



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Events management guidelines

An overview of the assessment and approval process for external events delivered in NSW national parks



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1. Preamble

Sydney's reputation as a global city is key to growing the State's **visitor economy**. The delivery of programs and activities, such as events, support the NSW economy and are essential to ensuring continued success for Sydney and regional NSW.

Events generate more than \$600 million in annual revenue for New South Wales (Source: Destination NSW) and bring a range of economic, promotional and community benefits to a destination, which is why the sector is a major priority for the NSW Government.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) manage over seven million hectares of land across New South Wales, including more than 860 protected areas, four **World Heritage-listed sites**, several **Australian National Heritage sites** and 17 **Ramsar wetlands**.

NPWS works closely with the arts, entertainment, sports and lifestyle sectors to present a healthy and vibrant annual program of events across NSW national parks and reserves that deliver quality visitor experiences and positive results to the NSW visitor economy.

NPWS also works in close partnership with other NSW Government agencies, such as **Destination NSW** and **Business Events Sydney (BE Sydney)** to attract major events (including business events) to our national parks and reserves to drive strategic and economic outcomes for the State.

Events can create memory-driven moments in our nature-based destinations. Many NSW national parks feature some of New South Wales's most outstanding natural attractions, which set us apart on both a national and a statewide stage. NPWS aims to deliver exceptional visitor experiences through the provision of well-designed, sustainable and creative events utilising our unique and iconic sites.

Through the delivery of innovative, inspirational and memorable events in areas managed by NPWS, new and existing audiences will have new opportunities to engage with our natural experiences, creating more advocates for national parks.

2. Introduction

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) manage four types of events across a range of unique and iconic **event venues** (i.e. locations) in NSW national parks and reserves:

- third party events – **small scale** events, **low impact** events and **high impact** events
- NPWS owned events.

This document provides an overview of the application, assessment and approvals process managed by NPWS for **third party events**.

This process is led by a centralised team in NPWS' Visitor Experience Branch (**events team**), in collaboration with national park and reserve operational management teams. Small scale events such as weddings and private functions are, however, managed at the park operational management level.

The events team also lead, manage and deliver NPWS owned events – including New Year's Eve in Sydney Harbour National Park and business events.

3. Third party events in NSW national parks

The events team manages an annual calendar of approximately 170 third party events across the state. This includes major or high impact events such as Ultra Trail Australia in Blue Mountains National Park, Oxfam Trailwalker in Berowra and Ku-ring-gai National Parks and Wine Island on Clark Island in Sydney Harbour National Park.

Third party events are owned and managed by individuals, external companies and organisations (**event organisers**) who enter into an agreement with NPWS to utilise NSW national parks and reserves as venues for their events.

As detailed in the [NPWS Events, functions and venues Policy \(2010\)](#), NPWS undertakes assessment of all third party events to limit any impacts on the **natural, historic and cultural values** of the park, park operations management, other park users and the surrounding community.

NPWS' role is to ensure the ongoing conservation of the natural and cultural values of national parks and reserves in New South Wales. This includes working with third party event organisers to ensure that events are sustainably managed and use of sites is culturally appropriate.

The criteria for assessment and approval of third party events is defined as follows:

Table 1 Event type assessment

Event type	Event features	Example of event
Small scale event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 150 participants • Non-exclusive use • Organised by an individual, a company or an organisation • No infrastructure such as marquees • No sound impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wedding ceremony • Private birthday party or function • Community sporting event
Event – low impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 151 and 400 participants • Non-exclusive or exclusive use • Organised by a company or organisation • Minimal infrastructure with no more than four temporary marquees • Minimal sound impacts with no more than one speaker for the purpose of announcements or background music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial, charity or community sporting event including trail running, triathlons and mountain biking events • Business and corporate events such as brand launches • Small food and wine and cultural events
Event – high impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 400 participants • Non-exclusive or exclusive • Organised by a company or organisation • Large amount of infrastructure including more than five temporary marquees and staging requirements • High output sound impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large commercial, charity and community sporting events • Music events and performances • Large food and wine and cultural events

4. Event application

4.1 Small scale event

Small scale events with less than 150 participants such as weddings, private functions and community sporting events are managed by relevant park operations staff through a **small-scale event application** (Attachment A). The application is available on request by the event applicant from the relevant local park office.

