

# Newcastle Ocean Baths Revitalisation

## Frequently asked questions

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City of  
Newcastle

### Redevelopment of the Baths

#### Why is City of Newcastle redeveloping the Newcastle Ocean Baths and pavilions?

Newcastle Ocean Baths were opened in 1922 and, due to their ageing condition, require a substantial upgrade. The harsh coastal environment has degraded the various materials that make up the pavilion, pools and promenade, which means the structural integrity is compromised. Previous methods to extend the life of the structural steel, including cathodic protection (preventing rust), have slowed the decay; however, the Baths site will continue to degrade due to the age of the structures. Significant work is needed now to allow ongoing use of the Baths for decades to come.

Some components of the buildings have degraded so much that sections closed. The bulk of the northern pavilion at Newcastle Ocean Baths has been deconstructed, and upstairs areas in the central and southern pavilions have been closed for some years.

#### Will the City's redevelopment look like the designs in the original Expression of Interest (EOI)?

The images in the 2019 EOI document were an artist's impression of Newcastle Ocean Baths and did not represent potential EOI proposals or the final design. New concept designs will be developed with extensive input from the [Newcastle Ocean Baths Community Reference Group](#) (CRG). These concept designs will also be available for broad community feedback, before being finalised.

#### Will Newcastle Ocean Baths' façade be knocked down?

City of Newcastle has committed to retaining the aesthetic of the Inter-war Striped Classical / Art Deco facade of the Newcastle Ocean Baths. Any upgrades to the site must consider heritage controls, as the Baths are listed as a local heritage item in the Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP) and is located within the Newcastle East Heritage Conservation Area.

#### What does 'local heritage item' mean and what protections does it afford the baths, facade, structures or blue-stepped bleachers?

The Newcastle Ocean Baths is an item of local significance and listed in the LEP 2012. This means that the planning pathway will need to consider the heritage values in relation to the existing and proposed site redevelopment. Typically, heritage consultant advice is given during the design process, documented in a Statement of Heritage Impact and issued as part of the approval process.

#### How much of this space will be accessible to the public?

The public will continue to have free access to the Baths, as well as access to toilet, change and community facilities. The public domain will also remain accessible and free. During construction, some areas will be temporarily closed to allow work to be carried out safely.

## Funding

### What has been spent on the Baths in recent years?

The total cost attributed to the Baths site is approximately \$500,000/year since January 2016 to March 2020. This includes:

- Repairs to ensure safety for users, such as demolition of unsafe areas of the Northern Pavilion in 2017.
- Operational costs including maintenance work, which will continue to be carried out until the Baths are renewed. This includes monitoring of the cathodic protection system installed as a means of slowing saltwater penetration damage to the pavilion walls.

### What is the budget for renewal of the Baths?

The Newcastle Ocean Baths revitalisation project is estimated to be around \$20 million. This estimate is a guide only as project scope is yet to be finalised, with input from the CRG. All City of Newcastle projects are delivered in our capital works program and while the City has committed to funding the upgrade in full, it will also review any potential alternative funding option (i.e. grants) for the project.

### Is grant funding available?

The City has reviewed and is continuing to monitor grant source funding options. No opportunities are currently available but potential funding sources include:

Crown Reserves Improvement Fund – next funding round is delayed and under review given the COVID-19 pandemic; prior to this, projects must be completed within 12 months; grants would only cover partial aspects of the project.

NSW Infrastructure Grant – Clubgrants Category 3 Fund – limited to \$300,000; project needs a DA or written exemption; and the project must be completed within two years. The next funding round is under review due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

NSW OEH Heritage Activation & Strategic Grant Funds – next funding round expected to be called in 2020/21. Grants previously were for less than \$100,000 and favourable for State listed heritage items rather than local items.

## Commercial opportunities

### Will there be commercial operation in the space?

The project scope is being developed with CRG input, however, the inclusion of a kiosk / café and community spaces are to be reviewed as part of the project. The provision of commercial uses would provide revenue directly back into coastal projects as outlined in the [Newcastle Coastal Plan of Management 2015](#).

### Are there options to have external business providers who do not have permanent facilities? i.e. can mobile vendors be considered?

It could be possible, but as the Baths are on community land, this does not currently fall within City of Newcastle guidelines. Refer to the [Mobile Food Vending Vehicle](#) guide for current information surrounding this type of food and drink service.

## Scope of work

### What are the immediate, short-term and long-term priorities at the Baths?

Immediate priorities include ongoing maintenance to ensure safety for users and to allow continued community use of the site.

The overall project goal is to provide a revitalised Baths site for the community to enjoy over the next 50+ years. Addressing safety and accessibility issues for the pools and promenades is a key priority.

Other priorities, particularly for the pavilions, are being developed with CRG and broader community input. We will provide updates to the community throughout the planning process.

### **What is included in the project scope?**

Project scope is being developed with CRG input including the following negotiable community spaces for the pavilions: change rooms, showers and toilets, kiosk / café and community space. The location, size, type, and quantity are to be agreed. Non-negotiable functional spaces include patrol room and storage, first aid, beach and pool cleaner rooms, bin store, electrical room, and a pump room / plant room.

External negotiable spaces include hot and cold showers, additional bleachers, access, public seating, lighting, water points for drinking, taps for cleaning, shade / shelters, and bicycle racks.

### **Will the redevelopment include car parking?**

Due to the existing restraints on the site it is not possible to increase parking spaces.

### **What changes will be made to the current number of toilets, showers and changerooms?**

Male, female and accessible toilets, change and shower facilities will be scoped into the plans with the layout and numbers to be agreed. The City will be working closely with the CRG on the design of the upgraded facilities.

### **Are the diving blocks in scope?**

Yes. The diving blocks are part of the overall upgrade work to the pools and promenades. The work will be a similar standard to the Merewether Ocean Baths upgrades in 2014.

### **Are the concrete seats, chairs and shelters near the Canoe Pool in scope?**

The boundary of the project area is the retaining wall between the Baths and the Canoe Pool. The 'four-seasons' shelters are included. Refer to the [Site Plan](#) for the proposed extent of works.

### **How will rising sea levels be factored into planning?**

The City will consider coastal hazards as outlined in the [Coastal Zone Management Plan 2018](#), including issues with wave run-up and inundation.

CN will complete a site-specific wave over topping study to establish pavilion reduced levels, provide guidance on material choices, room locations and details for future building protection.

## **Community engagement**

### **What role will the community have in the renewal of the Baths?**

The Community Reference Group's (CRG) role is to contribute to the planning of facilities that balance the needs of all users of the Baths and inform the broader community throughout the process. The City will work closely with the CRG to develop concept designs for the pavilions at the Baths.

We will take the concept designs to the broader community to ensure they align with expectations and to seek feedback potential improvements.

After this extensive community engagement, the preferred concept design will be placed on public exhibition before being finalised.

### **How can I have my say?**

The CRG is one of the ways we're engaging with our community on this important renewal project. The City will continue to invite the broad community to have their say at key times on the project. To keep up to date on the progress of the project, please visit our [Have Your Say](#) web page.