

8 July 2020

# **Newcastle Ocean Baths**

## **Community Reference Group**

**Focus group on change facilities  
Summary report**



**City of  
Newcastle**

This report outlines discussions from an online focus group on change facilities at Newcastle Ocean Baths, held with community reference group (CRG) members on Wednesday 8 July 2020 via Zoom.

Participants included:

Peter Wickham, Friends of the Newcastle Ocean Baths

Mark Metrikas, National Trust

Joseph Popov, Access Advisory Committee representative

Karen Read, Newcastle East Residents Group

Paul Scott, community member

Rod See, community member

Jeremy Landers, community member

David Henderson, community member

Peter Shields, community member

Ross Taggart, community member

Natalie D'Arcy, CN Community Engagement Coordinator (Facilitator)

Kristy Simpson, CN Senior Project Planner (Co-facilitator)

Matthew Blandford, CN Senior Project Planner (Observer)

Meaghan Bennett, CN Project Planning Coordinator (Observer)

Nick Kaiser, CN Media & Stakeholder Relations Manager (Observer)

The session was an opportunity for CRG members to share their views and discuss the change facilities at a restored or renewed Newcastle Ocean Baths site.

The purpose of the focus group was to discuss and expand on previous community engagement findings where we saw comments about maintaining the open-amenity of the change facilities, a call for more facilities including family and baby change areas, improvements to the facilities, and accessibility improvements.

The focus group broadly followed the discussion guide included in Appendix I. Notes were captured via an online whiteboard (Miro) and the session was recorded.

The whiteboards and other notes taken during the focus group are included in this report. Additional information/correspondence received from focus group participants after the session are included in Appendix II.

## Summary - What we heard about change facilities

### Broad community feedback

- General agreement that items raised in broad community feedback represent views of the CRG
- Other items raised included:
  - Ensuring lifeguards are consulted
  - Maintaining individual cubicles
  - Need for a user demand or recreation demand survey
  - Options for technology and hygiene

### Open amenity

- The open amenity of the change facilities is valued for:
  - Hygiene / disease prevention including ventilation, sunlight and not having to touch doors
  - Mental wellbeing benefits including sense of community and connection
  - Historical and cultural value, including being part of the 'beach experience'
  - Security
  - Low maintenance requirements and operational costs
  - All values were seen as important and interdependent.
- Key concerns about the open amenity include:
  - Drones
  - Accessibility
  - Privacy and security
- The open areas are used for getting changed and social gathering. Acknowledged need to be able to take children into a separate space or entry and not into the communal open space area.
- Open areas work well for school groups, though private facilities also required for some users.
- Number of outdoor showers appears sufficient, used by different users and showering behaviour is seasonal

### Change facility essentials

- Lockers, but need to be accessible and both inside and outside of change area
- Private / individual cubicles need to be maintained
- Long timber benches
- Some roofing to be maintained to keep belongings dry, and for the shade it provides
- Handrails and grab rails in all facilities

### Location and size

- Preference for previous layout with female change facilities in northern pavilion
- Futureproof the baths for population growth and increased visitation

### Additional facilities

- Accommodate a range of people where an open space may not be suitable including accessibility, religious reasons, medical reasons, and families
- External access required
- These facilities could be multifunction/shared, but need to ensure those who need them can access them.

## Focus group – whiteboards and notes.

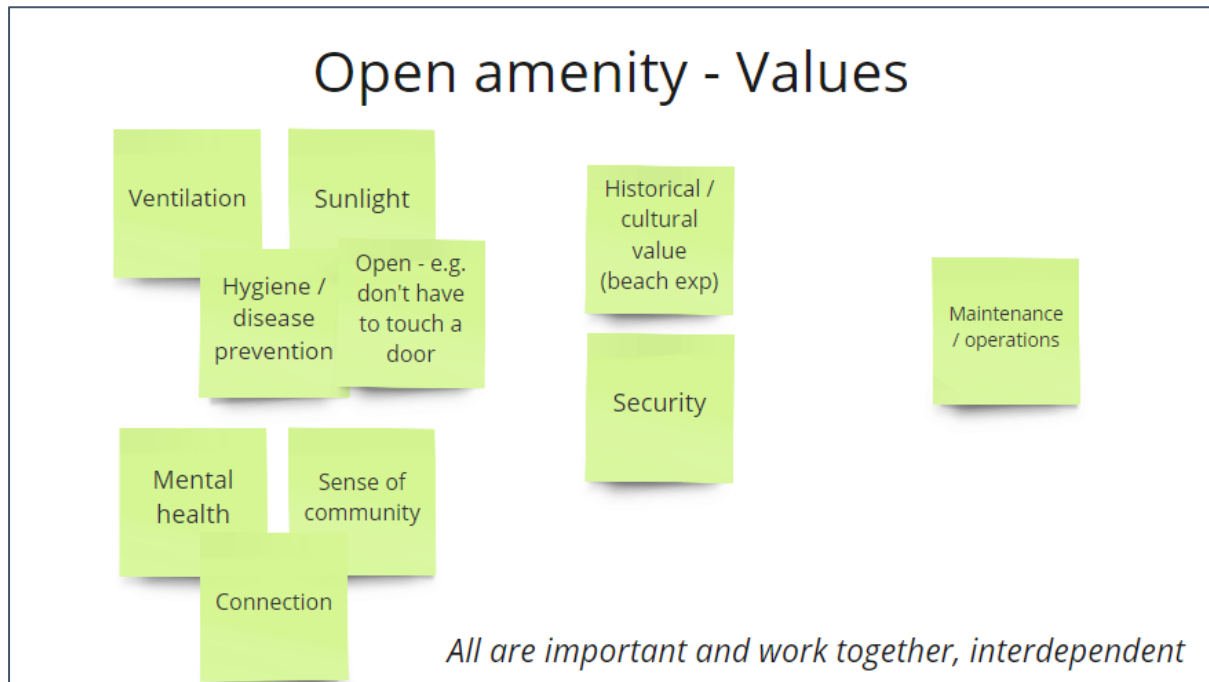
### What we heard from the broad community ....

