

SPECIAL EDITION 2021

City News



City of
Newcastle



A guide to your City of Newcastle
Serving You Better



Message from the Lord Mayor

City of Newcastle has been serving the community since 8 June 1859, as one of the first local councils created in New South Wales.

While our location and ways of working have evolved over time, we have remained committed to providing the best public facilities and community services for our residents.

Our recent move to the City Administration Centre at 12 Stewart Avenue, Newcastle West from the Roundhouse, which was opened in 1977, was the most significant modernisation of our operations in more than 40 years.

Known as project 'City Change' to reflect its role in the strategic westward move of Newcastle's CBD, it has resulted in a better work environment, more efficient systems, greater flexibility and improved staff culture, and is providing an improved service for residents and ratepayers.

Four projects have been delivered as part of the move to 12 Stewart Avenue, including office space for our administrative staff, a brand new, state-of-the-art Digital Library, the new Council Chamber, and the purpose-built Local Emergency Operations Centre.

This is designed to provide the best value to our residents and a seamless experience for all community members, whether you need to enquire about a development application, speak with a member of the Customer Service team or access the hundreds of thousands of items in the City's e-Library catalogue.

We look forward to welcoming you into our space in the heart of the emerging CBD in Newcastle West as we continue to work to serve you better, now and in the future.

Nuatali Nelmes,
Lord Mayor of Newcastle

New era of serving community

City of Newcastle has completed its transition to Newcastle West with a new and improved Customer Service Centre located on Level 1 of the City Administration Centre (CAC) at 12 Stewart Avenue.

We've moved from a traditional reception and counter model to a concierge service with minimal counter space, allowing our team to engage side-by-side with our community, visitors and ratepayers.

The concierge is the face of City of Newcastle, greeting all those who enter the space, making them feel welcome and determining how they can best assist.

This concept is one of many that reflects our move towards enhancing the experience our ratepayers have when interacting with our staff and signals a shift in culture that is focused on respect and understanding.

We encourage visitors to have their say on their service experience or digital library experience through a new visitor feedback kiosk.

While our new CAC sits at the heart of our commitment to serve our community better, it's not the only way we are working to serve our community better.

Our workplace and new ways of working align with our vision to become a Smart City that utilises technology to improve collaboration, communication and productivity, with a range of initiatives to make life easier.

Community members with simple requests for help have been making the most of the chat option on our website, saving themselves a visit to our CAC or the need for a phone call with staff. This has been particularly well utilised throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The City of Newcastle App has also been designed to increase digital communication with residents and visitors.

The mobile phone App is your one-stop-shop for the latest news and information on city services and events, plus handy tips on where to eat, stay, shop and play.

You can use the App to make Newcastle an even better place to live, work and visit by reporting non-urgent issues such as graffiti, fallen trees or if our facilities are broken or damaged.

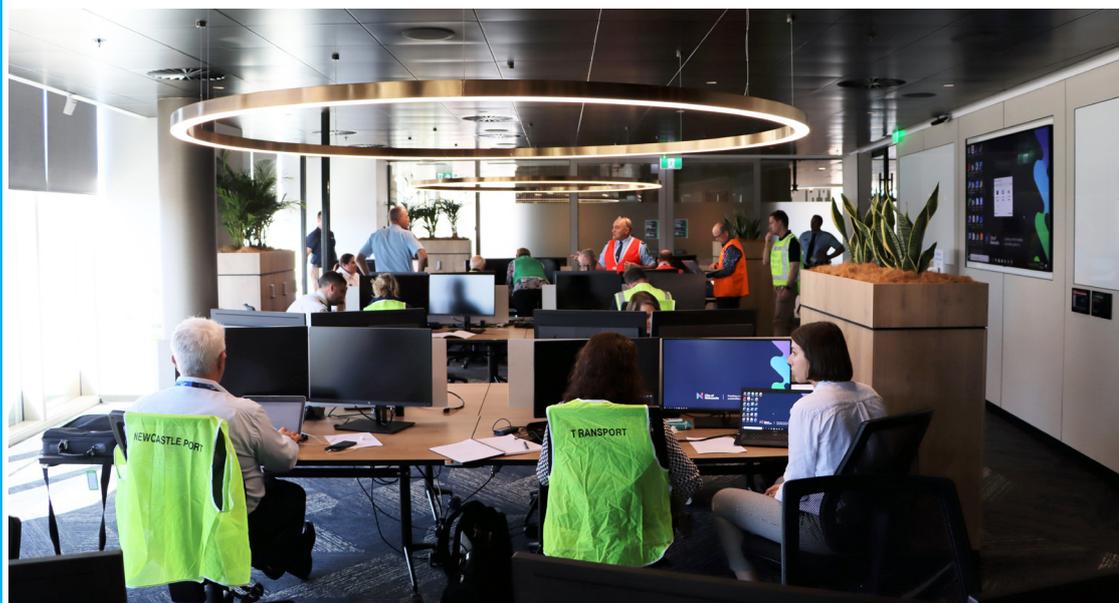
Our digital focus is also changing ratepayer communications. We've just launched an online portal where ratepayers can access current rates notices or change their email address at any time.

