

10.12.New Year's Eve - Introduction of Ticketing Managed Access

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ENDORSED BY	Duncan Rennie, Acting Director Corporate Services
ATTACHMENTS	1. Case Studies of other Vantage Points [10.12.1 - 3 pages] 2. NYE 2018 - Ticketing Consultation Outcomes - Council Resolution 25.03.19 [10.12.2 - 10 pages]
CSP LINK	5. Our Civic Leadership 5.3 Community is engaged in what Council does

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek a decision from Council regarding the potential ticketing of managed vantage points for New Year's Eve (NYE) North Sydney 2025/26, to support full or partial cost recovery of NYE event expenses which have for some years been fully subsidised by Council.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The City of Sydney funds a NYE fireworks display which is operationally supported by multiple State and local government agencies. Up to one million people view the fireworks live from the Sydney Harbour foreshore, with many viewing the display from North Sydney.
- Council manages three primary vantage places - Bradfield Park/Mary Booth Reserve, Lavender Bay Parklands (incorporating Clark and Watt Parks and Quibaree Reserve), and Blues Point (incorporating Blues Point and Henry Lawson Reserves).
- Neighbouring Councils and public landowners have ticketed for NYE celebrations in the past; however, it is evident few will be ticketing for 2025/26 NYE.
- This report explores the options for introducing paid ticketing for the 2025/26 event, to either partially or fully recover costs associated with managing the primary vantage points in North Sydney for the NYE fireworks display. All options come with a varying scale of risks and opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council note the contents of this report and considers the options outlining the risks and benefits associated with ticketing the managed vantage points in North Sydney for NYE 2025/26.

2. THAT Council endorse Option 2, which proposes ticketed access to one of North Sydney's three primary vantage points, with the intent to support partial cost recovery of New Years Eve event expenses, which have traditionally been fully subsidised by Council.

Background

The City of Sydney funds a New Year's Eve (NYE) fireworks display which is operationally supported by multiple State and Local Government agencies.

The fireworks display contributes to Sydney's positioning as a global city. Council's NYE responsibilities have grown in line with the event's popularity and status. Historically, Council's primary focus was to manage the event to reduce its impact on residents. In particular, Council has sought to reduce the incidence of violence, property damage, and antisocial behaviour in the foreshore area.

Council provides infrastructure such as toilets and bins for attendees and is responsible for crowd and traffic management, both within the access points and more broadly in the North Sydney CBD. With the introduction of the Metro and increased anti-terrorism needs, responsibility for crowd safety has increased. This has placed greater pressure on Council to implement additional safety strategies including increased Hostile Vehicle Management, security, and traffic management. With these necessary measures comes increased costs.

Council introduced ticketing trials in the COVID-19 pandemic with varied success and this report explores the potential of reintroducing ticketing for the 2025/26 event in order to recoup part or all the increased costs associated with running the event.

Report

Council has several responsibilities for NYE, including:

- crowd and emergency management;
- Hostile Vehicle Mitigation;
- infrastructure such as fencing and crowd-control barriers, toilets, internet, site sheds, power, lighting, water, marquees and other structures, VMS
- waste management
- management of food vendors
- risk management
- proactive management of Cremorne Point and Waverton
- traffic management
- security management

Council officers have consulted with this year's event management contractors to explore the possibility of ticketing the event. To achieve this, additional funding of up to \$200,000 would be required across all three managed sites, to cover associated operating costs and communications with residents. The following headings outline the main considerations and costs associated with planning a ticketing overlay across the three managed sites.

Budget Implications

- **Ticketing Software & Management** - a ticketing company would need to be engaged to facilitate the volume of tickets required to cover the three locations (approximately 27,000 ticketholders in total). This would include pre-production fees, staffing of gates, ticket software and hardware (e.g., scanners), and the potential of additional infrastructure on site to facilitate these teams. The ticket agency fee is generally \$3 per ticket; Gate Managers and scanners for seven hours (5pm to midnight), additional signage, fencing, and furniture.
 - Bradfield Park - 16,000 pax - approx. cost \$77,000 - \$89,000
 - Lavender Bay - 3,000 pax- approx. cost \$14,000 - \$17,000
 - Blues Point - 8,000 pax- approx. cost \$39,000 - \$44,000
 - TOTAL - 27,000 pax- approx. cost \$130,000 - \$150,000
- **Reception Booster** - phone and internet reception decreases during NYE, and as ticket scanners generally require a strong connection to data download, a reception booster such as a Cell-on-Wheels (COW) trailer or satellite internet connection (e.g., Starlink) receiver would be required to support all three managed spaces.
 - All three sites (27,000 pax)- approx. cost \$20,000 - \$40,000
- **Additional Advertising & Communications** – to ensure attendees are aware of the cost.
 - All three sites (27,000 pax)- approx. cost \$10,000.

