

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

COMMUNITY SENTIMENT REPORT

**POLICE
PARTICIPATION
CONSULTATION**

31 August - 11 September 2024

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Community

SENTIMENT REPORT

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Introduction

The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Board is proud to have conducted community consultations, ensuring that all voices have the opportunity to be heard in shaping the boards approach to the NSW Police Force's participation in the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade.

Aspects of the relationship between SGLMG and the Police have come under the spotlight recently, in response to community concerns.

In response, the Board of Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras has completed community consultation sessions, that have contributed to this report on community sentiment regarding the NSW Police Force's participation in the annual Sydney Mardi Gras Parade.

The report will be shared with the Sydney Mardi Gras Board and used to help guide and inform the Sydney Mardi Gras Board on a motion to be presented at the 2024 Annual General Meeting, and will be further drawn upon by the Board and committees for any further decision making.

This consultation process has been crafted to ensure parity of voice and that all community members are able to express their views on Police participation safely and freely.

This consultation does not, and cannot, include the operational role the NSW Police Force plays at Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras events.

As with all major events in NSW, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras require policing under state law to be able to proceed. Regardless of the outcome of the consultation, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras are committed to working collaboratively with the NSW Police Force regarding policing at our events to ensure the safety of our communities.

Community

SENTIMENT REPORT

Police Participation Consultation

Objective & Scope



Objective

- Conduct an inclusive consultation process to gauge community sentiment regarding Police participation in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade.
- Invite all voices to be heard and considered in the decision-making process.
- Share community feedback received as part of the consultation process
- The Board will provide an undirected motion to the membership for Police participation in Parade that will be voted on during the 2024 AGM



Scope

To create a data-informed report for the SGLMG Board capturing the community sentiment regarding Police participation in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade, acknowledging the changes that have occurred since the cancellation of the Police Accord.



Deliverables

- Detailed report summarising the community sentiment.
- Publication of the report no later than 30 September 2024.

SENTIMENT REPORT

Police Participation Consultation

Method



Method

Data for the report has been gathered through three collection points.

1. The initial survey will utilise Survey Monkey, providing a view of the communities sentiment on whether the community believes that the NSW Police should march in the SGLMG parade.
2. The in-person and online community sessions included facilitated sessions that enabled participants to provide written reflections on specific topics and an opportunity to speak directly to board members about their views and experiences
 - 1 in-person community session
 - 2 online community sessions (via Zoom):
 - 1 in-person members only session

The consultation sessions have been facilitated by an impartial, professional community member.

3. A post-consultation survey was distributed to all participants who attended the sessions. This online survey offers an additional opportunity to gain further insight into their perspectives on the topic.

All written content, whether gathered through in-person meetings, Zoom sessions, surveys or email is attached to the report as an appendices to ensure transparency and clarity.

