KINGS CROSS 
REVISITED 
Designing Out Crime 
Faculty of Design Architecture & Building 
University of Technology, Sydney 
Winter School 2013
01/ CONTENTS

02/ INTRODUCTION

03/ THE CONTEXT
- Kings Cross as an event
- Design + Crime Conference 2012

04/ FRAME CREATION

05/ ARCHAEOLOGY
- Kings Cross the place
- Kings Cross the problem
- A concise history of Kings Cross

06/ THE PROCESS

07/ DISTRACTION
- The problem
- The strip
- Laneways
- Signs of relief
- Branding

08/ EXTRACTION
- The night zippa
- The new route
- Smart wayfinding

09/ CONCLUSION

10/ WITH THANKS TO
INTRODUCTION

This booklet presents the design explorations from a student project to reduce alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour in Kings Cross, Sydney. The project, undertaken during July 2013, formed part of Designing Out Crime’s annual, intensive four-week Winter School program, in which students from different disciplines develop design explorations based on a brief passed by an external client. The client for the Kings Cross project was the City of Sydney. The project group included undergraduate and masters students enrolled in architecture, industrial design, interior design, visual communications and fashion, led by a tutor with expertise in industrial design practice, and guided by DOC staff and external stakeholders.

Drawing from research undertaken by DOC staff, a site visit and brief from the client, the student-tutor group looked at how they might approach the problem of drinking and violence in the Cross in a different way.

The design explorations shown in this booklet showcase the creativity and design skill of the students and tutors. They also represent the latest design iteration in a long-standing collaboration between Designing Out Crime and the City of Sydney around Kings Cross, and a shared vision for the improvement of this unique and conflicted night-time precinct. This report will outline the story of the design process for the Kings Cross project, from preparation and research through to the design explorations shown in detail at the end.
DESIGNING OUT CRIME'S first project on alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour in Kings Cross was completed as part of the inaugural Winter School program in 2009, with City of Sydney as the client. This project signalled the beginning of DOC's partnership with the City.

The 2009 project sought to approach the problem of violence in the Cross in a proactive (rather than reactive) way. The student-tutor group wanted to help the area to realise its potential as a party precinct, to create a more enjoyable experience for the 30,000-odd part-goers who visit Kings Cross each Friday and Saturday night.

The design process undertaken as part of this project resulted in a new conceptualisation - or framing - of Kings Cross. The framing was to consider Kings Cross as an ‘event’, analogous in scale and broad purpose to a music festival, where thousands of people converge on one place to drink, dance and have fun. Re-imagining Kings Cross as an event allowed for many of the issues plaguing it to be reinterpreted in terms of crowd management rather than crime, and immediately brought to light ideas for solutions that were achievable, cost-effective and non-adversarial. The frame offered a new way of looking at Kings Cross: as an unwieldy and undeniably dangerous, but ultimately very promising nightlife entertainment area, rather than an unredeemable zone of drunken violence, moral vacuum and high police presence.

The idea of ‘Kings Cross as an event’ was supported by the City of Sydney and several individual elements from the student projects were trialled by the City in subsequent months and years, including pissoirs, street ambassadors and artistic light installations.
In December 2012, as part of the first Design + Crime conference, a three-hour workshop focusing on the issues of Kings Cross was held 'on site' at the Kings Cross hotel. Around 50 participants attended, from a diverse mix of professional backgrounds and academic disciplines. Supported by experienced designers, visual stimuli and the findings of many months (indeed, years) of preparatory research by DOC staff, the participants undertook group work design activities to explore and record their understanding of the constraints and opportunities in Kings Cross.

As part of an iterative frame creation process, the workshop event (as well as the research and context exploration done in preparation for it) offered an opportunity to investigate and reinvestigate the Archaeology, Context and Field of the seemingly intractable problem of alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour in Kings Cross.

This workshop reinvigorated the problem area and, along with the first Winter School project, provided a foundation for a new exploration of issues in Kings Cross in 2013.
The methodological underpinning of the Winter School design process is frame creation, an iterative process of ideation based on the analysis of a complex problem and the identification of relevant stakeholders, their objectives, needs and aspirations. Following the analysis stage, a process of synthesis reveals themes based on human needs and desires that are the foundation for the development of conceptual frames and design explorations. Human-centred design is one of the main principles in frame creation; the process focuses not only on end users (of products or spaces) but also on the requirements of the larger network of stakeholders involved in the design, maintenance and operations related to the problem in question.

The frame creation process begins with capturing the recent history of the problem arena. Then, stakeholders having direct influence on the problem, as well as stakeholders that are relevant but have less decision-making power are defined. An analysis of what is important to each stakeholder and any synergies that exist between them is also identified. From this process of synthesis, some of the paradoxes of the problem become apparent, and themes, new frames and visualisations for future transformation are defined.

Drawing on a body of knowledge dating from the first Kings Cross project undertaken by DOC and consolidated in the intervening years, DOC staff used the frame creation process to flesh out the problem over a series of sessions in May and June 2013. The insights resulting from this process—in particular, suggestions for themes and design frames—were then conveyed to the student-tutor groups as a basis for their design explorations.

