



MINUTES

The Minutes of the 3751st Extraordinary Council Meeting held at the Council Chambers, North Sydney at 8:30 PM on Monday 11 October 2021.



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1. Opening Meeting

The Mayor, Councillor Gibson, in the Chair, and Councillors Baker, Barbour, Brodie, Drummond, Gunning, and Keen were in attendance.

At the commencement of business 8.40pm those present in the chamber were: The Mayor

Those present remotely were: Councillors Baker, Barbour, Brodie, Drummond, Gunning, and Keen.

The meeting was opened by the Mayor.

2. Acknowledgement of Country

The Acknowledgement of Country was read by Councillor Drummond.

3. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Carr and Mutton.

A Motion was moved by Councillor Baker and seconded by Councillor Keen.

1.THAT a leave of absence be granted to Councillors Carr and Mutton

The Motion was put and **Carried**.

Voting was as follows:

For/Against 7 / 0

For: Councillor Gibson, Councillor Keen, Councillor Brodie, Councillor Barbour, Councillor Drummond, Councillor Gunning and Councillor Baker

Against: Nil

Absent: Councillor Beregi, Councillor Carr and Councillor Mutton

253. RESOLVED:

1.THAT a leave of absence be granted to Councillors Carr and Mutton

4. Disclosures of Interest

Re: 5.1

New Year's Eve 2021

Councillor Keen

Working in the Tourism industry (Non-Pecuniary, less than Significant)

5. Reports to Council

5.1. New Years Eve 2021

AUTHOR: Joanna Gibson, Team Leader Events and Sandra Moore, Manager Communications and Events

The purpose of this report is to seek direction and endorsement from Council for the proposed plans for the management of the North Sydney New Year's Eve (NYE) 2021-22 vantage points, in a COVID-19 safe way.

The City of Sydney funds a NYE fireworks display which is operationally supported by multiple State and local government agencies. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, up to one million people viewed the fireworks live from the Sydney Harbour foreshore and an estimated one billion watch them on television and online. Temporary custodianship was given to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) for the 2020 event and for 2021 the City of Sydney has taken back planning and control of the event.

On 19 August, at the NYE Crowd Management Workshop, the City of Sydney advised stakeholders that its plan for NYE 2021, to ensure a COVID-19 safe event, was to follow the DPC's format from 2020 by proceeding with only the midnight firework show. The 9pm Family Fireworks, Harbour of Light Parade and Lord Mayor's Picnic events were to be cancelled.

On 22 September, after an email to the NYE Working Group was released to the media, the NSW Treasurer and the Premier proposed that the 9pm fireworks should proceed.

On 1 October, Mayor Jilly Gibson in consultation with the General Manager, sent a letter to The Hon Stuart Ayres, MP, Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney seeking clarification of the NSW Government, as to whether the 9pm fireworks will proceed or if the event would remain as a midnight only event. In the event the 9pm fireworks proceed, the letter requested the NSW Government take full responsibility for the North Sydney foreshore areas as per 2020. The letter also sought assurance that NSW Police would continue to manage North Sydney vantage points that Council cannot actively manage. At the time of writing, no response had been received (Please see Attachment B).

On Sunday 3 October, the City of Sydney's Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, released a statement to the media that the 9pm Family fireworks were to be reinstated into the program after consultation with the NSW Government. The agreement to stage the 9pm fireworks was subject to a number of conditions to be met by the State Government (see Attachment A) at an extraordinary general meeting of the City of Sydney Council on Tuesday 5 October.

There is no COVID-19 Public Health Order (PHO) or Safety Plan currently in place for Outdoor Gatherings or Events for more than 500 people. On 7 October the Premier announced changes to the NSW roadmap, including that at 80% double vaccination up to 3,000 people will be permitted to attend controlled and ticketed outdoor events. It is not clear whether this is intended to be the limit for NYE.

As there is currently no confirmation of the 9pm fireworks proceeding, a PHO or COVID Safety plan available for events larger than 500, it is difficult for Council to plan the event.

The Events team is working around planning to ticket and manage the sites as per 2019. They are forecasting based on 4m² per person rule capacities at our ticketed sites with potential to move to 2m². The team is also planning to delay the release of tickets until further information is available. If the tickets need to go on sale before the 9pm fireworks are confirmed, they will be sold for the midnight only show but valid for the 9pm if it goes ahead.

Normally at this time, Events staff would have completed a number of tasks including; engaging suppliers for ticketing and infrastructure, negotiated arrangements with affected NSW agencies, negotiated arrangements with affected businesses and residents and finalised staffing and security. In the absence of a PHO staff have not been able to complete any of these tasks.