#### Support to improve the existing facilities e.g. change rooms



#### Additional / expanded responses to the Miro whiteboard

- Can we improve or enlarge the size of the changerooms?
- Lifeguards need a view of the people entering and exiting the changerooms – often note involvement with the police with various matters at the Baths
- Want to retain some individual cubicles inside the change rooms for people who require privacy inside the cubicles.
- Recreational demand survey requested to be completed if not done to determine floor space requirements based on demands of the site – CN to come back to the CRG on the status / direction of this
- Use of technology in the upgrades to ensure the project is updated and modernised to include the latest technologies – such as items for hygiene, product specifications



### Additional / expanded responses to the Miro whiteboard

- Great that you don't have to touch a door to get into and out of the facility – especially given COVID 19
- Ventilation – sunlight – hygiene – seen as a high priority
- Mental health – sense of community - also seen as a high priority
- Noted that all the items are valued – while some have more important than others, some have stronger links and connections, they are all interdependent on each to make it the community place it is today. A diagram which was circular would help to depict how these items are all interlinked.

## Open amenity - Issues

Drones

Accessibility

Privacy /  
security

### Additional / expanded responses to the Miro whiteboard

- Recent drone incidents noted, not an isolated incident

## Open amenity - uses

Getting  
changed

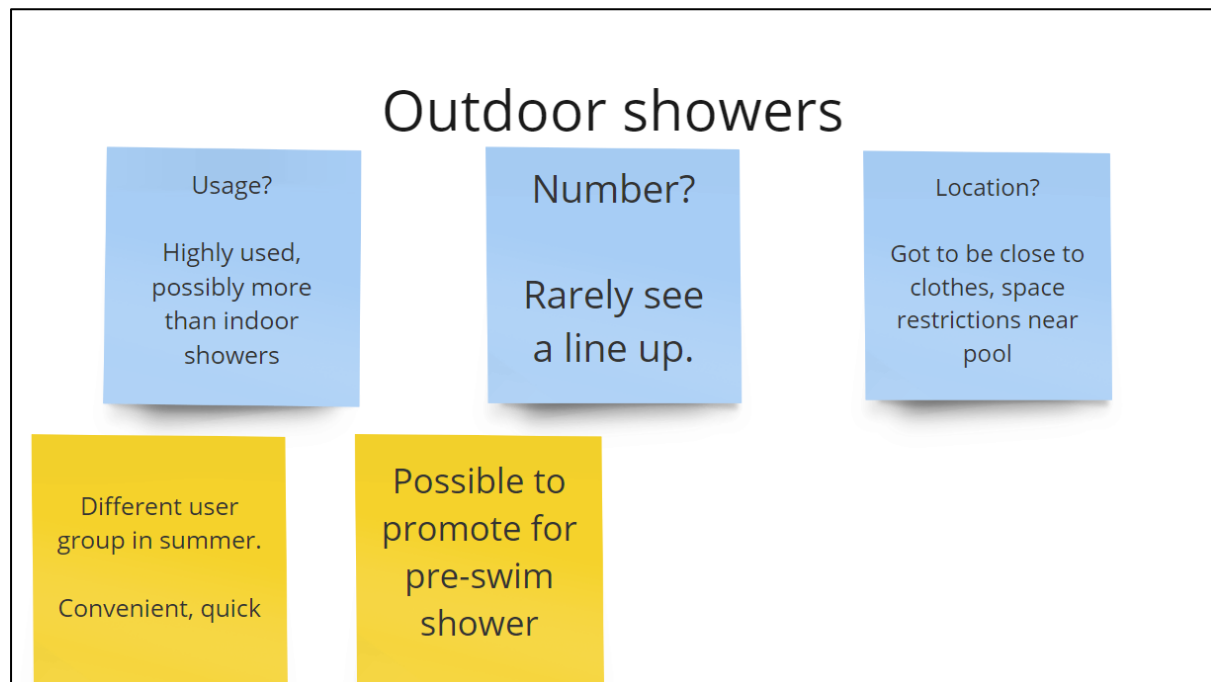
Social  
gathering

Anything  
else??

Cubicles?  
Mens - open air used, and cubicles  
Open areas used by families - long  
benches work well. Excursions - good  
area to address students. Needs internal  
cubicles (teen girls).  
Accessibility - school group example.

### Additional / expanded responses to the Miro whiteboard

- Uses include getting changed and for social gathering
- Private cubicles are noted as being required to be accessed from the outside
- Men's change facilities noted as being highly used in the open-air section. Acknowledged the need to be able to take kids into a separate space or entry and not into the communal open space area
- Open areas in the women's change facility are a highly used space. Alternate view with the women's in that the open area is an easy space for mums to change their kids as it offers an open / wide space and visual opportunity for keeping an eye on your children.
- For excursions the change rooms are a great place for kids to get changed, gather around bench seats and talk to them there.
- Noted there is still a need to have internal cubicles – used by teenage girls. Noted the older people get the less inhibited they are and therefore use the open part of the change room.
- Nobbys upgrades noted as not good for groups. Noted that a school teacher can't visit anymore with school children who have autism, due to the individual toilet cubicle layout. Should be able to bring kids with disabilities into the open change room areas.



Additional / expanded responses to the Miro whiteboard

- Outdoor showers are highly used and noted that people use the outdoor showers more than the indoor showers in the summer. In the winter it is the other way around with the internal hot showers preferred for use.
- There are enough showers provided and rarely a line up. There are different user groups in summer with people often just wanting a quick rinse off and therefore use the external showers more. There are four shower heads, so you must have a certain level of sociability when using them.
- Upper level is the correct place to have the outdoor showers
- In Europe people are encouraged to enter the pool after first showering which may be a good protocol given the current COVID 19 situation, but not so good in winter with a cold shower.



