DARLING HARBOUR CULTURE ALIVE PROGRAM

Expression of Interest (EOI)
Announcement for 2027

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.

DARLING HARBOUR

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.**

DARLING HARBOUR

CULTURE ALIVE PROGRAM

The Culture Alive Program supports the celebration of Sydney's diverse cultures through a curated program of community-led festivals and cultural events at Tumbalong Park, Darling Harbour.

Each year, PMNSW invites cultural organisations to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for inclusion in the Cultural Festivals Program.

Festival opportunities are assessed against published criteria and allocated based on cultural outcomes, organisational capability, venue availability, operational considerations and overall program diversity.

The annual EOI process and supporting information 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, application 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

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2027

- **One Annual EOI Process**

  A single Expression of Interest process will now cover the full 2027 Culture Alive Program.

- **Three Preferred Festival Weekends**

  Applicants are required to nominate three preferred festival weekends. Preferred dates are considered but not guaranteed.

- **Updated Sponsorship & Activations**

  Clearer guidance for sponsorships, commercial activations and culturally aligned partnerships.

- **Earlier Planning & Support**

  Successful applicants will receive a planning timeline, key milestones and dedicated PMNSW support.

- **Updated Guidelines & Resources**

  Revised EOI Guidelines, FAQs and planning resources to support applicants through the process.

DARLING HARBOUR

SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES

Placemaking NSW recognises 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

DARLING HARBOUR

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 through PMNSW's annual Cultural Festivals Program calendar**
- 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

