



Inner West Mayor **Darcy Byrne**

Artwork: Mulga

25 November 2020

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP
Premier
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

By email and post: willoughby@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Premier,

I am writing to request urgent assistance in addressing the serious public health risks created by the New Year's Eve policy announced by the NSW Government last Friday.

Council understands the NSW Government's motivation in wanting to proceed with the New Year's Eve fireworks display. After such a difficult year, many residents of the Inner West and across Sydney will be looking forward to marking the end of 2020 with a semblance of normalcy and a spirit of celebration.

Nonetheless, the announced plans, in which access to the CBD and North Sydney is heavily restricted and access to the Balmain Peninsula is completely unrestricted, will incentivise many thousands of people who wish to view the fireworks to visit the harbourside vantage points in Balmain and Birchgrove.

No provision has been made in the policy for the management of the obvious public health risks this will create.

In the context of the pandemic, these risks require urgent attention and immediate collaboration if they are to be managed safely and parks in the Inner West are to remain open for New Year's Eve. The NSW Government must take responsibility for this.

Last night, Council resolved to write to you, along with all relevant ministers and the Chief Health Officer, to raise the following concerns and requests:

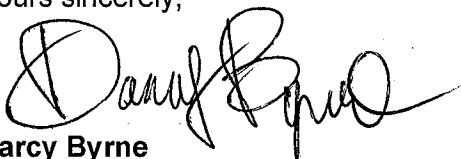
1. Council notes that it is the primary responsibility of the NSW Government and the NSW Police to ensure public safety and adherence to public health orders, at all times, including on New Year's Eve.
2. Council seeks written clarification about how the NSW Government intends to ensure public safety in the Inner West Local Government Area. Council is ready to provide cooperation and assistance, under the direction and resourcing of the Government, in the development of Covid safe plans for crowd management and the implementation of public health orders on New Year's Eve.

3. We request information about whether barriers or ticketing will be required in our parks, to ensure compliance with public health orders and to enable contact tracing, noting that in a number of parks in Balmain and Birchgrove the number of visitors on New Year's Eve is often in the thousands. It is Council's strong view and adopted position that if ticketing is required as a safety measure, that there should be no cost to residents or visitors. Council has no experience or expertise in managing large scale ticketing such as this and requests the Government implements a ticketing system, if this is necessary. Should that be the case we seek a specific allocation for local residents. I further suggest that Rural Fire Service volunteers be allocated places in this eventuality, in thanks and recognition of their outstanding service to the people of NSW.
4. We request, at a minimum, that all harbourside parks in Balmain and Birchgrove, not only Illoura Reserve and Mort Bay Park, be included in the "yellow zone", allowing NSW Police the move-on powers needed to ensure safety at all those locations.
5. The NSW Government must fund any extension of crowd control measures being implemented within the CBD and North Sydney that is identified as necessary to public safety. Given the tight restrictions on attendance in the CBD and North Sydney the significant financial savings the Government will retain should be in part directed to ensuring public safety in nearby areas that the Government's policy allows unrestricted access to.
6. We seek written confirmation from the Chief Health Officer that the plans the NSW Government has developed or will develop have been reviewed and endorsed by NSW Health. Without such an endorsement it is not possible for the Government's New Year's Eve policy to be implemented safely in the Inner West Local Government Area.

Council has sought urgent meetings with the Leichhardt Area Police Command and NSW Health to discuss Council's concerns. In addition, given the limited time left for planning and the paucity of information available at this time, I would like to request a meeting with a responsible Minister or with the Chief Health Officer to ensure these serious safety problems are attended to and the Government's New Year's Eve policy is able to be implemented.

Council has one scheduled meeting remaining in 2020, to be held on December 8, at which a report will be tabled outlining the Government's response to this urgent representation. A decision will need to be taken at that time about what actions Council must take to protect public safety. As such I request the Government's immediate attention and cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Darcy Byrne
Mayor of the Inner West

Copy to:

The Hon. Brad Hazzard, MP - Minister for Health and Medical Research
The Hon. David Elliott, MP - Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Chief Health Officer - Dr Kerry Chant PSM
Leichhardt Area Police Command - Mr David Nupier