## Change facilities

### Keep

Hot water

Wooden benches

Lockers - possibly inside and outside of change area (own lock atm, investigate other options available - e.g. The Forum. Multiple areas. Keys not easy for people with disability - keypad preferable. Sentosa Island example). Accessibility. Some smaller lockers. 15 at the moment, can fill up in summer.

Private cubicles

### Add

Hooks

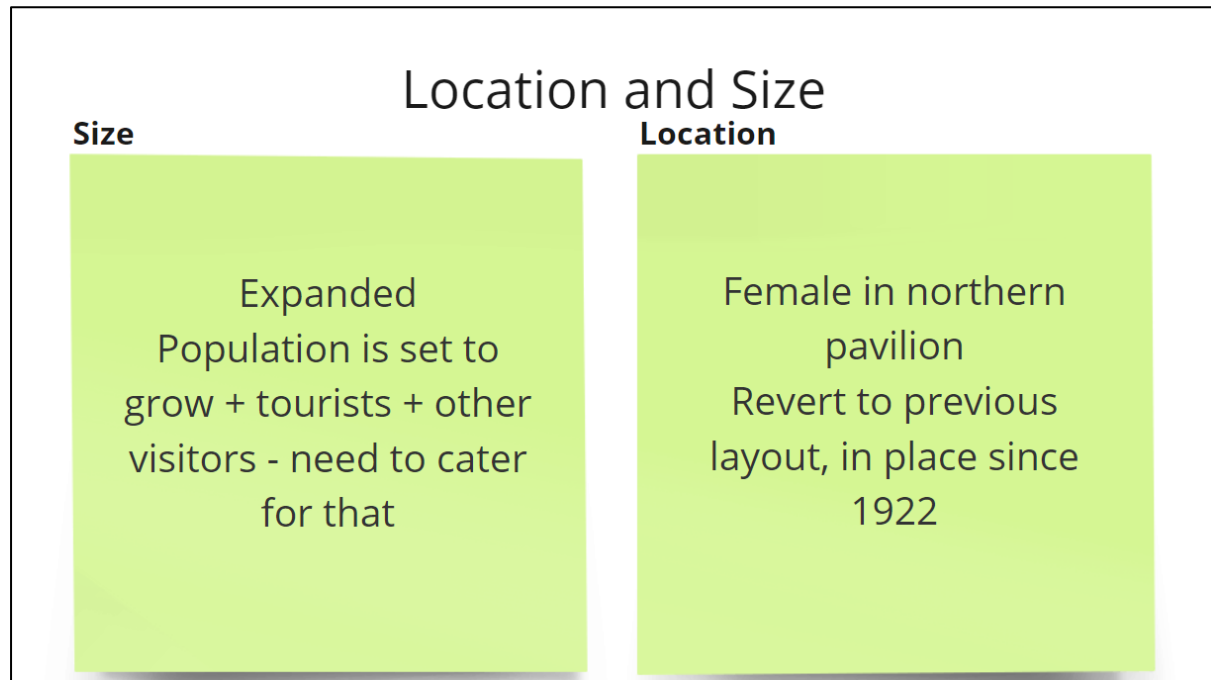
Section of roofing -  
dry and shade

Handrails and grab  
rails in all facilities

### Great examples

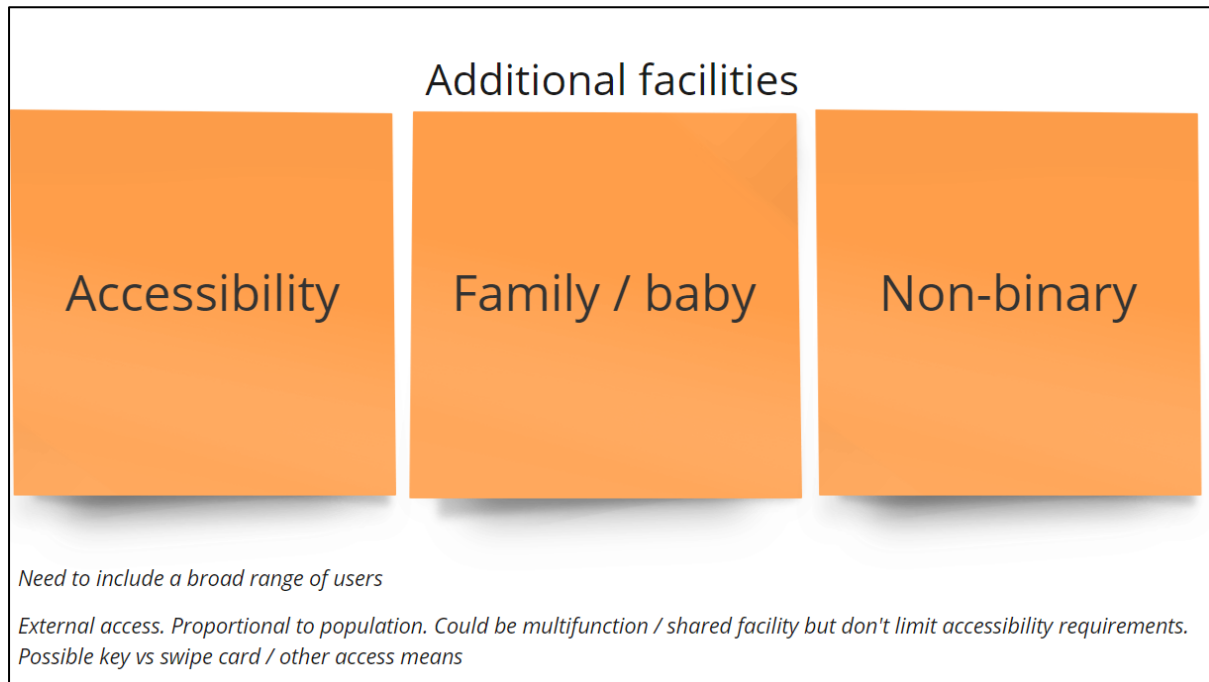
#### Additional / expanded responses to the Miro whiteboard

