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## **Slip, slop, slap takes on a new meaning as city gets its skates on**

**CLARE BARNES**

*July 10, 2010*



Shaky start ... children get the hang of it on the ice rink at Winterland at the CarriageWorks, Eveleigh. *Photo: Anthony Johnson*

SYDNEYSIDERS are finding a new way to chill out this winter.

The number of people visiting ice skating rinks across the city has jumped by a quarter, boosted by the increasing popularity of winter festivals.

"Sydney is finally coming out of its winter hibernation," said Stephanie Zappala from CarriageWorks, the inner-city arts centre which is hosting the Winterland festival this week.

"Ice skating brings a bit of that classic European winter to Sydney and people are embracing it."

Patrick Raben, from Holland, skated for the first time in Sydney this week on Winterland's 144 square metre rink.

"It brings me back to my childhood skating on the frozen canals in Holland.

"Everyone skates in Europe so it's great to see it coming here too," he said.

This year the ice skating rink at St Mary's Cathedral - the centrepiece of Sydney's Winter Festival which ended last Sunday - was four times the size of last year and open 11 days instead of four to cope with demand.

The Winter Festival's director, Martin Kratky, said the festival's package of snow machines, food markets, winter bars, and live bands had added to the sport's popularity.

"We were actually overwhelmed ourselves. It's the festival environment that has encouraged more people to take up ice skating," he said.

Later this month Bondi Beach will be transformed into the Bondi Bergstation, a giant ice rink, with organisers expecting more than 100, 000 to participate.

But it's not just the open-air skating that has taken off.

Rinks across Sydney have reported big increases in the number of young people pulling on their skates.

Liverpool Catholic Club Ice Rink has had almost double the amount of people skating compared to this time last year, and 25 per cent more people taking lessons.

"It has become particularly popular in young adult men looking to use skating as the basis for ice hockey," the sports complex manager, Jacque Venesjarvi, said.

The general manager of Macquarie Ice Rink, Wendy Rigg-Smith, said: "Since the Winter Olympics in Vancouver this year we've had a 20 to 25 per cent increase in ice-skaters." But for many the real issue is staying on their feet.

Therese Doherty watched her son take a tumble on the CarriageWorks rink this week.

"The kids end up spending more time on their backsides than standing up, but they love it," she said.

## **WHERE TO ICE SKATE THIS WEEKEND**

Macquarie Ice Rink, North Ryde

Canterbury Olympic Ice Rink, Canterbury

Sydney Ice Arena, Baulkham Hills

Liverpool Catholic Club Ice Rink, Liverpool

Penrith Ice Palace, Jamisontown

Winterland, CarriageWorks, Eveleigh