



Friday 5 December 2014

New safe haven to curb late-night violence

Young people can look forward to a safer night out in Sydney this summer thanks to a Safe Space trial organised by the NSW Government, the City of Sydney, the Salvation Army and the Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation.

From tonight, a Safe Space will be established in Sydney Square next to Town Hall to offer first aid, water, phone access and transport information to vulnerable young people who may be intoxicated or affected by drugs.

A team of specially trained Salvation Army volunteers, the 'Take Kare Ambassadors', will be on hand to offer support and practical advice, from providing water to help people sober up, to organising transport home or phoning a friend or family member.

The trial will run from 10pm to 4am on Friday and Saturday nights for the next three months.

As part of the trial, teams of Take Kare Ambassadors will also patrol the CBD's entertainment precincts to offer help or refer people to the Safe Space for further assistance.

Ambassadors will work closely with NSW Police and the City of Sydney's CCTV operators to identify people who are in need of assistance or vulnerable to crime.

Ralph and Kathy Kelly from the Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation said they were pleased to help launch the Safe Space as part of the Foundation's commitment to helping vulnerable young people get home safely.

"There are currently no prevention services in place to assist young people who are ejected from venues due to being too intoxicated, and they can end up on the street in a vulnerable state with the potential of becoming either a victim or an offender," Mr Kelly said.

"Tonight all that changes. Many parents will owe so much to the Take Kare Ambassadors, but few will ever know that their son or daughter got home safely because a team of people volunteered their time to come to their children's side when they needed it the most.

"We also need to ask parents over the summer period to play their part to tell their loved ones not to pre-fuel before they head out for a night on the town. As a community we all need to Take Kare of one another."

NSW Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Brad Hazzard, said the NSW Government was investing \$30,000 to support the Safe Space trial as part of its ongoing commitment to reduce alcohol-related violence.

“With the silly season just around the corner, the NSW Government, the City of Sydney the Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation and the Salvation Army are giving people a safe place to go and take a break on a night out,” Mr Hazzard said.

“By providing this space we are helping people make healthier choices – not only reducing public intoxication, crime and anti-social behaviour but hopefully reducing the risk of these individuals being involved in a violent incident.”

Lord Mayor Clover Moore said the City had committed \$40,000 to the Safe Space trial, which would be an important addition to the City’s existing summer safety programs.

“It’s vital that we do everything we can to calm Sydney’s streets and curb alcohol-related violence,” the Lord Mayor said.

“The City will continue to work with NSW Police and the NSW Government to create the safest possible environment we can for young people out at night. This program will play a pivotal role in helping intoxicated young people in the city sober up, seek assistance from a responsible adult and get home safely late at night.”

The Salvation Army’s Safe Space team leader, Nate Brown, said the organisation was excited about the opportunity to partner with the NSW Government, the City of Sydney and the Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation.

“Our volunteer Take Kare Ambassadors will be out on the city streets this summer ready to help those who may be in need or in a vulnerable situation,” Mr Brown said.

“Whether it’s handing out a bottle of water and a pair of thongs, helping someone reconnect with their friends, or ensuring they can access public transport to get home safely, we’re confident the Safe Space and Take Kare Ambassadors will play a vital role in helping young people stay safe when they’re out and about late at night.”

The Safe Space pilot is one of several City of Sydney summer safety initiatives to make the city a safer place for people to enjoy at night.

Six variable message signs have been installed across the CBD and Kings Cross to provide transport and safety information.

Temporary toilets have also been installed at Town Hall, Whitlam Square, Taylor Square and Springfield Mall and will be open Friday and Saturday nights from 10pm to 6am until next March.

Crowd control barriers at the secure taxi rank on Bayswater Road in Kings Cross will be in place on Saturday nights from 9pm to 6am.

And the City’s information kiosks will remain open until 9pm, providing late night transport and other important information to people visiting the city.

For more information, contact City of Sydney Senior Media Advisor Keeley Irvin. Phone 0448 005 718 or email kirvin@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au