- Lockers both within the change area and external to the change area. Don't currently have disability access to lockers. Lockers for car keys and valuables would be best located externally.
- Currently 15 lockers in both male and female lockers and they can get filled up in summer. Outside lockers should be consider for durability such as made from a polyurethane, or other material subject to what is available.
- The current lockers rely on people bringing a lock which is not so good for non-regulars. As an example, at Bondi you drop a coin in and get a key, you can drop it off to the lifeguard / reception desk and collect when finished
- Suggestion that a room could be allocated for people with disabilities to access lockers
- Good example of a locker system in Singapore
- Section of roofing to the change rooms is essential to be able to put your towel and your belongings in to stay dry and have a shaded section for summer.
- Handrails and grabrails in all the showers and change rooms is essential as there are a lot of older users.
- No other excellent facility precedents stated in the meeting. Nobbys change facilities referenced throughout the session as having issues.



Additional / expanded responses to the Miro whiteboard

- NERG members felt like you had space back when the changerooms were over two space – south and northern pavilions
- Increased size of the change rooms could be justified with the local strategic planning policy increasing, increasing tourist buses, LGA growth plus important to take in whole hunter region as it a tourist destination



#### Additional / expanded responses to the Miro whiteboard

- External access required for all the additional facilities
- Accessibility should consider all sensory disabilities – colour-blind, fully blind through textures, colours, signage, other ways to make people comfortable in spaces.
- Ways to ensure accessible facilities are kept for those who need it through some type of locking systems – MLAK Key – photo idea – swipe card
- Privacy rooms for users such as – non-binary – family – religious reasons – people who don't want to use open facilities
- Good example of accessibility bathroom facilities at UoN NeWSpace – change table and a shower

Anything else about change facilities ...

Good accessibility bathrooms - NewSpace inc shower

Needs analysis done? / Recreational demand study

In regard to disability, multiple needs e.g. tactile, adequate signage. Take into account textures and colours for example.

Lifeguard visibility.

Additional / expanded responses to the Miro whiteboard

- Good example of accessibility bathroom facilities at UoN NewSpace – change table and a shower
- Nobbys accessible changeroom aspects are good with the hoist
- User needs analysis through a recreation demand study would be good to know if completed or possible

## **Appendix I – Discussion guide**

### **Community feedback to date**

- Overview of community feedback on change facilities – does this fit with your views?

### **Open amenity**

- What's valued about the open change facilities? Rank, if possible
- What are the concerns or issues about open facilities?
- What elements should be open?
- What is the open space used for?
- Where/how do outdoor showers fit in?

### **Change facility essentials**

- What needs to stay?
- What needs to be added?
- Great examples we should look at?

### **Location and size of change facilities**

- How big do the overall change facilities need to be? Are the current facilities too big or too small?
- Thoughts on where change facilities should be?

### **Additional facilities**

- Accessibility
- Family / baby change facilities
- Non-binary change facilities
- Separate entries or within broader change rooms?
- Views on numbers required?

### **Close**

## **Appendix II – Additional information received after the focus group**

### Email from Joseph Popov:

Further to the ocean baths changeroom focus group hosted last week, I have the following comments:

- in relation to covered areas, the disability bathroom and surrounding area would need covering due to dignity in changing on the changetables and needing protection of electric wheelchairs and hoist from the rain
- disability bathroom example at University of Newcastle is in University house on level 4.

Kind regards

Joseph

Email from Paula Thistleton

Dear Kristy,

My apologies to the Council and Reference Group, in not being able to attend the Focus Group meeting organised to discuss the change facilities at Newcastle Ocean Baths (NOB).

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my input into the Change Facilities at Newcastle Ocean Baths. I'm preferencing my comments based on the fact I have the privilege of being a regular single user of the Baths, and I'm drawing upon this experience and my experiences accessing other ocean baths in NSW, Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria to provide the following comments.

Generally I support the comments submitted by the Friends of NOB in the submission (29 June 2020). The rationale of hygiene, less maintenance and reduction of mould further supports the heritage value of keeping open air facilities - I really appreciated this insight from 'The Friends'.

Consequently in addressing the shortfalls of accessibility for the full diverse needs of our community it appears that a **separate facility** could/should be **purpose built**. The design should also take into account future proofing and provide surge capacity during summer months (closed during winter months when capacity is reduced). ie uni sex self cleaning toilets, change table facilities, hand held shower hoses

The current change facilities would benefit from an overall **refurbishment** to include:

Walk through to identify and **reduce hazards** including but not limited to:

- leveling of ground to reduce potential trips and falls;
- whilst levelling include 'tactile indicators' for people who are vision impaired
- rails in showers and toilets;
- floor grip in shower areas
- consideration of moving the power points from the hand wash area (even putting 'mirrors' on other side of washbasins)

**Future Proofing capacity (see comments above)**

- Harness solar/wave/wind energy to support continued access to hot showers and electricity for hair dryers
- relocate lockers (to increase capacity for shower or toilets)

Thank you again for the opportunity to make comment on the change facilities

Regards

Paula Thistleton

## **Restoration of Newcastle Ocean Baths June 29<sup>th</sup> 2020**

### **Friends of Newcastle Ocean Baths Incorporated (FONOB Inc) Submission to Community Reference Group re Change facilities (Changerooms).**

**Note:** The changerooms in reality are a surrounded outdoor area. There is good reason not to consider them a room. For the purpose of consistency and to avoid confusion in this document reference will be made to “change facilities” that incorporates toilets, showers, change areas within the open-air rectangular enclosures.

