

Sydney Opera House Policy

Title:	Venue Hire Policy		
Policy Number:	2025/1		
Effective Date:	14 March 2025	Next Review:	Three years from authorisation
Authorisation:	Chief Executive Officer		
Authorisation Date:	13 February 2025		
Superseded Policy:	Venue Hire Guideline for Commercial Hirers 2014		
Accountable Director:	Director, Production, Events & Security		
Responsible Officer:	Head of Venue & Event Sales		

1. CORE PROPOSITION

- 1.1. The Sydney Opera House (SOH) is a NSW Government Cultural Institution, one of the world's busiest performing arts centres, a State, National and World Heritage-listed site, and the nation's premier tourism destination. Due to high demand and limited venue availability, SOH must effectively manage access to its Venues by SOH internal business units and Resident Companies, as well as Venue hire requests from other hirers.
- 1.2. This Venue Hire Policy and supporting procedures (Policy) set out the principles and criteria considered by SOH when assessing Venue hire booking requests.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. Subject to section 2.2, this Policy applies to SOH's assessment of all Venue hire booking requests from hirers.
- 2.2. This Policy does not apply to Venue hire booking requests from:
 - SOH internal business units; or
 - SOH Resident Companies when the Venue hire is subject to the terms of a resident company agreement.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. SOH Resident Companies – Australian Chamber Orchestra, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Bell Shakespeare, Opera Australia, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Theatre Company and The Australian Ballet.
- 3.2. **SOH Trust (Trust)** – a public statutory body constituted under the Sydney Opera House Trust Act 1961, responsible for the administration, care, control, management and maintenance of SOH, including its Venues. The Trust consists of members appointed by the NSW Governor on the nomination of the NSW Minister for the Arts.
- 3.3. **Venue(s)** – any location that forms part of SOH premises at Bennelong Point, including the SOH building and surrounding outdoor areas, and any other premises operated by SOH.

4. PRINCIPLES

- 4.1. Venue hire booking requests are considered on a case-by-case basis and in line with SOH's primary role and function as a performing arts centre.
- 4.2. Given SOH's role and profile, and limited availability of its Venues, SOH must consider a broad range of cultural, commercial, operational and reputational factors in its Venue hire decision-making.
- 4.3. When assessing Venue hire booking requests under this Policy, SOH will consider:
 - SOH's objectives and functions under the Sydney Opera House Trust Act 1961.
 - SOH's organisational values of creativity, courage, inclusivity, integrity, collaboration and care.
 - SOH's organisational strategy, as updated from time to time.

- Assessment criteria set out in section 5 below.
- Any other matter considered relevant.

4.4. SOH may accept or decline Venue hire booking requests in its absolute discretion.

5. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

SOH will assess Venue hire booking requests against a range of criteria, including:

- Safety, wellbeing and security of visitors, audience, artists and workers.
- Care and protection of the site, building and their contents.
- SOH's status as a national icon, tourist attraction, community meeting place and World Heritage site.
- Venue availability, utilisation and program diversity.
- Logistical and operational delivery and impact on SOH operations.
- Financial viability, including previous ticket sales (if applicable).
- Artistic quality, production values and visitor experience.
- Hirer's previous experience delivering events of a similar scale.
- Social and environmental impact, including alignment with SOH's Sustainable Event Management Principles.
- Alignment with SOH's values and strategic priorities.
- Impact on SOH's brand and reputation.

6. ENQUIRY PROCESS, ASSESSMENT AND CONTRACTING

6.1. Hirers may request a Venue hire booking by using the forms available on the SOH website or by emailing:

- Venue Hire at venuehire@sydneyoperahouse.com
- Function Sales at functions@sydneyoperahouse.com for catered functions.

6.2. The Venue Hire or Function Sales team will assess Venue hire booking requests in line with this Policy and relevant booking procedure, and may request additional information from the hirer to be provided within the timeframe specified by SOH.

6.3. SOH may conduct a risk assessment of a Venue hire booking request in accordance with the *SOH Risk Management Policy*.

