



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 3 December, 2019

Messages of welcome from Gadigal land

A symbolic message stick will be presented to Lord Mayor Clover Moore to accept on behalf of Sydney this New Year's Eve as a gift from the Gadigal people.

The age old Aboriginal custom will be the focal point of this year's Calling Country ceremony, which welcomes Sydney and the world to Gadigal land.

The Calling Country ceremony will see the Sydney Harbour Bridge pylons light up with projections depicting summer time stories in Sydney.

The ceremony will feature a smoking ceremony as well as musical and dance performances.

Creative Consultant Rhoda Roberts AO said message sticks were an ancient Aboriginal custom that enabled safe passage across boundaries.

"For New Year's Eve, the message stick is a gift to the people, acknowledging Sydney for recognising the lands and the First Peoples of the city," Ms Roberts said.

"The Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council has regenerated this ancient practice, paying homage to the old ways of crossing territories and communication. The gifting is a symbolic gesture that enables the continuous communication with the city."

Ms Roberts has worked closely with Artists in Motion to develop the stunning Sydney Harbour Bridge pylon projections, which tell the stories of the hot and dry January season.

"This year we look at the depth and wisdom of reading country, listening to the movement of the six seasons and honouring the water that gives us life," Ms Roberts said.

"Our story focuses on the season of January and the estuaries that have always flowed and connected the clans to the deep water.

"Our Calling Country features the song of the whale as we call the clans. The call and response is heard as the smoking commences and our warrior arrives carrying the message stick as the women begin the cleansing.

"And like the old ways, we still gather to connect on the harbour, to feast, celebrate the abundance, to laugh, think and play.



“As our nations join forces to help those who are suffering from drought and fire, we are reminded of the precious gift we have inherited and the stewardship we continue as the First Nations People of country.”

Lord Mayor Clover Moore said including the ceremony as part of proceedings that are watched by a billion people around the world reflects the City’s commitment to celebrating the culture of the world’s oldest civilisation.

“The Calling Country ceremony prominently and proudly acknowledges our First Nations People as custodians of the land on which we celebrate New Year’s Eve,” the Lord Mayor said.

“It is an honour to accept a message stick on behalf of Sydney and help share Indigenous heritage and culture with the world.

“This year’s official charity partner is the Refugee Council of Australia, so commencing New Year’s Eve celebrations with a message of ‘welcome’ is particularly apt.”

The City of Sydney New Year’s Eve event times:

7pm	Fire tug presents its water display on Sydney Harbour
7.30pm	Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony on Sydney Harbour by the Tribal Warrior Association
8pm	Air display above Sydney Harbour by flying ace Matt Hall and Sydney Harbour Bridge pylon projections start
8.30pm	Sydney Harbour Bridge lighting effects start
9pm	Family fireworks (8 minutes) includes the ABC Design Your Own Firework competition firework display
9.08pm	Calling Country segment honouring Australia’s Indigenous heritage
9.15pm	Harbour of Light parade
12am	Midnight fireworks (12 minutes)
2am	Sydney Harbour Bridge pylon projection and lighting effects end.

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For New Year’s event information, visit the [Sydney New Year’s Eve website.](https://www.sydneynewyearseve.com)