

10.5. North Sydney Oval - Rugby Festival

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek Councils endorsement of a proposal to hold a rugby festival at North Sydney Oval (NSO), Bon Andrews Oval (BAO), and adjacent areas of St. Leonard's Park, from Wednesday 30 July to Saturday 2 August 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- Four days of events involving the Classic Wallabies and Rugby Australia have been proposed for 2025, from 30 July to 2 August, including an open Classic Wallabies Captains' training run on Wednesday 30 July, Classic Wallabies vs Classic Lions match on Thursday 31 July, Wallaroos vs Wales match on Friday 1 August, and a 'Live Site' broadcasting the Wallabies vs Lions third test on Saturday 2 August.
- The Classic Wallabies have proposed hosting rugby clinics on Bon Andrews Oval (BAO) on Wednesday 30 July 2025, open to children and schools within the local community.
- Rugby Australia has subsequently endorsed North Sydney Oval (NSO) as a recognised 'Live Site' for the third Wallabies vs Lions test match, scheduled for Saturday 2 August 2025.
- To maximise the impact of these events, it is proposed that NSO hosts a four-day Rugby Festival from 30 July to 2 August 2025. To successfully accommodate the anticipated 12,000 patrons per night, it is recommended to extend the NSO boundaries on game

nights and establish a secure 'Fan Zone' within St Leonards Park. This area would also be open to the public on non-game nights, with NSO remaining closed.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** Council endorse the proposal for a Rugby Festival to be held at North Sydney Oval, Bon Andrews and St Leonards Park, from 30 July to 2 August 2025.
- 2. THAT** Council endorse the operation of a 'Fan Zone' to be operated in partnership with the Classic Wallabies within St Leonards Park.
- 3. THAT** Council authorise Council's Chief Executive Officer to finalise negotiations and enter into agreements with the Classic Wallabies, Rugby Australia, and food & beverage stakeholders for the Rugby Festival to be held at North Sydney Ova, Bon Andrew Oval, and the adjacent areas of St Leonards Park, from 30 July to 2 August 2025.

Background

In May 2023, the Classic Wallabies secured a booking at North Sydney Oval (NSO) for a scheduled Classic Wallabies versus Classic Lions match on Thursday 31 July 2025. Subsequently, Rugby Australia requested two separate bookings for training camps at NSO, to accommodate the needs of the touring British & Irish Lions squad. The second of these training camps is scheduled for 28 July to 1 August 2025, in preparation for the third and final test match against the Wallabies. This booking overlaps with the pre-existing Classic Wallabies booking.

During logistical planning meetings concerning the coordination of the Lions 'closed' training sessions and preparations for the Classics match, Rugby Australia proposed a Wallaroos vs Wales test match on Friday 1 August 2025, to be played at NSO, thereby creating a double-header rugby event.

Rugby Australia has also offered Council the opportunity to host a live site for the Wallabies vs British and Irish Lions, which is scheduled for Saturday the 2 August 2025.

Report

In December 2024, following discussions between NSO Management, Rugby Australia, and the Classic Wallabies, an agreement was reached to host a series of rugby events at NSO. The schedule includes a Classic Wallabies match on Thursday 31 July 2025, followed by a Wallaroos vs Wales match on Friday 1 August 2025. This agreement requires the venue to have a capacity of 12,000 patrons per match.

In addition, and as part of this arrangement, the Classic Wallabies have committed to hosting a rugby clinic at Bon Andrews Oval (BAO) on Wednesday 30 July 2025. The clinic will be open to children and schools within the local community. Additionally, immediately following the clinic, the 'Captains' Runs' for the Classic Wallabies match will take place at BAO, providing an opportunity for community engagement and spectator involvement.

Rugby Australia has subsequently confirmed NSO as endorsed 'live site' for the third Wallabies vs Lions test match, scheduled for Saturday 2 August 2025. This designation would make NSO an authorised fan zone to watch the match. The initiative aims to provide a dedicated venue for fans who are unable to secure tickets for the live match at Accor Stadium in Homebush.

The establishment of the 'live site' will require the closure of sections of St Leonards Park to create a secure 'Fan Zone' from Monday 28 July to Wednesday 6 August 2025. The fan zone will accommodate food and beverage outlets, live entertainment including a band or DJ, a large screen for broadcasting the Wallabies vs Lions match from Accor Stadium, toilets, and ample seating for patrons.

It is proposed to open the 'fan zone' for four consecutive days from Wednesday 30 July 2025 to leverage the temporary additional infrastructure, to maximise the impact of the event, significantly improve the patron experience on the game nights, and augment existing onsite infrastructure.

The Plan of Management for St Leonards Park contemplates the use of this space for the purposes of events, and legal advice has confirmed that enclosing space within the park would not require formal notification. Nevertheless, notification of the proposal to enclose the space will be undertaken.

NSW Liquor & Gaming have confirmed that Council would be able to extend the Licence for NSO into an enclosed space within St Leonards Park through a 'Liquor licence temporary change of boundaries application.'

On Wednesday 30 July 2025, following the final Classic Wallabies Captain's Run, the Fan Zone would open at 3:30pm, while the main gates to NSO would remain closed. Security personnel would conduct bag checks and monitor capacity. This evening would allow vendors to finalise their setups in preparation for the following days. The 'Fan Zone' is expected to be quiet and close at 9pm.

On Thursday 31 July and Friday 1 August 2025, only ticketed patrons would be permitted to access the Fan Zone within the extended NSO boundary. The Fan Zone would open at approximately 3:30pm each day, with NSO gates opening at 5:30pm ahead of a 7pm kick-off. The Fan Zone would remain operational during the match and would stay open until 11pm to facilitate a staggered exit, reducing congestion.

