



NEWS RELEASE

Premier of New South Wales

SYDNEY FESTIVAL

Friday, 8 January 2009

More than 300,000 people are expected to attend three weeks of entertainment as part of the Sydney Festival – the city's premier arts, music and cultural festival.

Premier Kristina Keneally today also announced financial support for the Sydney Festival for the next five years, giving the event certainty and a solid future.

The \$1.25 million annual funding grant will ensure the gala opening event – known as *Festival First Night* continues to showcase the best national and international music, art, and theatre performance.

Festival First Night kicks off the three-week Sydney Festival 2010 from January 9 to 30.

Premier Keneally joined legendary soul artist Al Green to officially launch Festival First Night 2010 - the free event featuring more than 1000 artists across six CBD precincts. It also includes nine hours of non-stop entertainment.

Sydneysiders and visitors are encouraged to check out the events scattered through the city in parks, on rooftops, and special performance spaces.

"Festival First Night - now in its third year - has become one of the most anticipated events in the Sydney Festival program and is a celebration of theatre, music and dance.

"The event will once again showcase Sydney's summer fun with hundreds of performers taking to the streets, even swinging performers on trapezes," she said.

Al Green will take to the stage for the first time in Australia on Festival First Night along with a line-up of major international artists including The Black Arm Band, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, The Manganiyar Seduction and Australia's own Casey Chambers.

"I am delighted that we have Al Green with us for Sydney Festival 2010 and that he has selected Sydney for his first performance Down Under."

Al Green's career has spanned more than four decades has sold more than 20 million albums worldwide, is the winner of 11 Grammy awards including the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the Songwriters Hall of Fame and the Gospel Music Hall of Fame.

Festival First Night starts at 2pm in Hyde Park and continues through the night until 11pm.

Performances will be held across various sites in Sydney's CBD including The Domain, Hyde Park, Martin Place, Chifley Square and Macquarie Street.

Performers from countries including Canada, USA, Panama, UK, Japan, Papua New Guinea and Mexico will descend on Sydney for this year's Festival which is set to be a spectacular display of music, light, and acrobatics.

For the full Sydney Festival 2010 program visit www.sydneyfestival.org