

## **8.18. Managing Council's Prime Main - Harbour Foreshore Parks**

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### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Map for Main Harbour Foreshore Parks [8.18.1 - 1 page]

### **PURPOSE:**

To ensure that North Sydney's prime Sydney Harbour foreshore parks are available for everyone to use.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

North Sydney's parks are in high demand, and Council manages these important public open spaces for the benefit of all users including people who wish to book an area for a special event, activity or gathering and for the general community who wish to access and use the parks for recreation.

'MM01 – Managing Blues Point Reserve' was tabled at the Council meeting of 22 February 2021. The Mayoral Minute noted the increase in use of Council's parks, particularly those on the main-harbour foreshore, for private events. In some cases, use of the parks for special events and activities means that little space remains for casual community use.

To address this issue, Council can reduce the number of people who can gather in a park without a booking. Taking bookings means that Council can control the number of special events and activities occurring in some of the most popular parks, and ensure that space remains available for unscheduled, informal recreation. Issuing permits to booking holders also means that Council officers can distinguish special events, activities and gatherings that are authorised from those that are not.

Council can impose tighter controls on people wishing to book one of Council's prime main-harbour foreshore parks, including requiring bookings for certain special events and activities regardless of the number of people attending. This means that, if necessary, Council can restrict the number of events and activities occurring in a particular park at a particular time, again, ensuring that space remains available for unscheduled, informal recreation. This is particularly relevant in small parks such as Dr Mary Booth Lookout, where even small-scale events such as pop-up picnics can fill the park if too many of these events occur simultaneously.

Additional signage in prime main-harbour foreshore parks is not considered necessary at this stage. However, if the current issues persist once the new booking measures are implemented, this can be revisited.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The cost to Council to administer the additional bookings that will be required will be covered by the cost of the new park hire fees. A new fee of \$195 will be charged for bookings for 40 – 60 people in all parks, and a new fee of \$100 will be charged for selected special events and activities taking place in one of Council's prime Sydney harbour foreshore parks, regardless of the size of the group.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** Council reduces the number of people who can gather in a park without a booking from 60 to 40.

**2. THAT** Council requires individuals and organisations wishing to use one of Council's prime, Sydney harbour foreshore parks for a special event or prescribed activity to make a booking, regardless of the number of people attending, activities include:

- Corporate promotional activities
- If a jumping castle/amusement/animal farm is present
- Weddings and commitment ceremonies
- Commercial photography
- Use for a film location
- Special events and activities requiring payment of a fee to a service provider (including., companies providing curated picnics, marriage proposal ceremonies, commercial dog walking, commercial fitness training, art classes, and yoga classes)

**3. THAT** Council exhibit the proposed new restrictions and park fees for a period of 28 days and report the feedback from the exhibition process is reported to Council.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

### **1. Our Living Environment**

#### **1.4 Public open space and recreation facilities and services meet community needs**

## **BACKGROUND**

‘MM01 – Managing Blues Point Reserve’ was tabled at the Council meeting of 22 February 2021. The Mayoral Minute noted the increase in use of Council’s parks, particularly those on the main-harbour foreshore, for private events such as weddings which occupy a large proportion of the park, as well as for small events such as pop-up picnic tables with champagne and flowers.

An unauthorised wedding at Blues Point Reserve that involved the erection of 50 chairs, a wedding arch and 2 marquees (prohibited by Council) was specifically cited as an example of a large event that resulted in a public park being mostly unavailable for general community use. Much of Blues Point Reserve is currently annexed from public use by the NSW Government for construction of the Sydney Metro project , compounding the problem.

This report considers some of the ways in which Council can ensure that popular parks ranging from Blues Point Reserve to the much smaller Dr Mary Booth Lookout remain available for everyone to use.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

That the proposed new restrictions and fees and charges be placed on public exhibition for a period of 28 days

Council informs the known hirers about the new park booking conditions.

## **DETAIL**

North Sydney Council’s prime Sydney harbour foreshore parks are uniquely positioned. They offer what ‘MM01 – Managing Blues Point Reserve’ describes as ‘arguably the best harbour view in Sydney’. With a backdrop that includes the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, the local community must share these extraordinary public open spaces not just with regional users, but with national and international visitors as well.

Council must manage all its parks for the benefit of all users including people who wish to book an area for a special event, activity or gathering and for the general community who wish to access and use the parks for recreation.

## **1. Current Situation in North Sydney regarding use of Parks**

Bookings are currently required for North Sydney's parks in the following situations:

- If there are 60 or more people (or 30 or more in a bushland reserve)
- If a jumping castle/amusement/animal farm is present (regardless of the number of people)
- If the booking is for Wendy Whiteley's Secret Garden (regardless of the size of the group)

Bookings are currently not required for North Sydney's parks in the following situations:

- If there are less than 60 people (or less than 30 in a bushland reserve)
- If the gathering is on one of the following public holidays: New Year's Eve, New Year's Day or Australia Day

## **2. Review of Other Council's Conditions of use of Parks**

A review of harbourside and inner-city Councils including Inner West Council, Woollahra, Mosman Council, Lane Cove Council, City of Sydney Council and Waverley Council was undertaken to determine how Sydney Council's current conditions of park hire compared with those of its near neighbours.