Operational Risks

- **Crowd Management** - due to the implication that a ticket gives the holder a guaranteed spot within a venue, previous ticketed sites have seen an influx of people arrive very close to show moments (i.e., 9pm or midnight), expecting to go through entry gates swiftly. This can be softened by effective communication to ticket holders leading up to NYE, encouraging them to arrive early so to avoid queues and to secure the best available position within the managed area/s.
- **Reception Drop-Out** - ticket scanners work either via the phone network or a Wi-Fi network, with both generally overloaded at key moments during New Years Eve. This could result in connection issues that would delay entry into venues. This risk can be reduced through the introduction of reception boosters.
- **Ticket scams** - there is always a risk of fake tickets in the online marketplace if purchased via third party vendors, which can take additional time to validate at the gate by staff and can cause emotional distress for attendees. Capacity needs to be built into pre-event briefings and training, for temporary staff or software experts to troubleshoot when issues arise.
- **Ticketing trends** – many other landowners along the Sydney Harbour foreshore who have ticketed in the past (including free or low cost) have stopped doing this and opened sites as free access until capacity is reached. A summary of the attached case studies and other information gathered is as follows:

- City of Sydney
 - During COVID affected NYE, main vantage points were ticketed to help control capacities and maintain social distancing restrictions.
 - Since COVID the City of Sydney has not implemented ticketing at any of their vantage points.
- Botanic Gardens
 - Ticketed most recently for the 2024/25 NYE – tickets ranged from \$45-\$225.
 - Indication is that, after many years of paid ticketing, the Botanic Gardens vantage points will be non-ticketed or managed via free tickets.
- Harbour Trust
 - Sydney Harbour trust manages several open spaces along the Sydney Harbour foreshore, including Cockatoo Island, Macquarie Lightstation, North Head, Woolwich Dock and Parklands, Chowder Bay, and Georges Heights.
 - Most of these sites are not ticketed, with the exception being Cockatoo Island, where visitors need to secure accommodation to access the island for NYE.

Reputational Risks

- **Crowd mentality and behaviour** – ticketing for an event which has been free of charge, could see large numbers of non-ticketholders arriving at the sites, potentially manifesting in unsettled behaviour near entry gates, dissatisfaction voiced to staff on the ground, and/or complaints to Council’s customer service centre. This can be managed by regular, targeted communications in the lead-up to the event, along with well-planned operations, and thorough briefing of staff prior to the event.
- **No elevation of experience for cost** - the ticket price for cost recovery would not allow for additional investment to raise the experience of the event for ticketholders, such as entertainment programming, hospitality (such as licensed bar areas), and nicer facilities (e.g. deluxe temporary bathrooms rather than Portaloos). This can be partially addressed through clear messaging prior to the event, highlighting the benefits of a ‘guaranteed spot’ and the services that will still be provided in the managed areas.
- **Migration to free-to-access areas** – low-service vantage points such as Cremorne Point might experience a higher influx of visitors, which may mean that there is a requirement for more security, first aid, and infrastructure to make safe. Also, residents directly adjacent to these areas may well be highly impacted. While this is a risk, crowds along Sydney’s foreshore on NYE are traditionally very large, with all possible vantage points typically at capacity.

Options

Three options have been identified for the management of NYE 2025:

- 1) ticketing to achieve full cost recovery;
- 2) partial cost recovery ticketing; and
- 3) continuing with free managed access.

The following options incorporate the three vantage point precincts that Council actively manages: Bradfield Park/Mary Booth Reserve, Lavender Bay Parklands (incorporating Quibaree Reserve, Clark and Watt Parks), and Blues Point Reserve (incorporating Blues Point and Henry Lawson Reserves). The risks and opportunities of each model are summarised in the following table.

Option	Finance/ Resourcing	Risk/Opportunity	Consultation
1. Ticketing to achieve full cost recovery	<p>Budget for NYE is \$1,086,000. Additional costs to introduce ticketing across all 3 sites are approx. \$200k, resulting in a total cost of \$1,286,000.</p> <p>To achieve full cost recovery, 27,000 tickets would need to be sold at approx. \$48 per ticket.</p>	<p>Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative effect on Council's reputation due to charging for access which was previously free. Community objection to charging to access public land. Limited spaces left for free access to view the fireworks, due to all 3 managed sites being ticketed. Operational risks as listed in the report. <p>Opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ticketholders guaranteed a place at one of three vantage points, reducing the need to arrive early, and adding value to ticket price. Good communication should reduce additional numbers outside of vantage points as non-ticketholders will know there is no chance of entry. Cost-neutral for Council to manage the 3 vantage sites (assuming all 27,000 tickets are sold). More resources available to manage Cremorne Point and Waverton sites. Provides data for TransportNSW to plan for public transport. Provides opportunity for direct messaging to ticketholders. 	<p>No community consultation required at this stage.</p> <p>A communications strategy including information for Precinct Committees, foreshore residents, and businesses will be developed when a direction and details regarding ticketing for NYE 2025 has been resolved.</p>
2. Partial Cost Recovery Ticketing	This option involves ticketing only the Blues Point managed vantage point, as the premier	<p>Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access within Blues Point vantage site would be restricted from night before. 	No community consultation is required at this stage.