The essence of this research is summed up in the following section.
Kings Cross is many things to many people. It’s where upward of 30 000 young people go clubbing on Friday and Saturday nights; where 58% of Sydney City’s backpacker accommodation can be found; where both the criminal underworld and some of Australia’s most prominent artists, writers, musicians and restaurateurs congregate. It is considered the ‘red light district’ of Sydney where, for decades, young men have gone to confirm their masculinity by visiting sex shops and strip clubs. It’s also where Wayside Chapel support services receive over 48 000 visits from disadvantaged people requiring care and assistance each year; and where many people live and work, as the most densely populated locality in Australia. It’s a place of disadvantage, risk, delight and opportunity.
Appendix A1: Kings Cross: Pedestrian volumes, Saturday night 12-2am.

Kings Cross is also where more incidents of alcohol-related crime and antisocial behaviour occur than any other locality in Sydney. Pedestrian volumes of nearly 6000 people have been recorded on Bayswater Road, Kings Cross between 1am and 2am on a Saturday night. While this sheer volume of people visiting and residing in Kings Cross is undoubtedly a factor in the high rates of crime, evidence suggests that other environmental, social and cultural factors lead to alcohol-related crime being more likely to occur in King Cross. The recent unprovoked attack and subsequent death of teenager Thomas Kelly in July 2012 has also heightened political and public awareness, fuelling the resourcing of standard isolated interventions.

KINGS CROSS THE PROBLEM

A concise history of Kings Cross

A modern, progressive and exciting part of Sydney with a developing reputation for nightlife, entertainment, Kings Cross was popular among the haunts, the trendy and artistic.

Kings Cross developed a reputation for going warrants and violence.

1920s-1940s

First high-rise residential building, built in Kings Cross (Kings Cross Hotel, Malabar Hotel - removed)


by 1920s

KX became the centre of modern apartment living in Australia

1930s

Office of European migrants (escorts) and assimilation of life style in Australia, e.g. KX, with delicatessens, butchering and restaurants and the rise of taxicab service.

1940s

KX was also one of Sydney's main destinations for composite entertainments, including a dance hall and club with shows ranging from burlesque and pin-up to cabaret and cinematograph performances.

1950s-1990s

Also a popular place for tourist accommodation, Kings Cross was about the only place international tourists could get a full view of the city, providing accommodation to international visitors. Today, it still retains its identity.

2010

'Lost Drinks'. A Coalition of Concerned Emergency Services Workers reported that over a high rate of alcohol-related violence against emergency service workers. Recommendations:

- Extend the time of reduced opening hours across N.S.W. for 12-month period
- Ban drinking for all vehicles in N.S.W.
- Develop a model management plan based on the Honolulu Cloth, to be adopted by all licensed premises.
- Post the price of alcohol, made up of wine with more than 10% alcohol, and hard liquor strong at the 13% alcohol after 10pm.

The Vietnam War years saw the arrival of new entertainment, such as Martin Sharp’s ‘Yellow House’ and public houses.

1970s - now

Today

One of the most popular destinations in Australia's 19,000 pubs. In 1984, the highest density of licensed premises in any locality in Australia.

Every weekend night, KX attracts around 70,000 people looking for a good time. Around 75% of these people are aged 25-30.
Drawing on a detailed briefing from DOC and the client, the students sought to view the problem of alcohol-related crime in Kings Cross in a new light. More so than in other years the client brief stressed the pragmatic considerations of local government – the demands of the local community and the need to be responsive to these in light of council’s function and jurisdiction. With this in mind, the students tried to identify the paradoxes underlying the problem: what made it difficult to solve? They examined the stakeholders, their needs and values, and explored themes that resonated with the problem context. At the end of this process, the student-tutor group had decided to focus their design exploration on two themes: Distraction and Extraction.
The frames of distraction and extraction drove the students’ design explorations. The first group focused on the frame of ‘distraction’: positively engaging and occupying patrons, and unifying the public domain to effect this aim. The second group focused on the frame of ‘extraction’ – getting people out of Kings Cross, and safely home – and proposed a concept for late-night transport that responded to the Kings Cross context.
A major problem in Kings Cross was what the students described as the ‘vacuum’ effect experienced by (often intoxicated) patrons when they exit bars, clubs and pubs onto The Strip. At night, this environment is characterised by pedestrian congestion and an overwhelming visual assault of neon lights, a ‘void’ atmosphere, a lack of safe and fun activities and nowhere (other than private premises) to sit down and take a breather. The public domain needs to provide distraction and a new atmosphere of novelty, amenity and legibility.
This group focused their designs on ‘the strip’, the segment of Darlinghurst Road between the El Alamein fountain and the intersection with Bayswater Road. The proposal includes cobbled street paving and soft overhead lighting to create a more unified and welcoming streetscape. On weekend nights a partial street closure (with emergency vehicle access only) is used to reduce congestion and support a low-key carnival-style experience for patrons on Darlinghurst Road. Defined along the new temporary public domain are ‘distractions’: food stalls from local restaurants; illuminated seating podiums for chilling out and to elevate street performers; interactive games and photo opportunities. Patrons are pleasantly distracted (from drinking or thoughts of misbehaving) and then engaged in activities designed to promote a more diverse atmosphere and a process of ‘unconscious sobering’.
Laneways adjacent to the strip are transformed into alternative spaces. Subtle ambient lighting and fixtures give each its own unique identity and mood, supporting greater diversity of experience in Kings Cross. The Red Lane on Earl Place serves as a seductive and alluring place in support of low key venues. The Blue lane on Roslyn street is a chic, slick urban space with blue luminescent lighting. A more sophisticated, delicate aesthetic is created via the green lighting in Llankelly Place. By creating character and identity, the laneway scheme provides opportunity and legibility in Kings Cross – where ‘let’s meet at 10 in the green lane near that funky jazz place’ is the way people plan their nights.
With limited numbers of public toilets in Kings Cross, a new temporary public urinal system provides relief for patrons, residents and the council. The system involves tapping into the sewage system by retrofitting access ports for a lightweight but sturdy aluminium urinal fixture into the sewage manhole covers that are dotted throughout the precinct. Utilising the sewage network reduces servicing costs and enables the use of lightweight fixtures for ease of temporary installation.

