

Newcastle Ocean Baths Revitalisation

Summary community engagement report

June 2020



Background

Community engagement activities were carried out to better understand the community's wants and needs for the future uses of Newcastle and Merewether Ocean Baths. The engagement activities were promoted across the local government area (LGA) to ensure the broadest number of people had the opportunity to comment.

The engagement program included online, telephone and face-to-face activities between late November 2019 and early March 2020.

The key purpose of the engagement was to learn more about how the community use and value the baths, and their feelings around future upgrades, as well as potential design or operational changes.

Engagement program

The following activities were carried out between Friday 22 November 2019 and Sunday 1 March 2020:

- Online ideas wall to share ideas and comments about the ocean baths. A total of 840 comments were received for Newcastle Ocean Baths.
- 898 telephone (poll) surveys.
- 129 intercept (face-to-face) surveys for Newcastle Ocean Baths.
- 4,400+ visits to the Baths' dedicated 'Have Your Say' web page.

Key findings:

- Support for façade and building repairs, restoration and maintenance and maintaining the aesthetic
- Support to upgrade the facility, including change rooms, shade, seating and lockers, and improve parking and transport links
- Limited support for a restaurant, bar or gym, but interest in improving the café offering.

Telephone (poll) survey

A quantitative survey was carried out using an automated telephone-based system among 898 respondents across the LGA, asking five questions:

How important do you think it is that City of Newcastle upgrades ...

	Very or somewhat important
the existing facilities e.g. change rooms	90%
the shade	87%
the existing accessibility	80%
the existing kiosk	79%
How important do you think it is having a community meeting space provided at Newcastle Ocean Baths?	51%

Online ideas wall

The community were invited to provide ideas and comment around six key themes via our dedicated Have Your Say webpage:



People could comment on the ideas, join a discussion around the ideas already posted and like or dislike the ideas. The comments were public and could be viewed by other users. A total of 262 people commented on the ideas wall for Newcastle Ocean Baths, resulting in 840 comments.

Qualitative analysis of responses revealed support for the **façade and building being restored or maintained**. This was followed by **keeping the change room amenity and providing private change facilities** for families and babies, as well as **improving shade/shelter** along with **parking and public transport**. While there was limited support for a restaurant, bar or gym at the site, there was some **interest in improving the café offering**.

Face-to-face survey

A total of 129 surveys were completed about Newcastle Ocean Baths with residents and visitors to Newcastle aged 16+ across five key locations across the LGA. A good cross section of the community was included in the survey, and most respondents had used of one or both ocean baths in the 12 months prior to the survey (86%).

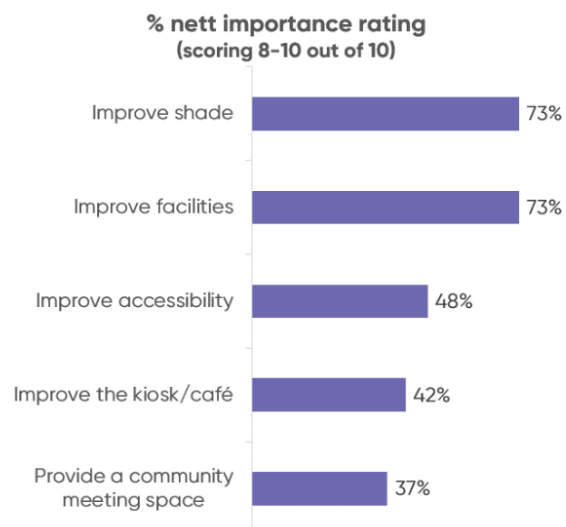
Top uses at Newcastle Ocean Baths

When asked what activities they normally do at Newcastle Ocean Baths, respondents said:

1. Swimming (90%)
2. Family or social outing (26%)
3. Getting something to eat (24%)
4. Exercise and fitness (23%)
5. Walking (22%)

Perceived potential importance

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of several potential upgrades to the Newcastle Ocean Baths. The pattern of results was similar to those obtained in the telephone survey



Priority ranking

Respondents were asked to choose up to five potential changes from a provided list.

The highest score was for **more shade and upgraded toilets**, followed by **better shower facilities, car parking and bubblers/taps**, followed by **seating and individual change rooms**.

For more detailed community engagement findings, visit newcastle.nsw.gov.au/yoursay

Next steps

We will use community feedback on Newcastle Ocean Baths to help shape concept designs for future upgrades at the site.

We are also working closely with the Newcastle Ocean Baths Community Reference Group throughout concept design development.

There will be further opportunities for the community to have their say on revitalisation of Newcastle Ocean Baths. To stay up to date as the project progresses, visit newcastle.nsw.gov.au/yoursay