Option	Finance/ Resourcing	Risk/Opportunity	Consultation
	<p>location in North Sydney. 8,000 tickets @ \$50 per ticket, would generate approx. \$400,000.</p> <p>After ~\$95,000 of costs associated with ticketing Blue Points are accounted for, this would leave approx. \$305,000 towards recovering costs associated with infrastructure, supplier costs, and staffing across all managed sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community objection to charging to access public land at the premium location in North Sydney. Potential ticketholder disappointment with Blues Point site not coming with additional benefits (e.g. entertainment). Operational risks as listed in the report. <p>Opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ticketholders guaranteed place at a premium vantage point, reducing the need to arrive early and adding value to ticket cost. Reduced costs for Council. Access to a premium viewing location at an affordable cost. Only ticketing Blues Point still offers 2 other managed vantage points free of charge. Provides opportunity for direct messaging to ticketholders. Permits Council to recover some of the costs associated with managing NYE crowds. 	<p>A communications strategy including information for Precinct Committees, foreshore residents, and businesses will be developed when a direction and details regarding ticketing for NYE 2025 has been resolved.</p>
<p>3. Continuing with free managed access</p>	<p>This option involves replicating the delivery of the last two years.</p> <p>Managed access includes fencing the three actively managed vantage points and allowing people to enter the reserves for free until they reach capacity.</p>	<p>Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park access restricted from night before. More people likely to arrive early to ensure entry to vantage point, potentially queuing overnight as seen in 2024. Potential crowd overflows onto street if people travel to vantage point after it is closed. Council bears full cost associated with managing the vantage places in North Sydney. <p>Opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More trade for local businesses as people arrive earlier. 	<p>No community consultation required.</p>

Option	Finance/ Resourcing	Risk/Opportunity	Consultation
	People entering have their bags checked for alcohol and dangerous items.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reserves likely to reach capacity, ensuring maximum audience for Council investment. Reduced risk of crowd crush at entry points later in the day, as patrons arrive across the day to ensure they can access the Reserve. Aligns with City of Sydney delivery model. 	

Ticketing of North Sydney vantage points for NYE 2025/26 would require careful operational planning, increased resources, and an enhanced communication plan to ensure financial viability of the event and a safe environment for attendees.

Option 2 is recommended, ticketing only Blues Point with an introductory ticket price of \$50 per ticket. Based on 8,000 tickets being sold, this option would contribute to approximately \$400,000 in cost recovery for managing North Sydney NYE vantage points (or net \$305,000 after costs associated with ticketing have been accounted for). Subject to community consultation and feedback following NYE 2025/26, Council could then decide whether to change the ticket price for future NYE managed access, expand or maintain the number of ticketed locations, or return to free-access options for all managed sites.

Consultation requirements

Council has attempted multiple approaches to managing the vantage points over the years, including trialing ticketed vantage points in 2018 and 2019. For the last two years, Council has provided free, managed access.

The attached resolution and associated report from the 25 March 2019 Council meeting summarised the consultation outcomes of the ticketing trial at NYE 2018/19:

Ticketholders were generally very satisfied with the event which indicates ticketing would be viable in the future. However, ticketing reduces income for businesses and takes away previous resident rights to view the fireworks from the reserve without having to pay for or reserve a place.

The Council survey into the principle of ticketing showed there was not majority community support for either paid or free ticketing. If ticketing was to be introduced, the preferred option of the community would be on a full cost recovery basis.

Community consultation (informing) and communication is recommended if a reintroduction of ticketing for the event is endorsed. A communications strategy including information for Council's Precinct Committees, foreshore residents, and businesses will be developed once a direction and details for ticketing NYE 2025 has been resolved.

Financial/Resource Implications

The current budget for NYE is \$1,086,000. To introduce ticketing at Blues Point only, additional costs of approximately \$95,000 would be incurred including contract staff, equipment, and additional communications support. This would result in a total cost of \$1,181,000.

If 8,000 tickets were sold to access Blues Point at \$50 per ticket, this would generate \$400,000 in revenue, reducing Council's net expenditure to manage NYE crowds to circa \$781,000.

Legislation

It is legislated via the Major Events Act that Council has an obligation to cooperate with the Premier's Department and to comply with Ministerial directions regarding road and transport plans.

Case Studies of Other Vantage Points**City of Sydney**

For NYE after COVID-19 lockdowns in 2022, the City of Sydney ticketed their main vantage points in the LGA. This was a result of conversations about maintaining control of capacities and COVID safety due to the 1.5m social distancing restrictions in place at the time. Since that year, the City has not implemented ticketing at their vantage points. The following is an overview of what the process of ticketing those sites entailed.