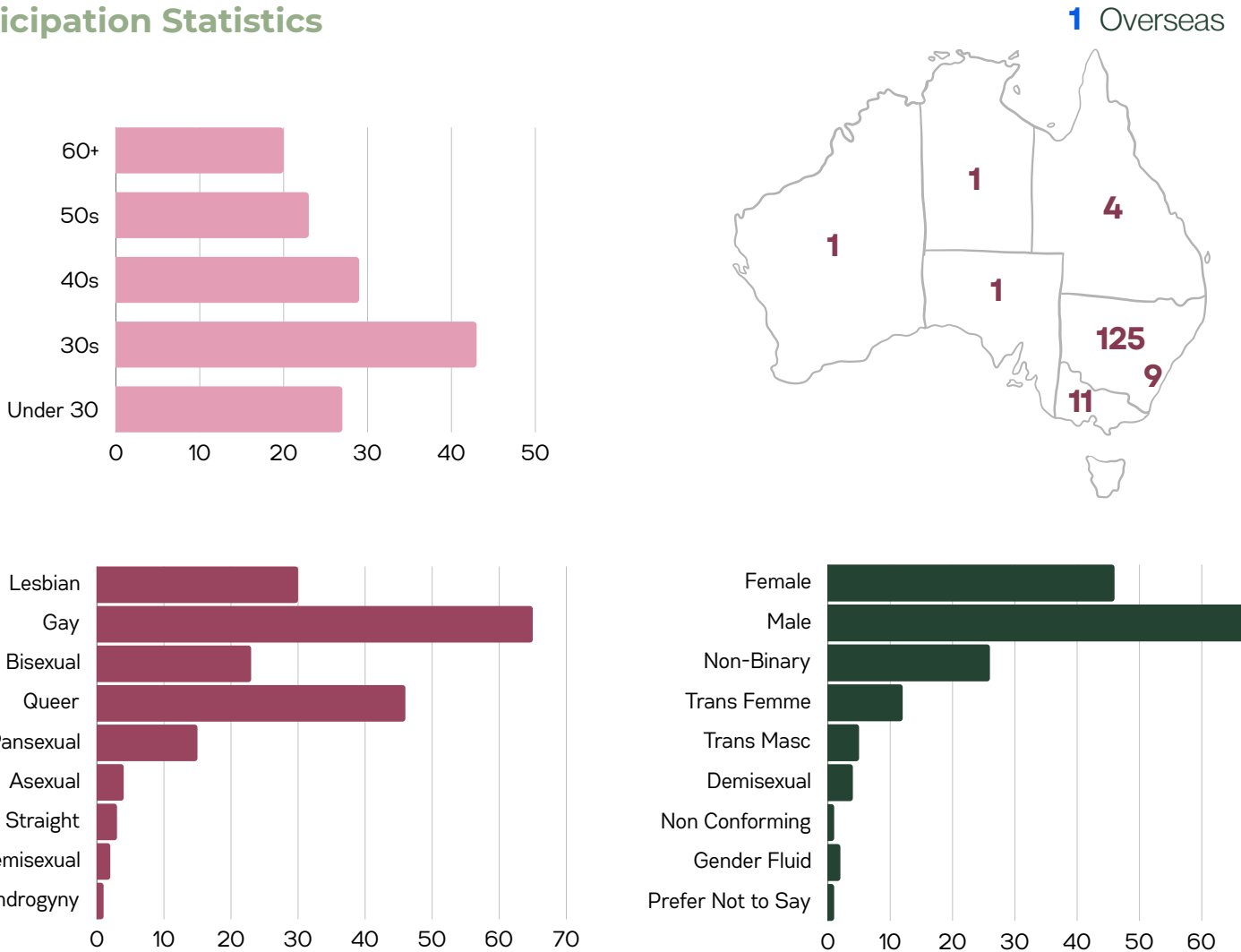
Community SENTIMENT REPORT

Police Participation Consultation

Key Statistics

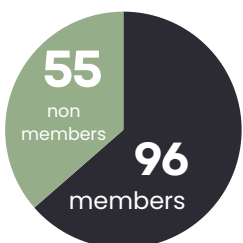
MG Membership as at Aug 2024: **3505**

Participation Statistics



Membership types that contributed to survey results

151 people registered and completed the survey



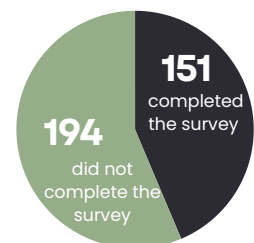
Members that contributed to survey results

96 members completed the survey accounted for **2.7%** of total membership



Members that registered to attend consultation ~v~ those that contributed to survey results

345 people registered to participate in the Consultation



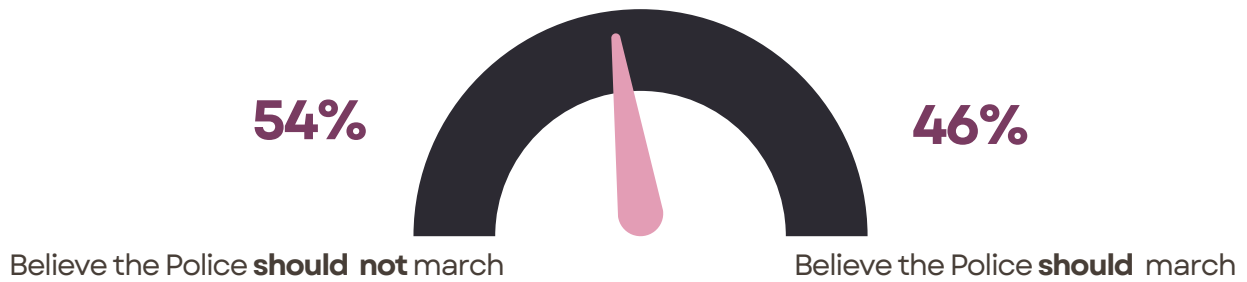
SURVEY OUTCOME

Questions posed

I believe that the NSW Police should be able to participate (march) in the Mardi Gras Parade?