On Saturday 2 August 2025 (the final day of the Rugby Festival), the Fan Zone would operate similarly to the opening night, allowing access to the public, and the Oval remaining closed. Given the Wallabies vs Lions match at Accor Stadium is scheduled to begin at 8pm, the Fan Zone would open at 3:30pm and remain active until the conclusion of the match at approximately 10pm.

The proposed site layout includes secured zones with 1.8-meter fencing used to expand NSO's boundaries (refer to Figure 1, below).

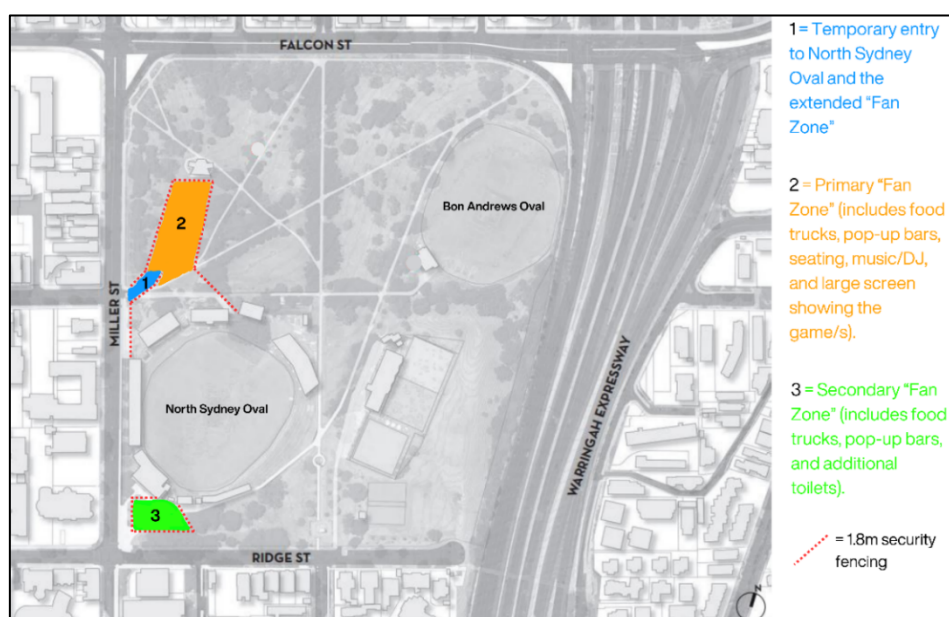


Figure 1: Site Map for 'Rugby Festival'

- **Zone 1 (Blue):** The single point of entry for both the Fan Zone and NSO. This expanded access area will facilitate quick and safe entry. In case of high demand, queuing will be managed along Miller Street under The Colonnade.
- **Zone 2 (Orange):** The primary Fan Zone, hosting most of the food and beverage vendors, a large screen, live entertainment, seating areas and toilets. Classic Wallabies and Rugby Australia would also utilise this space for fan engagement activities.
- **Zone 3 (Green):** A smaller area for spectators at the southern end of the Oval on match nights. This area will feature additional food and beverage options and extra toilet facilities. Fencing around this zone would be designed for easy removal post-match to assist with crowd dispersal. This area would only be in operation for the two game days.

NSO management has engaged with key stakeholders, including Council's events team, external security providers, and North Shore Police. All stakeholders have provided valuable input in relation to the proposal and are enthusiastic to be involved and deliver a safe and successful event for the local community.

Importantly, North Shore Police has reviewed the high-level event plans and has indicated satisfaction with the proposed arrangements, contingent on continued communication and planning. North Shore Police will continue to refine logistics and security measures with Council to optimise the festival experience for all attendees. Council will also be using 'users pay' Police as part of the event, in addition to security contractors.

Council staff have also been working closely with the North Shore Police Area Command to introduce a Local Licensing Agreement (LLA) for the Oval, which outlines the minimum requirements and guidelines required for a hirer to operate a sports-based festival at the NSO. The LLA will be applied to the proposed Rugby Festival to ensure a safe and enjoyable event is conducted.

Council staff have also engaged an external specialist to complete a formal risk assessment of North Sydney Oval, providing expert input to ensure events at NSPO are conducted with measures in place to mitigate potential risks and improve public safety.

Consultation requirements

Community engagement is not required, however public notification of the event and closure of sections of St Leonards Park will be undertaken.

Financial Implications

The booking of NSO for the Classic Wallabies and Wallaroos matches are in alignment with Council's advertised fees and charges.

A breakdown of costings and income has been provided within the confidential attachment to this report.

It should also be noted that establishing the 'Live Site' for only Saturday 2 August 2025 would not be financially viable.

Resource implications details

The physical resources within St Leonards Park, encompassing Zone 2 (the 'Fan Zone') and Zone 3, will be reserved and inaccessible from Monday 28 July to Wednesday 6 August 2025, for the setup, use, and dismantling of infrastructure. Whenever feasible, any footpaths that are restricted while these zones are in operation will be reopened and made accessible at other times.

Bon Andrews Oval will be reserved from Tuesday 29 July to Thursday 31 July 2025, to accommodate the preparation, execution, and dismantling of the rugby clinic, Captains' Runs, and fan engagement activities involving Wallabies Classics players and the community. NSO is already booked through standard operations to accommodate the Classics and Wallaroos matches, in addition to the Lions training sessions throughout the week.

Staff resources will be primarily allocated from the NSO and NSC Events teams in the lead-up to and during the Rugby Festival. Limited support may also be required from Council's Open Space Bookings, Traffic & Transport, and Communications teams. All staffing needs should be integrated into standard daily operations. Staff resource costs have been factored into existing operational budgets &/or included within the Rugby Festival budgets attached to this report.

Legislation

- NSW Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007
- NSW Local Govt Act s47 and s47A.