- **Staffing**
 - RFQ completed for Front of House services, followed by an intensive training pack for how these staff were to communicate with the public as representatives of council. The casual workforce saw many workers unable to attend pre-event briefings, so this had to be fulfilled by the site managers.
 - Some roles filled with Volunteers, however there was already a large volunteer workforce in place through regular City of Sydney operations.
- **Software**
 - Humanitix - software and devices. Troubleshooting support.
Data drop outs on the day caused delays in getting people inside venues. Created further pressure on the gates and queuing systems.
Financial obligation with the software use, on top of sourcing scanners, scanning staff and mobile data across different sites with varying levels of service.
- **Event Day Timings**
 - People travelled into the City later when they held a ticket. Hence, it was harder to determine the capacity of a site and declare it full.
 - It also puts additional pressure on transport services later in the evening which is already pressurised around the 9pm fireworks.
 - On all marketing materials that went out prior to the event across multiple landowners, including The Rocks, Dawes Point and Circular Quay (all free ticketed that year), the messaging was that ticket holders should arrive before 6pm, otherwise their place would be at risk of being turned away due to large crowds and the impact on public safety. This would be difficult to enforce with paid tickets.
- **Tourists that do not plan ahead**
 - Sydney New Year's Eve has three main demographics - families, Sydney locals, and people who are visiting from overseas. It is very common for people who are not familiar with the precedent of their event and its operations to familiarise themselves with the information online, which is why overflow areas and clear communication are important on the night. Having ticketed areas that do not fill completely until very late in the proceedings creates the expectation that there will be room within sites that eventually become available for non-ticket holders. This caused tension in the queues that was difficult to dissipate.
- **Negative response from local ratepayers**
 - In 2022, when free ticketed sites were implemented by the City of Sydney, there was a backlash from local residents in waterfront housing that were not able to guarantee access to their local parks.
- **Public Messaging/Impact on communication across the NYE Footprint about site closures**
 - Not being able to declare a precinct as full has a huge impact on crowd flow and communication from the control centres.

- Difficult to communicate across the board what the capacity is of each. People without tickets can line up for spaces to become available, however making the call to allow people through to fill in for “no shows” was a guessing game.
- Digital ticket booking limitations
 - There was a large amount of feedback from residents and visitors who did not regularly use a computer or were not subscribed to the online newsletters from Council, not fully comprehending the process of booking a ticket for New Year’s Eve. To require local residents to use a digital platform put strain on the Customer Service team, as many of these people were used to printed information about Council events in the form of resident letters.

Royal Botanic Gardens

As of 2023, Royal Botanic Gardens no longer ticket their vantage points with the exception of the Foundation and Friends NYE Picnic, which is a paid ticketed event that takes place on Mare and Foal Lawn and is a fundraising opportunity for the gardens, after Premier Chris Minns announced that all NSW Government owned sites around Sydney’s harbour foreshore would be free to the public for New Years Eve.

- Previously Tarpeian Lawn was ticketed at \$250 per ticket - this included access to bathrooms and food trucks. Now the venue is non-ticketed and has a general hospitality area (including bar) and regular portable toilets.
- Previously First Fleet Steps was ticketed with 5-course meal for \$500 per ticket - including access to VIP toilets and facilities, bar offering, etc. Now the venue is non-ticketed and has a general hospitality area (including bar) and regular portable toilets.
- Previously Mrs Macquarie’s Chair was \$20 per ticket with no additional services provided. This has since been changed to free tickets.

In 2025 mirroring 2024, free managed access will be provided to Bennelong Lawn, Tarpeian Lawn and Mrs Macquarie’s Point (including Fleet Steps).

Landowner Overview 2025

Landowner	Vantage Point Name	Access Type
Transport for NSW	Cahill Expressway	Free Ticketed/Via Ballot
Botanic Gardens of Sydney	Bennelong Lawn	Free Managed Access
Botanic Gardens of Sydney	Tarpeian Lawn	Free Managed Access
Botanic Gardens of Sydney	Mrs Macquarie’s Point (inc Fleet Steps)	Free Managed Access
Botanic Gardens of Sydney	Foundation and Friends NYE Picnic	Paid Ticketed
Placemaking NSW	Campbells Cove	Free Managed Access
Placemaking NSW	Hickson Rd Reserve	Free Managed Access
Placemaking NSW	Dawes Point Park	Free Managed Access
Placemaking NSW	West Circular Quay	Free Managed Access
Placemaking NSW	Wharf 2	Free Managed Access
Placemaking NSW	East Circular Quay	Free Managed Access
Placemaking NSW	The Rocks Central	Free Managed Access
Placemaking NSW	Cockle Bay	Free Managed Access
Placemaking NSW	Barangaroo Reserve	Free Managed Access

