

## 10.4. New Year's Eve 2023

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<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	1. History of NYE in North Sydney [10.4.1 - 2 pages]
<b>CSP LINK</b>	4. Our Social Vitality 4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement from Council for the proposed plans for the management of the North Sydney vantage points for New Year's Eve 2023.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The City of Sydney funds a New Year's Eve fireworks display which is operationally supported by multiple State and local government agencies, including North Sydney Council.
- Council's focus in supporting New Year's Eve is to provide infrastructure and access to key vantage points.
- In recent years Council has trialled different models for New Year's Eve, including free and paid ticketing, managed access (controlling the numbers into and out of the sites, bag checks etc.), and operating an event site with entertainment.
- Four models have been assessed for New Year's Eve 2023 to manage three key vantage points: Bradfield Park/Mary Booth Reserve, Lavender Bay Parklands (incorporating Clark and Watt Parks and Quibaree Reserve), and Blues Point (incorporating Blues Point and Henry Lawson Reserves).
- The managed-access model is the recommended option for New Year's Eve 2023. This model is fair and allows residents and others access to public land for free, disperses arrival times across the day, brings vibrancy to the area, and trade to local businesses. The model makes the Reserves accessible to residents during the day and more likely to be fully utilised in the evening. This is the same approach as City of Sydney for NYE 2023.
- The expected cost of this approach is \$710,000. This is within the amount allocated in Council's budget.

### RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** Council resolves to implement the managed access model for the delivery of NYE 2023.
- 2. THAT** the managed access gate at McMahons Point be reinstated at the corner of French Street and Blues Point Road.

## Background

The City of Sydney funds a New Year's Eve (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 from the Sydney Harbour foreshore, with an estimated one billion watching on television and online. City of Sydney research undertaken at NYE 2019 indicates that 25% of people who attend the fireworks on the foreshore are international tourists. The fireworks contribute to Sydney's positioning as a global city.

Council's NYE responsibilities have grown in line with the event's popularity and status. Historically, Council's primary focus has been to manage the event to reduce its impact on residents. In particular, Council has sought to reduce the incidence of violence, property damage, and antisocial behaviour in the foreshore area. While Council provided infrastructure such as toilets and bins for the people who viewed the fireworks, responsibility for crowd management lay with NSW Police.

In recent years, responsibility for crowd safety has increased for landowners. This has placed greater pressure on Council to implement safety strategies including crowd and traffic management.

Attachment 1 provides background on the how NYE vantage points have operated with managed access and the introduction of the ticketing trials through the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Report

Council has several responsibilities for NYE, including:

- crowd management outside our vantage points;
- Hostile Vehicle Mitigation;
- infrastructure such as toilets for crowds outside our vantage points;
- proactive management of Cremorne Point and Waverton; and
- traffic controllers to manage road closures.

Costs this year will be higher because NYE falls on a Sunday. This will impact labour costs for the bump-in and for 31 December for Council staffing, security, and infrastructure contractors. Whilst New Year's Day is a public holiday, NYE is not.

Four options have been identified for the management of NYE 2023 - free ticketing, flat fee ticketing, cost recovery ticketing, and managed access. Ticketing at a profit was not considered as Council has previously indicated no interest in pursuing this option due to a commitment to making this event accessible to the community.

The four options discussed apply to the three vantage point precincts that Council actively manages: Bradfield Park/Mary Booth Reserve, Lavender Bay Parklands (incorporating Quibaree Reserve, Clark, and Watt Parks), and Blues Point Reserve (incorporating Blues Point and Henry Lawson Reserves). The implications, risks and opportunities of each model are summarised in the table on the next page.

