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Sydney Council Approves Fee for NYE Fireworks Vantage Point

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North Sydney Council has voted to charge \$50 for access to Blues Point Reserve, a prime vantage point for New Year's Eve (NYE) fireworks, to address a dire financial shortfall. The decision, passed on July 28, 2025, has sparked debate over privatizing public spaces, with critics slamming the move as unfair and questioning the state government's role in local budget woes.

Facing a "precarious" financial situation after an infrastructure project's cost doubled to over \$120 million, North Sydney Council approved ticketing Blues Point Reserve for NYE 2025, expecting to generate \$400,000 from 8,000 tickets. Mayor Zoë Baker, speaking to ABC News, called it a "heavy-hearted" decision, emphasizing it's a one-year trial to offset the \$1.086 million cost of hosting NYE crowds. Other vantage points, like Bradfield Park

and Lavender Bay Parklands, remain free, but the council rejected full cost recovery through ticketing all sites, balancing access with revenue needs. The move follows the council's exploration of other income sources, including urging wealthy private schools to pay rates.

The decision has ignited community backlash, with residents like local teacher Sarah Collins telling 7NEWS, "Charging families \$50 to use public land is outrageous". Social media posts on X echoed this, with users like @Michael94858047 calling it a "tax on joy" during a cost-of-living crisis. Critics argue the NSW Labor government's mismanagement of local funding has forced councils into such measures, leaving ratepayers to bear the burden. Shadow Local Government Minister Sam Faraway stated, "Labor's neglect of councils pushes them to monetize community traditions". Meanwhile, supporters claim ticketing will reduce overcrowding and dawn queues, ensuring safer access to a premium view.

As Sydney prepares for its record-breaking 2025 NYE fireworks, with nine tonnes of pyrotechnics across a seven-kilometer harbor span, the council's move risks alienating locals who cherish free access to this iconic event. With community consultation planned post-trial, the debate over public space and fiscal responsibility is set to intensify, challenging Labor's oversight of local governance.