

# **Newcastle Ocean Baths Community Reference Group June 2020**



City of  
Newcastle

## 1 Introduction and objectives



The second meeting of the Newcastle Ocean Baths Community Reference Group (CRG) was held on Wednesday 3 June 2020 from 4.30pm to 6.00pm. To align with COVID-19 social distancing protocols, the CRG meeting was held via an online meeting platform (Zoom).

The meeting was facilitated by Spectrum Comms. Members were encouraged to use the Zoom chat function throughout the meeting to ask questions and compliment the discussions. Members of the CRG were joined by representatives from CN who also took part in the Zoom meeting. Final attendee and apology list are included as **Table 1**.

This report has been prepared by Spectrum Comms on behalf of CN.

### 1.1 Meeting objectives

The objective of the meeting was to bring the CRG and CN team together again to share an update on the Baths project, including:

1. Plans to progress revitalisation of the Baths via two stages of work
2. Provide an update to the group on recent funding announcements
3. Provide an update on community engagement feedback carried out by CN over the summer of 2019/20
4. Discuss any questions or issues the group wanted to raise following recent media coverage on the project; and
5. Seek some further feedback from the group about how CN can support user groups during the staged upgrade process.

*Table 1: CRG meeting 2 - Attendees and apologies*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisations/Representative Group</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Robert Russell	City of Newcastle's Guraki Aboriginal Advisory Committee & Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council	√ (Apology from 5pm)
Nathan Burford	Access Advisory Committee representative, CN	√
Peter Sherlock	Hunter Living Histories (Coal River Working Party)	√
Ross Taggart	Pirates Swimming Club	√
Penny Maxwell	Friends of Newcastle Ocean Baths	√
Karen Read	Newcastle East Residents Group	√
Mark Metrikas	National Trust	√
Robert Faraday	Local businesses representative	Apology
Paul Scott	Community member	√
Tiahna Goldbird	Community member	√
Jeremy Landers	Community member	√
David Compton	Community member	√
David Henderson	Community member	√
Paula Thistleton	Community member	√ (Apology from 5:30pm)
Roderick See	Community member	√
Peter Shields	Community member	√
Matthew Blandford	Senior Project Planner, CN	√
Kristy Simpson	Senior Project Planner, CN	√
Natalie D'Arcy	Community Engagement Coordinator, CN	√
Joanne Rigby	Manager Assets and Projects, CN	√
Lynn Duffy	Manager Parks and Recreation, CN	√
Nick Kaiser	Media & Stakeholder Relations Manager, CN	√
Emily Dowswell	Media & Communications Advisor, CN	√
Sarah Horan	Project Planning Coordinator, CN	√
Glenn Mahood	Manager of Property & Facilities, CN	√
Donna McGovern	Aquatics Services Manager, CN	√
Cr Nuatali Nelmes	Lord Mayor, CN	√
Angela Felton	Spectrum Comms / Facilitator	√
Cr Emma White	Infrastructure Advisory Committee representative, CN	Apology
Cr John MacKenzie	Liveable Cities Advisory Committee representative, CN	Apology
Joseph Popov	Access Advisory Committee representative, CN	Apology

## 2 Workshop agenda and activities

A run sheet for the Workshop is provided as **Appendix A**.

The complete CRG slide presentation is included in **Appendix B**, and on the CN website:

<https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Have-Your-Say/Projects/Newcastle-Ocean-Baths-CRG>

### 2.1 – Since we last met... (Activity 1 Group Discussion)

Members of the CRG were welcomed back and the logistics of the online meeting platform were checked (i.e. Screen sharing, can everyone hear and be heard, how we will use the Chat function to ask questions and share ideas).

A brief update about a recent funding commitment made for the project was then shared with the group. Senior Project Planner Kristy Simpson discussed the recent media reports and advised that:

- \$9.5 million from the sale of vacant CN owned buildings would be directed towards the Newcastle Ocean Baths project.
- CN has now resolved the sale of these buildings. Following settlement, the proceeds will go into a reserve, and have been committed to partly fund the Baths restoration.
- CN estimates revitalisation of the Baths will cost around \$20 million, though this is a guide only as CN are yet to finalise the project scope and the development of concept designs will be done in consultation with the CRG.