- 4 choices provided: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree
- With an optional open text field for participants to provide additional context of their choice

Responses



Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
65	16	55	15

There are strong, contrasting views regarding Police participation.

Many assert that the historical and ongoing harm caused by Police towards marginalized communities, particularly in uniform, makes their inclusion inappropriate. On the other hand, some see the participation of LGBTQIA+ officers as a symbol of progress and reconciliation.

The core tension lies between honouring the parade's activist roots and the belief that it should be broader celebration of inclusion.

Notable contrasts in community views

Historical Perspective vs. Progress:

Against Police Participation:

Police are seen as historically oppressive, and their participation undermines the roots of Mardi Gras as a protest against Police brutality.

For Participation:

Some suggest that the Police force has changed and that LGBTQIA+ officers deserve to march as a symbol of progress and inclusion.

Safety and Trauma vs. Olive Branches & Reconciliation:

Against Participation:

Police presence, particularly in uniform, is seen as a source of trauma for many in the community, especially marginalized groups like queer people of colour, First Nations People, and sex workers. Excluding Police is viewed as necessary for community safety.

For Participation:

Supporters claim that participation in the parade is a way to build bridges, promote reconciliation, and demonstrate progress in Police-community relations.

Uniform vs. Non-Uniform Marching:

Against Participation:

Police uniforms are symbolic of the oppression faced by the LGBTQIA+ community, and many believe that officers should only march as individuals and out of uniform.

For Participation:

Others see the uniform as part of the officers' identity, and believe it represents a step towards full acceptance of LGBTQIA+ members in all professions, including law enforcement.

Mardi Gras' Activist Roots vs. Modern Inclusivity:

Against Participation:

Many assert that Mardi Gras is, at its core, a protest, and allowing Police to march contradicts the event's original purpose of resisting Police oppression.

For Participation:

Many believe that Mardi Gras has evolved into a celebration of inclusivity and that excluding the Police goes against the spirit of unity and progress that the event now represents.

Common themes among those opposing NSW Police participation

Historical and Ongoing Harm by Police:

Many emphasize that the Police have a long history of violence and oppression against the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly against queer people of colour, First Nations People, trans and gender diverse people and other marginalized groups. This historical trauma, alongside recent instances of Police brutality, remains a key barrier for LGBTQIA+ community members to participation in Mardi Gras.

Police Institution as Oppressive:

The Police are seen by many as a symbol of systemic oppression, enforcing discriminatory laws and suppressing marginalized communities. Their participation in Mardi Gras, a protest born out of resistance to Police violence, is viewed as contradictory to the spirit of the event.

Lack of Trust and Reconciliation:

There is a prevailing sentiment that Police have not made meaningful reparations or demonstrated enough tangible change to warrant their inclusion in Mardi Gras. Apologies without action or accountability are seen as insufficient for building trust with the community.

Police Presence as Traumatic:

For many members of the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly those who have experienced violence or discrimination from Police, the presence of uniformed officers is traumatic and makes them feel unsafe. Excluding Police in uniform is seen as a way to prioritize community mental well being and healing.

Police Participation Out of Uniform:

While many oppose Police marching as representatives of the institution, individual Police officers who are LGBTQIA+ should be free to march out of uniform within other community groups. This is seen as a compromise that separates the person from the institution.

Exclusion of Oppressive Institutions:

Beyond the Police, other institutions like the military and large corporations are also viewed as adversarial to marginalized communities. Many believe that Mardi Gras should exclude all such institutions from participation to ensure the event remains a safe space for those who have been oppressed.

Need for Police Reform and Accountability:

Many believe that before Police can be considered for participation, there needs to be substantial and demonstrable reform within the force. This includes addressing queerphobia, racism, and violence, as well as implementing the recommendations from reports like the Sackar inquiry.

Police Presence as Counterproductive to Inclusivity:

Including Police in Mardi Gras is seen as counterproductive to the inclusivity that the event seeks to promote. For many in the community, the presence of Police will exclude those who feel unsafe or threatened by law enforcement.

Symbolism of Uniforms and Weapons:

Police uniforms and weapons are viewed as symbols of violence and oppression. Their presence in the parade is seen as a visual reminder of the harm inflicted on the community, and many believe these symbols have no place in an event meant to celebrate LGBTQIA+ freedom and identity.

SURVEY OUTCOME

Common themes among those supporting NSW Police participation

Inclusivity and Unity:

Many believe that Mardi Gras is about inclusivity, and excluding Police officers, especially LGBTQIA+ members, contradicts the event's core values of unity and acceptance. Participation should extend to all community members, regardless of their profession.