Receiving your rates notices electronically rather than through the post is not only convenient, it's also a win for the environment by reducing paper usage, while the money saved on our postage costs is being re-invested into other services and projects. Around 11,300 ratepayers, or 16 per cent of all properties, are already receiving their rates via email, which translates into a \$45,000 annual saving to be reinvested in essential services. To receive your rates by email simply go to our website and register.

The process of accessing information about developments happening across Newcastle has also been simplified online via an interactive aerial map on our website.

The map makes it easy to access information about current development applications, modifications, reviews and complying development certificates, as well as all development determinations made in the past 12 months.

Development locations are marked on a Google Earth-style map with a pin showing properties, street names, suburbs and local landmarks.





Fit for purpose in Newcastle West

Our Council Chamber has moved west with our Administrative buildings over the past 160 years as our City has continued to grow. The original Council Chamber was located at Watt Street, Newcastle East before moving to the City Hall in 1929.

Relocating to 12 Stewart Avenue signals a new era for City of Newcastle. This decision is in keeping with the city's own long held plans and also aligns with NSW Government priorities to shift the CBD west as part of the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan, it also enabled hundreds of staff who had been spread across three separate buildings and 13 floors to be working together under the one roof.

Prior to the move, more than 450 of our staff were working across the 42-year-old Roundhouse, the 114-year-old Frederick Ash Building and the 90-year-old City Hall.

In contrast, our new fit-for-purpose office features modern amenities, a flexible multi-purpose design, community areas and links to the surrounding green spaces.

The fit-out provided staff with dedicated kitchen and dining facilities for the first time, as well as meeting rooms to encourage better communication and collaborative decision-making.

All these elements are working together to encourage greater connectivity and create an environment in which staff can deliver better outcomes for our community.

The sale of properties, which were no longer fit for purpose, including the Roundhouse and Frederick Ash Building allowed us to direct significantly more funds into projects that benefit the community while also paving the way for the revitalisation of the Civic Cultural precinct.

Relocating our City Administration Centre to Newcastle West wasn't a decision made lightly. But the choice was clear when it came to either investing in modernising our organisation or pouring money into bringing our former facilities, which had a combined age of 140 years, up to standard.

Coordinating an emergency response

Newcastle is better placed to respond to natural disasters following the establishment of a purpose-built Local Emergency Operations Centre (LEOC).

Located on the top floor of our City Administration Centre, the new LEOC replaces the 30-year-old facility at Tighes Hill, which no longer complies with modern standards.

The LEOC's technology and flexible design provide a dedicated space where City of Newcastle can work with emergency services including Police, SES, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Ambulance and others to deliver a coordinated response to natural disasters and other incidents.

Features include modern and accessible screens with live-stream capabilities; a 16-seat conferencing facility with wireless presentation and TV connectivity for live news coverage, weather and traffic updates; a 32-seat room and the ability to create breakaway spaces; as well as a commercial kitchen capable of providing meals for

critical emergency services personnel in the event of a city-wide blackout.

The co-location of the LEOC on the sixth floor of our CAC provides this comprehensive range of amenities and support facilities in a central location, with on-site access to backup power via two diesel-powered generators.