The group was then invited to raise any questions or provide feedback on the recent announcement and highlight any discussions they may have had with their community or representative groups since the last meeting held in March 2020. The aim of this activity was to allow CRG members seek any clarifications from the last meeting and the media reports, and to share any feedback they may have had from the groups and organisations they represent.

The following comments were captured during the group discussion and via the *Chat* function within *Zoom*.

The CN asset sales are welcome as long as money goes into community-based projects. Feedback from my community group has been positive.
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<b>Q. Is the \$9.5 million already allocated or is it contingent on the sale of CN assets?</b>
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The funds are from the sale of CN's assets and have been allocated to the revitalisation of the Newcastle Ocean Baths.
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<b>Q. Is there an estimated cost of the facade being restored?</b>
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Investigation work is continuing. CRG members will be involved in discussions in focus groups with key specialists.
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## 2.2 – Community engagement feedback

Community Engagement Coordinator Natalie D'Arcy provided an update on the broader community engagement activities carried out from 22 November 2019 to 1 March 2020 which aimed to further understand the community's aspirations for the Ocean Baths site and identify any areas for improvement.

Figure 1 included below was shared with the CRG and summaries the recent community engagement activities carried out by CN on the Baths.

## Learning from the community

- 100 days community engagement program from 22 November 2019 to 1 March 2020

			
<b>Dedicated Have Your Say web page</b>	<b>Ideas Wall (embedded on Have Your Say)</b>	<b>Intercept surveys</b>	<b>Telephone surveys (poll)</b>
<b>4,400+ visits</b>	<b>840 comments 262 unique stakeholders</b>	<b>129 surveys conducted at 5 locations</b>	<b>898 respondents across Newcastle LGA</b>

*Figure 1: Feedback presented to the CRG on how community engagement feedback on the Newcastle Ocean Baths has been captured in the wider community.*

Natalie's presentation included a summary of key findings relating to the pavilion/exterior; supported improvements, and feedback on operations at the baths, with the full engagement report to be made available on the CN website:

<https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Have-Your-Say/Projects/Newcastle-Ocean-Baths-CRG>

Natalie discussed CN's desire to have scheduled focus group discussions on three topic areas to gain a more detailed understanding of community perspectives to inform CN's project planning. The CRG expressed support for focus group discussions to be held on:

1. **The change rooms** - for example, we saw in the engagement some support for keeping the open-air change rooms and we'd like to better understand what's driving this. For example, are the change rooms valued because of the direct sunlight? The air flows? The sense of space? Other topics to cover in regard to change rooms are getting the balance right in terms of open vs private changes rooms; size of the change rooms; and location of the change rooms.
2. **Café and community spaces** – physical infrastructure improvements, location, shade, seating, size, what works well at similar facilities you have seen, how to best make use of community space in southern and central pavilions.
3. **Western façade** – discussion to include structural specialist.

CRG members were invited to ask any questions prompted by the information presented.

The following themed comments and questions were captured during the group discussion:

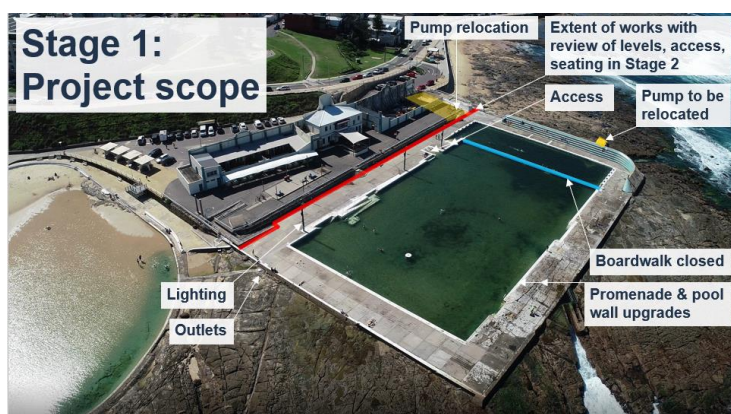
Community engagement feedback	<p><b>Q. Are you concerned that the survey samples are relatively small?</b></p> <p>Sample size for telephone survey is considered robust at 898 responses. While the intercept survey numbers were comparatively low, the results were similar to the telephone survey. CN is confident in the results.</p> <p>The Ideas Wall was intended to capture qualitative ideas and feedback. A lot of detailed comments received, and CN is satisfied with the breadth of information received.</p> <p><b>Q. What style of questions were used?</b></p> <p>Non directional questions were used with scales of responses provided. Engagement reports will be provided with links to the questionnaires.</p>
Amenities/change rooms	<p><b>Q. If toilet amenities and shower amenities were oriented toward the south, could they then be utilised by the beach goers as well as those swimming on the baths? Did the community engagement feedback capture prefer locations of the shower and toilet amenities?</b></p> <p>The feedback didn't get down to that level of detail, but we would like to understand that more in upcoming focus group discussions with the CRG.</p> <p><b>Comment:</b> Accessibility requirements need to be considered when considering any changes to the design and layout of the facilities and give consideration to family change rooms. Non-gender binary change rooms is something that needs to be taken seriously to show we value our community. Diverse access needs.</p> <p><b>Comment:</b> We have both an opportunity and challenge to balance private vs public, and universally accessible change and bathroom facilities to optimise space and flexibility for all users, while also adhering to formal access requirements and building regulations.</p> <p><b>Comment:</b> We need to provide a safe place for those who don't recognise themselves as being one gender or another and having additional spaces like family rooms and additional change room options. We can look to similar facilities at South Sydney baths and Bondi Beach.</p> <p><b>Comment:</b> We advocate need to have open air change rooms for sanitation and the feeling of open space. A safe female (and male) space is created by open air change rooms.</p>



Community spaces	<p><b>Q. Has consideration been given to having the baths used for more social events and not just a recreational space?</b></p> <p>CN would like to have that discussion further as a part of one of the focus groups as there will likely be more space available for additional activities after the space has been renewed.</p> <p><b>Comment:</b> By changing the fundamental use of the site, you may gain one thing, but you can take away intrinsic nature of the site for others. Please be cautious in thinking about changing the recreational use of the space.</p>
Parking	<p><b>Q. Is there attention being given to increased security of bicycle parking which will encourage people to cycle instead of using cars?</b></p> <p>There is nothing specific yet to address cycle parking, but this can be accommodated on site as there is plenty of open space. As the site is a destination location, it is definitely suited to more cycle parking.</p>
Design	<p><b>Q. Has a 'beach design' entry into the baths been considered? This would allow for great accessibility for families and could provide universal access instead of a lift or a ramp?</b></p> <p>The design will be open for comment and consideration will be given to accessibility.</p>

## 2.3 – Project Update - presentation

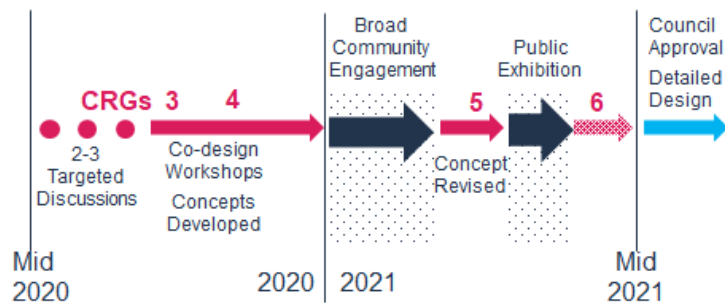
A project update was provided by Senior Project Planner Kristy Simpson. The update provided detail on how the work to restore the Ocean Baths will be carried out in two stages, with stage 1 to incorporate poolside work and stage 2 to incorporate pavilion side work. Presentation slides on the project update are summarised below:



### Stage 1:

- Repairing and restoring the pools, promenades and completing pump upgrades.
- Works to be expediated due to urgent structural repair works.
- The area of works can be completed under the Part 5 REF approval process. This would allow for construction works to commence in FY 20/21.