- **FONOB Inc position is that the open-air change facilities must remain. The current roofed area must not be extended.**

The change facilities that are located behind the pavilion façade are simple open-air structures. Historically these have enhanced the ocean beach nature of the bathing experience. During the last renovations these structures were dramatically reduced in size with the female change facilities moved adjacent to the male change facilities. Historically the male change facilities were provided for in the southern wing and the female were provided in the Northern wing.

#### **The Health Benefits of the open-air changerooms:**

In 1922 when the change facilities were designed and opened in November 1922 it was not long after the Pandemic of the Spanish Flu.

*“Spanish flu, the pandemic that killed between 50-100 million people worldwide, made landfall in Australia by 1919. About a third of all Australians were infected and nearly 15,000 people were dead in under a year...” (Dr Peter Hobbins University of Sydney).*

Other infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, scarlet fever, whooping cough, poliomyelitis and measles were also prevalent in the community.

*To quote Dr. Steven Fleming (Newcastle-based architectural theorist/historian: “Architecture of the interwar period responded to scientists' new understanding of infectious diseases and societal paranoia in the wake of the 1918 flu pandemic. The sunlit and*



*naturally ventilated change rooms at Newcastle's Ocean Baths are not just a nicety. They are the pavilion's reason for being....”*  
(November 28,2019)

### **Covid-19 Pandemic:**

The current Covid-19 Pandemic reinforces the need to preserve the open-air change facilities. Medical and scientific evidence acknowledges the reduced transmission of the Corona virus in open air environments compared to enclosed environments dependent on artificial management of air flow and absence of direct sunlight. Historical and recent studies suggest that natural ventilation offers protection from transmission of airborne pathogens. Sunlight boosts resistance to infection, with older studies suggesting potential roles for surface decontamination.

The current structure of the change facilities provides sunlight and cross breezes.

Closed environments have a tendency to be more confined thus aiding the spread of diseases such as Covid-19.

The Australia Chief Medical Officer has stated that the chance of transmissions is greatly reduced when people are outdoors which in turn makes the open-air change facilities at Newcastle much safer.

Social distancing is more easily achievable in the current change facilities. However, the current southern change facilities would not allow adequate social distancing when NOB gets large school groups, cruise passenger tour group, etc. Expected population increases will also impact on current spacing.

Expert opinion is that we should be prepared to live with the virus causing Covid-19 for a long time. CN plans for NOB should take this into account.

### **Mental Health benefits:**

There is ample evidence that swimming alone is beneficial for people's mental health. The environment where people swim is also important. Stress and anxiety are reduced. The Newcastle Ocean Baths open-air change facilities as stated earlier in this article have historically enhanced the ocean beach nature of the bathing experience. Open air environments are particularly good for positive wellbeing. The structure of the open-air change facilities encourages a

healthy socialisation beneficial for mental health. The rustic oceanic experience, shared communal and inclusive nature of the change facilities at Newcastle Ocean Baths cannot be understated.

### **Hygiene and Maintenance benefits of the open-air change facilities:**

Newcastle Ocean Baths open-air change facilities have maintenance/cleaning benefits. There is no need for mechanical ventilation, no requirement for heaters, mould is reduced, surfaces dry more quickly, they are easier to clean/hose out, there is less requirement for lighting in day light hours that would logically reduce power consumption and maintenance.

Enclosed change facilities can present multiple issues. FONOB Inc discussion with **Bondi Icebergs Club** reveals that their enclosed change facilities have resulted in costly interventions to maintain hygienic conditions for their members. Although their change facilities have been enclosed for 20 years a recent glassing over of a remaining natural ventilation system resulted in higher humidity, increase in dampness and greatly reduced natural air flow. The women's section required under floor heating to eliminate dampness; all change facilities required expensive ventilation systems to maintain a healthy environment. During the recent Covid-19 restrictions their hot showers needed to be reduced to tepid showers to reduce the risk of infections as the artificial ventilation was unable to reduce the level of humidity and thus maintain the necessary requirements of environmental needs to control Covid-19 transmission.

- **The current size of change facilities must be expanded to meet contemporary community expectations and population growth regarding change facilities.**
- **The female change facilities should be reinstated in the northern enclosure.**

### **Meeting contemporary expectations in regards to change facilities:**

FONOB Inc strongly supports the erection and fit out of private change facilities to cater for families, and those who - for a range of diverse cultural, personal, and health reasons - seek secure and private facilities. This has the benefit of enhancing inclusiveness at the Ocean Baths to meet contemporary expectations.

**FONOB Inc highly recommends that these options be considered to enhance inclusiveness to meet contemporary expectations:**

Two configurations proposed:

- I. 2-3 lockable family rooms with baby change table, bench seating, toilet and showers.
- II. 3-4 smaller lockable change facilities designed for individuals.

Subject to expert advice, these could be optimised for those with special needs and accessibility issues such as those who might also need an attendant, mobility devices, handrails or duress alarm.

These privacy change facilities should be accessible and clearly visible from the upper concourse. New openings in the 1922 masonry enclosure walls should be kept to a minimum.

Access to these privacy change facilities should not be dependent on asking the attendant to unlock the room during opening hours of the Baths.

It is essential that a parent caring for younger children of the opposite sex have access to privacy change rooms.

FONOB Inc expect all aspects of inclusiveness to be addressed.

**Change facilities fittings & amenities:**

After consultation with Bath users the following items are considered necessary to meet contemporary expectations. The views of both female and male users have been considered.

Cubicles must remain in the general change facilities, both female and male patrons may prefer privacy at times for many reasons- attending to medical devices, sanitary needs etc.

Hand rails/grab rails in all toilets and showers.

Hot water showers must be retained.

Size of toilets even in general change facilities need to be increased.

Soap dispensers essential in Covid-19 era. (Vandal/theft proof versions are available)

Current number of lockers (15) are considered appropriate in the general change facilities.