4.2 Low and high impact events

Third party events with more than 150 participants that require exclusive use, cross more than one NPWS management area or are of high impact to the park are managed by the events team.

For all events other than small scale events, the following documents are provided to the event organiser at the beginning of the application process. This set of documents is referred to as an 'Event Pack' and is made available via [Dropbox](#):

- Event Application Form
- Consent and Licence Samples
- Events and Venues Fee Structure
- Event Toolkit (Templates for Event Plans)

These documents provide event organisers with a clear overview of NPWS expectations to enable the preparation of an application that takes into consideration the standard requirements for events held in NSW national parks and reserves.

Event organisers must fill out the NPWS **event application form** and submit a site map which indicates all tracks and trails and where any proposed temporary infrastructure will be placed.

The application is an online form which will be sent to the organiser on request along with the event pack.

5. Assessment process – low and high impact events

The events team performs an initial assessment of the event application form in consultation with park operational management staff.

The event is first assessed against permissibility criteria:

- Is the application consistent with the objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act ([NPW Act](#)) and park **Plan of Management**?
- Are there any conflicts with other planned activities, events, high park visitation times, capital works or maintenance, hazard reduction programs or high fire danger period?

If the event does not meet these criteria, the application does not proceed.

The event's level and type of impact is also assessed, which then determines on a case-by-case basis:

- if conditions need to be applied
- if further levels of assessment are required
- the form of approval required (see section 6 below).

5.1 Low impact event assessment

If the event is not considered to have a high impact to the park, the event can be given in-principle approval by the relevant Area Manager. An **event consent agreement** can then be finalised with the **final event plans** due to be submitted at least six weeks prior to event delivery.

The consent can be withdrawn if the final event plan is inconsistent with the approved event application form or does not meet the terms and conditions of the event consent agreement.

Events deemed as low impact will have plans assessed six weeks prior to delivery.

If plans are deemed to be of an acceptable standard and consultation and any other approvals have been presented, the application may move to approval (see section 6 below).

5.2 High impact event assessment

If the event is deemed to be high impact, a thorough assessment of key event plans will be completed by NPWS before in-principle approval is given.

The event assessment criteria is outlined below.

Table 2 Event plans assessment criteria

Plans	Requirements to be assessed
Event overview	<p>The number of construction days, event days and hours of operation will not impact surrounding communities or other park users.</p> <p>Hours of operation for high impact events will not be approved beyond: Sunday to Thursday: 10am to 9pm Friday, Saturday and the day before a public holiday: 10am to 10pm.</p>
Crowd management/site capacity plan	<p>NPWS will determine if crowd capacity applied for is appropriate for the nominated site and that crowd management plans ensure environmental values are upheld.</p> <p>Planning for crowd capacities is informed by the <u>Emergency Management Australia (EMA) Manual 2 Safe and Healthy Mass Gatherings (1999)</u></p> <p>The following factors are also considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • available space considering infrastructure requirements such as marquees and staging • routes and means available for evacuation and staging areas • crowd demographic and event profile (i.e. cultural, food and wine, music event)

Plans	Requirements to be assessed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> length of event and number of event days. Determine impact to the site if an event is staged over one day or several days. <p>A total of two square metres per person will be required as a minimum. Note: The event profile and crowd demographic will further influence the total site capacity. For example, it is expected attendees at a food and wine event will require more available space for attendees to be seated. In this case, up to four square metres of space would be determined as the required space per person.</p> <p>For sporting events using tracks and trails, the Park Ranger or Area Manager will determine the number of participants based on the condition and location of tracks and trails and spacing of participants.</p> <p>For example, a trail running event in a high use area would be approved for a lower number of participants than a low use park, so other park users are not impacted.</p>
Noise management	<p>Events that feature amplified sound are defined into two separate categories based on the output level and event profile.</p> <p>NPWS will determine if the event is Category 1 or Category 2 and determine sound management plans required according to the category.</p> <p>Category 1: High Output Sound – Event with live or recorded music as main feature. Sound management guidelines are issued to event organisers when applying for events with high output sound, including requirements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The maximum accepted level for noise. Notifications letters delivered to identified neighbouring areas. Letter to include events hotline number for any noise complaints. Events hotline will be set-up and operated by the event organiser. Real time noise monitoring and recording required in identified neighbouring areas. Report to be provided post event to NPWS with any exceedances (duration and cause) and any complaints/action. <p>Category 2: Low Output Sound – Food and wine or cultural event where amplified sound is background music.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to two powered loudspeakers permitted with a low volume output. Noise limits at monitoring points identified on site. Amplified sound is distributed evenly. Noise monitoring is not compulsory. Recommended that on-site monitoring and recording is taken periodically.
Waste management and sustainability	<p>Plans must address waste minimisation and separation strategies and demonstrate sustainable event practices in line with ISO 20121</p> <p>Site specific environmental considerations are to be addressed in sustainability assessments</p>

