

The Newcastle Ocean Baths upgrade is a staged project with Stage 1 focused on the pools and lower promenade to address key safety, accessibility, and water-quality issues.

Will the bleachers and boardwalk be retained?

Yes, the historic bleachers and boardwalk will be retained as part of the revitalisation of Newcastle Ocean Baths.

What's happening with the pump and pumphouse?

Due to the operational constraints of the existing pump and surrounding infrastructure, the pump will be decommissioned, but the iconic pumphouse will remain in place. A new pump system will be installed in a location which allows easier access for maintenance. The new pump system will improve water quality through increased water circulation helping to minimise the opportunity for algae to grow. In addition, the new pump has the capacity to replace the water of the baths within six hours. This is a significant improvement on the current system which is largely dependent on tidal movement to refill the baths.

Will the pool surrounds be resurfaced?

New concrete surfaces will be constructed across the entire site to meet current safety standards.

Will the sand floor be retained?

Yes. The sand floor of the pool is formed by the occasional overtopping of the Baths. This will continue even after the increase to the pool deck height as sand will continue to wash into the pool as it does now.

The final design addresses the undulating rock bottom, while retaining the sand floor, to facilitate cleaning of the pools and to improve user safety when sand levels are low. Sand will continue to accumulate in the pool via natural ocean processes as it does currently, with the floor being periodically cleaned for hygiene and water quality purposes.

Why is the pool floor being capped?

As part of Stage 1, the rock bottom will be capped with a safe, flat surface that will set a maximum depth when sand levels are low. Capping the pool floor with engineered concrete will allow for improved cleaning, water quality and safety for users.

We've consistently heard from the community that water quality is a key issue at the baths. Capping the bottom with engineered concrete will allow for improved cleaning and maintenance of the baths, which will enhance water quality for years to come. Capping the pool bottom will also improve safety by minimising uneven edges on the floor and sand will continue to build up on the pool floor as it does now.

Will the pool deck level be raised?

Yes, as part of the Newcastle Ocean Baths upgrade, the level of the pool deck will be raised to provide a constructible and stable pool deck that addresses long-term sea-level inundation forecasts. The overall depth of the pool will be maintained through increasing the floor height. Raising the pool will allow for the baths to be used more days per year, reducing the need to close when seas are too high and dangerous.

A new reinforced concrete surface will be layered over the top of the existing pool deck. The depth of this layer will vary across the site from 200mm to 300mm.

Why is the pool deck being raised?

It is essential that the upgrade considers the 50-year design life and sea-level rise to ensure the Baths are resilient to increased future inundation and high seas. Planning advice has been taken into account when considering the height for the new pool deck, including the Newcastle Coastal Zone Hazards Study 2014, which shows likely coastal inundation hazards for the 2050 and 2100 planning horizons.

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Will the ocean view be maintained?

The Stage 1 design does not impact the view to the ocean.

Will the northern vehicle access ramp be retained?

The northern vehicle access ramp will remain with minor modifications to be made during Stage 1 works to facilitate maintenance access to the facility.

What's happening to the central pedestrian stairs and southern pedestrian ramp?

The new design incorporates the existing central pedestrian stairs within upgraded seating and improvements to ensure they meet current standards and provide access from the main entrance through to the pool. The southern pedestrian ramp will be replaced with a ramp which is compliant with modern accessibility and safety standards.

Will there be beach access from Newcastle Ocean Baths?

Yes, the existing access to the Cowrie Hole will be upgraded and maintained as part of Stage 1 works.

Has accessibility been considered in the design process?

Yes, City of Newcastle has engaged accessibility consultants, the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee and the Community Reference Group accessibility representative to provide input to the design. The final design includes ramp access and improved handrail support into the pool. For disabled and low mobility pool users, the design also considers the route from a vehicle at the entrance to the facility and down into the pool.

Will handrails be included?

Yes, handrails have been included to support access into and out of the pool.

Has heritage been considered in the design process?

Yes, City of Newcastle has engaged heritage consultants and worked with the Hunter Regional Committee of the National Trust, who are represented on the Community Reference Group, to have input into the design. In particular, the art-deco inspired circular stairs, the iconic bleacher seating and the boardwalk have been maintained in the final design.

Can the diving board be brought back?

The diving board was removed due to user safety concerns relating to the inconsistent depth of the pool. The diving board will not be reinstated.

Has drainage been considered?

The Stage 1 final design considers appropriate drainage for the site.

How will the project be funded?

City of Newcastle has committed to funding the upgrade to the Newcastle Ocean Baths. Part of the funding for the entire works will be provided by the capital works program, with funds recovered from the sale of the Fred Ash Building, and through appropriate grant funding opportunities. Stage 1 will be partially funded via \$3 million from the NSW Government Public Spaces Legacy Grant, which was secured in June 2021.

When will Stage 1 works occur?

Tenderers for Stage 1 construction work will be asked to come up with a construction program that will see the least possible disruption to the thousands of people who enjoy Newcastle Ocean Baths every year.