

DARLING HARBOUR CULTURAL ALIVE PROGRAM

Expression of Interest (EOI) Announcement
September – November 2026

 **DARLING
HARBOUR**



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Placemaking NSW proudly supports the celebration of Sydney's cultural diversity through the Cultural Alive Program at Tumbalong Park, Darling Harbour.

The program invites cultural organisations to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to present a public, culturally authentic festival within a curated seasonal program.

The program is delivered across two seasons each year and supports a diverse mix of cultural experiences for the wider community.

WHAT IS A CULTURAL FESTIVAL?

- A Cultural Festival is a celebration of the traditions of a particular people or place. This includes festivals focused on a specific culture or cultures, as well as folk, arts and food festivals.
- Placemaking NSW recognises and celebrates the contribution that cultural festivals make to Darling Harbour and to the lives of visitors and local communities. Darling Harbour has been home to many cultural festivals over the years, bringing joy, connection and celebration to millions of people.
- Through the Cultural Alive Program, Placemaking NSW proudly supports Sydney's rich cultural diversity and the presentation of vibrant, high-quality cultural experiences at Tumbalong Park.
- Cultural Festivals presented at Darling Harbour must demonstrate culturally relevant and appropriate food offerings, performances and merchandise, and must be **free and open to the general public to attend.**





FESTIVAL SEASONS

The Cultural Alive Program supports up to seven (7) festivals per calendar year across two seasons:

Season 1: February – May

Season 2: September – November

EOI submission periods open in advance of each season and are published on the Darling Harbour website.



EXPRESSION OF INTEREST PROCESS

Key information for applicants:

- Cultural organisations must submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to be considered for the inclusion in the Culture Alive Program at Darling Harbour
- All EOIs are competitively assessed against the published criteria by a panel before any dates are confirmed or venue commitments are made
- After the EOI period closes, applications are reviewed and assessment outcomes (including feedback) are provided to applicants
- Panel decisions are final and are not open for review or appeal
- Dates offered to successful applicants are indicative only and remain subject to operational requirements
- Once date is confirmed, successful applicants enter a structured planning process with PMNSW support
- Festival organisers receive a tailored planning timeline outlining key milestones required documentation and payment obligations

SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES

Placemaking NSW recognizes the important role commercial sponsors play in supporting the financial viability of cultural festivals.

Sponsorship Categories:

- Culturally Aligned Sponsors (direct cultural connection)
- General Commercial Sponsors (may be considered, must complement the festival)

Placemaking NSW Approval

- All third-party sponsors must be submitted to PMNSW before entering any agreements

Branding Requirements

- All sponsor branding must comply with the 80/20 rule (max 20% sponsor branding)