Plans	Requirements to be assessed
Risk, safety and emergency plans	<p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • risk assessments • safety plan • first aid plan • emergency management plan – including medical evacuation, incident management, weather contingencies and cancellation procedures. <p>The NPWS events team will determine if these plans meet relevant standards.</p>
Food and alcohol plans	<p>Where food is served, demonstrate compliance with NSW Food Standards.</p> <p>Where alcohol is served, proof required of the appropriate liquor licence and alcohol management plan to ensure Responsible Service of Alcohol.</p>
Traffic management plans	<p>Where road closures or changes to the normal road conditions for the Event are required:</p> <p>Submit a Traffic Management Plan which includes Traffic Control Plans as per Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) requirements. Traffic Management Plan is required to be authorised by a local Traffic Committee.</p>
Approvals from other authorities	<p>Demonstrate approval where applicable, including NSW Police, RMS, Council, other landholders.</p> <p>This may include other local stakeholders identified in the assessment process.</p> <p>Also, to include Heritage Exemption if the site is listed on the State Heritage Register.</p>
Public liability insurance	<p>A Public Liability Certificate for \$20 million with Department of Planning Industry and Environment listed as an interested party. (Requirement for low and high impact events).</p>

Some sites within NSW national parks are used more often as venues for cultural and food and wine events which generally require a larger amount of infrastructure and **plant equipment** than a sporting event. These sites have specific conditions for use which are outlined in the permitted features document.

The permitted features document will be provided to event organisers after initial discussion on staging events at these specific sites.

5.3 Review of Environmental Factors

While all event plans will be assessed using the criteria outlined in section 5.2, some events will also require the completion of a Review of Environmental Factors (REF).

A REF is an environmental impact assessment for activities proposed on land reserved under the NPW Act.

If the event is determined as an ‘Activity’* under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and has more than 400 attendees, a REF must be completed by the event organiser.

*An ‘Activity’ is defined in section 5.1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. This would include those events which involve erection of any buildings (including temporary structures such as marquees or staging) or a new use of land.

The REF examines the significance of likely environmental impacts of a proposal and measures required to mitigate adverse impacts to the environment.

It assists NPWS' determination of whether the activity is likely to have a significant effect on the environment or significantly affect threatened species, populations or ecological communities or their habitats.

A REF precedes the granting of an approval to an external party for an activity (i.e. lease, licence, easement). An approval cannot be granted until the REF is determined

All event management plans are to be submitted for assessment as part of the REF process and will be considered at the same time.

Further information on REF preparation can be found on the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment [website](#).

6. Approvals

Under the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019, any group activity or gathering involving more than 40 persons (or a lower number set by the park's **Plan of Management**) requires a NPWS consent or licence agreement.

The specific type of agreement is determined on a case-by-case basis, as set out below.

A REF will also require an event licence or event consent agreement in addition to the REF approval.

Approvals will be determined by a NPWS officer with appropriate skills and experience in line with the internal delegations of authority.

Table 3 Types of event agreements

Agreement type	Detail of agreement
Small scale event consent agreement	For events with less than 150 participants, non-exclusive use and low impact. Consent is in the form of letter agreement to the applicant.
Event consent agreement	For events of more than 150 participants with non-exclusive use. Consent is in the form of an agreement document with specific terms and conditions applied.
Event licence agreement	Any activities that require exclusive use of a venue or significant structures require a licence under s.151 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. The licence is in the form of an agreement document with specific terms and conditions applied.

These agreements contain enforceable conditions. These include;

- standard conditions relating to planning, operational delivery and reporting
- site and event-specific conditions as identified through the assessment processes, to ensure the event will be carried out in a safe and sustainable manner with minimal impacts on the environment of the park and the surrounding neighbourhood.