Placemaking NSW	Darling Quarter & Tumbalong Park	Free Managed Access
Placemaking NSW	Cumberland St	Free Managed Access
Placemaking NSW	King St Wharf	Free Managed Access
Sydney Opera House	Forecourt	Free ticketed
Sydney Opera House	Ticketed events	Paid Ticketed
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services	Clark Island	Paid Ticketed
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services	Goat Island	Paid Ticketed
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services	Shark Island	Paid Ticketed
Harbour Trust	Cockatoo Island	Paid Ticketed for campers and island guests
Waverley Council	Dudley Page Reserve	Paid Ticketed

**DECISION OF 3717th COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 25 MARCH 2019**

87. CoS03: New Year's Eve 2018 – Ticketing Consultation Outcomes

Report of Sandra Moore, Manager Communications & Events

At its meeting of 28 May 2018, Council resolved to endorse a trial of ticketing at New Year's Eve (NYE) and requested a further report about options for cost recovery and revenue generating opportunities, together with a community engagement strategy. On 30 July 2018, Council endorsed a strategy to engage the community on the principle of ticketing foreshore sites on NYE.

The community consultation included widespread dissemination of a discussion paper (see Attachment 2), information kiosks at local markets and an online survey. The survey respondents did not support the principle of paid or free ticketing for NYE.

Ticketing was trialled at Blues Point Reserve as per the Council resolutions of 28 May 2018 and 24 September 2018. Verbal and written feedback was also received on the trial from residents and businesses immediately prior to and after the event. This feedback was predominantly negative.

Council also consulted the people who bought tickets to the event via an online survey in January. Overall, ticketholders were satisfied. Key drivers of satisfaction were that the event was well organised, was safe and family friendly, and the tickets were reasonably priced.

This report summarises all the feedback received since October 2018 about NYE in North Sydney, in particular about Blues Point Reserve, and is provided as background information for a report (CoS04) outlining options for managing NYE in the future.

This report is provided for information only, however, it should be noted that any decision to pursue paid or unpaid ticketing will have financial implications for Council.

Recommending:

1. THAT the report on New Year's Eve 2018 – Ticketing Consultation Outcomes be received.

The Recommendation was moved by Councillor Baker and seconded by Councillor Barbour.

The Motion was put and **carried**.

Voting was as follows:

For/Against 10/0

Councillor	Yes	No	Councillor	Yes	No
Gibson	Y		Barbour	Y	
Beregi	Y		Drummond	Y	
Keen	Y		Gunning	Y	
Brodie	Y		Mutton	Y	
Carr	Y		Baker	Y	

RESOLVED:

1. THAT the report on New Year's Eve 2018 – Ticketing Consultation Outcomes be received.



Report to General Manager

Attachments:

1. Pre-NYE 'Have Your Say' Ticketing Survey Comments
2. Pre-NYE Ticketing Consultation Discussion Paper
3. Blues Point Reserve Ticketholder Survey Comments
4. NYE 2018 Community/Council Correspondence (Emails and Letters)

SUBJECT: New Year's Eve 2018 – Ticketing Consultation Outcomes

AUTHOR: Sandra Moore, Manager Communications & Events

ENDORSED BY: Margaret Palmer, Director Corporate Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At its meeting of 28 May 2018, Council resolved to endorse a trial of ticketing at New Year's Eve (NYE) and requested a further report about options for cost recovery and revenue generating opportunities, together with a community engagement strategy. On 30 July 2018, Council endorsed a strategy to engage the community on the principle of ticketing foreshore sites on NYE.

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This report summarises all the feedback received since October 2018 about NYE in North Sydney, in particular about Blues Point Reserve, and is provided as background information for a report (CoS04) outlining options for managing NYE in the future.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report is provided for information only, however, it should be noted that any decision to pursue paid or unpaid ticketing will have financial implications for Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the report on New Year's Eve 2018 – Ticketing Consultation Outcomes be received.

Report of Sandra Moore, Manager Communications & Events
Re: NYE 2018 – Ticketing Consultation Outcomes

(2)

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN:

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Direction: | 4. Our Social Vitality |
| Outcome: | 4.2 North Sydney is creative and home to popular events |
| Direction: | 5. Our Civic Leadership |
| Outcome: | 5.3 Community is informed and consulted |

BACKGROUND:

At its meeting of 28 May 2018, Council resolved:

- 1. THAT Council endorse ticketing at Blues Point Reserve for 2018 at a cost set to recover the actual costs of conducting the event on the site.*
- 2. THAT Council support the closure of Balls Head Reserve on NYE for 2018.*
- 3. THAT a further report be provided to Council outlining options for cost recovery and revenue generating opportunities, together with a community engagement strategy.*

At its meeting of 30 July 2018, Council resolved:

- 1. THAT Council endorse the NYE Community Engagement Strategy.*

At its meeting of 24 September 2018, Council resolved:

- 1. THAT Council support partial cost recovery for the trial of ticketing at Blues Point Reserve for 2018 at the cost of \$40 for adults, \$20 for children (plus booking fee) and infants 0 to 2 free.*
- 2. THAT the review of the ticketing trial at Blues Point Reserve include a review of the cost models and feedback from the community consultation.*

At its meeting of 24 October 2018, Council resolved:

- 1. THAT Council open Balls Head Reserve to the public this New Years Eve.*
- 2. THAT the post NYE report make specific reference to Balls Head Reserve.*

At its meeting of 29 January 2019, Council resolved:

- 1. THAT Council acknowledges the difficulties encountered with paid ticketing in Blues Point Reserve on NYE 2018.*
- 2. THAT Council's Events staff prepare a report to Council on the 2018 NYE Event and address alternative options of managing crowds at Blues Point Reserve for future NYE events.*

Report of Sandra Moore, Manager Communications & Events
Re: NYE 2018 – Ticketing Consultation Outcomes

(3)

This report outlines the results of all consultation regarding ticketing, including:

- Council’s pre-NYE community ticketing survey;
- a survey of Blues Point Reserve NYE ticketholders after the event;
- correspondence received from residents prior to and post NYE.

A review of cost models and options for the future, as resolved at the 29 January 2019 meeting, is included in CoS04: NYE 2018 and Options for NYE 2019.

DETAIL:

1. Pre-NYE Ticketing Consultation

Ticketing of vantage points within the North Sydney Council area for NYE is considered to be a high impact, LGA wide project. The community was informed of the proposed ticketing trial through a variety of sources and given an opportunity to provide feedback.

A discussion paper was prepared and a shortened version of this was included in North Sydney News (Council’s community newsletter) which is distributed to all residents and businesses within the LGA. Information was also disseminated through the following channels: Council’s website, a media release, e-newsletters, social media, advertisements, letters to Precincts and other stakeholder groups, community noticeboards and information kiosks at local markets.

The community was invited to have their say through the Engagement HQ section of Council’s website or by emailing or writing to Council. In total, 451 people visited the project page on Council’s website and 205 completed the online survey.

Paid Ticketing

Paid ticketing was supported by 42% of respondents, with 49% of respondents opposed to it and 8% not sure (NB: this number does not add to 100% due to rounding).

The main reasons given for not supporting paid ticketing were equity concerns and the unfair impact on ratepayers. Typical comments were:

- “The land belongs to all of Sydney and everyone has the right to enjoy it not just the wealthy.”
- “Why should those of us who live in the LGA and pay rates have to pay again to have access to local facilities.”

The main reasons for supporting paid ticketing were that it would alleviate the cost burden to Council of managing NYE and the expected improvements to crowd control that ticketing would facilitate. Typical comments were:

- “The large costs of running the event for people mostly outside of the council area should not come from ratepayers.”
- “Keeps numbers safe, controls anti-social behavior and makes it safe for all to attend.”

Free Ticketing

There was slightly more support for free ticketing (43% of respondents), however, 40% did not

Report of Sandra Moore, Manager Communications & Events
Re: NYE 2018 – Ticketing Consultation Outcomes

(4)

support free ticketing and 13% were unsure.

The main reason for supporting free ticketing was the anticipated improvement in crowd control. Typical comments included:

- “It will help control the numbers but doesn’t give preference to the wealthy.”
- “It is a better way to maintain numbers than to just encourage an 8am rush and leave most people wondering if they will find the area already at capacity.”

There were a variety of reasons why people did not support free ticketing, including growing regulation and the additional cost burden to Council. Comments included:

- “Don’t like constraints we keep adding to society.”
- “Free ticketing will do nothing to help manage the event and simply be another cost to the council. What issues in previous years have happened that a ticketing system would solve? The answer is none.”

Respondents were asked what model they would prefer if Council were to ticket NYE. The most preferred model was for no ticketing, followed by ticketing on a full cost recovery basis. The responses were:

MODEL	% preferred
No ticketing (access to the foreshore should be free and Council should cover costs associated with NYE)	38
Cost recovery (the price is set to cover all costs to Council of managing NYE)	27
Profitable (the price is set to cover costs and raise some money towards events at other times of the year)	11
Subsidised (the price is set to offset some of the costs to Council if managing NYE)	9
Minor (the ticket covers the cost of implementing the ticket system only)	7
Mixed (the price is set at different levels for different parks and reserves)	7
Not sure	1

Some respondents queried why ticketing was being considered at all. Comments included:

- *“The NYE event has progressively become safer and more family friendly over the years. I see no need for ticketing at all.”*

2. Survey of Ticket Holders

Ticketing was trialed at Blues Point Reserve in 2018, with 4,500 tickets allocated for sale. While Blues Point Reserve previously had a capacity of 15,000, this was reduced by the Metro works site, then further reduced to allow more space for ticketholders as would be expected at a paid event. Tickets were \$40 for adults, \$20 for children 2 to 15 years and free for children under two years.

