinct management plan or other legislation. It may also follow a recommendation from an inquiry carried out by the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner.

Thresholds for suspension or revocation

A special entertainment precinct can only be suspended or revoked through a formal Council resolution, and only when all the following thresholds are met:

- **Cumulative amenity impacts** – Businesses in the precinct are collectively causing unreasonable disturbance that cannot be managed through standard compliance actions.

- **Sustained anti-social behaviour** – There are ongoing, elevated levels of anti-social behaviour or public safety incidents over a significant period, supported by verified reports and shared agency data.
- **Exhaustion of compliance pathways** – All reasonable compliance measures – such as targeted enforcement, monitoring and collaborative work with precinct operators – have been tried, and suspension or revocation is the only remaining option to protect community safety and amenity.

Requirements for any suspension or revocation

Any decision to suspend or revoke a special entertainment precinct must:

- **be supported by verified evidence** from the City of Sydney, Liquor & Gaming NSW, NSW Police and other agencies, showing a clear, ongoing failure to meet precinct expectations
- **reflect a coordinated, multi-agency position** agreed in principle by the working group, NSW Police, City of Sydney staff and the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner
- **be a genuine last resort**, taken only after clear attempts to resolve issues with businesses, residents and partners.

Council may also choose to revoke a special entertainment precinct if a strategic review finds the precinct model is no longer suitable or effective for the area. For example, where land-use patterns have changed, community needs have shifted, or another planning mechanism would better support local amenity and night-time activity.

Our approach to compliance

The City of Sydney works to balance its legislative responsibilities, strategic priorities and available resources when making regulatory decisions. Our goal is to achieve the best outcomes for residents, businesses and visitors, while supporting a vibrant, safe and sustainable city.

To promote transparency and provide clear guidance, we provide relevant resources on our website, including:

- our [compliance policy](#)
- information about our [complaints management approach](#)
- operational noise management plans for venues in identified sound catchment areas
- publicly available information on premises and venue addresses in special entertainment precincts, including maps of relevant areas.

Who to contact for assistance

Type of complaint	City of Sydney	Liquor & Gaming NSW	NSW Police	NSW Police Marine Area Command
Feedback about special entertainment precincts	✓			
Entertainment sound from a licensed premises		✓		
Entertainment sound from an unlicensed premises	✓			

Special entertainment precincts management plan

Type of complaint	City of Sydney	Liquor & Gaming NSW	NSW Police	NSW Police Marine Area Command
Entertainment sound from a marine vessel				✓
Environmental noise such as construction noise or rubbish collection	✓			
Crime or anti-social behaviour that requires immediate attention			✓	
General non-compliance of a business, including trading hours and patron capacity	✓			

