

10.9. Council Christmas Closure 2024-2025

AUTHOR	Jennie Walker, Service Unit Manager, Customer and Communications
ENDORSED BY	Therese Cole, Chief Executive Officer
ATTACHMENTS	Nil
CSP LINK	5. Our Civic Leadership 5.2 Strong civic leadership and customer focussed services

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval for the closure of Council offices and facilities (excluding Stanton Library and essential services) from 12pm Tuesday 24 December 2024 until 9am Thursday 2 January 2025.

This closure aims to support employee wellbeing and manage employee leave by providing staff with time to rest and recharge during the holiday season – improving overall workplace performance and service delivery.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- Council proposes a closure of Council facilities from 12pm on Tuesday 24 December 2024 until Thursday 2 January 2025. Stanton Library and essential services will remain operational.
- Customer Service will be closed, however calls will be directed to our out-of-hours service, and online self-service will remain available.
- This closure is consistent with many other councils (including NSROC members Willoughby City Council, Lane Cove Council, Hornsby Shire Council, and Ryde City Council), who have implemented similar initiatives in recent years to support staff wellbeing without compromising essential service delivery.
- This closure is expected to enhance employee job satisfaction and performance, positively impacting service delivery in the new year.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** Council endorse the closure of Council offices and facilities (excluding Stanton Library and essential services) from 12pm Tuesday 24 December 2024 until 9am Thursday 2 January 2025.
- 2. THAT** the community be actively informed of the closure through all available communication channels.

Background

North Sydney Council has previously been open during the Christmas period (outside of the Public Holidays) however there has been increasing recognition of the need to manage leave entitlements, prioritise employee wellbeing and work/life balance.

Feedback from staff highlights the benefits of taking time off during this period to recharge, particularly in terms of increased energy and motivation, which in turn enhances the quality of services delivered to the community.

This period is also typically a much quieter time for Council, with customer call numbers and in-person visitors historically tracking lower than average.

Report

The proposed closure of Council facilities (excluding Stanton Library and essential services) from 12pm on Tuesday 24 December 2024 until 9am on Thursday 2 January 2025 seeks to balance the need for community access to key services with the wellbeing of our employees.

Stanton Library and essential services will remain operational. Customer Service will be closed during this time; however, residents will still have access to online services, and calls will be redirected to the out-of-hours service provided by Welldone.

Other NSROC councils (including Willoughby City Council, Lane Cove Council, Hornsby Shire Council, and Ryde City Council) have adopted similar closures over recent years, delivering positive outcomes for staff wellbeing and minimal disruption to essential services. This proposal reflects these best practices and reinforces Council's commitment to fostering a healthy work environment for its employees, while ensuring essential services remain available to the community.

By granting staff time off during this holiday period, Council aims to promote employee wellbeing, improve work/life balance, and foster an environment that supports higher-quality customer service throughout the year.

Consultation requirements

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Protocol. Information about the closure will be widely communicated to the community through Council's social media channels, website, and newsletters.

Financial/Resource Implications

The closure is expected to result in minimal financial impact. Costs associated with utilities and maintenance may decrease during this period, leading to potential savings for Council.

The closure will assist in the management of leave entitlements, which is important for financial management of liabilities.

Legislation

All leave arrangements for staff will comply with the Local Government (State) Award 2023.