Forgiveness and Moving Forward:

While acknowledging the difficult history between the LGBTQIA+ community and the Police, many see that it is essential to forgive past wrongs and move forward together constructively.

Police as Part of the LGBTQIA+ Community

Police officers, particularly those who identify as LGBTQIA+, are seen as integral to the community. Excluding them would be counterproductive to the spirit of Mardi Gras, which is about visibility and inclusivity for all, including those working in law enforcement.

Symbol of Progress and Positive Change:

Supporters view the Police participation in Mardi Gras as a symbol of the progress made since 1978, showcasing the shift in attitudes within law enforcement toward greater acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Building Trust and Relationships:

Participation by Police is viewed as an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the LGBTQIA+ community and law enforcement. It provides a platform for building trust, promoting better practices, and fostering open dialogue.

Individual vs. Institution:

Many pose that while there may be issues with the Police institution, individual LGBTQIA+ officers and allies should not be excluded from the parade. Their participation helps to humanize the institution and show that change is possible from within.

Recognition of Police Contribution:

Acknowledging the Police's role in maintaining safety during the parade and their broader contributions to public safety is seen as important.

Healing Through Participation:

Allowing Police to march is seen as a way to heal from past trauma, showing how far both the community and law enforcement have come in addressing historical wrongs. Participation signals a commitment to working together for a better future.

Non-Discriminatory Participation:

Excluding Police is seen by some as a form of discrimination, which goes against the values of the LGBTQIA+ movement.

Conditions for Police Involvement:

Many agree that Police should participate, however under certain conditions, such as not marching in uniform or without weapons, and with a theme inspired float, to address concerns from those who may feel uncomfortable with their presence, while still promoting inclusivity.

Consultation method

The sessions were divided into 2 primary sections:

1. **Participant Written Reflections:** This section addresses three key questions from the board, capturing participants' individual feelings and experiences. Participants engaged in a practical exercise using sticky notes and boards, where they were given 10 minutes to write as many responses as they wished and post them on the board that best aligned with their answers.

For in-person sessions, scribes were available to assist participants with challenges in written communication. For online participants encountering difficulties with the digital medium or typing, facilitators offered the option of a 1:1 session to ensure all voices were included in the data collection.

2. **Participant Voices:** In this section, each participant was given 2 minutes to share their personal views on the topic. This allowed for an open forum where all participants had an equal opportunity to express their opinions verbally, ensuring a diversity of perspectives was heard and recorded.

For both in-person sessions, all participants stayed as one group to speak their voice. Each of these sessions had at least 3 directors listening. For online sessions, participants were split out into breakout rooms, where at least 1 director was in each room with participants to hear their voices.

Survey responses from the post-consultation sessions have been integrated with the written reflections from the consultations to report on community sentiment, key perspectives, common themes, and notable contrasts.

Three questions were posed to attendees

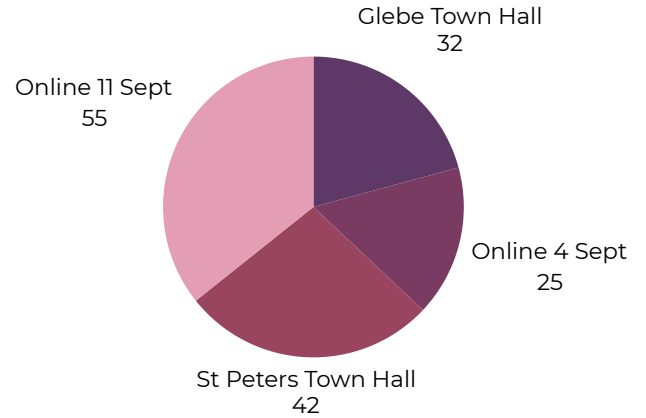
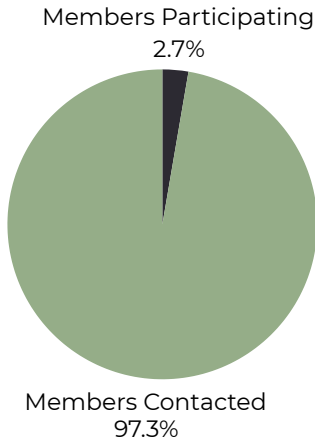
Question 1: How do you feel about the presence of NSW Police marching in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade?