An email was sent to all ticketholders after the event inviting them to provide feedback; 244 completed the survey. On this sample size, with a confidence level of 95%, the margin of error

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is plus or minus 6%.

Only a quarter of respondents had attended Blues Point Reserve on NYE in the past. The two main reasons respondents chose to attend the Blues Point Reserve event in 2018 were that they wanted a guaranteed space (43%) and they considered it a great vantage point to see the fireworks (37%).

Three quarters of respondents (76%) were satisfied with the event and 14% were neutral. Some of the key reasons for satisfaction included:

- View of fireworks – described as perfect, awesome, excellent.
- Organisation of the event – described as well planned, well managed, staff very helpful and friendly.
- Family friendly – described as safe, comfortable, child friendly, no drunks.

Only 9% of ticketholders were dissatisfied. The main reasons for dissatisfaction were:

- Rain – respondents felt Council should have provided shelters, free ponchos/umbrellas and notified them it was going to rain, although many recognised that the weather was out of Council's control.
- Transport – some people waited two to three hours to get on a train home, although again, many recognised that transport was not Council's responsibility.
- Tents/seats – many people brought sunshades and chairs, despite instructions not to, and this was perceived to not be adequately managed.

When asked how they would rate the event in terms of value for money, the majority (70%) rated it above average or excellent, 19% rated it average and 11% rated it below average or poor.

There were mixed views on some aspects of the event, which were expressed in the open ended comment section of the survey. The majority considered the site not overly crowded, however, some considered the site too crowded. Similarly, many considered the entertainment to be excellent and the food good value, but some thought there was not enough entertainment for the ticket price and the food options were too limited and over-priced.

The majority (69%) said they were extremely or very likely to attend a ticketed event at Blues Point Reserve again, while 16% were neutral. Of the 15% who said they would not attend again, many commented that this was because they were from overseas or interstate and not expecting to return to Sydney for future New Years Eves.

A number of respondents made suggestions for improvements, including broadcasting music during the fireworks, enforcing advertised prohibitions of sunshades and seating, having alcohol available for sale on site, and increasing the range of entertainment and food available.

3. Emails to Council Pre and Post NYE

A number of people wrote to Council about ticketing at Blues Point Reserve, addressing either the principle of ticketing, their experience as ticketholders or as residents of Blues Point. It is not known whether the correspondents also contributed to the online community and ticketholder surveys.

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Council received emails/letters from 34 people about NYE 2018. Of these, the majority related to arrangements at Blues Point Reserve, comprising two compliments and 21 complaints. It is understood that the Mayor engaged directly with residents and businesses about NYE in Blues Point Reserve and that additional feedback was provided directly to the Mayor.

The following summary relates to feedback referred to Council staff for comment or response. This feedback has come through emails, letters, Council's online comments form and telephone.

The positive comments related primarily to the staff and event arrangements, and to the benefit for residents of the controlled crowd numbers. The negative comments related to the positioning of toilets, event planning and the ticketholder queue, use of chairs and tents, access to the reserve for Sails Restaurant guests, security, exclusivity of ticketing, unnecessary control, loss of business for McMahons Point businesses, and the SRV.

Table 1: Negative Feedback

Complaints – Blues Point Reserve	Comment
Residents did not know tickets were to be sold.	A flyer was distributed to residents in McMahons Point who were given a week's notice to purchase tickets before the tickets went on sale to the general public. No marketing was undertaken for a further two weeks to give residents time to purchase tickets in advance.
Tickets were bought and on-sold by travel agencies.	There is no cost-effective way for Council to control this – tickets to events around the world are regularly purchased and on-sold at inflated prices by agencies and individuals.
The event introduced queuing.	There have been no queues outside the reserve on previous years because people were able to enter (i.e. queue) in the reserve. By 30 December 2017, there were 300 tents in the reserve and by 8am on 31 December 2017, there were more than 2000 people. In recent years, Council has received numerous complaints from residents about the campers. Ticketing did not introduce queueing, but rather changed the complaint about people in the reserve two days before the event to people outside the reserve on the day of the event.
There were no toilets for the queue outside French Street.	Event staff did not expect people who had paid for a ticket to arrive more than four hours before the advertised start of the event.
Queueing was a health risk / 'inhumane'.	Portable toilets, a coffee/water/ice-cream van and first aid were available for early arrivers. There was no need or requirement for ticketholders to queue – they did so at their own discretion.
Ticketholders were not permitted to enter the reserve until 4pm.	The event site needs to be proactively managed from the time ticketholders enter the site. Council had arranged for suppliers and event staff to arrive and be inducted between 3pm and 4pm. As a reference, no other ticketed site in Sydney opens eight to ten hours before the event.
Residents were not able to access the reserve for free to watch the fireworks.	Free entry for some people creates resentment among paying customers. If residents are to be given free access to a paid event, they would need to be given an allocation in advance and not be able to wander in off the street.

