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Sydney Chinese New Year Festival 2009

Sydney's 2009 Chinese New Year Festival begins today - welcoming the Year of the Ox.

"Sydney's Chinese New Year Festival is growing every year and one of the new highlights this year is our first Twilight Parade," Lord Mayor Clover Moore MP said.

"2009 is on track to be the biggest and the best Festival yet with tonight's launch at the Chinese New Year Markets in Belmore Park. This marks the start of a three-week long program of more than 50 events offering spectacular performances, unique cultural experiences and community celebrations."

The City of Sydney produced Festival runs from 23 January – 15 February 2009. More than 600,000 people attend the Festival annually, making it one of Sydney's fastest growing and most popular events.

Celebrations begin tonight with firecrackers, lucky lanterns, Chinese warriors juggling sticks of fire, lion and dragon dancers, children dressed as dancing dumplings and a shrine to the God of Wealth - creating an explosive start to the Sydney Chinese New Year Festival.

The giant illuminated Ox lantern will also shine in Belmore Park as spectators witness the debut performance of *Red Lanterns Glowing* by Danielle Meng with four backing singers, drummers and butterfly dancers.

2009 HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Chinese New Year Launch Celebration** – 6pm – 8pm, Friday 23 January. Lions and dragons will come to life and red firecrackers will scare away the previous year's misfortune. See the latest in Chinese-Australian culture as performers on stage present ancient traditions with a modern twist.
- **Chinese New Year Markets @ Belmore Park** - Friday 23 January (4pm – 10pm), Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 January (11am – 10pm) Delicious Asian food and all the glitz of traditional New Year gifts will be on offer at more than 50 stalls. Take a class in Tai Chi, Chinese drumming or Lion Dancing or try your hand at Mah Jong. Watch a Chinese cooking demonstration or create your own Chinese New Year lantern to take home. On stage, enjoy a mix of traditional Dragon Dancing, Chinese Opera, musical groups and contemporary performers. On-site bike parking available.
- **Inaugural Chinese New Year Twilight Parade** - 7.45pm – 9.30pm, Sunday 1 February. Sydney's streets from Town Hall to Chinatown will be transformed with a stunning night time procession of costumes, giant lanterns, lights and illuminated floats. 2,600 performers will take part, including 500 dancers, musicians and martial artists from Henan Province in China. Another first in 2009 will be a special Chinese New Year Fireworks finale at Cockle Bay to celebrate of the start of the Year of the Ox.

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- **New Festival Ambassador and International film star Jackie Chan** who says “The Sydney Chinese New Year Festival is a great opportunity to celebrate Chinese culture and heritage, eat delicious food, and be entertained by talented performers. Wishing you a healthy, happy, and prosperous Year of the Ox!”
- **More than 50 events** including temple tours, the **first ever Sydney Chinese Film Festival**, art exhibitions, kids’ events, history, food and cultural tours, calligraphy demonstrations, opera and banquets.
- **Dragon Boat Races** - Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 February (8am – 5pm) More than 3,000 paddlers converge on Darling Harbour for two days of heart stopping racing.
- The Year of the Ox brings good natured patience combined with physical stamina to influence the year.

This year’s Chinese New Year Festival will bring the first ever *Vivacity* festival to a close – an exciting array of events, festivals and outdoor activities between December and February.

Shuxia Chen (Chinese Media) 0401 628 723, schen@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Maya Catsanis (02) 9265 9553, 0409 045 425. mcatsanis@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

The 2009 Chinese New Year Festival is proudly supported by Government Partners Events NSW, Vivacity and Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, Major Sponsors Medibank Private, Volkswagen, Sydney’s Paddy’s Markets, Helen Wong’s Tours, Macau Government Tourist Office, Asian Home Gourmet and China Union Pay, Supporting Sponsors Rémy Martin, Citigate Central Sydney and Chameleon Touring Systems, Media Partners TVB Australia and Time Out and Charity Partner Oxfam Australia.

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