Question 2 What impact, if any, do you believe Police participation in the Mardi Gras Parade has on the event and its attendees/participants?

Question 3: What suggestions do you have for how Mardi Gras can ensure that the Parade remains a safe and inclusive event for all, in relation to this consultation?

CONSULTATION

Consultation attendance



Location	Date	Registered to Attend	Directors Attending	Attended	Attendance Rate
Glebe Town Hall	31 Aug 24	41	3	32	78%
Online	4 Sept	120	5	25	21%
St Peters Town Hall	7 Sep 24	68	5	42	62%
Online	11 Sept 24	116	5	55	35%
TOTAL		345		157	

Q1 – HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF NSW POLICE MARCHING IN THE SYDNEY GAY AND LESBIAN MARDI GRAS PARADE?



Summary

There is a considerable range of perspectives on whether the NSW Police should march in the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade.

Many participants feel that Police presence contradicts the LGBTQIA+ community's history of resisting state oppression, particularly for marginalized groups, and may re-traumatize those who have experienced Police violence.

Conversely, others see it as a step toward progress and inclusivity, especially given that many officers are part of the LGBTQIA+ community themselves. While some believe Police participation promotes healing and reconciliation, the ongoing mistrust between the Police and vulnerable communities remains a significant concern for many participants.

Key Community Perspectives

Oppose NSW Police marching

Those that oppose Police participation believe it contradicts the historical and ongoing struggles of the LGBTQIA+ community against state oppression and violence.

They view the Police as an institution that perpetuates harm, particularly against marginalized groups such as queer and First Nations People. For them, the presence of Police—especially in uniform—re-traumatizes individuals who have experienced violence and intimidation at the hands of law enforcement.

This perspective emphasizes that despite training or reforms, the Police have not earned the trust of the community and that their inclusion in Mardi Gras erases the protest origins of the event and diminishes the safety of its most vulnerable members.

Support NSW Police marching

Those that support Police participation believe that allowing LGBTQIA+ officers to march symbolizes progress and inclusivity.

They believe that excluding Police is counterproductive to the spirit of acceptance and reconciliation, as many officers are part of the LGBTQIA+ community themselves.

The view stresses the importance of moving forward, acknowledging past wrongs while recognizing efforts toward reform and improvement in Police behaviour and relations.

Police involvement is seen as a way to bridge divides, promote healing, and demonstrate solidarity, particularly for younger queer people who may feel safer with Police as allies.

Q1 - HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF NSW POLICE MARCHING IN THE SYDNEY GAY AND LESBIAN MARDI GRAS PARADE?



Viewpoint:

Oppose NSW Police marching

Common Themes

Feelings of Fear and Intimidation: Many participants express feelings of fear, intimidation, and trauma triggered by Police presence, especially in uniform. This theme highlights personal experiences of violence and harassment by Police.

Ongoing Violence and Lack of Accountability: A major theme revolves around the idea that Police violence, particularly against marginalized communities (queer, First Nations People, sex workers, trans and gender diverse people etc.), is not just historical but continues today without meaningful accountability or reform.

Contradiction of Mardi Gras Values: Several voices express that the inclusion of Police is seen as incompatible with the event's historical roots and the values of Mardi Gras itself.

Re-Traumatization of Vulnerable Groups: Police presence, particularly in uniform, is described as re-traumatizing for many LGBTQIA+ individuals, especially trans and gender diverse people, and First Nations People who have historically and continue to face disproportionate harm from the Police.

Lack of Trust in Police Reforms: Scepticism toward Police reform efforts is a recurring theme, with many citing failed commitments and a lack of genuine attempts by the Police to build safer, more inclusive relationships with the LGBTQIA+ community.

Historical Context and Legacy: References to the original 1978 Mardi Gras protest against Police violence highlight the historical significance of excluding Police from the event. Participants see Police involvement as erasing or undermining this legacy.

Systemic Oppression and Institutional Violence: Many view the Police as an institution that perpetuates systemic oppression, especially against marginalized groups such as First Nations People, trans and gender diverse people sex workers, and disabled people.

Exclusion of Police to Protect Vulnerable Communities: Many say that the presence of Police hinders these groups' ability to fully participate, as it may trigger mental trauma and fear associated with NSW Police.

Individuals, Yes. The institution, No: There is some support for allowing LGBTQIA+ Police officers to march as individuals, out of uniform, rather than as representatives of the Police institution. This is seen as a way to maintain inclusivity without legitimizing Police oppression.

Symbolism and Representation: The uniform and presence of Police at Mardi Gras are seen as symbolic of ongoing harm and state violence. The Police's inclusion is seen as legitimizing a violent institution rather than fostering genuine reconciliation or safety.

Q1 - HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF NSW POLICE MARCHING IN THE SYDNEY GAY AND LESBIAN MARDI GRAS PARADE?



Viewpoint:

Support NSW Police marching

Common Themes

Inclusion and Acceptance: Many voices emphasize the need for inclusivity, even of groups like the Police, who have a complicated history with the LGBTQIA+ community. Excluding them may hinder progress and reconciliation.

Reconciliation and Moving Forward: There's a recurring theme of reconciliation, with participants expressing that moving forward from past wrongs is essential for healing and unity.

Police as Part of the LGBTQIA+ Community: Several comments highlight that many Police officers are part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and excluding them could be seen as contradictory to the values of inclusivity.

Acknowledgment of Progress: While acknowledging the painful history, there is recognition of the progress made by the Police force over the years, and many see their participation in events like Mardi Gras as symbolic of this progress.

Diversity within Groups: There is a theme of rejecting broad generalizations, recognizing that both the LGBTQIA+ community and the Police are diverse groups with varied individuals and experiences.

Need for Continued Dialogue and Understanding: Ongoing communication and collaboration between the Police and the LGBTQIA+ community are seen as key to improving relations and mutual understanding.

Representation and Visibility: Allowing Police to march is viewed as a step towards visibility and inclusion for LGBTQIA+ officers and allies, showcasing the diversity within the NSW Police.

Concerns about Uniforms and Guns: While many support Police participation, there are concerns about them marching in uniform or carrying weapons, with some proposing they they would like the NSW Police to participate as a group however in a less formal presence and aligned with the Mardi Gras parade theme.

Learning from the Past Without Being Stuck in It: Many voices stress the importance of learning from past harms while not being held back by them, suggesting that exclusion based on historical events may not be productive for future relationships.

Support for Police as Allies: Some see the Police as necessary allies in the fight for safety and equality, with their participation in events like Mardi Gras being seen as an opportunity to strengthen those alliances.

Q2 – WHAT IMPACT, IF ANY, DO YOU BELIEVE POLICE PARTICIPATION IN THE MARDI GRAS PARADE HAS ON THE EVENT AND ITS ATTENDEES/PARTICIPANTS?



Summary

Police participation in the Mardi Gras Parade is viewed differently by opponents and supporters.

Opponents assert that it negatively impacts the event, particularly for those who have experienced trauma from law enforcement, and contradicts the parade's origins as a protest against Police brutality. They believe Police presence alienates vulnerable community members and serves as a public relations tool without addressing systemic issues.

Supporters, however, see Police participation as a sign of progress and inclusivity, fostering safety and unity, especially with the presence of LGBTQIA+ officers, and driving cultural change within law enforcement.

Key Perspectives

Negative Impact

Those that believe that Police participation has a negative impact on the event and its attendees, see Police presence, especially in uniform, as a reminder of ongoing oppression and systemic violence against marginalized groups, including queer people of colour, First Nations People, trans and gender diverse people, and sex workers.

Police participation is viewed as contradicting the very purpose of Mardi Gras, which began as a protest against Police brutality, and by through their presence within the parade alienate vulnerable community members who do not feel safe around law enforcement.

There was a consistent view that by allowing Police to march, it provides the Police with an optical legitimacy, providing a positive public relations opportunity that does not seem warranted as they have not made any attempt to address the systemic issues they continue to perpetrate.

Positive Impact

Those that believe Police participation has a positive impact on the event and its attendees, emphasize its role in promoting inclusivity, unity, and reconciliation.

They view the Police marching in uniform as a powerful sign of progress, showcasing how far relations between law enforcement and the LGBTQIA+ community have come since the event's origins as a protest against Police brutality.

For many, Police presence at Mardi Gras fosters a sense of safety and security, with officers seen as protectors of the community. The participation of LGBTQIA+ officers further enhances representation and visibility, demonstrating the inclusivity of both the event and the Police force.

Supporters highlight the positive reception Police receive from attendees, arguing that their involvement drives cultural change within law enforcement and sends a strong message of acceptance to the wider public.

Q2 – WHAT IMPACT, IF ANY, DO YOU BELIEVE POLICE PARTICIPATION IN THE MARDI GRAS PARADE HAS ON THE EVENT AND ITS ATTENDEES/PARTICIPANTS?