## Stage 2: Proposed CRG meetings



### Stage 2:

- Includes the pavilions and all other external works areas.
- Concept plans to be developed with CRG input in 2020 / early 2021
- Works would likely require approval through a development application. It is estimated that construction would commence in FY 22/23.

## 2.4 – Project Update – questions and discussion

CRG members were invited to ask questions of the CN team and discuss any aspects of the project update. Themed comments from the discussion and from the *Zoom* Chat function are captured below.

Cleaning	<p><b>Q. Merewether Ocean Baths gets more regular flushes/cleans in summer than Newcastle Ocean baths. Any thoughts on the cleaning schedule in the future?</b></p> <p>The cleaning schedule will be determined in when the facility is upgraded. The key issue with the current pump system is that it does not perform well when it is below half tide. Relocating it will ensure better intake.</p>
Programming work/timing	<p><b>Q. Any thoughts on the time of year the revitalisation work would take place?</b></p> <p>The intent is to carry out Stage 1 as priority work first. A similar timeframe to the renewal project at Merewether Ocean Baths is being considered whereby the closure occurs outside the summer seasons. Consideration is also given to tides and weather conditions.</p>
	<p><b>Q. Will wedding groups need to book like other CN assets?</b></p> <p>Any booking requirements will be dependent on what facilities are provided within the pavilions; however the public spaces like the pools and promenades will remain open and not require bookings.</p>
Design elements	<p><b>Q. Any chance we can incorporate a pump design that captures the energy of the oceans tides that allows it to be flushed continuously? It's definitely a step toward sustainable future designs</b></p>



	That is quite innovative thinking. The primary goal for the pumps is to increase overall reliability and efficiency. The use of tides will be examined in due course during design investigations.
	<b>Q. Will the boardwalk remain ?</b> The intent is to keep the boardwalk. Further investigation works are required to determine the revitalisation scope for the boardwalk.
	<b>Q. Is there any chance the diving board could be bought back?</b> The board was removed for safety as the pool cannot be maintained at a depth to meet the standards for a diving board. To restore the diving board would involve cutting the rock out which would be extremely challenging.
	<b>Q. While understanding that heritage means we must keep the sand bottom in the lap pool, can some kind of line marking be incorporated at the Baths? Can ropes be out at 4am or some other way of addressing the increasing demand for the Newcastle Ocean Baths?</b> Lane dividers is something we can look at further. CRG member suggestion put forward about investigating a change to the cleaner's duties to include putting out lane ropes.

## 2.4 – Group discussion – User group support

Following the project update and discussion on timing for the Baths work, CRG members were invited to provide CN with some ideas on how it may be able to support their user groups when the facility is closed for construction activities.

Comments captured from the group are listed below:

What is important to your user group as the work is carried out?  Based on the above, how can CN work with your user groups during this time?	Briefing and investigation material on inundation that occurs at the Baths will help inform the CRG on the design elements we need to consider when we start to look at the location of amenities and services within the facilities.
	Is there any assistance for people who can't drive to Merewether Ocean Baths? Can a shuttle bus be run between the two facilities?
	Can Soldiers pool be used and made safer during construction? <i>NB: this is not a CN asset.</i>
	We need to consider those who use the facility for wedding photography.

	Can CN support a learning opportunity with architectural and construction students at the University during the work?
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### 3 Summary and next steps

The second CRG meeting captured an ongoing and genuine commitment from the CRG to be engaged in the funding, design elements and renewal of the Baths. CRG members expressed an interest in attending the CN's upcoming series of focus groups to further 'unpack' some of their values and 'must-haves' about the design and functionality of the site.