Bradfield Park, Quibaree Park and Blues Point Reserve are proposed to be managed ticket sites. Additional infrastructure; including traffic management, toilets, bins and lighting towers, will be provided at Cremorne Point, Kurraba Reserve, Waverton Park, Balls Head Reserve, St Peters Park, St Leonards Park and on Burton and Fitzroy Streets but there will be no active site management by Council. Council is not resourced to manage these additional vantage points in a COVID-safe way.

Based on the limited time frame to the event, it is proposed to follow the 2019 NYE vantage point management with a few minor changes including:

- opening gates to all ticketed sites at 9pm (midnight only fireworks) and 6pm (if there is 9pm and midnight displays)
- adjusting of road closures to later time where possible to reflect the reduced crowds and later crowd movement
- Reducing the capacity of sites in line with COVID safety plans and to allow for the large construction site compounds in Bradfield Park and Blues Point Reserve.

While Council is planning on facilitating NYE 2021/22 as described above, ultimately its ability to do so in a COVID safe way, is dependent on:

- The PHO in place at the time and capacity to establish a satisfactory COVID Safe plan in line with any applicable requirements and WHS obligations,
- Enhanced support from the State and State Government agencies, and
- Confirmation from contractors and suppliers.

Noting that no concerns were raised by members of the public or licensed venues after the public exhibition, the NYE Alcohol Free Zones and Alcohol Prohibited Areas will now be renewed from 2021 to 2024 as per Council resolution on 26 July 2021.

The net budget for the management of the NYE vantage points for 2020/21 is \$266,584 (exclusive of NYE Officer salary). In addition to this was the anticipated income from ticket sales and stallholder fees of \$340,00. This allows for \$606,584. The income will be significantly reduced this year as the expected COVID restrictions will reduce the number of tickets that can be sold. Preliminary modelling indicates the cost of delivering NYE with four ticketed sites is \$450,000. With the reduced ticket income, this means NYE will be up between \$50,000 and \$100,000 over the net budget allocation.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** Council endorses ticketing Bradfield Park, Mary Booth Reserve, Quibaree Park and Blues Point Reserve for NYE 2021.
- 2. THAT** Council to seek urgent clarification of the PHO and COVID Safety Plan that will apply on NYE and assurance that the NSW Government will take control and management of the North Sydney's public space and vantage points if, in the opinion of the Mayor and General Manager, Council is unable to implement a satisfactory COVID safe plan or meet WHS obligations.
- 3. THAT** Council endorses the Events Team setting a capacity for the ticketed sites to manage the COVID safety of attendees and staff when the PHO becomes available.
- 4. THAT** Council resolves to charge \$10 per ticket (plus booking fee) at the four ticketed sites.

5. THAT Council endorses the gates opening at all ticketed at 9pm if it is midnight fireworks only and 6pm if there is 9pm and midnight fireworks.

A Motion was moved by Councillor Gibson and seconded by Councillor Baker.

1. THAT given:

- The uncertainty of any public health orders or COVIDSafe Plan requirements for New Years Eve,
- the lateness of advice to reintroduce a 9:00pm fireworks on New Year's Eve (NYE),
- the apparent desire by the State Government to generate a carnival atmosphere with a full NYE fireworks display and prospective early January event, and
- the need to prevent congregation at pinch points caused by fencing or controlled access,

Council leave its foreshore parks open on NYE and for the proposed early January event.

2. THAT Council provide additional toilets, bins and cleaning services for New Years Eve and the proposed follow on events.

3. THAT the State Government be advised that Council will continue to service its park/foreshores for NYE but will not be ticketing or fencing.

4. THAT should the State Government require greater control of Access to meet Public Health Orders or COVIDSafe Plans at the time; the State Government take responsibility and meet the costs of doing so.

The Motion was put and **Carried**.

Voting was as follows:

For/Against 7 / 0

For: Councillor Gibson, Councillor Keen, Councillor Brodie, Councillor Barbour, Councillor Drummond, Councillor Gunning and Councillor Baker

Against: Nil

Absent: Councillor Beregi, Councillor Carr and Councillor Mutton

254. RESOLVED:

1. THAT given:

- The uncertainty of any public health orders or COVIDSafe Plan requirements for New Years Eve,
- the lateness of advice to reintroduce a 9:00pm fireworks on New Year's Eve (NYE),
- the apparent desire by the State Government to generate a carnival atmosphere with a full NYE fireworks display and prospective early January event, and
- the need to prevent congregation at pinch points caused by fencing or controlled access,

Council leave its foreshore parks open on NYE and for the proposed early January event.

2. THAT Council provide additional toilets, bins and cleaning services for New Years Eve and the proposed follow on events.

3. THAT the State Government be advised that Council will continue to service its park/foreshores for NYE but will not be ticketing or fencing.

4. THAT should the State Government require greater control of Access to meet Public Health Orders or COVIDSafe Plans at the time; the State Government take responsibility and meet the costs of doing so.

6. Closure

The Meeting concluded at 8.57pm.