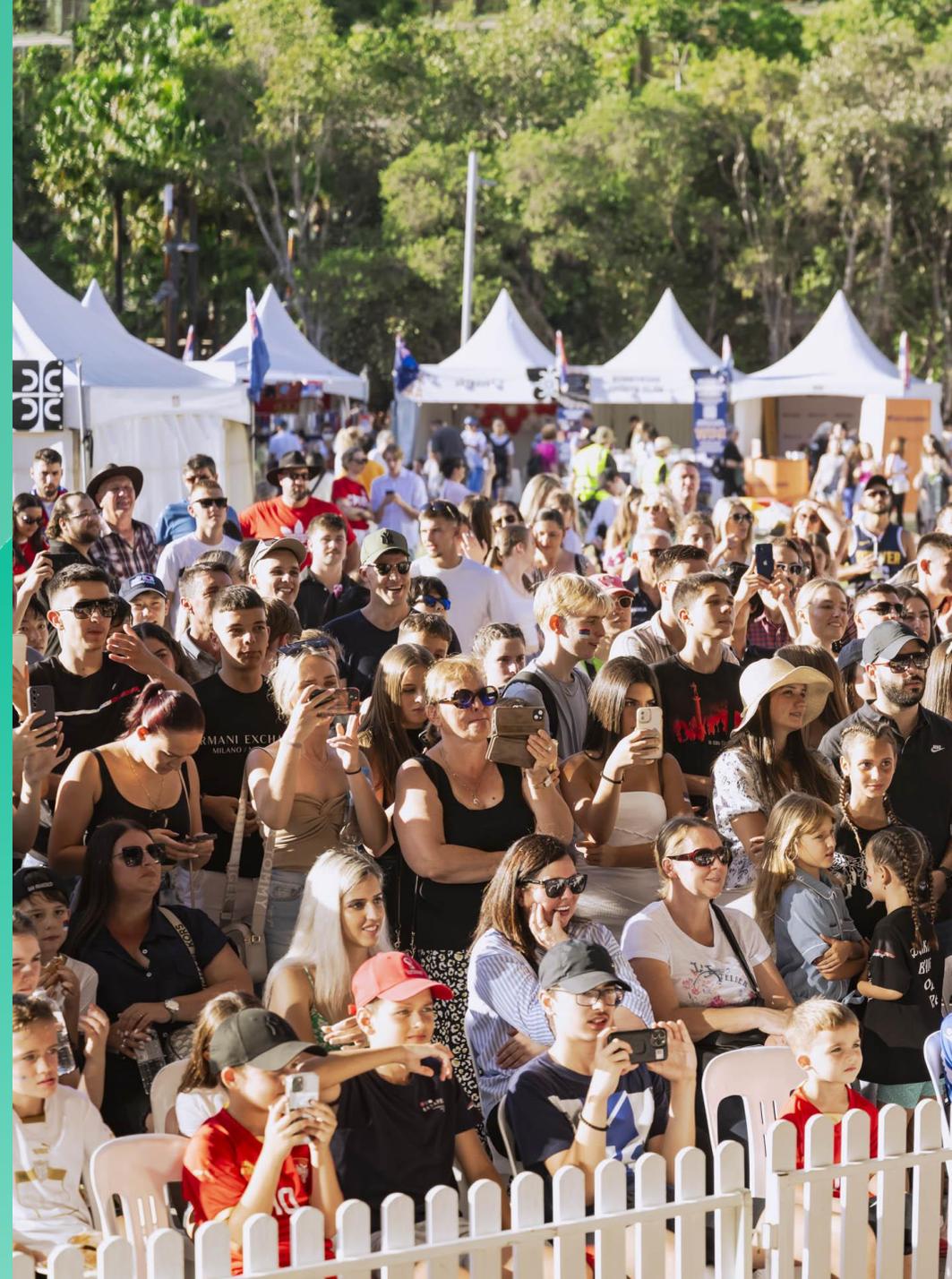
On-Park Activations & Stalls

- Commercial activation and stalls are limited to ensure the event remains culturally focus.
- Full details must be submitted to your PMNSW Account Executive for review and approval
- All activations must complement the festival and align with PMNSW guidelines



WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

- Festivals are typically presented over one or two days on a weekend, supported by a managed bump-in and bump-out period.
- Events are programmed to balance vibrant activation with the ongoing use of the park as a shared public space.
- Successful festivals immerse visitors through:
 - authentic cultural performances and workshops
 - culturally representative food and merchandise
 - engaging programming that reflects both traditional and contemporary expressions of culture





HOW WE ASSESS YOUR APPLICATION

Every Expression of Interest is reviewed with the aim of selecting a **diverse, high-quality and achievable program** of Cultural Festivals for Darling Harbour.

Applications are assessed holistically by a panel, looking not just at the idea itself, but at how ready the festival is to be delivered safely, responsibly and in a way that works well for the precinct and the wider community.

The assessment process is designed to be **fair, transparent and supportive**, and to ensure successful festivals are set up well for the planning and delivery stage.

Cultural Experience

The strength and authenticity of the cultural program

How the festival engages audiences through performance, food, workshops and displays

Delivery & Readiness

The organiser's experience and capacity to plan and deliver a public event

Clarity around staffing, governance and coordination

Safety & Compliance

Awareness of safety, licensing and compliance requirements

Readiness to plan for crowd management, public safety and operational responsibilities

WHAT CULTURAL ALIVE PROGRAM PROVIDES

Venue Features

- Newly renovated stage with two 9m x 5m HD LED screens and a central screen
- Permanent audio-visual infrastructure and new roof structure for weather protection
- Accessible access and motorised curved rigging truss reduce production costs
- Upgrades improve overall presentation quality and audience experience

Programming & Hire

- Festivals programmed within PMNSW's seasonal cultural calendar (Feb–Apr & Sep–Nov)
- Value-in-kind venue hire for up to four days (Fri–Mon) supporting bump-in, event delivery and bump-out

Operational Support

- Dedicated Event Manager and Account Executive supporting planning and compliance
- Guidance offered throughout all planning and delivery stages

Marketing & Promotion

- PMNSW provides marketing via Darling Harbour digital channels (website, social media, eDMs, in-precinct signage)
- Additional PR support where available
- Aligns with PMNSW's Cultural Alive program promoting multicultural festivals across Tumbalong Park



