

## 10.4. North Sydney Oval - Event Proposal

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<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	Nil
<b>CSP LINK</b>	1. Our Living Environment 1.4 Well utilised open space and recreational facilities

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to outline a proposal from the North Sydney District Rugby League to hold an event at North Sydney Oval, from 17 to 18 May 2024.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The festival seeks to build on the strong community connection established by the North Sydney Bears, enhancing local engagement.
- This festival has demonstrated growing success since its inception at Henson Park, suggesting a sound model for replication in North Sydney.
- Anticipated economic benefits include increased local business patronage and broader community participation and increased revenue for Council.

### RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** Council notes the approach from the North Sydney Bears to bring the Beer, Food and Footy Festival to North Sydney Oval.
- 2. THAT** Council authorise the General Manager to finalise negotiations and enter into a formal agreement with the North Sydney Bears for the proposed event.

## Background

Since its establishment in 1910, North Sydney Oval, affectionately known as "Bear Park," has been the proud home of the North Sydney Bears. This enduring relationship has seen the venue and club evolve together, maintaining a strong connection with the local community whose passion for attending home games has never wavered.

In the 2024 season, the Bears will host 12 home game days from April to August, each featuring unique themes like Retro Round, ANZAC Round, Foundation Round, and Bears Legends Day, alongside community activations to engage a diverse audience. The 2023 season attracted an average crowd of over 1,800 spectators per game, underscoring the community's ongoing enthusiasm for these events.

The North Sydney Bears are deeply committed to engaging with the local community during every home game at North Sydney Oval, offering free access to children under 16 (except during the Magic Round), the games are family-centric, featuring activities such as face painting, bubble stations, craft tables, NRL skills clinics, and "Kick for Cash" opportunities.

The Community Partners Round highlights local organisations like Learning Links and The Kirribilli Centre, among others, showcasing them at the venue and on social media. The ANZAC Day Round involves collaboration with local RSL groups for fundraising. A cherished tradition, "Fans on the Field," invites spectators onto the field during half-time and post-game, enhancing the game day experience and fostering a strong community spirit.

The North Sydney Bears play a strong role in providing opportunities for members of the local community interested in rugby league; including eight Junior League Clubs across the North Shore, that engage 1,800 players of both genders, and reaching a community base of over 5,000.

In 2023 the Bears offered numerous opportunities for junior players to experience North Sydney Oval including:

- free NRL Come & Try Clinics encouraging young enthusiasts to try rugby league.
- Gala Game Days for U8 to U11, held before four main games, showcasing young talent.
- Females in League High Performance Development Clinics, aimed at developing skills for local female junior league players, supporting a pathway from grassroots to WNRL.
- Women in League Round, highlighting local female talent and concluding the Girls Friday Night 7's Tackle Competition.
- Minis Grand Final Gala Day for U6 to U10s on August 18th and Junior League Grand Final Day for U11s and up on August 31st, celebrating the season's culmination.

These initiatives underscore the Bears' commitment to fostering a comprehensive development pathway for women and juniors in rugby league. It is anticipated that these initiatives will occur and expand during 2024.

## Report

### NSWRL (NSW Rugby League) Magic Round

The NSW Rugby League (NSWRL) has given the North Sydney Bears the opportunity to host the NSWRL Magic Round for 2024 (coinciding with the National Rugby League Magic Round in Brisbane), on 18 and 19 May. This unique opportunity positions North Sydney Oval as the exclusive venue for senior rugby league in Sydney over this weekend in NSW.

To leverage this opportunity the Bears are proposing to host the Beer Food and Footy Festival (BFFF) at North Sydney Oval, an event that is anticipated to attract upwards of 10,000 people to North Sydney Oval over the Magic Round weekend.

The Festival, which had its inception in 2016 at Henson Park, has evolved into a well-loved cultural and community event, blending the celebration of rugby league, craft beer, and local cuisine with a vibrant community spirit. Starting with a modest crowd of 2,500 attendees, the festival's popularity has significantly increased in recent years, marking a record turnout of almost 11,000 people in 2023. This growth trajectory is evidenced by year-on-year attendance figures:

- 2016: 2,585 attendees
- 2017: 3,197 attendees
- 2018: 5,356 attendees
- 2019: 6,738 attendees
- 2022: 10,320 attendees, split across two days due to COVID
- 2023: 10,867 attendees, with over 40 brewers and food stalls

The festival's audience has a demographic split of 40% female and 60% male. Since inception, its reach has expanded from predominantly residents in Marrickville to include patrons from across Greater Sydney and beyond.

In 2024 the BFFF series is proposing to expand to three events. The first event is proposed for North Sydney Oval in May, the second event in Newcastle in June, and the third event at the original home of the BFFF in July at Henson Park.

This expansion reflects the Festival's growing significance not only as a local community event but as a cultural phenomenon that has provided an economic boost to the Inner West and beyond during the traditionally quieter winter months. The Inner West Council continue to support and promote the event highlight its value to the community and the potential benefits of extending this successful model to North Sydney Oval.

### Consultation requirements

This type of event does not typically require a community consultation process. The North Sydney Bears would have use of the Oval for this weekend under their usual venue hire arrangements and the Festival will be entirely within North Sydney Oval.

Council staff who manage North Sydney Oval have been working on preliminary planning in relation to the Festival and are supportive of the proposal, subject to the finalisation of an agreement with the Bears for the Festival.

### **Financial/Resource Implications**

North Sydney Bears already have arrangements in place for the hire of North Sydney Oval through ongoing Venue Hire Agreements. For the Festival, the Bears would be looking to hire the venue as a 'dry hire' for the weekend of the Festival.

The North Sydney Bears would be responsible for all costs associated with event and will pay Council an increased hire fee that will be negotiated and finalised through formal hire agreement.

### **Legislation**

1. Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)
2. Liquor Act 2007 (NSW)
3. Food Act 2003 (NSW)
4. Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
5. Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)