The CRG has been advised that they will have access to community engagement report findings and will receive invitations for focus group meetings in the next few weeks.

## Appendix A – Workshop Runsheet

Session	Activity	Output	Who	Resource
Welcome back (5 mins)	Welcome group to online meeting and discuss how we will work virtually together over the next hour and half. Check logistics of screen sharing can everyone hear and be heard.  Terms of Reference	Participants feel welcome.  Everyone is comfortable with who is on the call and all technology is working.	Angela / India	Slides
Agenda  (5 mins)	Run through agenda and get buy in on the process ahead.  Apologies	We know what we are doing together today. Gets everyone on the same page about what they can expect during this meeting.	Angela	Slides
Recap (15 mins)	<b>Since we last met</b>  Request for acceptance of CRG1 workshop report.  Discussion of any outstanding issues/ unanswered questions, information gaps that need filling.  Revisit expectations	Participants comfortable that their feedback is being heard and information is flowing.	Angela / Kristy	Slides
Presentation from CN – Natalie D’Arcy & Kristy Simpson (25 minutes)	<b>Presentation</b> - Project update on Newcastle Ocean Baths project. Includes:  1. Includes high level <u>community feedback</u> results from the recent engagement activities (Natalie)  2. Provide a revised timeline for the project which takes current COVID restrictions, and broad engagement plan.  3. Provide update on CN’s preference to undertake refurbishment of the pools as the first stage of work. Includes reasons, scope, budget.	Participants are up to date on the project and how CN are responding to community feedback so far.	Natalie / Kristy	Slides  (Share screen)

(30 mins)	<b>Group discussion:</b> Share the dilemma – There are considerations for safety, accessibility and program as CN approaches work on the Baths pools. CN has a preference to do this work over the winter months. We recognise some CRG members raised a preference for continuous access. We therefore would like to discuss: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is important to your user group as we do this work?</li> <li>2. Based on the above, how can CN work with your groups during this time?</li> <li>3. Consider asking the group to discuss how these competing needs can be prioritised and managed together.</li> </ol>	CRG members understand how they can provide value to this next stage of the project.	Angela	Spectrum to take notes. Consider sharing Angela's screen as discussion is captured.
(5 mins)	<b>Next steps:</b> At the last meeting there were some reference made to some 'must haves'. To help CN understand these further, we would your feedback on willingness to take part in some focus groups between now and next meeting to discuss	Provides members with input and oversight of upcoming work.  Group to indicate their preference to be involved.	Angela	Slide
Wrap up (5 mins)	Present proposed meeting schedule	Participants articulate preferences and feel included in the forward planning	Angela / Kristy	
Total: 1:30 hours				

## Appendix B – CRG Presentation

### Newcastle Ocean Baths Community Reference Group Meeting no.2


3 June 2020



1

### Meeting Protocols

- Technology checks – audio, video, chat function
- Ask questions throughout presentations via the Chat Room
- Breaks to answer questions



2

### Terms of Reference

**Objectives**


- Contribute to the planning of facilities that balance the needs of all users of the Baths
- Inform the broader community of project objectives, status and outcomes of the project

**Functions of Community Reference Group (CRG)**

- Provide information on current usage and areas for improvement of the Baths
- Provide feedback and information to the community
- Represent your user group
- Provide feedback to City of Newcastle (CN) on proposals

**CRG Reporting Structure**


- The CRG is part of CN's review process and is not a decision-making body. Outcomes of CRG meetings will be reported to the Coastal Revitalisation Project Control Group



3

### Agenda


- Apologies
- Since we last met
- Community Engagement Feedback
- Project Update
- Group Discussion
- Next Steps



4

### Apologies


- Attendees
- Apologies



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### Since we last met

- Acceptance of CRG1 workshop report
- Any other matters?
- Any feedback or discussions with your community group?