DARLING HARBOUR

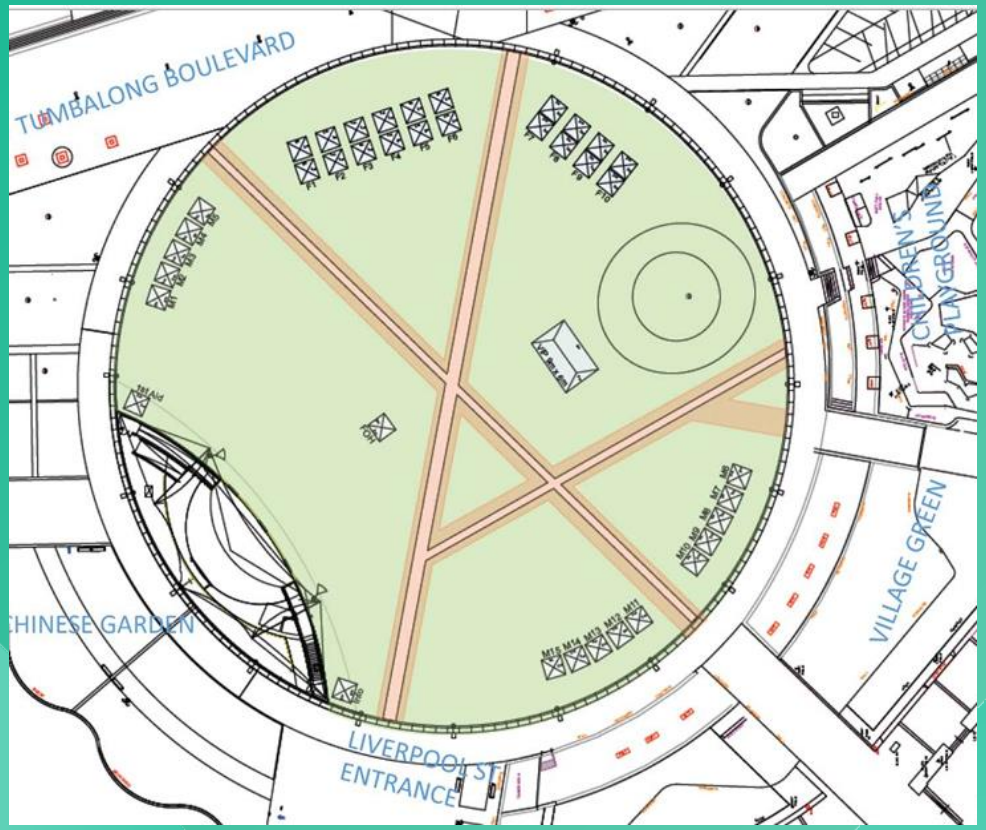
MARKETING & PROMOTION

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		

DARLING HARBOUR

BUDGET PLANNING
Medium Footprint



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

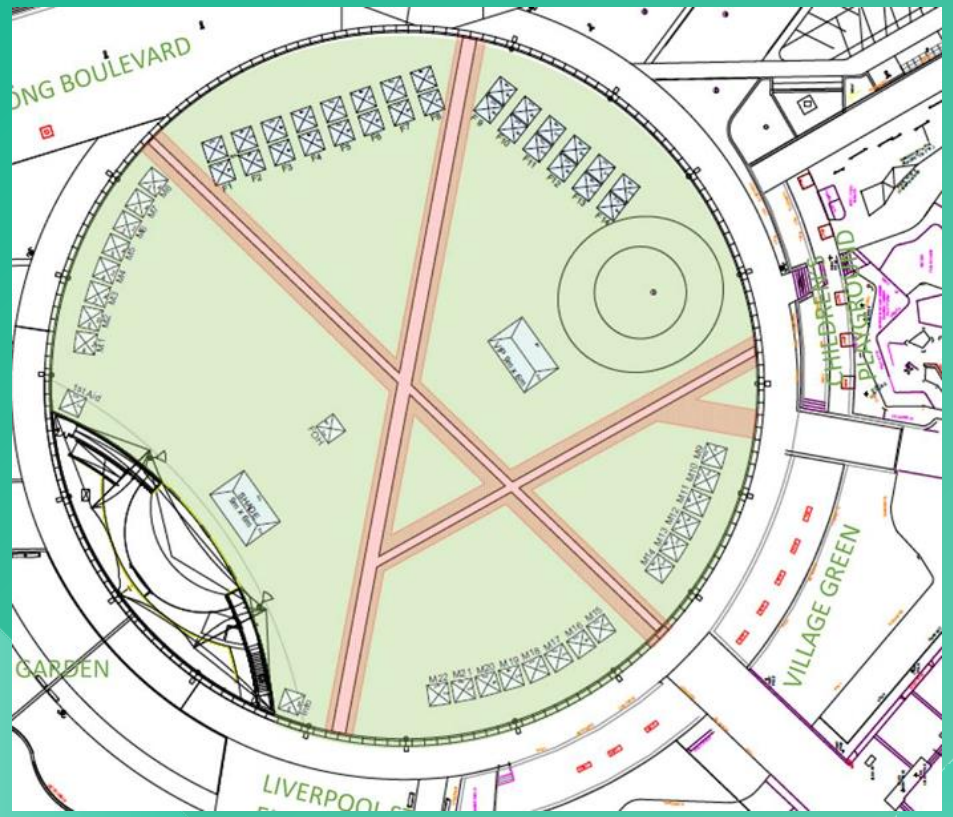
Item	1 day	2 day
Application	$198	$198
Bond (refundable)	$5,000	$5,000
PMNSW Operational cost estimates		
Security (Gate guards, Traffic escorts, overnight assets protection, event security)	$9030	$13125
PMNSW Staff	$6,191	$7,668
Cleaning & Waste	$5,775	$9,450
Cool rooms	$2,800	$2,800
Plumbing/ Gas compliance (incl handbasins)	$5,250	$5,250
Electrical plan & install	$15,750	$15,750
Fire Extinguishers / Blankets	$630	$630
Fencing	$1,890	$1,890
First Aid	$1,323	$2,783
Audio/Visual/Lighting	$6,334	$11,366
Estimated Total (Ex. GST)	**$60,601**	**$75,800**

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

DARLING HARBOUR

Costs are indicative for planning purposes. Actual costs to be determined once event plans are confirmed.

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)	$14,175	$19,425
PMNSW Staff	$11,256	$14,281
Cleaning & Waste	$8,400	$11,025
Cool rooms	$2,940	$2,940
Plumbing/ Gas compliance (incl handbasins)	$6,825	$6,825
Electrical plan & install	$18,375	$19,950
Fire Extinguishers / Blankets	$919	$919
Fencing	$2,625	$2,625
First Aid	$1,575	$2,62
Audio/Visual/Lighting	$8,437	$15,150
PMNSW Operational Cost Estimate (Ex. GST)	**$80,474**	**$100,871**

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

DARLING HARBOUR

Costs are indicative for planning purposes. Actual costs to be determined once event plans are confirmed.

KEY DATES

2027 Season | February - November	DATE
Expression Of Interest (EOI) Period Opens	Wednesday 7 October 2026
EOI Information Session 1 (online)	Wednesday 14 October 2026
EOI Period Closes	Tuesday 20 October 2026
EOI Outcome Notification	Early November 2026
First Production Meeting	12 weeks prior
Licence Agreement & Event Deposit Issued	11 weeks prior
Second Production Meeting	9 weeks prior
50% recoverable costs invoice	Due 8 weeks prior
Final Production Meeting	6 weeks prior
Balance of recoverables costs invoice	Due 3 weeks prior
Event Date	February – December 2027
Post event debrief	2-3 weeks post event
Final event reconciliation invoice	2-3 weeks post event

DARLING HARBOUR

AVAILABLE DATES

2027
Friday 12 February – Monday 15 February
Friday 19 February – Monday 22 February
Friday 26 February – Monday 1 March
Friday 26 March – Monday 29 March
Friday 2 April – Monday 5 April
Friday 9 April – Monday 12 April
Friday 30 April – Monday 3 May
Friday 6 August – Monday 9 August
Friday 10 December – Monday 13 December

DARLING HARBOUR

SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS

Key Dates:

- EOI submissions open dates:
  06 October 2026 – 20 October 2026
- Program acceptance and application unsuccessful notifications:
  Early Novemer26
- **Application briefing sessions** (online):
  - Wednesday 14 October | 12pm – 12.30pm

Applicants who wish to attend a briefing session must refer to their initial EOI notification email, where they will find an Eventbrite link.

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

DARLING HARBOUR

THANK YOU

DARLING
HARBOUR