

8.8. Swimming Pool Enclosure Report

AUTHOR: Peter Massey, Environmental Services Manager

ENDORSED BY: Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

This report details the costs and approval processes involved in installing a swimming pool enclosure in Sydney Harbour.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At its meeting on 24 August 2020, Council resolved:

THAT Council staff provide a brief report to assess the viability and cost of a netted swimming area within a harbourside swimming location – possible locations to include Hayes Street Beach and/or Lavender Bay.

Any installation of a swimming pool enclosure in Sydney Harbour would require the lodgement of a Development Application together with associated technical reports such as Human Health Risk Assessment, bathymetry and harbour bed characteristics, ecological assessments, etc. The assessment process is likely to take 9-12 months. As an initial step, discussions should be held with Transport for NSW (Maritime) to assist in determining the most appropriate location given that organisation is the land owner and Council would need their consent for any such installation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Indicative budget necessary to pursue, install and maintain any likely location for a Harbour pool swimming enclosure would be divided into three components:

- Development Application and technical report preparation including approval from State Government Agencies is estimated at \$250,000-\$300,000 (based on recent refurbishments of two existing tidal pools in the Northern Beaches area) and the time frame for approval in the order of 9-12 months.
- Installation of structure including steel piling, HPDE sleeve and polyethylene netting (based on 40 x 40 meter dimension) is estimated at \$600,000.
- Maintenance of installed structures including monthly diving checks of integrity of netting and any associated works is estimated at \$18,000 per annum.

It should be noted that the above budget estimates are very approximate and based on discussions held with staff from other local government areas who have installed/renovated new and existing tidal netted pools.

There are no funds allocated to this project in the 2020/21 budget or the current Long Term Financial Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** Council make contact with appropriate staff from Transport for NSW (Maritime) in order to discuss the viability of the proposed locations for any proposed swimming pool enclosure in Sydney Harbour.
- 2. THAT** Council staff provide a further report to Council on the outcomes of discussions with Transport for NSW (Maritime) on a proposed swimming pool enclosure in Sydney Harbour.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment

1.4 Public open space and recreation facilities and services meet community needs

BACKGROUND

In response to a Notice of Motion from Councillor Brodie, Council at its meeting on 24 August 2020 resolved:

THAT Council staff provide a brief report to assess the viability and cost of a netted swimming area within a harbourside swimming location – possible locations to include Hayes Street Beach and/or Lavender Bay.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

Preliminary Studies

In determining the most suitable location for a harbourside swimming enclosure, the following factors might be considered:

- Harbour water quality and water clarity;
- Contaminated sediments including likelihood of resuspension of disturbed sediment;
- Bathymetry;
- Publicly available land for access and for the installation of public amenities;
- Boat traffic and ferry stops;
- Car parking availability and/or access to public transport;
- Amenity impacts on surrounding residents;
- Harbour bed physical hazards; and
- Harbour bank and edge characteristics.

Each of the above factors will have an impact on whether the selected location would be well patronised by the general public with public health, aesthetics and access and convenience being major influencers.

It should be noted that in order to determine the most appropriate location based on the above factors, prior to, but complementary to the following planning studies, preliminary studies would be required to be undertaken, the most obvious being harbour water quality and clarity, contaminated sediments on harbour bed, bathymetry and harbour bed physical characteristics.

The aforementioned Notice of Motion referenced two possible locations that being Hayes St Beach and Lavender Bay but other locations that might be considered include Primrose Park, Berry Island Reserve and Berrys Bay (near the Quarantine Station). Regardless of preferred location, the prudent approach would be to undertake those previously mentioned preliminary studies.

Council's Historian, Ian Hoskins, has provided a historical context of tidal pools in the Harbour as follows:

Bathing in the harbour was commonplace in the 19th century and through much of the following century. In the present-day North Sydney area large houses such as 'Sunnyside' at Kirribilli had private enclosures at the end of waterfront gardens well into the 20th century. The earliest local recorded example of public bathing was on the small tidal beach in Lavender Bay, protected for public use in the 1860s. That area was fenced and became the famous Lavender Bay baths. When reclamation for the Milsons Point train line destroyed the beach around 1892, the baths were transferred to one, then two, large enclosures similar to the Dawn Fraser pool which survives in Balmain. Elsewhere there was a public bathing in Berrys Bay near the present site of the Noakes boatyard and opposite off the eastern shore of Balls Head. That swimming area was created with large rocks, similar to the first 'McCallum Pool' at Cremorne which was raised from the tidal area and consolidated with concrete around 1930. There was a wire bathing enclosure, probably built by Council, on the western side of High Street, in Careening Cove. All the baths had closed by the end of the 1980s, a result of pollution and increasing insurance costs. The history of these and other north shore baths has been explored by North Sydney Council, Ian Hoskins, in "'Everyone went down there at high tide": a semi personal history of swimming baths around Sydney's north shore'.

Planning Approval Process

Advice received by Council's Planning Section is as follows:

Any proposed swimming pool enclosure would require development consent from Council and landowners' consent from RMS as it would be considered integrated development.

Typically, such a Development Application would need to be accompanied by ecological, environmental reports and surveys including assessment to whether there would be any impact on waterway navigation and boat traffic, leading to the requirement for the approval from Transport for NSW (Sydney Ferries) NSW Fisheries, and Department of Environment. In addition to this a plan of management for the

construction including all environmental protection measures would also need to be provided. All reports would need to be lodged as part of the DA and would need to be completed at the cost of the developer.

It is noted from the proposed locations in the report that the locations are adjacent to Council's parks that are identified as Heritage Conservation Areas, so any application would need a Heritage Impact Statement.

In terms of plans, a full suite of architectural drawings would be required and would need to show long sections of the proposed enclosures from the land into the water and a site plan detailing the location of the enclosures. It would be advisable to engage a consultant familiar with land water interfaces as it is quite specialised.

In addition to the above advice, given the likelihood of chemical contamination of the harbour bed's sediments and stormwater faecal water pollution, it is highly likely that a Human Health Risk Assessment would be prepared by consultants and require to be approved by NSW Health and the EPA.

It would also be prudent, prior to the lodgement and determination of the DA, that pre consultation be carried out with the local residents in order to gauge any community concern.

Discussion

If Council wishes to pursue the installation of a swimming pool enclosure in any of the abovementioned potential locations, then it is suggested that the next step would be to have informal discussions with appropriate staff from Transport for NSW (Maritime). Any lodgement of a Development Application for the swimming pool enclosure would require land owners consent and the aforementioned agency is the land owner in this instance.