Viewpoint:

Negative impact

Common Themes

Reparations and Public Acknowledgment: Many participants of the consultation believe the Police should voice a public apology and reparations from the Police for historic and ongoing harms, including addressing gay hate crimes and deaths in custody, as a step towards healing and rebuilding trust within the community.

Police Presence Creates a Sense of Insecurity: The presence of Police in the parade makes many attendees and participants feel unsafe, particularly marginalized members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Their participation is perceived as a threat to personal safety.

Triggers Trauma for Vulnerable Groups: Police participation retraumatizes individuals who have experienced past Police violence or harassment. This presence brings back negative experiences rather than fostering an inclusive atmosphere.

Ongoing Police Violence Undermines the Event: Police violence against the LGBTQIA+ community is still a present issue. Including them in the parade is seen as condoning or overlooking their harmful actions, which directly impacts the integrity of the event.

Over-Policing and Intimidation of Participants: Heavy Police presence, along with practices like drug dog use and strip searches, intimidates and over-Polices attendees. This creates an oppressive environment, particularly for those already marginalized by the system.

Exclusion of the Most Vulnerable: Allowing Police to march excludes vulnerable community members, such as First Nations People, trans and gender diverse people, sex workers, and others who do not feel safe around law enforcement. Their absence diminishes the inclusivity of the event.

Contradicts the Spirit of Mardi Gras: Police participation goes against the foundational values of Mardi Gras, which was born from protest against Police brutality. Their inclusion is seen as a betrayal of the event's history and purpose.

Police Marching is a Display of Power, Not Solidarity: The Police marching in uniform is perceived as a display of authority rather than an act of solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community. This power dynamic negatively affects the community's sense of autonomy and safety.

Lack of Accountability for Past and Present Violence: The Police's participation is seen as an attempt to gain legitimacy and positive PR, without addressing their ongoing lack of accountability for violence against queer and other marginalized communities.

Undermines the Celebration's Safe and Inclusive Atmosphere: Instead of fostering a sense of celebration and safety, the participation of Police disrupts the atmosphere, making attendees feel unsafe and unwelcome. This compromises the event's purpose as a space for liberation and inclusion.

Q2 – WHAT IMPACT, IF ANY, DO YOU BELIEVE POLICE PARTICIPATION IN THE MARDI GRAS PARADE HAS ON THE EVENT AND ITS ATTENDEES/PARTICIPANTS?



Viewpoint:

Positive impact

Common Themes

Symbol of Progress and Reconciliation: Many view Police participation as a sign of progress, showing how far the LGBTQIA+ community and law enforcement have come since the days of conflict.

Inclusion and Unity: Police marching in the parade is seen as a powerful symbol of inclusion, showing that all sectors of society, including law enforcement, are welcomed. It emphasizes the message that the community is broad and diverse.

Breaking Down Barriers: The presence of Police helps break down barriers between law enforcement and the LGBTQIA+ community. Familiarity with officers marching in uniform fosters understanding and reduces fear or mistrust over time.

Cultural Change and Positive Perception: Allowing Police to march is perceived as driving positive cultural change within the force itself. Their participation signals that the organization is willing to evolve and be supportive of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Positive Reception from the Crowd: Many note that Police marching in the parade are often met with cheers and positive reception from attendees, which demonstrates widespread support for their participation and acknowledgment of progress.

Representation of LGBTQIA+ Police Officers: There are many LGBTQIA+ officers within the Police force, and their participation in the parade allows them to proudly represent both their professional role and their identity, fostering a sense of belonging.

Symbol of Inclusivity for Wider Society: Police participation sends a positive message to the broader community, including tourists, showing that Mardi Gras is a place where everyone, including law enforcement, can come together in celebration and support of diversity.

Positive Impact on Police and Community Relations: The inclusion of Police is viewed as fostering better relations between law enforcement and the LGBTQIA+ community. It promotes a sense of trust and fairness, making it more likely that community members will feel they will be treated respectfully in future interactions.

Generosity of Spirit and Forgiveness: Many believe that by welcoming Police into the parade, the LGBTQIA+ community is demonstrating generosity of spirit, forgiveness, and a commitment to moving forward. This act of inclusivity is seen as a way to strengthen the community and its values.

Q3 – WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR HOW MARDI GRAS CAN ENSURE THAT THE PARADE REMAINS A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE EVENT FOR ALL, IN RELATION TO THIS CONSULTATION?