The height of the lockers needs to be lowered as shorter people and people in wheel chairs are disadvantaged.

The style of locker is considered appropriate (lockable with supply of own lock)

Some patrons may only want a lockable box to store car keys due possibility of car theft. These could be located outside of change facilities.

Privacy change facilities should have lockers available to negate the need for those patrons to enter the general change facilities. These lockers could be located on the eastern wall.

### **CN inclusion policy and user needs analysis:**

FONOB Inc believes that Inclusion Policies covering people with a disability, people from diverse cultures and sexual and gender identity issues be fully considered when restoration plans are in the process of approval. Increasing the standard of inclusiveness will allow CN to be rated highly by world standards.

It is strongly recommended that CN undertake a user needs analysis to forecast patron growth over the next decade, including usage by those

with requirements for privacy or special needs. This will assist with determination of the number, type and fit out of privacy rooms. It is noted that the City of Newcastle population is expected to grow by almost 40, 000 by 2040 (up 21%). It is envisaged that there could be an additional 4,000 dwellings in the Newcastle City Centre by 2036.

### **Summary of reasons for reinstating the female change facilities in the northern enclosure:**

- Frees up additional space for erection of privacy change facilities.
- Increases surge capacity (school groups, cruise ship tourists, large events)
- Cater for increased population growth forecast to 2040
- Increases open space with infection control and amenity benefits.
- Preserve the cultural significance of the northern enclosure by returning it to its original function. Since 1922, female and male change facilities have remained north and south until the last renovations. This long held tradition should be reinstated.

### **Heritage value of design of current open-air change facilities:**

The large open change facility space is a defining characteristic. It should be returned to its original size by reinstating the northern (Ladies) change facility enclosure.

The 1922 masonry rendered reinforced concrete walled open air dressing enclosures are considered to have high cultural significance.

Open-air long timber bench seating: This original style of open-air timber bench seating should be retained for reasons of cultural significance and ease of maintenance.

Currently the fittings comprise a mishmash pastiche of old and modern materials with no constant design consideration. Examples are:

Stainless steel fittings, old school timber and concrete, obtrusive tiles with no reference to the prevailing character. FONOB Inc believe modern fit out is acceptable but it should be consistent throughout and not compromise heritage of the open-air enclosures, for example, the steel louvres affixed to the top of southern dressing enclosure wall is unattractive and compromises the heritage value.

## **Newcastle City Council Ocean Baths Newcastle NSW Conservation Management Plan Sutures Architects June 2002**

CN should be guided by the 2002 Conservation Management Plan.

The 1922 masonry open air change facilities are considered to have high cultural significance.

CN is reminded that the entire Ocean Baths precinct (not just the facade) is a listed heritage item in NLEP.

Any alterations, interventions or change of use to the northern and southern change facilities should be minimised to ensure conservation of built form, fabric and function.

### **In summary expectations of FONOB Inc:**

- **FONOB Inc position is that the open-air change facilities must remain. The current roofed area must not be extended.**
- **The current size of change facilities and amenities must not be reduced but must be expanded to meet contemporary community expectations and population growth regarding change facilities.**
- **The female change facilities should be reinstated in the northern enclosure.**
- **Options be considered to enhance inclusiveness to meet contemporary expectations for private change facilities.**
- **CN inclusion policy**
- **User needs analysis**
- **CN should be guided by the 2002 Conservation Management Plan.**

## References:

- a) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6QwnzbRUyA&t=3s>
- b) Journal of Hospital Infection 84 (2013) 271e282  
Review  
Roles of sunlight and natural ventilation for controlling  
infection: historical and current perspectives  
R.A. Hobday a, S.J. Dancer b, \*  
a 8 Springvale, Cwmbran, Torfaen, UK  
b Department of Microbiology, Hairmyres Hospital, East  
Kilbride, Lanarkshire G75 8RG, UK  
PDF available on request
- c) Newcastle City Council Ocean Baths Newcastle NSW  
Conservation Management Plan June 2002 Sutures  
Architects
- d)
  - i. <https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Development/Land-Use-Planning/Planning-Policies>
  - ii. <https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Community/Community-Services/Access-and-inclusion>

**Friends of Newcastle Ocean Baths Incorporated (FONOB) response to CRG meeting held on 08/07/20.**

To Kristy Simpson and Nick Kaiser.

FONOB thank you for a positive CRG meeting. We would like to take this opportunity to re-emphasise some of the issues discussed that we raised in our submission re the change facilities, also comment on some of the other issues raised in the CRG meeting last Wednesday and comment on one issue not raised.

**Firstly in regards to several issues FONOB raised in the submission and discussed in the CRG on 08/07/20:**

- FONOB note there was no opposition raised to our proposal to use the northern enclosure to reinstate the Ladies change facilities that existed from 1922 -2006. FONOB emphasises that it improves social distancing, allows for future patronage growths and will allow more space for family change facilities and accessibility/privacy facilities. During the CRG discussion FONOB made reference to the United Nations report released on 6<sup>th</sup> July (World Zoonoses Day). FONOB emphasises that it would be wise practice to design facilities that will assist in the prevention of transmission of zoonotic diseases that may appear in future years. The current design of the open-air facilities has been an invaluable asset for those who use the OB during the restrictions imposed by Covid-19.
- In regards to family change facilities and accessibility/privacy facilities FONOB note that after discussion there was realisation that these facilities can meet many needs and issues such as gender diversity, shyness, body self-esteem, mental health, medical devices, aged care and religious and cultural needs. FONOB recommends that many of these facilities be interchangeable and provided there is a sufficient number of these facilities based on user needs analysis/survey and the design carefully managed e.g. including a shower head in the private facilities there will be better utilisation of the space available. FONOB noted the general agreement that these facilities need to be accessed from outside the enclosure walls. FONOB recommends that these facilities be placed at both ends (south wall of north enclosure and north wall of south enclosure) to reduce impact on the heritage east wall



enclosure and that colour schemes of doors be similar to walls to reduce visual impact of the heritage colour schemes. FONOB recommends the private spaces already provided for in the current enclosures be retained to give more options.

