

Item 4.

Position Statement - Lockboxes on City Assets

File No: S087656

Summary

This report sets out the City of Sydney position on lockboxes attached to its assets and recommends adoption of a formal position statement to guide management of the devices in the public domain.

In March 2026, Council resolved to investigate options for addressing the increasing use of lockboxes attached to City assets, particularly in relation to short-term rental accommodation, and to report back with a recommended approach.

Lockboxes attached to City assets present risks to safety, accessibility, amenity and the integrity of infrastructure.

This report recommends that Council endorse a clear position statement confirming that lockboxes are not permitted on its assets and outlining a proportionate, education-led approach to their management, supporting voluntary compliance and including removal from 1 April 2027, following a public notification and education period.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the Position statement - Lockboxes on City assets, as shown at Attachment A to the subject report
- (B) note that the City will commence removal of the lockboxes from 1 April 2027, following a public notification and education period to support voluntary compliance
- (C) note that during the notification and education period, the City may remove lockboxes where they present a safety risk, obstruction or affect high-use or sensitive infrastructure
- (D) note that the City will move to a proportionate compliance approach, including removal of remaining lockboxes, following this period.

Attachment

Attachment A. Position statement - Lockboxes on City assets

Background

1. In March 2026, Council considered a Notice of Motion regarding the increasing presence of lockboxes attached to public infrastructure across the local government area.
2. Council noted that these devices are commonly attached to public assets such as poles, signs, fences, bike racks, tree guards, trees and other infrastructure, and that their use has increased alongside evolving access arrangements for residential and commercial premises.
3. Council further noted that lockboxes can contribute to:
 - (a) safety risks and obstructions in the public domain
 - (b) impacts on accessibility, particularly in a high-density urban environment
 - (c) visual clutter and reduced amenity
 - (d) risks associated with unauthorised access and security concerns.
4. Council resolved that lockboxes should not be placed on Council property due to public safety concerns and impacts on Council assets and requested that the Chief Executive Officer investigate options for implementing this position, including education and enforcement approaches, and report back with a recommended course of action.
5. In response, it is proposed that Council adopt a formal Position statement confirming that lockboxes are not permitted on City assets.
6. The Position statement provides a clear and explicit policy position that guides a consistent, proportionate approach to education, compliance and removal activities and provides a clear position to the community on this issue.
7. The proposed approach:
 - (a) provides clear guidance to the community
 - (b) supports education and voluntary compliance, including an initial public notification and education period
 - (c) enables removal of lockboxes and prioritises action where they present a safety risk, obstruction or affect high-use or sensitive infrastructure.
 - (d) supports a transition to ongoing compliance and removal following the notification and education period
 - (e) ensures consistent operational practice.

Key implications

Strategic alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

8. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This policy is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 1 - Responsible governance and stewardship - supports clear, consistent and legally sound management of public assets and compliance activities, ensuring transparent and accountable decision making.
 - (b) Direction 3 - Public places for all - Protects the safety, accessibility and amenity of the public domain by reducing obstructions and visual clutter on City assets.
 - (c) Direction 5 - A city for walking, cycling and public transport - Improves pedestrian safety and movement by removing potential obstructions and hazards in high-use public areas.
 - (d) Direction 7 - Resilient and diverse communities - Supports safe neighbourhoods by addressing security risks and promoting equitable use of shared public spaces.

Organisational impact

9. Implementation will involve existing City teams, including Corporate Communications, Customer Service, City Greening and Leisure, City Rangers and Infrastructure Services.

Risks

10. The proposed approach aligns with the City's risk appetite, including:
 - (a) a "minimal appetite to take risks which may impact on our reputation where there are alternative avenues available"
 - (b) no tolerance for "unsafe work environments or unsafe infrastructure".

Social / Cultural / Community

11. The proposal supports a safer and more accessible public domain for all users.
12. It reinforces the principle that City assets are for shared use and helps reduce clutter and obstructions, particularly in high-density areas.

Environmental

13. The proposal supports the protection and maintenance of City assets, including trees, landscaping elements and heritage items.
14. No adverse environmental impacts are anticipated.

Economic

15. The proposal may have minor impacts on some short-term rental accommodation operators who rely on lockboxes for guest access. However, impacts are expected to be limited as alternative access arrangements are readily available.
16. Overall, the proposal supports the fair and appropriate use of City assets and is not expected to have a significant broader impact on local business activity.

Financial implications

17. The proposal will be funded within existing operational budgets.
18. Minor costs may arise for communication and education materials, and the removal and storage of lockboxes; however, these are expected to be absorbed within current operational budgets.
19. No additional budget allocation or variation is required, and the proposal will not generate revenue.

Relevant legislation

20. Local Government Act 1993.
21. Roads Act 1993.

Critical dates / Time frames

22. Subject to Council endorsement, implementation will be in accordance with the following timeframe:
 - (a) publication of the Position statement and supporting information materials following adoption
 - (b) public notification and education period activities will be undertaken from 1 October 2026 to 31 March 2027 to support awareness and voluntary compliance
 - (c) targeted intervention during the notification and education period where lockboxes present a safety risk or obstruction
 - (d) commencement of ongoing compliance and removal activities from 1 April 2027.

Options

23. Council could not adopt the recommended position statement and maintain status quo. This option is not recommended as it would not resolve the ongoing community concern regarding misuse of public assets or the ongoing impacts on safety, amenity and infrastructure.

VERONICA LEE PSM

Executive Director City Services

David Cornett, Executive Manager City Services