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Complaints – Blues Point Reserve	Comment
Local business owners lost business.	There was insufficient information provided to business owners about the 2018 changes in the lead up to NYE. Future changes to NYE arrangements will be communicated more extensively.
Event catering opportunities should be offered to local business owners first.	Council advertises for food stalls/trucks before each event and all local businesses are welcome to apply, however, most do not as they do not have the capacity or necessary equipment.
McMahons Point has not had a problem with alcohol in the past – it did not need to be ticketed.	McMahons Point was chosen for the trial because it is the smaller of the two Managed Access sites within the North Sydney LGA and the Metro construction site was already reducing the capacity of the reserve. Previous community concerns in McMahons Point have included people defecating and urinating in small reserves and residents' gardens, climbing on roofs for a view and using drugs in the street. There were no complaints about antisocial behavior for NYE 2018.
Sails Restaurant guests unable to access reserve to watch the fireworks.	Arrangements were discussed with Sails prior to the event and this was not mentioned. Sails patrons were still able to access the area directly in front of the restaurant but the view was affected by fencing. Reserve access was provided for the midnight fireworks after Sails notified event officers of the issue.
Early closure of Blues Point Reserve unnecessary.	In recent years there has been up to 300 tents in the reserve by 30 December. The early closure in 2018 was chosen to provide time to move people on if required. The messaging and signage was effective and a later closure would have been possible.
Reserve not properly litter picked after the event.	Referred to Parks Department for further cleaning.
No enforcement of chairs/tents/alcohol prohibited rules.	How and who can enforce rules needs further consideration and planning for all NYE sites as this was also a concern at Bradfield Park.
The entry at French Street looked like a 'disaster zone'.	NSW Police are responsible for crowd control and the SES and other emergency vehicles were part of the Police safety strategy.
No parking on Blues Point Road/road closures were inconvenient for residents.	This did not change from 2017.
Site shed and generator places outside a residential property.	The site shed and generator were moved into the reserve.
Generator noise caused distress.	Generator in that position has not previously been a concern. Resident did not complain on the day or notify event staff that it was an issue. The generator is required to power the site shed, lighting, etc., but could have been turned off for some periods of the day.

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Complaints – Blues Point Reserve	Comment
Toilets outside residential property.	Toilets were provided for the queue on Blues Point Road and unable to be moved. Lack of toilets for the queue outside French Street was noted as a concern by residents.
Changes to NYE for 2018 were not communicated sufficiently.	Notification was provided through letters, a booklet and meetings with the local Precinct. The comment is noted; more communication will be done for businesses to advise them of Council's decision for NYE 2019.

There were no complaints about antisocial behavior.

There were three complaints about security guards and three relating to medical matters. As the matters relate to individuals, they have not been included in the report for privacy reasons.

None of the complaints has been substantiated.

Table 2: Positive Feedback

Compliments
Easier for guests; wouldn't change a thing; communication with residents was excellent and not defensive; neighbours felt the same.
No rubbish in street gardens; plants not trampled; changes well notified.
Evening was an overwhelming success; crowd control was outstanding.
Event was superbly organised; ticketing could potentially be extended to restaurants to increase patronage that way.

Discussion:

1. Ticketholders

Overall, ticketholders were very satisfied with the experience. The Blues Point NYE 2018 event was one of the cheapest paid ticketed sites on the foreshore and offered good value for money. The majority of complaints related to matters beyond Council's control – in particular the weather and train delays.

2. Residents

The majority of residents did not support ticketing in the pre-event online survey and feedback after the event. Many residents made it clear they did not believe they should have to pay for entry to a reserve when they already pay rates to maintain it. Many of those who did support ticketing believed the event should be free to residents of the LGA. Feedback after the event was critical of many aspects of the event's organisation but this was not mirrored in the feedback of the ticketholders.

The resident response was not unexpected. Managed Access has an enormous impact on McMahons Point residents which was previously offset by access to the reserve to view the fireworks. However, residents who had previously been negatively affected by the crowd were supportive of the change.

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3. Businesses

McMahons Point businesses had significantly fewer customers as a result of reduced numbers in the reserve and reduced numbers waiting at the Managed Access gate for potential entry. This feedback was provided to Council verbally.

4. Comparison with Previous Years

In the past few years, the primary complaint from McMahons Point residents has been the behaviour of crowds, including people urinating and defecating on their property or throwing litter into their gardens. There were also complaints about the number of people camping in Blues Point Reserve prior to the event. In 2018, there were no complaints about antisocial behaviour or campers.

Summary:

Ticketholders were generally very satisfied with the event which indicates ticketing would be viable in the future. However, ticketing reduces income for businesses and takes away previous resident rights to view the fireworks from the reserve without having to pay for or reserve a place.

The Council survey into the principle of ticketing showed there was not majority community support for either paid or free ticketing. If ticketing was to be introduced, the preferred option of the community would be on a full cost recovery basis.