## Options

Council has the following options in relation to this matter:

Option	Finance/Resourcing	Risk/Opportunity	Consultation
1. Free ticketing	<p>This option involves issuing free tickets for the three actively managed vantage points. It is proposed that the reserves would open 9am Sunday 31 December. Some queuing prior to 9am is anticipated. Ticketholders would have their bags checked for alcohol and dangerous items. Wristbands issued so that patrons can leave and re-enter the reserve throughout the day.</p> <p>Most expensive model with increased costs for ticketing, infrastructure, staffing and security. Estimated budget required for this model is \$810,000.</p>	<p>Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park access within the primary vantage point precincts restricted from night before</li> <li>• increased costs for ticketing, infrastructure, staffing and security</li> <li>• less trade for local businesses as patrons can arrive at any time</li> <li>• no-shows up to 50% based on NYE 2022 statistics</li> <li>• displacement of non-ticket holder crowds</li> </ul> <p>Opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• potential to reduce overflow crowds</li> <li>• provides data for Transport to plan for trains and buses</li> <li>• provides opportunity for direct messaging to ticketholders</li> </ul>	<p>No community consultation is required at this stage.</p> <p>A community communication strategy including information for Precinct Committees, foreshore residents and businesses will be developed when a direction and details for NYE 2023 has been resolved.</p>

Option	Finance/Resourcing	Risk/Opportunity	Consultation
2. Flat fee ticketing of \$10	<p>This option involves issuing tickets for the three actively managed points at a minimal flat fee of \$10 plus ticket handling fee. This income would offset some of the costs Council will need to pay.</p> <p>This model would provide an additional \$310,000. The estimated cost for Council would be \$500,000.</p>	<p>Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• park access within primary vantage points restricted from night before</li> <li>• community objection to charging for access to public land</li> <li>• less trade for local businesses</li> <li>• no-shows up to 50% based on NYE 2022 statistics</li> <li>• displacement of non-ticket holder crowds</li> </ul> <p>Opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• potential to reduce overflow crowds</li> <li>• provides data for Transport to plan for trains and buses</li> <li>• provides opportunity for direct messaging to ticketholders</li> <li>• provides some cost recovery to Council</li> </ul>	<p>No community consultation is required at this stage.</p> <p>A community communication strategy including information for Precinct Committees, foreshore residents and businesses will be developed when a direction and details for NYE 2023 has been resolved.</p>
3. Cost recovery ticketing	<p>This option involves ticketing the actively managed vantage points at a price set to recover the costs of managing that precinct. The costs for managing reserves varies. It is expected the ticket costs to range from \$22 to \$37 (costs cover infrastructure and supplier costs, staffing and ticketing).</p> <p>Cost to Council for infrastructure and other non-actively managed sites as well as communication to residents and promotion is estimated at \$90,000.</p>	<p>Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• park access within primary vantage points restricted from night before</li> <li>• community objection to charging for access to public land</li> <li>• less trade for local businesses</li> <li>• no shows around 15% depending on price of ticket</li> <li>• displacement of non-ticket holder crowds</li> <li>• ticketholder disappointment with vantage point as there would be no additional benefits (e.g., entertainment) for ticket (which has previously been subsidised by Council.)</li> </ul> <p>Opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• significantly reduced costs to Council for NYE</li> <li>• more resources available to manage Cremorne Point and Waverton</li> <li>• provides data for Transport to plan for trains and buses</li> <li>• provides opportunity for direct messaging to ticketholders</li> </ul>	<p>No community consultation is required at this stage.</p> <p>A community communication strategy, including information for Precinct Committees, foreshore residents and businesses will be developed when a direction and details for NYE 2023 has been resolved.</p>