The new LEOC has been successfully trialled with emergency services and will provide what could ultimately be lifesaving improvements to how we respond to major incidents and natural disasters.



PROJECT 1
12 STEWART AVENUE MOVE: **\$8,389,994**

Project Management (APP) \$273,840

Design (Inc. design and cost consultancies, certification and approvals) \$363,306

Staff relocation \$45,384

Construction (Inc. Preliminaries and Margin) \$8,061,664

Carpet rebate under lease terms -\$354,200

PROJECT 2
LOCAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE: **\$2,173,982**

Project Management (APP) \$154,830

Design (Inc. design and cost consultancies, certification and approvals) \$167,924

Construction (Inc. Preliminaries and Margin) \$1,851,228

PROJECT 3
DIGITAL LIBRARY: **\$3,267,456**

Project Management (APP) \$248,483

Design (Inc. design and cost consultancies, certification and approvals) \$261,215

Construction (Inc. Preliminaries and Margin) \$2,757,767

PROJECT 4
COUNCIL CHAMBER: **\$1,041,824**

Project Management (APP) \$83,365

Design (Inc. design and cost consultancies, certification and approvals) \$74,633

Construction (Inc. Preliminaries and Margin) \$883,826

CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION (GRAPHITE PROJECTS) FOR ALL FOUR PROJECTS, INCLUDING SIGNAGE, FLAGPOLES ETC: **\$2,749,827**



Modern Chamber on the move

The City Administration Centre makes the best use of every piece of space and its modern design to enable staff to meet the growing demands of our ever-evolving city.

The Digital Library, co-located with our Customer Service Centre on level one, can be easily packed away to allow the space to double as the Council Chamber when meetings occur twice each month.

The Chamber itself was subsequently designed to be moved into storage so the space can be used by the library and community when meetings are not taking place.

We've already seen some great community events in the space, including a series of lectures hosted by the Newcastle University of the Third Age (U3A) who were able to utilise modern, hybrid technology to hold their events in a COVIDsafe way.

The new modern chamber is equipped with technology that allows for the community to directly participate in Council meetings without the need to leave their home. This technology is not available in the preserved heritage chambers at City Hall.

Remote participants are visible and audible to the Chamber participants on two large ceiling-mounted screens and the speaker system installed in the chamber, while community members can tune in to the livestream on our website.

While the change of meeting location ushers in a new era for us, our historic 90-year-old City Hall will continue to be used by the community.

Our former Council chamber will be opened to the public, community groups and still used for Council committee meetings.

We are developing programs that further promote access to the chamber and civic spaces, including information and education about our civic history and iconic City Hall building.



Transforming our city centre

Sitting on the corner of Hunter Street and Stewart Avenue, just a short walk from the Newcastle Interchange, our new workplace is conveniently located in the West End of Newcastle.

This area is rapidly transforming into Newcastle's new CBD, with various large organisations, such as the Newcastle Herald and NSW Government offices, relocating to this emerging precinct.

We're excited to be part of this shift, which is not only revitalising the western reaches of the city centre but is also allowing new life to be injected into our cultural centre and some of our most treasured community facilities.

Our relocation paved the way for the sale of our former headquarters, the iconic Brutalist building known as the Roundhouse. Securing a price of \$16.5 million, 22 per cent above its market valuation, the proceeds are going directly towards our record \$116 million program of upgrading and improving key community assets.

Meanwhile, the Roundhouse has become symbolic of the changing face of Newcastle with its transformation into the city's first luxury five-star hotel by new owners, Crystalbrook Collection, which will open in early 2021.

Ideally located at the heart of the Civic precinct, the hotel is surrounded by Newcastle's cultural landmarks including the State Heritage-listed Civic Theatre and City Hall, Wheeler Place, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle Library and the nearby Visitor Information Centre and Newcastle Museum.

The \$25 million Kingsley Hotel project is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the investment this sale will inject into the community, with the longer-term effects leading to increased visitation and expenditure by tourists.