- In regards to lockers FONOB recommends that regardless of whatever system of lockers is adopted both for inside the open-air change facilities and outside the private facilities that the system needs to be robust, simple, easy to clean and easy to fix. FONOB recommends that locker systems not be dependent on CN handing over keys or collecting money. FONOB notes that the system of bringing one's own lock and key has worked successfully for many years. Also, the current kiosk has often held car keys for patrons, a formal arrangement could be further negotiated between the kiosk and CN. Patron contact with the kiosk could perhaps promote business for the kiosk. FONOB also emphasises that consideration must be given so that any increase in lockers will not distract from the 1922 aesthetics of the OB.
- Roof covering: FONOB warns that any significant extension to roof coverings over the open -air change facilities would defeat the value of the open-air enclosures.
- FONOB raised the issue of a user needs analysis/survey to project patronage over the next decade, the intention is to guide many aspects such as the number of and location of showers, toilets, lockers and needs of disability users, water refreshment frequency, etc.
- Note: FONOB highly recommends that any user needs analysis must include schools that use or intend to use the OB for their special needs children.

**Secondly in regards to new topics raised during the recent CRG:**

- Outdoor showers: FONOB encourages any decision about the location and number and design of outdoors showers be based on a user needs analysis. FONOB prefers the majority outdoor showers be located on the upper concourse. For the hygiene of the pool water some outdoor showers could be located closer to the pool to encourage showering before swimming in the higher use periods of the pool (school holidays, summer). FONOB noted this is a standard practice in Europe in chlorinated pools to reduce contaminates from cosmetics, etc.

- Security issues: FONOB encourages CN to fully consult with the pool staff and lifeguards. A new life guard tower may be obtrusive. FONOB recommends other avenues be explored for dealing with the observation of the pool promenade by pool staff, general security and drone issues. Security cameras scanning the pool surrounds/upper deck may assist the staff. Open air change facilities provide passive security. FONOB considers that drone issues be referred to the police at time of incident. Suggestions that more coverage of the change facilities be considered are not relevant when the issue of drones is a law and order issue.
- Retaining of timber benches in the open-air change facilities was given solid support by the CRG members. They are a constant feature of the OB 100-year history and serve their purpose, have rustic charm and are easy to maintain.

**Thirdly in regards to an issue not discussed at the CRG:**

Renewable energy: FONOB notes that CN promotes itself as an LGA leader in renewable energy. CN could now power the OB using this renewable energy from offsite. Advice received by FONOB from experts informs us that there are too many technical issues to install solar PV panels. These include salt and sand deposition resulting in expensive maintenance, limited space for positioning of panels and inability to efficiently position panels for maximum efficiency due to the shading of the façade parapet and the north facing aspect of the façade. FONOB recommends this issue be discussed at a future CRG.

In conclusion FONOB looks forward to ongoing open discussion with CN via the CRG to ensure the best outcome for the restoration of the OB in stage 1 and stage 2 of the project.

Thank You

Peter Wickham

Friends of Newcastle Ocean Baths Incorporated Committee Member  
and CRG Representative.

17<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Hunter Regional Committee  
PO Box 791  
HAMILTON NSW 2303  
[metrikas1@gmail.com](mailto:metrikas1@gmail.com)

21 July 2020

City of Newcastle

**Attn:** Kristy Simpson

### **NEWCASTLE OCEAN BATHS CONSERVATION – CHANGEROOMS**

The *Hunter Regional Committee of the National Trust* welcomes the invitation to provide feedback to the productive *Community Reference Group* focus meeting on the Changerooms, held 8 July 2020.

The aim of heritage conservation is to retain *cultural significance*. Heritage conservation follows a cautious approach (the ‘precautionary principle’): to *change as little as possible, as much as necessary*. New works are acceptable only when they do not impact on the cultural significance of a place. The following heritage considerations seek to inform works planning with regard to the two dressing enclosures:

1. **Heritage-significant dressing enclosures.** The unadorned rectangular ‘dressing enclosures’ have been a key functional component of the Newcastle Ocean Baths since 1922<sup>1</sup>. Contrary to popular belief, the entire pavilion building has heritage significance: not just its eye-catching *inter-war art deco* façade. The 2002 Suters Architects, *Ocean Baths Conservation Management Plan (CMP)* – adopted by Newcastle City Council – assesses these simple ‘dressing rooms’ as possessing built form and fabric of *high cultural significance*. While the number and position of eastern wall openings was altered early this century, the two enclosures possess a high-degree of intactness.
2. **Reconstruction – ‘Ladies dressing enclosure’ return wall.** The northern end-wall was demolished in 2017 along with the northern swimming club-rooms. Reconstruction of this wall is consistent with *Article 20* of the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for places of cultural significance, 2013*<sup>2</sup>. The *Burra Charter* defines reconstruction as ‘*returning a place to a known earlier state, distinguished from ‘restoration’ by the introduction of new material*’. This approach is appropriate only where a place is incomplete through damage or alteration, and where there is sufficient evidence to reproduce an earlier state of the fabric (i.e. plans and/or photos).
3. **Reconstruction to be identifiable.** *Article 20.2* notes that reconstruction should be identifiable on close inspection or through additional interpretation.
4. **Open-air design.** The open-air design of the changerooms should be retained for health, operational and maintenance benefits, and the continuity of cultural heritage. The 2002 CMP remarks that the simple open-air structures behind the façade ‘*enhance the ocean beach nature of the bathing experience*.’ The roof which partly covers the southern enclosure should not be extended. A similar roof should be reconstructed at the northern enclosure.
5. **Restoration of traditional function and layout.** Since opening in 1922, the ‘Ladies dressing rooms’ occupied most of the northern pavilion footprint. In 2006, the Women’s changerooms

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<sup>1</sup> The 1922 dressing enclosures replaced timber changerooms erected in 1918. The timber changerooms replaced temporary changerooms erected in 1915.