6.4. SOH may hold multiple tentative Venue hire bookings for the same date prioritised in order of the date of acceptance (each a Pencil Booking). Pencil Bookings are not confirmed bookings for a Venue and SOH may cancel a Pencil Booking at any time.

6.5. SOH will only accept a Pencil Booking from the date SOH opens the booking calendar (date subject to change) which is usually from April each year for dates in the following calendar year (e.g. the booking calendar for dates in 2026 open in April 2025).

6.6. Despite section 6.4, SOH may accept a Pencil Booking for catered functions in the Yallamundi Rooms up to three years in advance.

6.7. On receipt of a challenge from a subsequent Pencil Booking holder, SOH will require the first Pencil Booking holder to confirm the booking in writing within three business days. Otherwise, the challenging Pencil Booking holder becomes the first Pencil Booking holder.

6.8. Prior to issuing a venue hire agreement, SOH may undertake detailed scoping of a Pencil Booking holder's proposed event, including technical requirements and costing.

6.9. SOH may cancel an earlier Pencil Booking and offer the date to a subsequent Pencil Booking holder, if SOH does not receive the signed venue hire agreement and required deposit by the date specified.

7. FEEDBACK

SOH values feedback including complaints as part of its commitment to the community and its hirers and to support the continuous improvement of SOH services. The *Feedback and Complaints Handling Guideline for Commercial Hirers* sets out how hirers may provide feedback and make complaints and is available on the SOH website at www.sydneyoperahouse.com.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1. All employees (including permanent, temporary and casual employees), contractors and anyone engaged to undertake work on behalf of SOH must follow this Policy, all supporting procedures and maintain records.

8.2. Venue & Event Sales

Venue Hire Team members are responsible for:

- Determining booking requests.
- Informing potential hirers of the outcome of booking requests.
- Preparing booking request assessments for the Venue Hire Review Committee, CEO and Trust, as relevant.

Head of Venue Hire & Event Sales is responsible for:

- Determining booking requests.
- Preparing booking request assessments for the Venue Hire Review Committee, CEO and Trust, as relevant.
- Maintaining the SOH website with current venue hire information and this Policy.

Director, Production, Events & Security is responsible for:

- Overseeing implementation of this Policy.
- Advising the CEO and Trust on booking request assessments.

8.3. Food & Beverage (catered functions only)

Function Sales Team members are responsible for:

- Determining booking requests.
- Informing hirers of the outcome of booking requests.
- Preparing booking request assessments for the Venue Hire Review Committee, CEO and Trust, as relevant.

General Manager, Food & Beverage is responsible for:

- Determining booking requests.
- Preparing booking request assessments for the Venue Hire Review Committee, CEO and Trust, as relevant.
- Maintaining the SOH website with current information.

Chief Customer Officer is responsible for:

- Overseeing implementation of this Policy.
- Advising the CEO and Trust on booking request assessments.

8.4. **Venue Hire Review Committee (The Committee)** is made up of the roles below:

- Director, Production, Events & Security (Chair).
- Executive Director, People & Government.
- Director, Strategic Engagement & Impact.
- Director, Office of the CEO.

- General Manager, External Communications.

The Committee is responsible for:

- Determining booking requests.
- Advising the CEO and Trust on booking request assessments.

8.5. **CEO** is responsible for:

- Determining booking requests.
- Advising the Trust on booking request assessments.

8.6. **SOH Trust** is responsible for determining booking requests.

9. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- Sydney Opera House Trust Act 1961 (NSW)
- Sydney Opera House Trust By-law 2021 (NSW)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 (NSW)

10. SOH DOCUMENTS

- Venue Hire Booking Procedure
- Functions Booking Procedure
- Risk Management Policy
- Sydney Opera House Strategy
- Sustainable Event Management Principles
- Feedback and Complaints Handling Guideline for Commercial Hirers

Version History

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Sections modified
1.0	Director, Theatre & Events	28/02/2014	28/02/2014	New guideline
2.0	Chief Executive Officer	13/02/2025	14/03/2025	New policy

APPROVED



Acting Chief Executive Officer

Date: 13 February 2025