7. Event delivery – low and high impact events

When final plans are submitted and approved by the relevant Manager or Director, the events team will prepare an event brief for dissemination to relevant internal staff and the event organiser. This is not required for small scale events.

The brief will include NPWS contact details and pre-arranged requirements for access and supervision by NPWS staff as well as key timings and event details.

Supervision requirements will be based on the assessed impact of the event on park values and other users as well as complexity of the event.

High impact events will generally require a NPWS supervisor to be on site during construction and event phases.

8. Post event – low and high impact events

Post event, the applicant is required to provide a comprehensive **post event report** to NPWS.

This is not required for small scale events.

If NPWS is not satisfied with delivery of an event or complaints have been received by the public, a debrief meeting will be organised with the event organiser and relevant NPWS staff to discuss any issues and solutions for future events.

This debrief and reporting structure allows NPWS to compile and review data to assist with the planning and delivery of future events within NSW national parks and reserves.

If conditions of a consent or licence were breached during event delivery, the relevant park area may issue any fines according to the breach that has occurred. This occurs on a case-by-case basis.

9. Contacts

For event organisers wishing to proceed with staging an event in NSW national parks, the first step is to contact the NPWS events team:

Email: events.nationalparks@environment.nsw.gov.au

Phone: 9585 6570

After an initial discussion of the event proposal and if it is deemed appropriate to take place in a national park, an event pack including the relevant application form will be sent to the organiser for further assessment.

10. Glossary

Australian National Heritage sites means listed sites on the Australian National Heritage List which are natural, historic and Indigenous places of outstanding significance to the nation.

Business Events Sydney (BE Sydney) means the not-for-profit membership organisation that markets Sydney and New South Wales as a destination for Australian and international business meetings, incentive, conventions and exhibitions

Destination NSW means the NSW Government agency that is the lead agency for the tourism and major events sectors

Event Application Form means the form which event organisers must fill out for their event to be assessed by NPWS.

Event Consent Agreement means an agreement issued under the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019 (NSW) for an event that requires non-exclusive use of a venue and with no significant structures. Consent is conditional to the final approval of the Applicant's event management plans by the Park Authority.

Event Licence Agreement means an agreement issued under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW) for an event that requires exclusive use of a venue or includes significant structures. The licence is conditional to the final approval of the Applicant's event management plans by the Park Authority.

Event Organisers means organisations, companies or individuals that are responsible for delivering events on NSW national parks, reserves and historic sites.

Events Team means the centralised team within NPWS is oversees assessments and approvals of third party events delivered in on NSW national parks and reserves.

Event Venues means sites or locations within national parks which are utilised for events including defined areas and tracks and trails.

Final Event Plan means event management plans submitted by the event organiser which are assessed for approval of an event. The wider event plan includes all relevant plans such as risk, crowd and security, waste, traffic and sound management plans.

High Impact Events means events delivered on NSW national parks and reserves by external organisers, with over 400 participants and large amounts of infrastructure including more than five temporary marquees and staging infrastructure.

Low Impact Events means events delivered on NSW national parks and reserves with under 400 participants, less than five temporary marquees and minimal sound impacts.

NPWS Owned Events means events produced and delivered by NPWS including New Year's Eve events in Sydney Harbour National Park.

Plan of Management means the legal document which directs the management of each national park or reserve.

Plant Equipment means machinery or equipment required to deliver an event. Typical types of plant required for event delivery are forklifts and golf buggies.

Post Event Report means the report submitted by the event organiser after an event is delivered which details the amount of participants and if any incidents occurred.

Ramsar Wetlands means wetlands that are representative, rare or unique wetlands, or are important for conserving biological diversity. These are included on the List of Wetlands of International Importance developed under the Ramsar convention.

Small Scale Events means events delivered on NSW national parks and reserves by external organisers with under 150 participants and of a low impact.

Small-Scale Event Application means the application form which is used to apply to stage a small scale event.

Third Party Events means events owned and delivered by an external organisation, company or individual within NSW national parks and reserves

Visitor Economy means the production of goods and services for consumption by visitors, which includes the industries that directly serve visitors, such as hotels, transport providers, events, tour companies and attractions, as well as intermediaries and those involved indirectly, such as retail and food production.

World Heritage-listed Sites means the designation for place on Earth that are of outstanding universal value to humanity and such, have been placed on the World Heritage List to be protected for future generations to enjoy.