
DROP MUSIC FESTIVAL | 7 MARCH 2020 | EMPIRE PARK, BAR BEACH

Empire Park is not a suitable venue for a commercial festival. In the past commercial festivals have not been permitted to be held at Empire Park. Why is a commercial festival now permitted to be held there?

Events of this type have previously not been held at this location as they were not permissible under legislation. Due to recent changes to the Crown Lands Act, these events are now permissible within this space in line with the Plan of Management which governs this area. As a permissible event, due process has been followed by CN to assess the proposed event which is comparable and consistent with events of this type.

Why is this event not being held at another venue such as Camp Shortland, Foreshore Park, No 1 or No 2 Sportsground, Wickham Park, King Edward Park, the Showground or McDonald Jones Stadium?

The park is comparable to other sporting grounds and parks that have hosted successful events of similar type in recent years. Use of this location following assessment is consistent with the approach taken for other locations. The event is tied to the Surfest event being held at Merewether Beach, and the location allows for a greater level of collaboration and incorporation between the events. As a permissible location, the licence has been assessed based of the identified location at Empire Park.

There are a range of sites that could host the event; however Empire Park was preferred based off the following:

- *Camp Shortland* and *Foreshore Park* are heavily utilised for events, so an alternate location to activate with an event provide a diversification of offering to the City and spreads the economic outcomes beyond the city centre. These locations in Newcastle East are also disconnected from the Surfest finals location.
- *Wickham Park* is already host to a successful event of this type. The use of an alternate, comparable, permissible location ensures that different areas of the city benefit from the diversification of offerings from events, while also ensuring that specific local areas are not over utilised.
- *King Edward Park* successfully hosted the event in 2019. Empire Park provides a more suitable location based of topography, transport, noise management, and proximity to the Surfest finals location.

The event is also unsuitable for a range of locations that were also noted as alternate locations:

- *No.2 Sportsground* does not have the capacity for the event based off the projected attendance numbers.
- *No.1 Sportsground* is not a permissible site as the Plan of Management does not allow for events of this type.
- *Newcastle Showground* or *McDonald Jones Stadium* are not managed by City of Newcastle (CN). Use of these sites would be a separate commercial arrangement between an event organiser and the venue.

The site has been assessed for suitability by both CN and the Interagency Events Consultative Group. Approval in principle has been provided for the site to host an event of this type by the IECG, which includes representative from NSW Police, NSW Ambulance, and transport stakeholders.

Empire Park is a large open space with shown ability to handle event crowds in excess of 10,000 patrons with minimal issues and lower levels of controls that is proposed. Links and adjacent car park provide easy implementation for transport. Suitable roadway links and adjacent car park provide easy implementation for transport services. It is a well-connected site with suitable evacuation areas that provide a suitable emergency response. Expected noise impacts on surrounding private residences are comparable or better to other locations that have hosted events of this type, such as Wickham Park and King Edward Park.

Why is Empire Park being used for commercial gain? Shouldn't the sportsground and park always be available for community use?

The use of a public recreation space for commercial events is consistent and permissible. The support of large-scale music events is consistent with the 2030 Strategic Goals to provide vibrant, safe and active public places through the support of events and live music. The event precinct is primarily covering the oval and the parkland in the north east corner of the park for a one-day event only. Impacts to other areas of the park will be minimised to maintain access to all other public areas.

What assessment and approval process has been completed for the proposed event? Has the event already been approved?

The assessment of the event application for the Drop Festival at Empire Park has been consistent with all previous events of this type. The event proposal has been assessed by CN officers and tabled and reviewed by the Interagency Events Consultative Group, which includes representatives from CN, NSW Police, NSW Ambulance, Office of Liquor and Gaming, Transport for NSW, Keolis Downer, and other key event stakeholders. The IECG representatives have provided approval in principle for the event to be held at Empire Park.

Standard events consultation and notification was completed through the Public Lands Notice, with the period held between 28 October and 24 November 2019. In addition, a public information session was conducted on 18 November by the event organiser to assist with the provision of accurate information to residents from the area. CN received 53 submissions in response to the notice. Based on assessment of the submissions received, all raised issues have been addressed through the planning controls proposed for the event. Response to all issues raised have been addressed through the Executive Summary provided by The Drop Festival and will be finalised through the event licencing process.

An event licence has not yet been provided for the event. Final approval for the event is dependent on the event organisers meeting all requirements of the CN event licence, and of all key operational stakeholders (such as NSW Police).

Due to the close proximity of residents and with the noise amplification during the event, how will the noise be controlled?

The noise limits that will be applied under the proposed licence will be consistent with all other music events held under CN licence around the city, including those locations adjacent to private residences. The noise will be monitored regularly throughout the event and adjusted to mitigate noise level breaches, as per the requirements of the Noise Management Plan for the event. The site has been assessed, and the directional impacts for the proposed stage and speakers located at Empire Park has a comparable or lower number of influenced properties than other locations that have successfully hosted events of this type, including Wickham Park and King Edward Park.

I am concerned regarding possible vandalism, intoxication, drug abuse, defecation & urination on public and private properties

There will be significant Police and Security personnel presence before, during and after the event. Police and security will be deployed both inside the event precinct and also in surrounding streets. This is in line with the NSW State Government policies for Music Festivals, and consistent with the requirements of NSW Police.

Public transport and parking will be a problem for the local community

A full transport plan will be implemented for the event, linking the site with key transport nodes and desire locations post event with event specific buses. In addition, provisions will be provided for taxis and private vehicle drop off areas. There is extensive off-street parking available adjacent to the park.

The provision of transport and traffic controls is a requirement for any event licence, to appropriately address the specific issues associated with the location proposed.

Will the event result in excessive waste in the area?

An extensive waste management plan is being developed to manage the waste, especially with recycling, reusable cups and not using single use plastics. Roaming cleaning teams will be implemented to cover various areas of the event and the streets around the event precinct to capture waste.

Due to damage from the event and associated vehicles, will sporting groups be unable to use the sportsground for an extensive period?

CN now has extensive experience in managing event impacts on public parks and sportsgrounds and there are a range of measures that will be employed to minimise the impact on the sportsground and park surface. It is expected that the ground would be returned for sporting use for the following weekend, unless there is a significant rain event during the event weekend.

What is the benefit to the local community for holding this event at Empire Park?

The event promotes and highlights Newcastle as a destination to visit, bringing both tourism and economic benefits to the local economy and can create cultural diversity and promote our city. For local residents the event provides a festival that is consistent with the CN 2030 Strategic Goals to provide vibrant, safe and active public places through the support of events and live music. The event is also supported by the Surfest organiser Warren Smith, who has stated that the Surfest Organisation is “confident that the Drop will present a concert that will add to the experience of visitors to Surfest and benefit the Newcastle community”.