The review found that apart from Mosman Council, bookings were taken, and fees were charged for gatherings of more than 20 people in public parks. (for Mosman Council, the number was 50). North Sydney Council generally only requires a booking for 60 or more people. Most of the Councils also required bookings for a variety of special event and activities, regardless of the number of people attending. These events included weddings, ceremonies, bridal photography, corporate functions, and corporate promotional activities.

The review also found that none of the other Councils specifically mentioned curated picnics and similar activities of the type that have become prevalent in the North Sydney area over the last year or so. These are the activities that have made general community access to small parks including Dr Mary Booth Lookout difficult on occasions such as Valentine's Day. It is likely that North Sydney's location on the southern foreshore of the main harbour makes this more of an issue here than in other local government areas. This seems to be confirmed by viewing the websites of some of the companies that offer such special events and activities. North Sydney locations feature prominently, particularly Blues Point Reserve, the small parks along the Kirribilli Foreshore and the parks of Lavender Bay.

### 3. A New Approach for North Sydney

To keep our parks available for everyone, North Sydney needs an approach that will:

- Ensure large gatherings (authorised or unauthorised) do not occupy all or most of a particular park
- Ensure that numerous small gatherings do not occupy all or most of a particular park

Requiring bookings to be made for all gatherings of more than 40 people, and for a range of special events and activities taking place in any of Council's prime Sydney harbour foreshore parks will mean that Council can control the number of special events and activities occurring in particular parks, and ensure that space remains available for unscheduled, informal recreation. Issuing permits to booking holders will mean that Council officers can determine which special events, activities and gatherings are authorised and which are not.

Current information relating to booking a park is contained on Council's website. Council's existing web page 'Parks and Reserves Hire and Fees' This information will be amended as follows to reflect the new, suggested approach to use of parks in North Sydney.

#### 3.1 When do I need to make a booking?

- A) For social gatherings of more than 40 people in any of Council's parks.
- B) For the following special events and activities in any of Council's parks, regardless of the size of the group:
- Corporate promotional activities
  - If a jumping castle/amusement/animal farm is present
  - Commercial photography
  - Use for a film
- C) For any of the following special events and activities taking place in one of Council's prime Sydney harbour foreshore parks\*, regardless of the size of the group:
- Weddings, commitment ceremonies and the like
  - Special events and activities requiring payment of a fee to a service provider (including: companies providing curated picnics, marriage proposal ceremonies, commercial dog walking, commercial fitness training, art classes, yoga classes and the like)

\*Council's prime Sydney harbour foreshore parks include:

- o Blues Point Reserve
- o Henry Lawson Reserve

- Kirribilli Foreshore (includes Capt Henry Waterhouse Reserve, Dr Mary Booth Lookout, Copes Lookout & Stanton Lookout)
- Bradfield Park
- Lavender Bay Parklands (includes Lavender Bay Foreshore and Quibaree, Clark and Watt Parks)
- Cremorne Reserve

These parks are currently the most affected by organised activities and events due to the scenic views they offer of the harbour bridge and the city. Their size and capacity vary considerably. This list may be amended in future, if required.

Refer Attachment 1, **MAP 1** for the location of these parks.

D) For any activity taking place in Wendy Whiteley’s Secret Garden, and

E) For organised sport (Refer ‘Sportsgrounds Hire & Fees’ on Council’s website for more information regarding hire of sportsfields)

### 3.2 When are bookings not required?

- For social gatherings of up to 40 people.
- For social gathering of any size that take place on New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, or Australia Day. (Bookings are not permitted due to crowd numbers in foreshore parks).

### 3.3 Who makes the booking?

#### Situation 1

If you are organising the special event, activity or gathering in a park, you must make the booking (e.g. booking a park for a wedding)

#### Situation 2

If a service provider is organising the special event, activity or gathering that you are attending in a park, the service provider must make the booking (eg booking a park for a curated picnic)

Refer Section 1 to determine whether a booking is required for your planned special event, activity or gathering. If you are unsure, please contact Council’s Bookings team on PH: 9936 8100.

### 3.4 How do I get a permit?

To get a permit, you must first complete the application form on Council’s website and pay the booking in full.

### 3.5 Can I reserve a particular area?

A permit allows you to hold a special event, activity or gathering in a nominated park. However, it does not give you the right to occupy a particular area within the park. If another group is using the area that you intended to you, either for their own special event or just informally, you may not ask them to move.