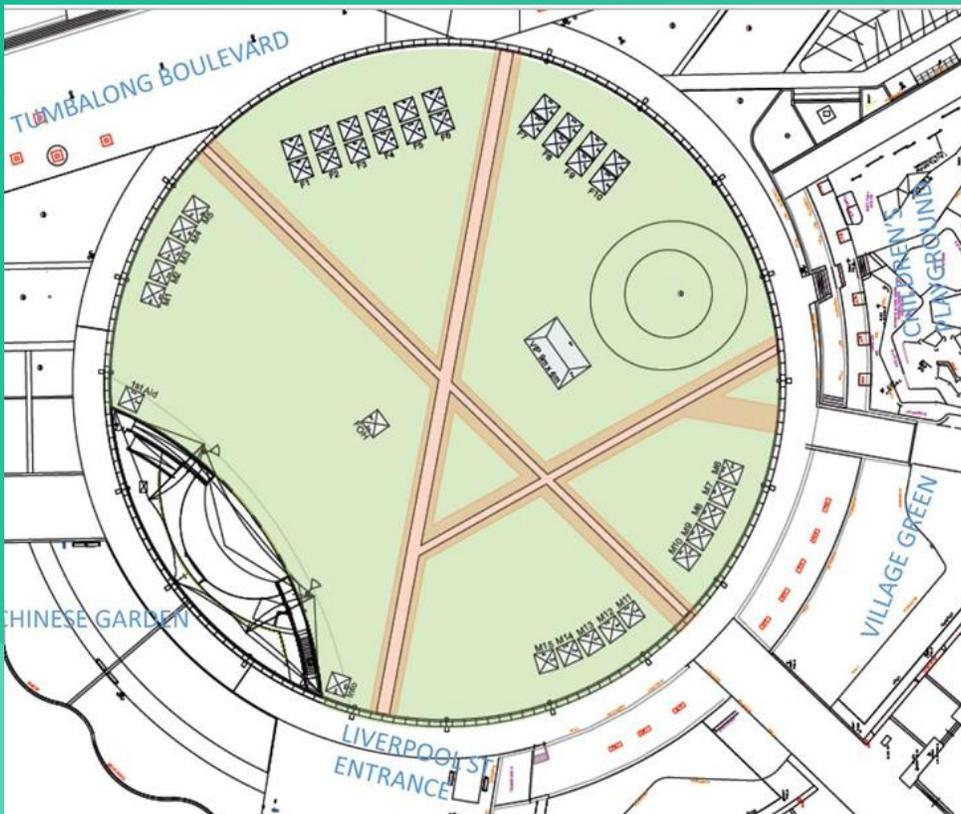
MARKETING & PROMOTION

The **Culture Alive** campaign will be supported by the Darling Harbour marketing channels

Channel	Month		
	1	2	3
Website (450K monthly views)	Website Live		
eDM (48K subscribers)	Feature in regular What's On eDM	Feature in regular What's On eDM	Feature in regular What's On eDM
Owned social (250K community)	2 x posts for each festival, pending content.		
In precinct signage	Dedicated ICC blade and Tumbalong Park Screen creative		
PR	Media Release	Media Follow Up	
Paid Social	Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok		
SEM	Always On		

BUDGET PLANNING

Medium Footprint



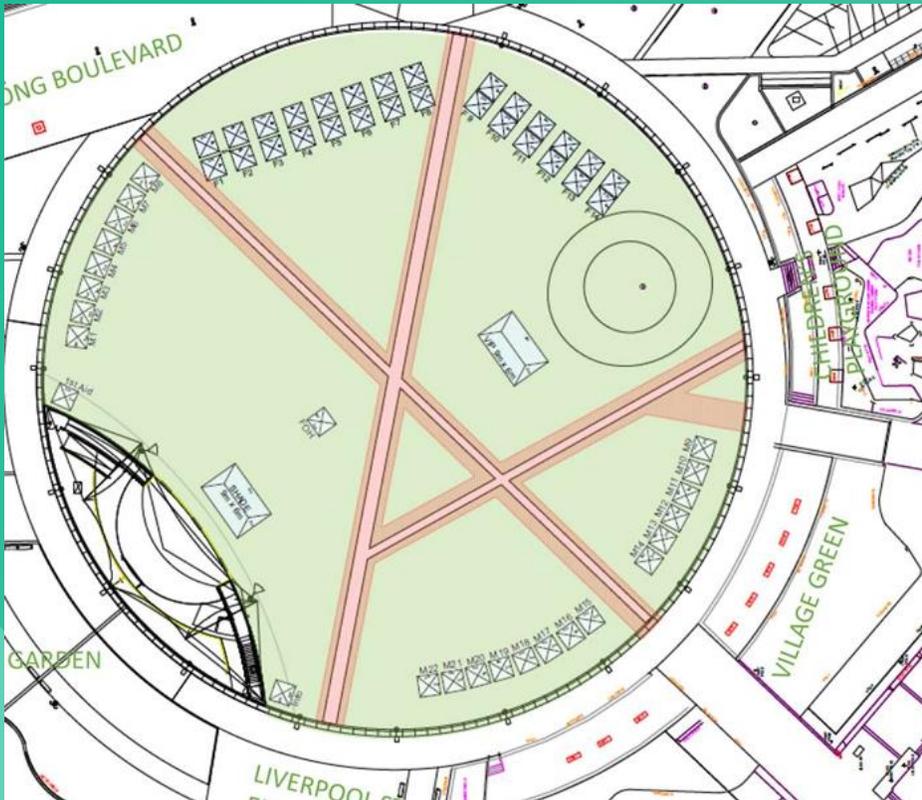
Based on 10 Food Stalls ; 16 non-food stalls.

