

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

## **How will the project be funded?**

City of Newcastle has committed to funding the upgrade of 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?**

The Baths will close on Sunday 13 March and the Stage 1 upgrade will commence on Monday 14 March. It is expected that the Baths will remain closed until mid-2023.

## **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 ocean view be maintained?**

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

## **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. City of Newcastle will consider manually replacing fresh sand in the pool following its annual clean depending on forecast swell and weather conditions.

### **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.

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.

### **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.

**Has a Review of Environmental Factors been completed for the site?**

Yes. City of Newcastle commissioned GHD to prepare a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) in 2021, after it was assessed that the proposed activity was subject to the provisions of Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). The purpose of the REF is to outline the proposed works to be undertaken, identify all environmental impacts and mitigation measures and to minimise impacts to the site during the construction phase.

City of Newcastle have assessed to the fullest extent possible all matters affecting, or likely to affect, the environment as a result of the construction of the Stage 1 work. City of Newcastle have reviewed the recommendations outlined in the REF and have provided the required information to the construction contractor for their action.

City of Newcastle is obliged to ensure that the recommendations outlined in the REF are addressed by the construction contractor, during the construction of the proposed works.

### **How has the community been engaged in the design process for the upgrade of Newcastle Ocean Baths?**

Over summer 2019/2020, City of Newcastle carried out a range of engagement activities with the community to better understand how they use and value the Ocean Baths, and to gain insight into future improvements.

The following activities were carried out from 22 November 2019 to 1 March 2020:

- Online ideas wall to allow for engagement via ideas boards. A total of 1094 comments or ideas were submitted on the walls by 354 people
- 898 telephone (poll) surveys
- 218 intercept (face-to-face) surveys
- 4,400+ visits were recorded to the Baths' dedicated 'Have Your Say' web pages.

In 2020 and 2021, we continued to seek community input on various aspects of the Newcastle Ocean Baths upgrade through the [Newcastle Ocean Baths Community Reference Group](#). This group was formed to help the planning process for the revitalisation of the Baths through discussions and co-design workshops. The CRG had the opportunity to review and have input into three rounds of designs including preliminary designs, concept designs and final designs for the Stage 1 upgrade. D-2023

### **How long will the Stage 1 construction take?**

City of Newcastle has worked closely with the contractor on a plan to limit disruption to users, including keeping the Baths open through the 2021-2022 summer season. It is expected that the Stage 1 work will be completed by mid-2023 and the ocean baths will remain closed during this time.

### **What does Stage 2 of Newcastle Ocean Baths revitalisation involve?**

The Stage 2 upgrade of Newcastle Ocean Baths will focus on the pavilion and surrounding public areas. This phase is subject to community consultation which is expected to start this year.