

10.8. North Sydney Oval PA System Upgrade – critical safety works

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ATTACHMENTS	Nil
CSP LINK	<div>1. Our Living Environment 1.4 Well utilised open space and recreational facilities</div> <div>2. Our Built Infrastructure 2.1 Infrastructure and assets meet diverse community needs</div> <div>4. Our Social Vitality 4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe</div> <div>5. Our Civic Leadership 5.4 Council services are efficient and easy to access</div>

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Council to reallocate capital works funding to enable the renewal of the public address (PA) system at North Sydney Oval.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- Over the last year Council has secured numerous long-term Venue Hire Agreements and significant events at North Sydney Oval, which assist in ensuring the financial sustainability of this venue.
- A venue risk assessment notes the PA system is the primary mechanism for crowd control and emergency evacuation.
- The current PA system at the venue is at the end of usable life and requires renewal.
- Given the increased usage and scale of events at the venue, Council faces significant risk should this equipment not be renewed.
- A quote of \$134,129 (excluding GST) has been obtained for the most urgent works, which will ensure basic functionality and safe operation.
- It is proposed to reallocate funding from the capital works budget to cover the cost of this renewal.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council note the contents of this report and the requirement to renew the public address system at North Sydney Oval.

2. THAT Council approve the reallocation of funding from the 2025/26 capital works budget and defer the reconstruction of the seawall at Blues Point to fund the public address system renewal at North Sydney Oval.

Background

Council is continuing to improve the delivery of services at North Sydney Oval (NSO) and increasing utilisation to assist in supporting the financial sustainability of the venue, following a recent service review.

Over the last year Council has secured long-term Venue Hire Agreements with Norths Rugby League, Northern Suburbs Rugby Union, Cricket NSW, and Cricket Australia. Council has also successfully secured a West Australian Football League (WAFL) game for the upcoming season, and semi-finals of the Shute Shield. This year NSO has hosted the British and Irish Lions, the 2025 Women's Super Rugby Final, and the England Vs Australia match in the Women's Ashes.

Later this month NSO will host one of only two Classic Wallabies Vs British Irish Lions Legends to be held in Australia, and the Australia women's national rugby union (Wallaroos) Vs Wales. It is anticipated that these fixtures will see NSO at capacity.

Report

An external venue risk assessment was completed in March 2025, as part of Council's ongoing service improvement work. Amongst other things, the risk assessment confirmed that the Public Address (PA) system was the primary mechanisms for crowd management and emergency communication, as is typical with venues of this nature.

The current Public Address (PA) system at North Sydney Oval is past the end of useable life. In previous years works have been undertaken to prolong the system (most recently 2018), however the system is now experiencing persistent technical issues including sound distortion, inconsistent coverage across key spectator areas, and periodic hardware failures, which result in Public Address completely dropping out.

While minor maintenance and temporary measures such as hiring supplementary components have been used to maintain functionality, these efforts are no longer sufficient, are not cost efficient, and represent significant risk-exposure to Council in the management of events at the facility.

Given the significant number of recurrent events at the Oval and the upcoming large-scale events scheduled from 30 July 2025, the current condition of the PA system further elevates Council's risk, particularly with regard to crowd management and emergency or evacuation, when clear and reliable communication is essential.

To address these concerns and ensure public safety, Council staff engaged a contractor to assess the existing system and provide recommendations for the renewal. Quotes have since been obtained for a full system replacement, with the total cost estimated in the order of \$400k.

However, given Council's current financial position and impending major events, a staged approach has been adopted, which will minimise initial costs and enable Council to address

its current risk exposure in relation to crowd management and evacuation at the venue. A quotation of \$134,129 (excluding GST) has been provided for the works, which includes the replacement of speakers in underperforming zones, and the improvement of coverage and reliability across key spectator areas

Works commenced in early July 2025, with Stage 1 infrastructure scheduled for completion prior to the large-scale events scheduled from 30 July. The system has been designed to allow for future enhancements as additional components arrive and scheduling permits.

It is proposed that funds for these urgent works be reallocated from existing capital works program allocations, with adjustments to be formalised in the next quarterly budget review process.

Consultation requirements

No community engagement has been undertaken to inform the recommendations of this report.

Financial/Resource Implications

It is proposed to redirect funds from Council's current 2025/26 Capital Works Program; specifically, the reconstruction of the seawall at Blues Point will be deferred and rescheduled, subject to available funding and resources. It is considered that the risk associated with the seawall project, which will be managed through barricading and inspections for the next 12 months, noting that these works would be completed earlier should sufficient funding become available during the course of the 2025/26 financial year.