



Office of Local Government



COVID-19 COUNCIL UPDATE

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20 January 2021



Minister's message following online meeting with health and police officials about Australia Day events

I would like to thank the council representatives from across NSW who joined this morning's webinar briefing with health and police officials to discuss holding COVID-safe events on Australia Day.

I would especially like to thank Dr Richard Broome of NSW Health and Acting Assistant Commissioner Stacey Maloney of the NSW Police Force for making themselves available to brief councils and

answer questions.

No doubt you found the information they provided very helpful in clarifying issues of concern in relation to complying with Public Health Orders and exemptions and other operational matters.

The NSW Government is pleased to be supporting councils in staging COVID-safe Australia Day events through this webinar and guidance from the Office of Local Government (OLG).

OLG Council Engagement Managers are also on hand to answer any further questions and provide assistance.

Police have also made it clear that they will have significant resources on the ground on Australia Day and can assist councils with operational matters such as crowd control, especially around our beaches.

I sincerely thank councils for the significant efforts they put into organising Australia Day events each year and for meeting the additional challenge in 2021 of ensuring celebrations and communities are COVID-safe. I know that many mayors and councillors will also be out and about representing their local communities on such an important day.

Below you can find a summary of the key points from this morning's webinar briefing.

A recording of the webinar will also be available on the OLG website [here](#).

Stay healthy and safe

Shelley Hancock
Minister for Local Government

Australia Day 2021 - key points from webinar briefing

- Council-organised Australia Day events including citizenship ceremonies can proceed as long as they comply with Public Health Orders relating to gatherings and face masks.
- Indoor gatherings such as those at community centres and halls are restricted to 1 person per 4 square metres of space for Greater Sydney and 1 person per 2 square metres of space in regional and rural areas of NSW. These events also require a COVID Safety Plan.
- The wearing of face masks in community centres and halls is not mandatory, however, NSW Health strongly encourages participants to wear face masks to reduce the risk of community transmission, particularly in Greater Sydney. Participants delivering a speech or taking an oath/pledge which requires clear communication should remove their mask temporarily. Audience members should wear face masks at all times.
- Public Health Order exemptions have been granted for council-organised outdoor events including fireworks on January 26 for up to 500 people subject to certain conditions. Participants do not have to be seated and no fencing is required. A COVID Safety Plan, including how physical distancing is going to be maintained, is required.
- Controlled outdoor gatherings can be held, however, they must be fenced, and attendees assigned a ticket/seat/seating area. In regional and rural areas of NSW up to 5,000 people are allowed if they are assigned a seat and up to 3,000 people if they are allocated to a seating area (such as a picnic blanket space). In Greater Sydney, up to 2,000 people are allowed if they are assigned a seat and up to 500 if they are allocated to a seating area. People are encouraged to remain seated as much as possible to avoid mingling.
- Councils should have a method to screen attendees to exclude those who are unwell as well as clear community messaging informing anyone who is ill not to attend events.
- While citizenship ceremonies can be held indoors or outdoors, NSW Health encourages councils to hold them outdoors to minimise the risk of COVID-19 community transmission. While presenting participants with certificates and gifts is allowed, handshaking should be avoided.
- Councils are encouraged to use the Service NSW QR code for public registration at events as it has been designed to assist with contact tracing. If QR codes cannot be used, then electronic methods such as computer spreadsheets should be used in favour of manual sign-in sheets.
- Singing is considered a high risk activity. Singing indoors is limited to five singers, with no audience participation. Singers should also wear face masks. There is no limit on singers outdoors.
- Councils should work with police to ensure beaches do not get overcrowded. While there are no limits on beaches, councils should ensure clear messaging to encourage members of the public to avoid crowding and ensure physical distancing.
- There will be a large deployment of uniformed and plain clothes police focusing in public/council areas, public transport and waterways. They will also have an aviation capacity on the day.
- Councils are encouraged to utilise local relationships with police in communicating their Australia Day plans, any risks and the support they may need on the day.
- Police will be taking a measured approach to provide a safe and secure environment, with a focus on enforcing Public Health Orders first through an educative and informative approach before proceeding to issue infringement notices.
- As landholders, it is up to councils to determine how they manage their areas, however, police will enforce Public Health Orders and assist councils with operational matters such as crowd management.
- The Australia Day Police Operations Centre can also assist councils with any legal questions in relation to Public Health Orders.



Helpful links for councils

The following links can assist councils:

Australia Day events
QR codes
Public Health Orders



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