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### Community Engagement Feedback



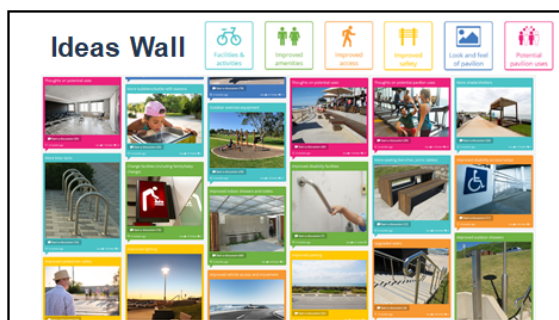
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### Learning from the community

- 100 days community engagement program from 22 November 2019 to 1 March 2020

 Dedicated Have Your Say web page	 Ideas Wall (embedded on Have Your Say)	 Intercept surveys	 Telephone surveys (poll)
4,400+ visits	840 comments 262 unique stakeholders	129 surveys conducted at 5 locations	898 respondents across Newcastle LGA

8



9

### Ideas Wall Key sentiments

Pavilion / exterior	Need	Operational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Façade</li> <li>• Pavilion building</li> <li>• Change rooms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More shade / shelters</li> <li>• More private change facilities</li> <li>• Renovations to maintain iconic art deco look</li> <li>• Lockers</li> <li>• Seating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little support for restaurant, bar or gym</li> <li>• Some support to improve the café</li> </ul>

10

### Telephone Poll Key findings

People were asked how important is it that CN improves...	Very important + somewhat important
• Existing facilities, e.g. change rooms?	90%
• Improves the shade?	87%
• Improves the existing kiosk / café?	79%
• Improves existing accessibility?	80%
• How important is it to have a community meeting space provided?	51%

11

### Intercept Survey

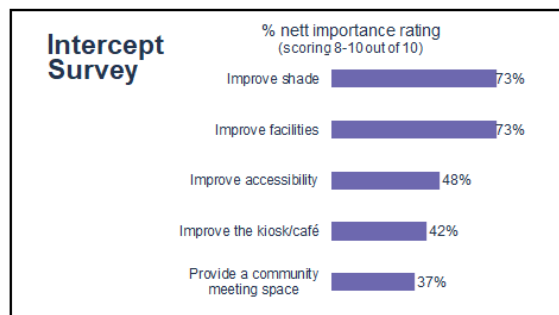
5 survey locations

Jesmond	Wallsend	Hunter St	Merewether Baths	Newcastle Baths
48	45	25	51	49

**People were asked:**

- Do they use the Baths and what they usually did
- Rate the importance of several potential upgrades
- Choose 5 potential changes
- Support for listed potential changes

12




13

### Overall Key Findings

#### Pavilion / Exterior

- ✓ Support for façade and building repairs, restoration and maintenance
- ✓ Acceptance that renovations are required and works to be sympathetic to the location
- ✓ Maintain the art deco aesthetic



14

### Overall Key Findings

#### Improvements

- ✓ Upgrade general facilities including amenities
- ✓ Maintain change room amenity, but have both private and open change rooms
- ✓ Additional shade / shelters, seating, lockers
- ✓ Improve disability amenities and access
- ✓ Improve parking and public transport




15

### Overall Key Findings

#### Operational

- ✓ Limited support for commercial operations
- ✓ Support to improve the café / kiosk offering



16



## Next Steps

Further discussion on topics including:

- Change rooms
- Café and community spaces
- Western façade



17

## Questions



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## Project Update



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## Project Stages

### Stage 1

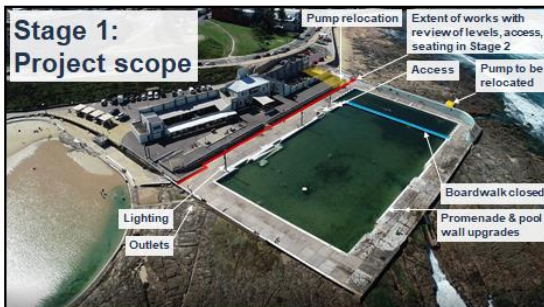
Pools side of works

### Stage 2

Pavilions side of works



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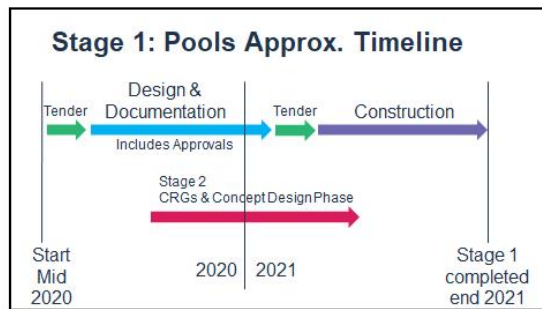
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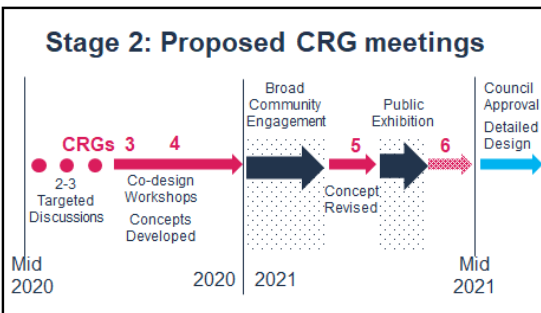
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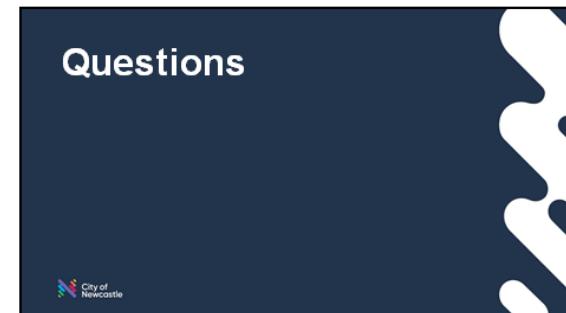
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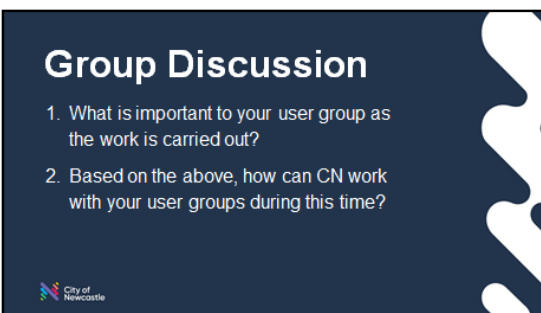
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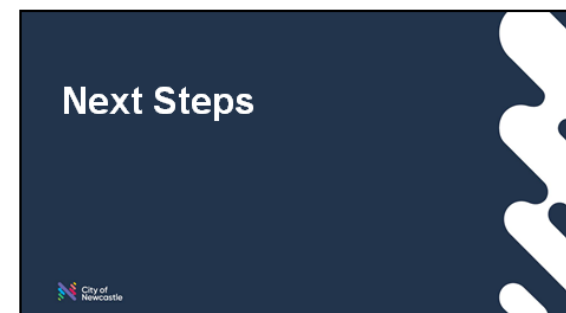
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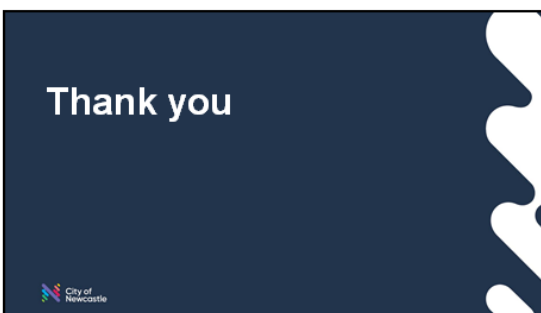
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