SIGNS OF RELIEF
Supporting the night markets, laneways and extra amenity is a branding and communication strategy. The branding speaks to the spectacle of Kings Cross as a night-time precinct but places it within a broader, welcoming frame of activities. To support the management of the night markets, ‘market dudes’ in friendly attire are on hand to provide assistance, challenge patrons to a dance-off or model how to chill out ‘Kings Cross-style’.
Guided by the theme of ‘extraction’, this group focused on strategies to increase patronage on late night bus services. Evidence suggests that difficulties getting transport home from Kings Cross cause patrons significant frustration and may precipitate violence on the street. Nightride bus services taking patrons from Kings Cross to suburban night-ride connections at Town Hall and Central stations are currently offered after the trains stop in the early morning; however, these services are little-used and underadvertised. The current bus stop is located on Bayswater road where the relatively narrow footpath and large volumes of pedestrians makes queuing problematic. The Nightrider buses leaving from this stop alternate between two different routes (although they bear the same bus number); one is a relatively direct route to Town Hall and the other is an indirect route via Martin place. Both require the bus to first crawl through the congestion of Kings Cross to get onto William street.
The proposal to increase usage includes a new route, new bus stop, free fare and a catchy communications and branding strategy. The drastically simplified route (a one-way straight line from Kings Cross to Town Hall via William Street), which resembles a zip, inspired the name of the service (‘Night Zippa’). The visual simplicity of the route is an important part of the marketing strategy.
The Night Zippa bus stop for Kings Cross is located on Victoria street adjacent to the Run property building. At the entrance to the precinct, the bus stop is located in a relatively open area for Kings Cross away from residential buildings and offering capacity for queuing and seating on the tiered promenade behind. As the buses do not need to enter into the Kings Cross precinct via Darlinghurst road, they avoid much of the congestion.

From the Victoria street bus stop the route is fast and direct: right onto William street then straight down through Park street to Town Hall, where patrons are dropped off at the corner of George street. From here, patrons have access to NightRider bus services to the South West, West and North West.
The Night Zippa’s branding and communication strategy responds to the target group – young people, often intoxicated, at the end of a long night. Prominent is the key message of Free, Fast and Direct. The branding has a vibrancy that sets the service apart from the standard Sydney buses and communicates the efficiency of the route. Licensed premises actively promote the Night Zippa by handing out branded stickers and displaying messages.
Night Zippa wayfinding draws on the catchy branding, simplicity of the route and prominent bus stop location. Smart technology is used to communicate where and when the Night Zippa departs to Town Hall. Light projections and smart plaques integrate a countdown clock and animated directions.
The 2013 Winter school brought new eyes to the problem of alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour in Kings Cross, Sydney. Using the frames of distraction and extraction, students took a pragmatic, grounded approach to the problem. The concepts resonated with the context and the needs of the client; they could feasibly be operationalised into design and action with stakeholder support. As part of the frame creation process Designing Out Crime will now explore with all stakeholders the steps required to implement and refine these concepts.

Epilogue:
Following the presentation of this project to the City of Sydney in July 2013, DOC has presented to the Transport for NSW Kings Cross working group. A copy of the report has been provided to the working group for their consideration. DOC has also informally discussed the work it has been doing in Kings Cross with a representative of the Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation.
WITH THANKS TO

Sincere thanks are due to the following people for their assistance with this project:

Kate O’Connor
City of Sydney

Buk Martin
City of Sydney

Xian-Zhi Soon
Behavioural Insights, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet

Marietta Buikema
NSW Government Architect’s Office

Tutor: Sarah Gibson
(sarah@designbythem.com)

Student Group 1: ‘Eat, Play, Live’:
Paul Cassimatis
Michael Fitzgerald
Elise Fancourt
Audrey Hunter
Jessica Hoang
Sylvia Kim

Student Group 2: ‘Fast, Free, Direct’:
Alex Berry
Prudence Duncan
Terry Lee
Jessica Tse