

Media release

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Newcastle Ocean Baths pool designs finalised

City of Newcastle has called for construction tenders for the first stage of Newcastle Ocean Baths' revitalisation including the pools and lower promenade.

'Stage 1' of the upgrade project addresses key safety, accessibility and water-quality issues that have been identified through detailed community engagement and engineering advice.

As part of the upgrade, the iconic bleacher seating will be retained, the boardwalk will be renewed, and a new pump station installed that can replace the water of the baths within six hours, improving water quality. The undulating rock bottom of the pool will be capped with concrete to improve safety and water quality, and sand will continue to build up on the floor by the same processes as today.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said the community engagement had been key to finalising the designs for Stage 1, with feedback shaping elements such as the location of ramp access, replacement of art-deco circular stairs, and boardwalk material.

"The final design for Stage 1 captures what the community told us was important to them, and we've worked with our expert consultants to also ensure the design meets accessibility, safety and health requirements," Cr Nelmes said.

"This is a generational investment in the Newcastle Ocean Baths, which will celebrate its 100th birthday next year, which is why City of Newcastle have meticulously worked with both the community and experts to ensure what's delivered meets the needs of current and future users.

"I'd like to thank everyone who has shared feedback to date and especially our Community Reference Group who have helped shape a range of upgraded features including access ramps, the appearance of the lifeguard lookout, how to incorporate the iconic circular stairs, and even materials we use for railings and the boardwalk."

City of Newcastle Acting Director of Infrastructure and Property, Joanne Rigby, said the project team would work with preferred tenderers to ensure overall disruption to Baths users was limited.

"Newcastle Ocean Baths is an important community asset enjoyed by a range of users ranging from tourists, families, lap swimmers and those committed to a daily dip," Ms Rigby said.

"We're asking tenderers 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."

The Stage 1 final designs also deliver significant improvements for people with a disability or low mobility. The design includes ramp access and improved handrail support into the pool and the route from a vehicle at the entrance to the facility and down into the pool has also been considered.

Chair, Hunter Regional Committee of the National Trust, Mark Metrikas, said heritage had been considered through the design process.

"I was actually delighted that the circa 1937 art deco bleachers and 1948 boardwalk are retained, and in the case of the boardwalk, improved," Mr Metrikas said.

"It took a bit of work to get the design right to retain these important elements and we've worked alongside City of Newcastle to provide that input."

City of Newcastle is committed to funding the renewal of Newcastle Ocean Baths in full and will direct the \$9.5 million recovered from the sale of the Frederick Ash Building to the project. The sale was made possible through the relocation of the City's Administration Centre to its new premises in Newcastle West in October 2019. Stage 1 of the Newcastle Ocean Baths upgrade is proudly funded by the NSW Government in association with City of Newcastle.