Item	1 day	2 day
Application	\$198	\$198
Bond (refundable)	\$5,000	\$5,000
PMNSW Operational cost estimates		
Security (Gate guards, Traffic escorts, overnight assets protection, event security)	\$8,600	\$12,500
PMNSW Staff	\$5,896	\$7,303
Cleaning & Waste	\$5,500	\$9,000
Cool rooms	\$2,800	\$2,800
Plumbing/ Gas compliance (incl handbasins)	\$5,000	\$5,000
Electrical plan & install	\$15,000	\$15,000
Fire Extinguishers / Blankets	\$600	\$600
Fencing	\$1,800	\$1,800
First Aid	\$1,260	\$2,650
Audio/Visual/Lighting	\$6,032	\$10,825
Estimated Total (Ex. GST)	\$57,686	\$72,676

Estimate doesn't include other operational costs such as marquees or signage that are not procured through PMNSW.

BUDGET PLANNING

Large Footprint



Based on 15 Food Stalls ; 23 non-food stalls

Item	1 day	2 day
Application	\$198	\$198
Bond (refundable)	\$5,000	\$5,000
PMNSW Operational cost estimates		
Security (Gate guards, Traffic escorts, overnight assets protection, event security)	\$13,500	\$18,500
PMNSW Staff	\$10,720	\$13,601
Cleaning & Waste	\$8,000	\$10,500
Cool rooms	\$2,800	\$2,800
Plumbing/ Gas compliance (incl handbasins)	\$6,500	\$6,500
Electrical plan & install	\$17,500	\$19,000
Fire Extinguishers / Blankets	\$875	\$875
Fencing	\$2,500	\$2,500
First Aid	\$1,500	\$2,650
Audio/Visual/Lighting	\$8,035	\$14,429
PMNSW Operational Cost Estimate (Ex. GST)	\$77,128	\$96,553

Estimate doesn't include other operational costs such as marquees or signage that are not procured through PMNSW.

KEY DATES

2026 Season 2 September - November	DATE
Expression Of Interest (EOI) Period Opens	20 Feb 2026
EOI Information Session 1 (online)	25 Feb 2026
EOI Information Session 2 (online)	26 Feb 2026
EOI Period Closes	15 March 2026
EOI Outcome Notification	Mid April 2026
First Production Meeting	20 weeks prior (Mid-April– Late May 26)
Licence Agreement & Event Deposit Issued	16 weeks prior
Second Production Meeting	12 weeks prior
50% recoverable costs invoice	Due 8 weeks prior
Final Production Meeting	6 weeks prior
Balance of recoverable costs invoice	Due 3 weeks prior
Event Date	September – November 2026
Post event debrief	October – December 2026
Final event reconciliation invoice	October – December 2026

AVAILABLE WEEKENDS

2026 Season 2 | September - November

Friday 18 September – Monday 20 September

Friday 9 October – Monday 12 October

Friday 23 October – Monday 26 October

Friday 6 November – Monday 9 November

Friday 13 November – Monday 16 November

Friday 20 November – Monday 23 November



SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS

Key Dates & Further Information:

Key Dates:

- EOI submissions open dates:
20 Feb 2026 – 15 March 2026
- Program acceptance and application unsuccessful notifications: **Mid April 26**
- **Application briefing sessions** (online):
 - Wednesday 25Feb | 12pm – 12.30pm
 - Thursday 26Feb | 430pm - 5pm

Applicants who wish to attend a briefing session must refer to their initial EOI notification email, where they will find two Eventbrite links. They should select and register for the session that best suits their availability.

For further information to help inform your application, please see the Expression Of Interest (EOI) guidelines and Cultural Festival Cost Estimate [here](#).

More information can also be found in the [Outdoor Events Manual](#) and [Outdoor Event Policy](#)

Next Steps:

- Read the information supplied in the email you have received
- **Chat to us!** If there is anything you are unsure of about the program on offer or that you would like to discuss to see if this is right for you, please contact our team prior to submitting an EOI form

E: culturalfestivals@property.nsw.gov.au

T: 02 9240 8500

- Complete and submit your [EOI application form](#)

THANK YOU