### 3.6 Conditions of Hire for all Park Users

#### Prohibited

- The installation of a marquee, tent, gazebo, tepee, or any other 4-post structure
- Signage, roping off or otherwise barricading an area
- Driving vehicles onto the park
- Fireworks and naked flames
- Live bands, amplification of any kind including microphones (eg a celebrant using a microphone) and speakers
- Confetti, rice, streamers, glitters, poppers and synthetic petals
- Hanging items from trees or attaching anything to other Council infrastructure
- Penetrating the ground with any items
- Sale of food or drink or consumer goods of any kind
- The following activities can damage bushland and are not permitted in Council's bushland reserves: orienteering, geocaching, rock climbing, abseiling, mountain biking, camping, open fires. (For more information, contact Council's Bushland Management Team on 9936 8100).

#### Permissible

- Tables and chairs
- Picnic blankets
- Small carpet runners
- Natural petals (must be removed by hirer after gathering)
- Wedding arch or similar (maximum 3 legs)
- Portable gas barbecues (unless there is a total fire ban) Drip mats must be placed under the barbecue to collect any spillage. Council will take steps to recoup costs should any damage occur.

### 3.7 Fees & Charges

Fees for special events, activities and gatherings held in parks are set out in the permit (Refer Section 4).

### 3.8 Litter Bins

Litter bins are essential if you are serving food or drink. You need one bin for every thirty (30) people attending the function. Litter bin fee: \$66 per bin.

For any of the situations described in 3.1, service providers must remove their own rubbish from the park and not use the park bins. (This is a condition of consent).

### 3.9 Public Liability Insurance

Everyone must have insurance. If the booking is on behalf of a company, then you don't have to pay for Public Liability Insurance. However, you must include a copy of your Certificate of Currency (at the time of lodgment).

The policy must be for no less than \$20 Million. Please review your policy closely as some policies may not cover your group activity if it's held away from the office. If the booking is on behalf of an individual, an additional fee of \$153 is payable.

### 3.10 Wet Weather

In the case of wet weather rendering the park unfit for use, a refund may be given. Applications for refunds must be made in writing. Upon confirmation, a refund will be given minus \$50 processing fee. Council must be advised on the day of the event that the booking did not take place due to wet weather.

## **4 Permit Fees**

Fees and charges for booking a park to hold a special event, activity or gathering in North Sydney are contained in the 'Permit for a Social Gathering in Parks and Reserves' available on Council's website.

Existing fees and charges for parks and reserves for 60 or more guest would remain unchanged, however, it is proposed that new fees would be introduced for fewer than 60 guests, as follows:

### Existing fees

Between 61 > 100 people: \$299.00

Between 101 > 150 people: \$482.00

Between 151 > 200 people: \$738.00

Between 201 > 250 people: \$962.00

Over 251 people: \$1240.00

Existing fees for hire of Wendy Whiteley's Secret Garden will also continue to apply.

### New fees

40 > 60 people: \$195.00

Less than 40 people (where applicable – refer Section 3.1): \$100.00.

Less than 40 people in all other parks and circumstances: no charge



## **1. Signage**

It is recommended that Council implements the changes to the process of booking parks outlined in this report. Once this has been done, the need for additional signage in prime main-harbour foreshore parks can be assessed. If the current issues persist once the new booking measures are implemented, this can be revisited.

## **2. Conclusion**

North Sydney's unique location on the southern foreshores of Sydney's prime Sydney harbour means that our foreshore parks are popular not only for the green space and the recreational opportunities that they provide, but also for the scenic views they offer. 'MM01 – Managing Blues Point Reserve' notes the recent increase in use of some of Council's prime foreshore parks for special events and activities and identifies the need to ensure that these parks remain available for everyone to use.

This report outlines an approach that will ensure that neither large gatherings nor numerous small gatherings will be permitted to occupy all (or most of) one of Council's prime Sydney harbour foreshore parks.

Requiring bookings to be made for all gatherings of more than 40 people, and for a range of special events and activities taking place in the prime Sydney Harbour foreshore parks will mean that Council can control the number of special events occurring in particular parks, and ensure that space remains available for unscheduled, informal recreation. Issuing permits to booking holders will mean that Council officers can determine which special events, activities and gatherings are authorised and which are not.

**Map 1 – Prime Main-Harbour Foreshore Parks in North Sydney**



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1</b> Blues Point Reserve</li> <li><b>2</b> Henry Lawson Reserve</li> <li><b>3</b> Lavender Bay Parklands (includes Quibaree, Watt &amp; Clark Parks and Lavender Bay Foreshore)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>4</b> Bradfield Park</li> <li><b>5</b> Kirribilli Foreshore (includes Captain Henry Waterhouse Reserve, Dr Mary Booth, Copes &amp; Stanton Lookouts)</li> <li><b>6</b> Cremorne Reserve</li> </ul> |
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