Option	Finance/Resourcing	Risk/Opportunity	Consultation
4. Managed access	<p>This option involves fencing the three actively managed vantage points and allowing people to come and go into the reserves for free until they reach capacity, when the area would be closed. People entering would have their bags checked for alcohol and dangerous items.</p> <p>Significantly reduced administration and some savings on infrastructure, ticketing, and staffing. The estimated cost for this model is \$710,000.</p>	<p>Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• park access restricted from night before</li> <li>• more people likely to arrive early to ensure entry to vantage point, potentially queuing overnight</li> <li>• potential crowd overflows on the street if people travel to vantage point after it is closed</li> </ul> <p>Opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more trade for local businesses as people arrive earlier and leave the vantage point to purchase food</li> <li>• return of vibrancy previously experienced with NYE</li> <li>• residents able to access reserves during the day</li> <li>• reserves likely to reach capacity, ensuring maximum audience for Council investment</li> <li>• reduced risk of crowd crush later in the day as patrons arrive across the day to ensure they can access the reserve.</li> <li>• aligns with City of Sydney which is moving to managed access for its vantage points for NYE 2023.</li> </ul>	<p>No community consultation is required at this stage.</p> <p>A community communication strategy, including information for Precinct Committees and foreshore residents, will be developed when a direction and details for NYE 2023 has been resolved.</p>

It is noted that, with all models, additional infrastructure including toilets, lighting towers, waste bins and road closure barricades are required for the remaining vantage points including:

- Balls Head, Waverton Park, and Carradah Park, Waverton;
- St Peter's Park and St Leonards Park, North Sydney;
- Kurraba Reserve, Kurraba Point; and
- Cremorne Point Reserve, Cremorne Point.

## **DISCUSSION**

In recent years, the delivery of NYE has been disrupted by extreme weather, the pandemic, and unexpected changes in crowd behaviour.

Managed access ensures equal access to the foreshore for everyone but can result in overflow crowds on the streets or residential properties, creating a nuisance for residents. Ticketing guarantees a space for ticketholders and gives them greater flexibility, but the Reserves operate significantly under capacity and there is less business for our village centres.

Financially, the best option for Council would be to ticket at a cost recovery price (up to \$37/ticket). While ticketing at a lower flat rate provides some cost recovery, it significantly increases the administrative workload and leads to under-utilised Reserves as the ticketholders are happy to forfeit the fee paid if a better option arises. Free ticketing is the worst option for Council financially as it provides no extra income, increases costs and required administration, and results in underutilised reserves.

For NYE 2023 managed access is recommended for the following reasons. Managed access:

- provides equal access to everyone;
- alleviates the problem for people who travel from overseas and interstate who may not realise they need a ticket;
- ensures vantage points are well utilised and reach capacity;
- creates vibrancy and strong sales throughout the day for local businesses as crowds arrive early to secure a good position; and
- aligns with the City of Sydney's approach for its land for NYE 2023. The NSW Government has indicated vantage points on their land should be free, but no details are currently available.

### **Consultation requirements**

Feedback received over the last few years indicates the majority of the community favours free access to the reserves on NYE without having to acquire tickets.

In 2022 a total of 23 complaints were received from residents on NYE. These ranged from the ticketing process, road closures to the parks being left untidily.

## **Financial/Resource Implications**

A budget of \$714,310 for NYE was included and adopted in the budget for the 2023/24 financial year. This budget was based on a managed-access model and did not include ticketing. The estimated cost for a ticketing contractor would be \$100,000 if a ticketing model is preferred by Council. Ticketing costs can be offset by a booking fee.

## **Legislation**

The amendment to the Major Events Act 2009, in April 2022, which included a responsible agency (in this instance the Premier's Department) being appointed for each major event.

There is now also an obligation for other agencies (including Council) to:

- cooperate with the responsible agency; and
- comply with road and transport plans (which can include HVM) and comply with any Ministerial direction.

## Attachment 1 – History of NYE in North Sydney

This section provides background on the how NYE vantage points have operated with managed access and the introduction of the ticketing trials and through the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Prior to NYE 2018 – Managed Access**

Prior to NYE 2018 the four premium vantage points of Bradfield Park, Mary Booth Reserve, Quibaree Park, and Blues Point Reserve were run as managed-access sites, with bag checks for alcohol and dangerous items. The sites were not closed until 8am on 31 December, before which there was an increasing number of people camping in the Reserves to claim the best viewing spaces. Infrastructure (toilets, bins, and road closures etc) was also provided at Cremorne Point, Kurraba Reserve, St Leonards Park, St Peter's Park, Clark Park, Watt Park, Waverton Park, and Balls Head.

