PART D: Challenge Brief
Safer Public Spaces for Women and Girls

Smart City Innovation Challenge / SR3606702842

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Background

The Smart City Innovation Challenges are looking for leading edge technology and data solutions for place-based problems that matter to the people of NSW. Through the challenges, the NSW Government is setting new pathways to work with the emerging technology sector to drive solutions for places and people. Increasing the commercialisation of NSW Government-funded innovation for smart cities will increase the number of smart city products, services and solutions.

Overview of the problem

Why women and girls may not feel safe in public spaces

Research suggests that cities have historically been planned and designed for men and by men. They tend to reflect traditional gender roles and gendered division of labour.[1] Generally, cities are not designed with women and girls in mind.

The NSW Government is investing $30 million over two years under the Safer Cities Program to improve safety in our cities and towns, particularly for women and girls. The solutions developed through this Innovation Challenge will support the Program.

With more people living in cities than ever before, an increase in the use of public spaces must come with efforts to improve safety and inclusivity to ensure women and girls of all ages, abilities, identities, and social and cultural backgrounds feel comfortable to enjoy public spaces. Women and girls may not feel completely safe and comfortable in public spaces due to perceived threats of crime or fear of harassment. As a result, women are more likely to spend less time in public spaces than men (23% compared to 11%).[2]

Women also perceive and experience safety differently from men. In Australia, 1 in 2 women do not feel safe walking home at night compared to 1 in 5 men.[3] This is not limited to walking at night: 43 per cent of women have experienced street harassment in Sydney's public spaces during the day.[4]

While anti-social behaviour can make a place unpleasant, the physical conditions of a location also can affect perceptions of safety.[5] Women respond to feeling unsafe by changing their behaviour to alter their route, time of travel, or shifting modes altogether. In many instances, women change their public transport travel patterns as a result of harassment and violence, ranging from avoiding certain stations and bus stops to catching taxis and rideshare services home from work after dark.

Challenge Statement

*How might we use **technology** to help make **public spaces** feel **safer** and more **comfortable** for **women** and **girls**?*

Challenge Summary

We **are seeking innovative technology solutions** to help make women and girls feel safer and more comfortable in public spaces.

The challenge calls for solutions that use **technology and data.** We are looking for solutions that focus on the customer experience and can potentially be utilised on the ground. In addressing the challenge statement, consider these prompting questions:
- What emerging and digital technologies can be used or leveraged?
- What information and insights can these technologies provide?

The challenge calls for solutions for public spaces, which are publicly owned or for public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive. These include public open spaces, public facilities and streets. Smart public spaces use technology to improve the quality of life of our communities. Public spaces can have a role in making a diverse range of people feel welcome, and open to a variety of uses.

The challenge focuses on helping make **women and girls feel safer and more comfortable**. The focus is not necessarily on crime, rather how women and girls perceive their own safety in public spaces. This can be influenced by many factors and are subjective to each individual. Factors affecting perceived safety include, but are not limited to,

lighting, crowds, exits, and knowing whether previous incidents have occurred. Although we do not anticipate a single solution will reduce or prevent all types of unwanted behaviour, we are interested to understand what interventions show promise at increasing perceptions of safety and how they can work together.

Benefits of the solution

The benefits of safer public spaces for women and girls will benefit all individuals and community members. Ensuring women and girls feel safer and more comfortable in public spaces would also help improve cities' accessibility and liveability for everyone.

Solutions that make public spaces safer for women and girls have great potential to influence future changes to the policy, regulatory and commercial landscape and will inform decisions on future investment and state-wide implementation.

Solution Requirements

Solutions should ensure public spaces:

- Provide areas for women and girls to feel safer and more comfortable
- Consider the cultural and historic significance of the public space
- Address the diversity of recreational uses and options for the community
- Understand the user experience and allow for co-design with women and girls.

Solutions should consider how data and technology could help:

- Increase people's feelings of personal safety
- Make public spaces more accessible for women to improve activation
- Promote areas for women and girls to walk, play, relax, eat and exercise at all times
- Understand how women and girls use public spaces through better collection of disaggregated data collection.

We can provide publicly accessible data links and it is assumed applicants will use existing data.

Applicants are welcome to use data that is independently purchased or data they have access to themselves, such as mobile phone data.

This challenge will not fund planning, concepts or delivery of temporary activations, such as events.

Solutions will not be precluded if they address only women, or only girls, rather than women and girls.

Place Applications

Solutions can address women and girls' safety anywhere in NSW. Your application should explicitly state if your proposed solution can be applied to a particular location or place. There may be opportunities to pilot successful solutions in:

- The Rocks, Darling Harbour, and Barangaroo
- Parramatta Park.

Participants should refer to and complete all documents listed on the buy.nsw website in preparing a response.

[1] www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design

[2] https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/405512/Public-Spaces-during-COVID-19-Adapting-to-the-new-normal.pdf

[3] https://www.napcan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Mission-Australia-Youth-Survey-2018-Web.pdf

[4] Plan International Australia, Sexism in the city: Young women speak up about street harassment in Sydney, 2018, viewed 15 June 2022, https:// www.plan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ sexism-in-the-city-young-women-speak-up-about-harassment-in-sydeny-2018.pdf

[5] Committee for Sydney, Safety after dark: creating a city for women living and working in Sydney, 2019, https://sydney.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2019-03-CfS_Safety-After-Dark_compressed-1.pdf p. 2.