

ITEM 3.4. 2015 SYDNEY NEW YEAR'S EVE AND CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL 2016**FILE NO: S051491****MINUTE BY THE LORD MAYOR**To Council:**2015 Sydney New Year's Eve**

Sydney New Year's Eve is produced annually by the City of Sydney with the support of State Government agencies and landowners. The event continues to sustain an unrivalled record for safety and security, crowd management and operational delivery and contributes around \$133 million annually in direct financial benefits to the state economy.

In 2015, Sydney retained its status of 'New Year's Eve Capital of the World' drawing well over a million people to the harbour and millions across Australia, and a billion people across the world through broadcast distribution networks.

For the first time, the event began with a moving 'Welcome to Country' ceremony which included a harbour-wide smoking ceremony by the Tribal Warrior Association, a four minute projection featuring Aboriginal dancers, local clan totems, native flora and fauna and images of Sydney.

This was directed by Rhoda Roberts and ended with the message 'Always was, Always will be...' 'Gadigal Land', 'Wangal Land', and 'Gamaragal Land'.

A custom designed Sydney Harbour Bridge effect created a symbolic Aboriginal flag with red flares fired from the road deck to the harbour, yellow strobe lighting within the interior bridge arches and the dark night sky above.

The Sydney New Year's Eve fireworks displays are currently the largest and most technologically advanced for New Year's Eve in the southern hemisphere. Both the 9pm Family Fireworks (eight minutes) and the Midnight Fireworks (12 minutes) displays are choreographed to specially produced soundtracks.

In 2015, the traditional centrepiece bridge effect was replaced with full pylon projections, additional spotlight lighting effects with an additional 2,400 fireworks shots in 60 pods attached to the hangers, making the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge the feature of 2015 Sydney New Year's Eve.

The Harbour of Light Parade[®] saw 45 vessels glide across the water illuminated with white LED rope lights. Pre-show entertainment featured Matt Hall's aerial acrobatics and the fire tug spray cannon.

The City worked closely with the NSW government, NSW police, landowners and other stakeholders to ensure careful crowd management planning was in place to ensure a safe night for everyone.

Over 170 volunteers helped ensure our audiences had access to information, safe spaces to rest and transportation home.

Creative agency Imagination again provided the delivery of creative elements including the theme, collateral, scenic design, performance director, lighting design and soundtrack. This year they profiled two Sydney-based, young, up and coming designers, Province Studio and Romance Was Born. Both were featured on the pylon projections.

For a second year, ABC television broadcast a four-hour program domestically and live distribution globally. Peak audience domestically was 2.26M on ABC. For the first time, Times Square live streamed the 9pm Family Fireworks to New Yorkers.

The event continues to attract people from around the world - StollzNow Research reported that 46% of visitors to Sydney New Year's Eve are from overseas. These visitors stay in Sydney for an average of a week. Overseas visitors came from Europe (42%), Asia (19%), United Kingdom (18%) and USA/Canada (10%).

StollzNow Research said that the event has a strong international reputation and, for many visitors, it's an experience that they will plan their holidays to coincide with. It is a major drawcard for visitors to come to Australia. In economic terms, the event funnels an enormous financial spend by visitors into Sydney and the City of Sydney area.

Chinese New Year 2016

The City's Chinese New Year Festival took place from 6 February to 21 February in 2016, and marked the 20th year we have produced this festival.

This year, the festival was reimagined with the introduction of a new Lunar Lanterns event from 6-14 February which replaced the Twilight Parade.

Lunar Lanterns saw 12 large lanterns in the form of the lunar zodiac spread across the city from Circular Quay to Chinatown. This included the construction of six new lanterns, designed by leading contemporary Chinese-Australian artists.

Lunar Lanterns attracted more than 750,000 visitors, an almost six-fold increase from the parade audience of 130,000 people, and the figure for the entire festival is expected to total more than 1 million attendees once final numbers are received.

The City's largest cash sponsorship in the last 10 years was forged with Principle Partner Westpac, which allowed the festival to grow and staff to deliver key programs that would otherwise have not been possible.

The Westpac Lunar Lantern Hub in Martin Place ran for nine days and nights, and was complemented with the Westpac Painting the Town Red program which saw the Sydney Opera House, Sydney Harbour Bridge and Circular Quay Station bathed in red light, receiving international media attention.

During the festival, we celebrated the significant 30th anniversary of our sister city relationship with Guangzhou. We were pleased to welcome Guangzhou performers who provided entertainment for the Festival Launch and Guangzhou also donated a lantern for the Lunar Lanterns exhibition which was exhibited in Dixon Street Mall.

In 2015, a new Chinese New Year Advisory Panel, chaired by Councillor Robert Kok, was introduced which replaced the former Chinese New Year Festival Advisory Group. Made up of representatives from the business, education, cultural and community spheres, this new group expanded the breadth of its focus beyond the festival to a wider remit looking at ways to maximize the City's relationship with the business sector and enhance all celebrations of the Lunar New Year in the City of Sydney local government area.

The festival's Charity Partner, Cure Brain Cancer Foundation, raised more than \$70,000, the most successful result for a charity partner in the festival's history.

Based on preliminary data, the festival received more than 1,600 stories in Australian media alone, reaching an audience of more than 30 million people and worth in excess of \$5 million. Further analysis of Australian and international media is currently being undertaken.

The festival also provided a platform to strengthen partnerships with key organisations. The Sydney Morning Herald and The Star once again presented the Lunar Markets in Pyrmont as a major associated event of the festival, along with the second year of the Lantern Carnival at Darling Harbour presented by Nanhai Media.

The City worked closely with Carriageworks to produce a Korean pop concert for the festival, worked closely with the Opera House, the Chinese and Thai consulates and Destination NSW and Tourism Australia.

A total of 38 community groups were involved in 22 hours of programmed performances surrounding the lanterns. This totaled 181 separate performances from the Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese and other communities, with participants ranging in age from three years of age to 90.

To assist the program and the Lunar Lanterns exhibition, 58 volunteers were recruited to act as ambassadors.

Overall, 2016 was by far the most successful Chinese New Year Festival to date, with increases in attendance, sponsor income, community engagement and Charity Partner involvement, and the introduction of a major new event, Lunar Lanterns.

Further reporting will be presented to Councillors in the coming weeks detailing the media coverage, overall festival attendance and economic impact of the event.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) note the successful results of the 2015 Sydney New Year's Eve and 2016 Chinese New Year Festival; and
- (B) thank everyone involved – our staff, the volunteers, the Chinese New Year Advisory Panel, Westpac and our other sponsors and all our Government and corporate partners - for their part in bringing these wonderful events to life.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor