



the bushland shire

creating a living environment

SUPPLEMENTARY BUSINESS PAPER

PLANNING MEETING

**Wednesday, 1 December, 2010
at 6.30 pm**

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SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS

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12 PROPOSED CLOSURE OF HORNSBY AQUATIC CENTRE

This report is considered confidential pursuant to Section 10A(2)(a) of the Local Government Act in that the recommendation contained in the report will affect staff currently employed by Council. As affected staff will have been advised of the recommendation contained in this report prior to it being considered by Council, there will be no objection to Council considering this matter in public, and it is specifically recommended that the report be made public during consideration of the matter.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hornsby Aquatic Centre was built in 1962. Concerns regarding the structural adequacy of the Centre first came to Council's notice in the early 1970's. Since that time a series of actions designed to monitor the condition of the reinforced concrete structure and to maintain its serviceability, has been undertaken. The most recent report on the serviceability of the structure indicates that Council should now give consideration to its closure. Closure of the Centre will have implications for the various groups and members of the public that use the Centre. The actions to be taken in each case have been outlined. A number of staff will be affected by the proposed closure.

As it is no longer possible to guarantee the safe operation of the Centre beyond August 2011, it is recommended that Council give consideration to its closure in December 2010.

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of advice received concerning the structural condition of the Hornsby Aquatic Centre, and as a result, to propose its closure. Council is also advised of additional actions that follow from such action.

BACKGROUND

The Hornsby Aquatic Centre consists of a 50 metre heated outdoor swimming pool, a 15 metre heated, covered, program/learn to swim pool and a toddler pool, and was built in 1962. The grandstand located on the western side of the main swimming pool was added to the Aquatic Centre around 1969. The structural adequacy of the concrete structure which supports the Hornsby Aquatic Centre main pool first came under consideration after a decade in service, following an inspection by Council's staff in 1973. This inspection revealed a considerable number of significant structural defects. Council engaged an engineering consultant to carry out an inspection of the pool structure and to report on the condition of the structure. Repairs were subsequently undertaken.

In 1993 Council engaged Professor SL Bakoss to assess the state of the concrete pool support structure. In 1995 Council sought an estimate of the remaining life of the structure and surrounds and was advised that without significant works, closure may be necessary. In 1999, following repairs, a further report identified ongoing corrosion, and closure was again considered. In 2001, in an attempt to slow down the passage of water into the structure, a new liner was installed in the 50m pool. This action achieved its objective, and

notwithstanding that the liner has now reached the end of its life, significantly contributed to the extension of the service life of the pool.

In accordance with the recommendations received by Council, the condition of the pool continued to be monitored with repairs undertaken following additional investigations carried out by Professor Bakoss to assess on-going matters of structural concern between 1999 and 2004. At this time, Council also carried out repairs to the grandstand (in 2004) and in 2008, to shade support structures over the children's program pool.

A comprehensive inspection was undertaken by Professor Bakoss in July 2008. It identified a large number of defects and confirmed that corrosion of steel reinforcement and deterioration of the concrete structure was continuing. The report recommended that Council consider the closure of the pool by 30 June 2012, by which time the consultant considered that he would not be able to guarantee the serviceability of the structure.

Further inspections and assessments were carried out in 2009. At this time, Council also engaged a second consultant to review reports received by Council, and, subject to ongoing regular inspections, was advised that the pool could continue to be used. At the time Council was advised that the condition of the pool should continue to be closely monitored with any changes in condition being promptly investigated. At the time it was considered that the service date of 30 June 2012 may have been able to be achieved.

However, further reports by Professor Bakoss in June 2010 and October 2010 confirmed further deterioration of the structure, and recommended urgent remedial action to minimise potential risk to patrons and property due to structural failure. These repairs were also undertaken by Council.

The most recent (November 2010) assessment by Professor Bakoss includes the following statement:

“The cumulative effect of the ongoing deterioration for over three decades has resulted in the critical reduction of structural integrity of key elements of the concrete support structure. The in-service performance of such severely deteriorated components of their effects on the serviceability and safety of the whole structure can neither be rigorously analysed nor reliably estimated.

The approach used successfully in the past to apply local remedial action to mitigate the effects of local defects can no longer be considered appropriate as the interaction and cumulative effects of a very large number of impaired components affect the integrity and safety of the whole support structure.”

Professor Bakoss advises that it is not possible to load test the structure to determine its remaining life. Professor Bakoss concludes that the risks to the safe operation of the facility can no longer be adequately mitigated or reliably predicted, and he recommends that the operation of the pool be terminated no later than 30 August 2011.

CONSIDERATION

Following receipt of Professor Bakoss' report, I convened a meeting of senior engineering staff and the Manager Aquatic and Recreation Facilities to discuss the ramifications of this report and the desirability of continuing operation of the Centre.

Professor Bakoss' reports are predicated on normal day to day usage of the Centre and always contained the additional qualification that the Centre may need to close at an earlier date should the condition of the pool deteriorate or unexpected developments be observed. Having regard to the opinion now provided by Professor Bakoss, and the imminent period where usage of the Centre would be heaviest, I consider it appropriate that Council should adopt a conservative approach to the future use of the facility.

It is important to note that it is no longer possible to reliably predict the behaviour of the structural elements of the pool. On this basis Council is advised that it should give serious consideration to concluding the use of this pool in the immediate future.

It is regretted that an earlier or a longer period of notice cannot be given; however, the nature of this latest recommendation is of concern. Should the Centre not be closed, Council may expose patrons and itself to an unacceptable degree of risk.

Implications of Closure

Closure of the Hornsby Aquatic Centre will impact on the following groups of users:

1. Casual/recreational Swimming

Patrons will be redirected to Council's Centres at Epping or Galston, and to the Cherrybrook facility operated by Carlile Swimming (subject to lane availability). Refunds will be organised for holders of multi-use passes. Alternatively, the passes will be recognised for use at the Epping or Galston Centres.

2. School Swim Carnivals

A number of School Swim Carnivals have been scheduled for February 2011, immediately following the resumption of school. Action has commenced to notify the affected schools and where possible, to offer use of the Epping Centre (subject to availability). Twilight carnivals are proposed to provide additional opportunities in this regard. The smaller schools will be offered the use of the Galston Centre.

3. Learn to Swim

The current term of Learn to Swim lessons concludes on 19 December 2010. A limited number of vacancies exist at the Epping and Galston Centres, and patrons will be advised of same. However, it has not been possible at this stage to identify an alternative venue suitable for use by Council in which Learn to Swim classes could be conducted.

4. Squads

Swim coaching is provided at the Hornsby Pool through a licensee, Aquabliss Swim School Pty Ltd. This licence agreement provides for the use of the pool to be terminated in an event such as this. The licensee has been advised accordingly and will cease activities prior to the proposed closure.

5. Swim Clubs

The Hornsby Amateur Swim Club utilises the Centre on Friday evenings. The opportunity to join with a swim club at Epping will be offered to this club.

The Hornsby RSL Swim Club uses the Centre on Sunday mornings in summer. As this club also makes use of the Galston Centre on Sunday mornings in winter, the opportunity to use the Galston Centre on a year round basis will be offered to this club.

The Berowra RSL Swim Club also uses the Centre on Sunday mornings. The use of the Galston Centre will be offered to this club.

6. Staff Considerations

The closure of the Centre will affect 47 permanent and casual staff. Council is fortunate to have a team of loyal and committed staff who have been employed at the Centre for varying periods of time, up to 15 years. As Council has indicated its intention to redevelop the Centre, it is considered to be in Council's interests to retain a core team of skilled staff to enable a new centre to commence operation.

Consultation with the affected staff will take place when Council has made a decision regarding the future of the Centre. Where possible, options for redeployment to fill a limited number of existing vacancies at Epping and Galston will be pursued. Opportunities for employment with other Councils will also be explored.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Council will recall that it had previously resolved to seek expressions of interest regarding the operation of Epping and Galston Centres. Preparation of the relevant documentation in this regard is well advanced and is nearing completion. However, it is considered that Council should maintain the maximum flexibility to enable it to adjust the usage of these Centres to reflect the changed circumstances that now exist, particularly with regard to accommodating staff and programs that may be able to be transferred from the Hornsby Centre. It is proposed that Council not proceed further with its resolution at this time.

As a result of the proposed closure of the Hornsby Centre, it can be expected that additional demands will be placed on the Epping and Galston Centres. A review of the condition of the mechanical plant at the Centres is currently in progress. The need for additional funding to undertake maintenance or improvement works at these Centres will be identified as part of the forthcoming December budget review, and will be further reported to Council.

Council has recently accepted the tender of Peter Hunt Architects, for the design of a replacement Centre. The architect has commenced work, and concept design is currently in preparation. It is proposed that the possibility of accelerating of the design and subsequent construction of a replacement structure, with a configuration to be determined by Council, be pursued.

BUDGET

The Hornsby Aquatic Centre was budgeted to operate at a cost to Council in 2010/11 of \$210,000. Subject to one-off costs associated with the closure, budget savings of the order of \$100,000 in 2010/11 may be achieved. However additional expenditure on maintenance of plant at Epping and/or Galston may reduce these savings.

POLICY

There are no policy implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

The following staff have been consulted in the preparation of this report; Manager Aquatic and Recreation Facilities; Manager Engineering Services; Manager Design and Construction. In addition, Council's consultant engineer has been extensively consulted following receipt of his most recent report.

TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE SUMMARY

Triple Bottom Line is a framework for improving Council decisions by ensuring accountability and transparency on social, environmental and economic factors. It does this by reporting upon Council's strategic themes.

As this report simply provides Council with information and does not propose any actions which require a sustainability assessment, no Triple Bottom Line considerations apply.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

This report has been prepared by Maxwell Woodward, Executive Manager, Works Division. Further information can be obtained on 9847 6665.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT

1. The contents of Executive Manager's report No. WK83/10 be received and noted, and the actions taken or foreshadowed, endorsed.
2. Council cease operation of the Hornsby Aquatic Centre in December 2010.
3. Council not proceed further with calling for Expressions of Interest for the operation of Epping and Galston Aquatic Centres.
4. Council explore opportunities to bring forward the design and construction of a replacement facility, to be further reported to Council in connection with progress of this project.
5. This report be made public.

MAXWELL WOODWARD
Executive Manager
Works Division

Attachments:

There are no attachments for this report.

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