

Community healing initiatives and lessons learned



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General Manager



A little bit about us

Waverley Local Government Area

Located in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, Waverley Council is home to the iconic Bondi, Bronte and Tamarama Beaches

- Boundary (shared with Randwick) at Waverley Cemetery and runs north to Christison Park in Vaucluse
- 9.2 km² in land size
- 71,000 residents
- Strategic commercial centre - Bondi Junction – one of Sydney's busiest transport interchanges
- Welcome over 3 million visitors each year to our beaches and events
- \$170 million annual operating budget
- 750 employees



Bondi Beach Terror Attack

What unfolded

- **Waverley community experienced an unprecedented and devastating loss of life at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025**
- Two gunmen targeted an annual, community run Chanukah by the Sea event in Bondi Park
- 500 attendees, organised by the Chabad of Bondi
- Targeted, antisemitic attack on our local Jewish community
- 15 people were killed, 42 people with significant injuries requiring medical attention or hospitalisation
- Deeply felt not just across our Waverley community but across the country and the rest of the world
- Worst terror attack in Australian history: unprecedented emergency and critical incident response
- Deeply affected our organisation in complex ways
- Required a specialist and nuanced crisis management response

What was expected of us

The role of Council

1. First responders
2. Critical incident response support to emergency services
3. Crisis Managers
4. Community support / recovery lead
5. Leadership and advocacy for social cohesion, community support, and public safety



Role 1: First responders

- 20 Council employees were first responders to the scene treating injured people and administering CPR
- Lifeguards on and off duty
- Events employees on site to support the Chanukah event
- Close to 100 volunteer surf lifesavers on site at Bondi and North Bondi SLSCs – end of year celebrations
- Regulatory and venues employees on-site assisting with crowd control, public safety, and communications to the general public

Many of these employees and volunteers along with emergency services put their own lives in danger to save others

Role 2: Critical incident response

- Crime scene management
- CCTV review and release
- Traffic management / road closure management throughout Bondi
- Communications and media management
- Supporting the NSW Government Response and Recovery efforts
- Establishment of the community support hub within Bondi Pavilion
- Support for direct community mental health services via a lifeline hub



NSW Reconstruction Authority

- Declared emergency by the NSW Government
- Establishment of the Local Coordination Committee
- NSW Premier established two Coordinator Generals of the Bondi Beach Recovery – Joseph La Posta (CEO Multicultural NSW) and Michelle Goldman (CEO NSWJBD)
- Weekly briefings of Mayors and MPs
- Provision of direct funding to Waverley Council of \$1 million via Reconstruction Authority Community Recovery grant
- Additional funding through the RA Disaster Recovery Fund
- Estimate we lost close to \$1 million in lost revenue, parking meter income loss, cancelled events and activations
- Additional direct costs close to \$1 million



Role 3: Crisis Managers

- Crisis Management Team (CMT) stood up on the evening of 14 December 2025
- Crisis Management Plan / Business Continuity Plans guided decision making
- Operations Centre established at Bondi Beach Public School for the recovery effort
- Relocated to Bondi Pavilion 18 December 2025
- Daily meetings with CMT to manage the implementation of plan
- Daily communications to organisation from General Manager in first week of response, every three days in second week
- EAP support available to all employees and Councillors in the aftermath of event
- Communication and media management – Local, national and international media interest



Most critical in crisis response

Mental health support

3 tiers of mental health support offered to employees within 24 hours

First responders:

- Contact made within the first 24 hours and support offered
- Special leave granted
- Trauma counselling (individual and team) with expert trauma psychologists
- Team trauma debrief one week following incident

Crisis Management Team:

- Debrief with psych support for all CMT employees, Councillors, and frontline employees involved in response (individual and team)

Other employees:

- Ongoing support services of EAP offered to all employees

Role 4: Supporting community recovery

- **Floral tribute**
- **Reading of the names**
3 times daily over 30 days of mourning
- **Establishment of a community hub within the Park for the Bondi Chabad**
- **Site security**
Floral tribute and temporary chanukiah memorial
- **Rock tributes**
- **Working with the Sydney Jewish Museum to preserve the floral tributes**
- **Hosting other Councils and dignitaries**
The Prime Minister, the NSW Premier, Governor General, NSW Governor, Ministers, LGNSW Mayors and Councillors
- **National Day of Reflection on Sunday, 21 December 2025**
- **Darkness over light community vigil with JBD and the NSW Government**







Bondi Vigil
7 News
21 December 2025





Role 5: Leadership and advocacy for community cohesion

- **Extraordinary Council meeting 16 December 2025**
Acknowledgement, condolences, community support packages
- **Extraordinary Council meeting 15 January 2026**
Condolences, incident response from organisation
- **Council meeting February 2026**
Tributes to victims, survivors and first responders
- **Allocated \$100,000 to community organisations within two weeks**
To service providers in the community providing direct support to families and victims
- **Hosted Mayors, Councillors, and staff from across NSW**
In partnership with LGNSW
- **Worked with LGNSW on a condolence motion for NSW Councils**
With options to provide grant assistance through Rotary for victims and their families



Advocacy on strategic change

- **Advocated to the Prime Ministers Office to seek funding for the Bondi Beach Security Masterplan (CCTV, landscape upgrade, HVM)**
- **Commenced discussions with the NSW Premiers Office on permanent memorial, upgrade to section of Bondi Park and playground, contribution toward the upgrade of the pedestrian bridges**
- **Developed Waverley's Strategy to Combat Antisemitism and our own Social Cohesion strategy**
- **Template for other Australian Councils launched**
- **Establishment of the 6 Community Resilience and Engagement Coordinator roles (CRECs)**



Lessons learned for Waverley

- **Keep refining Crisis Management Plan and Business Continuity Plans**
- **Regular scenario testing with your CMT**
- **Establish CMT communication channels within your organisation**
- **Importance of building relationships with your Local Emergency Management Committee / Reconstruction Authority**
- **Establish sophisticated mental health support for employees that can be quickly deployed if needed**
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate: Councillors, leaders and all employees**



Thank you