The Newcastle Ocean Baths is also benefitting from the multimillion-dollar sale of three other Civic precinct properties including the Frederick Ash Building, which was vacated by our staff as part of the Stewart Avenue move.

The \$9.5 million proceeds are being used to part fund the much-needed restoration of the Newcastle Ocean Baths, with the first stage upgrade to the pools and lower promenade starting next year.

With the Frederick Ash Building likely to be converted to tourist accommodation, the sale also allows for the preservation and adaptive reuse of this historic architectural gem while driving further activation in the Civic precinct.

Multipurpose facilities a Hub for workplace collaboration

One of the main drivers when designing our new City Administration Centre was to create a modern work environment our staff would be proud of.

Featuring more efficient systems and greater workplace flexibility, our new CAC enhances collaboration, communication and workplace health and wellbeing.

The Level 6 staff kitchen and outdoor rooftop terrace known as 'The Hub' typifies how these elements have been brought together in one space.

The bright, open kitchen, dining area and outdoor terrace encourage staff to take a break away from their traditional working environment to meet up with colleagues for coffee or lunch, collaborate on projects or just enjoy the fresh air, sunshine and native plants without having to leave the building.

Interested in becoming a member of our team?

Visit the Careers page on our website, newcastle.nsw.gov.au/careers, to keep track of all the latest job opportunities.

The outdoor terrace offers a variety of seating with access to Wi-Fi, audio and power to allow for working outdoors, which research has shown has a range of health and wellbeing benefits.

Senior Ranger Lauren Whitmore said the new CAC provides a flexible, comfortable environment that is fantastic to work in, with real benefits for her productivity, health and wellbeing.

"The new space has given my team and I the opportunity to be flexible between work environments," she said.

"We don't have to sit at a desk in a cubicle all day, the floor space includes quiet zones to focus or the Hub to relax and break out.

"We feel comfortable in the physical work settings, especially with the new sit and stand desks and ergonomic seating and the Hub is an amazing space that I look forward to using each day. There was nothing at all like it at the Roundhouse."



Involving the community in decision-making is at the heart of what we do.

That's why we regularly seek opinions and ideas from the community across a range of topics from parks, playgrounds, beaches and ocean baths, to events, heritage, climate action, waste management and more.



Library of the future

Our Customer Service Centre at 12 Stewart Avenue is co-located with the most digitally advanced library in NSW.

The Digital Library offers the community access to state-of-the-art digital technologies including an industrial-grade 3D printer, a programmable robot, podcasting studio and only the second digital multimedia 'Magic Box' anywhere in the world, which provides a hands-free way of reading the more than 400,000 items in our Heritage Collections, including around 1,500 rare books.

The Digital Library also breaks new ground in terms of the collection on offer. Rather than offer up a single copy of every book as done

in a traditional library, it stocks up to 10 copies of the latest and most popular books, CDs and DVDs. Older books can be ordered and delivered to the Digital Library for pick-up.

The process of borrowing and returning an item is fully automated, allowing library staff to dedicate time to enabling digital learning rather than being behind a desk.

Large touch screens offer digitised copies of more than 6,000 newspapers and magazines from 123 countries, while tablets and personal computers are available free of charge, as well as free Wi-Fi and online games inspired by literary classics.

Lots of great items from Newcastle Libraries' e-collection are also available for download, enabling people to read books from their phones or tablets rather than the traditional approach of borrowing a physical book.

The Digital Library forms part of our unanimously supported 2019-2029 Library Strategy to create contemporary and connected library facilities to support lifelong learning.

Funding of more than \$2 million towards the cost of the project was provided from the 2015 sale of the former Newcastle School of Arts, which was dedicated to be used for a new library.

This information is used to help shape our strategies, plans and projects in line with community wants and needs.

In the past year we've heard from more than 12,500 community members across 20-plus projects including a new off-leash dog area, our flagship arts festival New Annual, our disability inclusion action plan and our Foreshore masterplan.

We currently have several projects open for your feedback, but the easiest way for you to keep up-to-date and have your say on topics that matter to you is by joining our community panel.

Visit newcastle.nsw.gov.au/yoursay for more information or hear all about our engagement projects on our dedicated Newcastle Have Your Say Facebook group.