### **Ticketing trials – NYE 2018 and NYE 2019**

In 2018, in response to pressure from other agencies, a ticketing trial was undertaken at Blues Point Reserve. Ticket prices were set at \$40 per adult and \$20 per child (aged 3 to 15 years). Attendees were provided with additional entertainment including roving performers, a circus playground, children's activities, and a live DJ. All other vantage points were managed as per previous years. While the overall feedback from attendees was positive, businesses complained about the loss of business in McMahons Point village, and residents complained about people arriving early and queueing on the footpath before the opening time.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic - NYE 2020 and NYE 2021**

#### **NYE 2020**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision to go ahead with the fireworks was not confirmed until late in the year. The Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) took over care and control of the Sydney New Year's Eve for all prime vantage points on both the north and south side of the harbour. The DPC's strategy was to close and fence the vantage points and encourage people to celebrate at home and watch the fireworks on TV. Cremorne Point, Kurraba Reserve, Bradfield Park, Mary Booth Reserve, Watt Park, Clark Park, Quibaree Reserve, and Blues Point were closed and fenced, and road closures implemented.

#### **NYE 2021**

In May 2021, it was announced that the City of Sydney had taken back control and planning of the NYE celebrations and intended to hold only a midnight fireworks display. In early October, the City of Sydney released a statement to the media that the 9pm family fireworks were to be reinstated into the program after consultations with the State Government.

Just prior to that announcement, Council wrote to The Hon Stuart Ayres, then Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism, and Western Sydney to seek clarification of the NSW Government's position on the 9pm fireworks and to ask that, if they proceeded, the NSW Government would take full responsibility for the North Sydney foreshore areas as per 2020.

**Commented [A1]:** SS - Could this be included as an attachment - History of Access 2018 to 2022?

Should we include reference to the briefing? eg: Attached is further detail on the history of the access types for NYE since 2018. A briefing covering the history and options for 2023 will be conducted for Councillors on 17 July 2023.



The Events team planned to deliver three vantage points as managed-access, alcohol-prohibited venues: Blues Point Reserve, a combined Bradfield Park and Mary Booth Reserve, and the Lavender Bay Parklands (Quibaree, Watt, and Clark Parks). The capacity levels were based on the 1:2m<sup>2</sup> rule and took into consideration the State Government works in both precincts. Due to Council and supplier staff shortages resulting from the COVID-19 Omicron outbreak, a decision was made on 29 December 2021 to close the Lavender Bay Parklands.

Council also provided road closure infrastructure, toilets, bins, and lighting towers at Cremorne Point, Kurraba Point, Waverton Park, Balls Head Reserve, and St Peters Park. Additional toilets were provided at St Leonards Park, and on Burton and Fitzroy Streets.

Attendance at both of the open managed-access sites was very low throughout the day and early evening; the majority of attendees arrived within an hour of both firework shows. Bradfield Park/Mary Booth, with a capacity of 9,800, had 2,000 people for the 9pm fireworks and peaked at 5,462 for the midnight display. Blues Point reached its capacity of 3,500 at 11.30pm. Council's other vantage points also had very low attendance.

#### **NYE 2022**

In April 2022, the Major Events Act 2009 was amended to include a responsible agency being appointed for each major event. The amendment also placed an obligation on other agencies to:

- cooperate with the responsible agency;
- comply with road and transport plans (which can include Hostile Vehicle Mitigation, a counter terrorist strategy); and
- comply with any Ministerial direction.

A report to Council in June 2022 was based on information from the State Government, City of Sydney, and NSW Police that all vantage points were to move to a ticketing model to allow better integrated planning and management of crowds and public transport.