

SPECIAL ENTERTAINMENT PRECINCTS

Building on the success of the Enmore Road pilot, council is working with the NSW Government to bring the Special Entertainment Precinct model to our community, creating new opportunities for local nightlife and live music to thrive.



Credit: Hornsby Shire Council

What is a SEP?

A Special Entertainment Precinct (SEP) is a designated night-time going out area, where the relevant local council sets suitable trading hours and sound limits for live entertainment, shops, community facilities and cultural spaces. Using the planning system to provide clear, tailored rules for activity in the area gives greater certainty to businesses and residents and helps to create safe, vibrant, and welcoming destinations.

Councils tailor SEPs to reflect the character and local needs of an area – whether it's a buzzing restaurant district on a main street, a theatre and arts hub, a regional town centre or tourist destination. SEPs help councils plan for their future and support local culture, creativity and business.

Who creates a SEP?

Councils lead the process of making a SEP. They must do this in consultation with local community, businesses, state government agencies and other stakeholders.

Councils are enabled to make SEPs under Section 202 of the *Local Government Act 1993* and the [NSW SEP Guidelines](#).

How is a SEP created?

The council prepares planning documents in consultation with the community, local businesses, and NSW Government agencies. The SEP must be approved by the elected council before the council maps it in the local planning map, known as a Local Environmental Plan.

The council sets the trading hours and sound conditions for the SEP in a precinct management plan, which is published on the council's website. The rules are tailored for the local area based on community input and expert advice. This means everyone knows when businesses can operate and how much sound from entertainment activity can be made, which gives more certainty for businesses, venues and the community.

The SEP must be run as a trial for the first 12 to 18 months, so that the council can assess the SEP's impacts in consultation with the community and local businesses. The council will decide whether to make the SEP permanent.

How can I have my say about a SEP in my local area?

During its early planning, a council may consult with local businesses, stakeholders and the community to understand local interest in a SEP, any current issues with trading hours, sound limits or other concerns. This could involve council preparing discussion documents, surveys, or holding drop-in sessions and meetings. Public consultation on local night-time, economic development or tourism strategies might also help inform council's planning.

Throughout the process of making a SEP, there are mandatory steps where the council must consult with the community and NSW Government agencies, including local police and health authorities. This includes publicly exhibiting planning documents for comment. Businesses, residents and other community members can make submissions at this stage.

Councils also consult with the community at the end of the trial period about whether the SEP is meeting its goals. The SEP Guidelines also encourage councils to engage with resident groups and local business and to set up precinct working groups to help share information, resolve issues and support successful precinct management.

How will a SEP support my local community?

Reflect local character and communities

SEPs are intended to celebrate what makes a local area special and help its businesses and communities to thrive. They can help to grow the local economy with diverse, family-friendly activities and events and improved amenities for local residents of all ages, at different

times of the day and night. Councils can also use SEPs to support outdoor dining, street fairs, markets and other activities.

More night-time options and safety

By offering more than just pubs and clubs, including late-night shopping, restaurants, cultural and creative events, performance spaces or community and recreation spaces, SEPs encourage more activity and 'eyes on the street' in an area. This helps make everyone feel safe.

Certainty about trading hours and sound conditions

The clear rules about when venues and businesses can open and how much sound is allowed from entertainment activities can make it easier for hospitality, retail and entertainment businesses to host live performance, diversify their offerings and operate with confidence. Property buyers are notified that they are moving into a SEP on Planning Certificates, and existing property owners and residents are notified on a council's website. This helps to manage community expectations around an activated area.

New buildings encouraged to include soundproofing

This helps to futureproof areas with entertainment activity and protect existing and future businesses and residents.

Community wellbeing

There is no place for anti-social behaviour in a SEP. By getting the local settings right through consultation with police, local health authorities and businesses, and ongoing monitoring, councils can feed back to the community about how any issues or impacts are being addressed in a SEP.

How is sound regulated in a SEP?

SEPs do not remove the right for community members to complain about noise. Instead, they make the process clearer. Complaints are valid if the noise exceeds the limits outlined in the precinct management plan and is unreasonable.

Sound in a SEP is also managed clearly and fairly. Liquor & Gaming NSW regulates entertainment sound from licensed venues, and councils manage non-licensed venues and other complaints from noise sources such as venue air conditioning or deliveries. NSW Police also have powers to issue improvement notices to licensed premises in certain situations that require an immediate response. Importantly, a council can amend a SEP to resolve any ongoing issues with sound conditions or trading hours.

FIND OUT MORE

Visit nsw.gov.au/seps for information about how SEPs are made and operated.

Contact your local council to see what's planned for your area.



VISIT [NSW.GOV.AU/SEPS](https://nsw.gov.au/seps)