To ensure the Mardi Gras Parade remains safe and inclusive for all, a variety of suggestions emerged from the consultation with common themes broken down on the following pages.

Themed view of participant recommendations

- **Minimize Police presence**, focusing on community-led safety initiatives like harm reduction teams and peer-based support.
- **Allow LGBTQIA+ officers to march as individuals**, but without uniforms or weapons, to reduce intimidation.
- **Increase NSW Police accountability**, requiring Police to publicly acknowledge and apologise for past harms, such as implementing reforms related to gay hate crimes and deaths in custody, before participating.
- **Prioritize open dialogue between the Police**, community, and organizers to foster understanding and collaboration.
- **Ban the use of sniffer dogs**, strip searches, and over-policing at the event, ensuring harm minimization strategies are in place.
- **Remove all weapons from participants**, Ensuring that Police participants align with other parade participants, marching in the spirit of the event rather than in an official, on-duty capacity.

Q3 – WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR HOW MARDI GRAS CAN ENSURE THAT THE PARADE REMAINS A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE EVENT FOR ALL, IN RELATION TO THIS CONSULTATION?



Common Themes

Minimizing Police Presence: Many suggest reducing or eliminating Police presence at the parade, arguing that their participation in uniform or with weapons creates a hostile environment for vulnerable members of the community, particularly those who have experienced Police violence.

Support for LGBTQIA+ Officers: Suggestion include allowing LGBTQIA+ Police officers to participate as individuals rather than representatives of law enforcement. This acknowledges their identity without endorsing the institution that has historically oppressed the community.

Alternative Community-Led Safety Solutions: There is strong advocacy for investing in community-led safety initiatives, such as harm reduction teams, legal observers, and support groups, which are seen as more inclusive and aligned with the values of the LGBTQIA+ community (ACON Rovers, etc).

Disarmament and Uniform Restrictions: A recurring theme is the call to disarm Police officers within the parade and prevent them from marching in uniform. Many believe that the presence of weapons or uniforms reinforces fear and trauma.

Focus on Harm Minimization: Harm reduction strategies, such as removing drug dogs, ending strip searches, and advocating for drug decriminalization, are recommended as ways to make the event safer.

Inclusivity Through Community Dialogue: Encouraging open dialogue between Police, the LGBTQIA+ community, and event organizers is seen as essential for building trust and understanding. Suggestions include forums, consultations, and education sessions to address concerns and foster a more cooperative approach to create a safer parade for all.

CONSULTATION OUTCOME

Summary of Notable Contrasts

Question 1

Inclusion vs. Exclusion: Supporters for Police participation advocated for inclusivity and reconciliation, while others saw exclusion as a means to protect vulnerable groups and preserve the event's legacy of resistance.

Progress vs. Oppression: Police presence is seen by some as a sign of positive change, but others view it as a reminder of state violence and systemic racism.

Safety and Trust: Supporters feel Police improve safety, especially for younger LGBTQIA+ people, while opponents feel unsafe, seeing Police presence as endorsing institutional violence.

Question 2

Progress vs. Violence: Supporters see Police as a sign of progress; opponents view them as a reminder of violence and oppression.

Inclusion vs. Exclusion: Some would like to see the SGLMG Board to collaborate with Police for a more harmonious inclusion in the parade, while others say the Police presence excludes those who feel unsafe.

Safety vs. Intimidation: Supporters see Police as improving safety; opponents feel their presence creates fear and intimidation.

Cultural Change vs. Accountability: Some see Police participation as driving change; others believe it hides their history of violence without reform.

Question 3

Police Presence vs. Community-Led Safety: Some would like to see community-based safety, while others believe the Police are essential for security.

Uniform and Weapons Restrictions: Most agree that LGBTQIA+ officers should not participate with any weapons to reduce intimidation and be engaged in marching (not on duty).

Accountability vs. Forgiveness: One view stresses the need for Police accountability and reforms before participation, while another favours forgiveness and reconciliation without preconditions.

Exclusion vs. Dialogue: Some advocate for the exclusion of Police from events, while others support dialogue and education to foster better relationships over time.



Community **SENTIMENT REPORT**

Police Participation Consultation

Written reflections from each consultation session can be requested by emailing consultation@mardigrasarts.org.au

- 31 August Community Consultation: Glebe Town Hall
- 4 September Community Consultation: ZOOM
- 7 September Community Consultation: St Peters Town Hall
- 11 September Community Consultation: ZOOM