Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour in Main Streets: Survey Analysis and Recommendations

February 2025

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a survey conducted by Mainstreet Australia in October 2024 to explore the growing challenges of criminal and anti-social behaviour on local main streets, the impact on businesses and communities, and potential solutions. The survey responses indicate that these issues are significantly affecting perceptions of safety, foot traffic, and business operations.

Key Findings:

- 79% of respondents observed an increase in anti-social behaviour over the past 12 months, with vandalism, public drug/alcohol use, and aggressive behaviour identified as the most prevalent issues.
- 46% reported daily occurrences of anti-social behaviour, with a significant impact on perceptions of safety and economic activity. Many respondents called for increased police presence (36%) and greater investment in infrastructure (21%), alongside government-funded support for affected businesses.
- There is strong interest in receiving guidance on mitigation measures, with 57% expressing a clear need for resources or training / workshop from Mainstreet Australia.

Recommendations:

1. Advocate for increased police presence and targeted infrastructure investment.
2. Develop a comprehensive guide on mitigation measures, including collaboration with stakeholders.
3. Foster stronger local collaboration through community safety initiatives.
4. Advocate for legislative reforms and enhanced government support programs.

Full Report

Survey Participation

A total of 67 respondents participated in the survey, representing a diverse range of businesses, councils, and precinct managers. The high response rate reflects the urgency of addressing these issues.

Key Findings

Question 1: Have you observed an increase in criminal activities and anti-social behaviour in your local main street/precinct over the past 12 months?

• Yes: 79.10% (53 respondents)
• No: 14.93% (10 respondents)
• Unsure: 5.97% (4 respondents)
The data confirms a widespread perception that anti-social behaviour has increased significantly, affecting the majority of local main streets.

Question 2: Which of the following types of criminal/anti-social behaviours are most commonly affecting your main street?
• Vandalism/graffiti: 68.66%
• Public drug or alcohol use: 65.67%
• Aggressive or threatening behaviour: 62.69%
• Shoplifting: 46.27%
• Illegal tobacco-related activities: 23.88%
• Other: 23.88%
Respondents identified vandalism, public substance use, and aggressive behaviour as the most pressing concerns, contributing to negative perceptions of safety.

Question 3: How significantly have these activities impacted your business and/or local community?
• Severely: 7.46%
• Significantly: 32.84%
• Moderately: 35.82%
• Slightly: 19.40%
• Not at all: 4.48%
More than 75% of respondents reported moderate to severe impacts, including reduced foot traffic, increased costs, and damaged perceptions of safety.

Question 4: How frequently would you say anti-social behaviour takes place in your precinct?
• Daily: 46.27%
• Weekly: 34.33%
• Monthly: 11.94%
• Other: 7.46%
Nearly half of respondents indicated daily occurrences, reflecting the urgent need for interventions.

Question 5: What have been the main impacts of these activities?
Recurring themes from open-ended responses include:
• Reduced foot traffic and business turnover.
• High costs for graffiti removal, repairs, and increased insurance premiums.
• Decreased public perception of safety, deterring families, elderly patrons, and tourists.

• Increased stress and safety concerns for staff and business owners.

Question 6: What actions have you or your local community taken to address this criminal/anti-social behaviour?

• Worked with local police: 78.79%
• Contacted local council: 59.09%
• Organised community meetings or events: 21.21%
• Petitioned or lobbied government: 13.64%
• Engaged with the media: 4.55%
• No action taken yet: 12.12%

While many respondents have engaged with local police or councils, fewer have utilised media or lobbying efforts to bring attention to these issues.

Question 7: What specific policy reform, legislative changes, and/or additional government funding is needed?

• Increased police presence: 36.36%
• Greater investment in infrastructure: 21.21%
• Harsher penalties for vandalism and shoplifting: 13.64%
• Government-funded support programs: 6.06%
• Other: 19.70%

The most common request was for increased police presence, followed by infrastructure improvements such as street lighting and security.

Question 8: Would access to information on mitigation measures, resources, and support from Mainstreet Australia be helpful?

• Yes: 56.72%
• No: 8.96%
• Unsure: 34.33%

There is strong interest in receiving guidance, although some respondents were unsure of what specific resources would be most helpful.

Recommendations

Advocate for Increased Police Presence and Funding

- Lobby state and local governments for greater police presence in high-risk precincts.
- Advocate for targeted funding to support businesses affected by anti-social behaviour.

Develop a Comprehensive Resource Guide

- Create a guide outlining practical mitigation measures, including how to engage with police, councils, and the media.
- Provide templates for incident reporting, grant applications, and safety planning.

Foster Community Collaboration

- Organise forums and workshops to bring together businesses, councils, and law enforcement.
- Encourage precinct-wide initiatives like neighborhood watch programs and community safety networks.

Promote Legislative Reforms

- Advocate for harsher penalties for repeat offenders and funding for preventive measures.
- Push for government investment in infrastructure improvements, such as CCTV, lighting, and public amenities.

Expand Media Engagement

- Work with local media to highlight the economic and social impacts of anti-social behaviour.
- Share success stories of precincts that have implemented effective crime prevention measures.

Thank you to our members and stakeholders for contributing to the survey. Throughout 2025, Mainstreet Australia will continue work to strengthen advocacy on these issues to Local Councils, State Governments and police to empower its members to take action and create safer, more vibrant local main streets.

Over the next 6-12 months Mainstreet Australia will work to prioritise the following recommendations:

- Advocate for increased police presence and targeted infrastructure investment.
- Develop a comprehensive guide on mitigation measures, including collaboration with stakeholders.
- Foster stronger local collaboration through community safety initiatives.
- Advocate for legislative reforms and enhanced government support programs.