<sup>2</sup> The ‘*Burra Charter*’.

were relocated to the northern half of the southern enclosure – the Men’s enclosure since 1922. Aside from operational (forecast increases in patronage and surge capacity) and preventative health benefits (social-distancing), reinstating the Women’s changerooms in the northern enclosure restores the cultural significance of the now-abandoned northern dressing enclosure.

6. **New openings.** Some new openings in the enclosure walls are acceptable to provide direct access from the upper concourse to the proposed flexible-use family/access and smaller privacy changerooms. Visual disruption to the rhythm of the eastern wall should be minimised by ensuring that doors are painted the same colour as the external walls. Where practicable, new openings could be located at the southern wall of the northern enclosure, and the northern end of the southern enclosure.
7. **Interior design.** The 2002 CMP notes that the simple timber changeroom benches have been a longstanding feature of the Ocean Baths experience. These timber benches are efficient in accommodating patrons, encourage social interaction and require little maintenance. These timber benches should be retained, and reinstated within the northern enclosure. The southern enclosure exhibits a discordant evolution of materials and fittings. Fixtures - such as the metal louvres mounted on the eastern wall of the southern enclosure - should be removed. New interior partitions, fixtures and finishes should respect the simple rustic charm of the changeroom enclosures.
8. **Updating the 2002 CMP.** *Article 26 of the Burra Charter* states that work on a place should be preceded by studies to understand the place, which should include analysis of physical, documentary, oral and other evidence. Written statements of cultural significance and policy for the place should be prepared and incorporated into a conservation management plan (CMP). Since the CMP was adopted 18 years ago, significant alterations to the pavilion’s built-form and fabric have occurred due to dilapidation. Conservation planning for CN’s restoration project would be best served by an urgent revision of the 2002 Suters CMP. The principal author of the 2002 CMP – Linda Babic (then Linda Smith), of *Heritas Architecture*, could be approached to undertake this urgent revision.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Metrikas  
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**Co-chair, Hunter Regional Committee**  
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# **Change Facility Meeting 8 July 2020**

## **Points as agreed by Stockton Lappers Swimming Group**

- 1) Firstly we would suggest that many of the questions to be raised at today's meeting regarding the Change Facilities should be determined by a Recreation Demand Survey such as size of amenities and number of showers, toilets and floor space requirements, such demand Survey would assess likely user numbers in the future and so determine the facility requirements.
- 2) We favour the concept of an open-air facility (including open-air timber bench seating) as it adds to and enhances the outdoor recreation experience as well as the healthy well-being of the users. Having said this I am aware of issues relating to privacy & security eg the increasing use of drones these days, therefore possibly a combination of open-air and covered change facilities is desirable.
- 3) There is no objection to the Male & Female Change facilities being joined to each other in the southern section of the structure in fact it makes good sense in regard to economy of construction.
- 4) We support some private change facilities to cater for families / disability / and cultural needs.
- 5) As previously mentioned a Recreation User Demand Study should be undertaken as soon as possible to include not only the existing users but also a suitable sample size of potential user groups and surrounding residents.
- 6) It is most desirable to have hot and cold showers with the hot showers on a time restricted service also some cold showers should be included external along the concourse.
- 7) We support the inclusion of lockers at a nominal fee similar to the Singapore WaterWorld on Sentosa Island.

Rod See  
Co-ordinator

Rod to further check on 2002 Suters Architects "Ocean Baths Newcastle Conservation Management Plan".

## Newcastle East Residents Group Baths Priorities

Newcastle east Residents Group members were canvassed about what they believe are the most important NOB issues for them.

Categorised in order of the number of mentions received (from most to least) they are:

1. Retention of the changerooms as **open air pavilions** and the reinstatement of the **women's changeroom** to the northern end. Having open-air changerooms was the most important and valued aspect to be retained. Members pointed out that both change areas would be enlarged to accommodate high-use periods by reverting back to the original location of the separate changerooms.
2. Changeroom **cleaning procedures** must be upgraded and expanded to ensure the level of cleanliness is of the highest standard. At present, the standard is wanting. Members believe that the highest standards of hygiene are particularly important in disabled facilities and baby changeroom facilities.
3. **Floor levels** are uneven and present trip hazards for users. Uneven areas of paving allow puddles of dirty water to form. Paved areas on site (both inside and out) make walking barefoot hazardous.
4. **Pool cleaning** must be more frequent during periods of high use. Many members suggested overnight partial emptying and top-up as a means of cleaning without disrupting daily use. Present water quality and cleanliness of pool surrounds is often sub-standard.
5. **The heritage** features of the pool and its infrastructure (façade, catwalk, timber bench seating in changerooms, butchers block, old pumphouse, bleachers) must be retained and preserved. Most were adamant that no further commercialisation or gentrification should occur.
6. The number of **individual cubicles** within the men's and women's changerooms should be increased and hygienic baby changing facilities provided.
7. The current **locker system** should be retained (where users provide their own lock). Several users thought that smaller lockers designed to hold small items such as keys and glasses could be a useful addition, without taking up precious space.
8. Pool facilities must accommodate users of **all abilities**. Ramps and railings must be upgraded and integrated to meet current standards, but should be designed and integrated sympathetically so as not to detract from the heritage surroundings.
9. Outdoor **seating and shade** must be increased. Picnic tables should also be provided.
10. The **caretaker's role and apartment** should be reinstated. Most members who use the baths remember this as a factor that improved the amenity and security of the site. Knowing the site was manned, reduced antisocial behaviour.

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