

Sex in the city: Darlinghurst sees 460 per cent increase in prostitution charges

LIA HARRIS - THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH - NOVEMBER 09, 2014 12:00AM

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IT'S become a depressing and horrifying daily sight for residents of inner city Darlinghurst — prostitutes performing sex acts, using drugs and becoming violent outside their homes.

There has been a massive 460 per cent increase in prostitution charges in the area this year and despite the crackdown by police locals say the problem is getting worse.

The Sydney local government area accounted for almost 90 per cent of all prostitution offences recorded in NSW between June 2013 and June this year, compared to 27 per cent the previous year.



The streets of Darlinghurst at night Picture: Bill Hearne

The majority of the arrests were made on Darlinghurst streets.

Local resident Pam Burling said she and her husband often witnessed prostitutes performing sex acts on men in the middle of the day in a small park in front of their home.

“On a Sunday I can walk out my front door and see a girl giving a guy oral sex in broad daylight,” Mrs Burling said.

“We’ve had guys strip naked in the park. We’ve seen prostitutes have their children with them while they’re doing drugs.”



Police patrolling Darlinghurst. Picture: Bill Hearne

Mrs Burling said one woman punched her husband in the face after he called the police to have them moved away from their home.

She said they were concerned the problem would increase significantly as the weather warms up.

"I think they're spreading out a lot more into the streets," she said. "It always gets twice as bad during summer."

Mrs Burling said she believed the prostitutes had become increasingly violent and may be spreading out more into the suburbs because of an apparent turf war with the transsexual prostitutes who operate along William St, where police allow them to work.



Anne Burling often witnesses prostitution from her Darlinghurst home.
Picture: Rohan Kelly

Neighbour Kay, who did not want her last name used, said she was often woken in the middle of the night by prostitutes outside her home.

"Half the time they're high on drugs and they scream and yell outside my window," she said.

"I think Thursday nights are the worst."

Charges for prostitution offences have risen from 19 to 111 in Darlinghurst over the past two years. The number of offences recorded in NSW jumped from 90 between June 2012 and June 2013, to 157 the following year.

Kings Cross superintendent Michael Fitzgerald said police were targeting prostitution in the area after complaints from residents that the number of street workers had increased this year.

"We have increased patrols up there. We're doing overt and covert operations targeting street prostitutes on Bourke St and surrounding streets of East Sydney," he said.

"I go to the community meetings and the residents of east Sydney are very vocal in regards to the increase in street prostitutes, so we do our best to take action against them."



The streets of Darlinghurst at night. Picture: Bill Hearne

Mr Fitzgerald said street prostitutes were legal as long as they were not working within 100m of a home, school or church. He said the majority of prostitutes targeted by police were not charged, but told to move away from residential areas and back onto William St.