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Water slides, outdoor play, more Park Lands: concept design for world-class Adelaide Aquatic Centre revealed

Water slides, splash zones and lawned recreation spaces will form part of an extensive indoor and outdoor all-ages play area in the Malinauskas Labor Government's new state-of-the-art Adelaide Aquatic Centre, which will significantly increase the amount of land returned to Park Lands.

After scoping work and extensive consultation involving more than 1200 users, sporting groups and local residents, concept designs can now be unveiled for the build, with the new centre to include a range of amenities not currently available to users of the existing facility.

The new centre will include:

- a 50m, 10-lane indoor pool suitable for carnivals, sport and recreational use
- a 25m, six-lane outdoor pool with lagoon
- a dedicated warm-water indoor pool incorporating a rehabilitation program
- a dedicated indoor pool for learn-to-swim programs
- diving amenities
- extensive indoor and outdoor all-ages play areas with waterslides, splash zones, BBQs and lawned areas
- Café available for both centre visitors and other Park 2 users
- Gym and fitness facilities three times larger than previously planned
- Spa, sauna and steam room
- community change rooms

- improved car parking with access from Jeffcott Road, improved public transport, pedestrian and cycle pathways connecting the centre with existing networks

These significant improvements have increased the scope of the project, with the 2023-24 State Budget allocating an additional \$55 million, taking the total project to \$135 million over three years to build the expanded centre incorporating the new design features.

The current Adelaide Aquatic Centre costs the Adelaide City Council more than \$1 million a year. The decision to invest capital upfront in better facilities will help underpin a more productive business model.

The concept design will allow us to return even more space to park lands than previously committed – with 1000 square metres more open space in North Adelaide's Park 2 at the completion of the project than there is today.

To accommodate this outcome and minimise the impact of construction on the Park Lands, the Government and the City of Adelaide have agreed that the existing Aquatic Centre will now close during the major construction phase, from August 2024 until the project's completion in the Summer of 2025-26.

This will accommodate an innovative multi-level sustainably-designed facility that minimises the footprint of the new centre and will be set back 70m from Barton Terrace West – up from the early planning of 40m - enhancing its connectivity with the Park Lands while improving the amenity for residents.

This approach also better aligns with National Heritage principles, creating a clearer delineation between the city and Park Lands and allowing the structure to be embedded within the natural landscape.

This will enable the new recreation spaces in the north-west section of Park 2 to be delivered in collaboration with the City of Adelaide six months earlier, returning recreational spaces back for use by schools and sporting groups.

It will also mean the centre's outdoor and retail spaces will not be impacted by construction works of demolishing the old centre after opening of the new centre.

Most current Aquatic Centre users, including learn-to-swim programs, will be accommodated across other facilities for the period between shutting the existing centre and the opening of the new centre, while the centre's permanent staff can be redeployed in other roles.

The Government will spend the next 14 months working with pool users and operators to make the transition as seamless as possible. Alternative pool options have already been identified at venues including the Parks Community Centre and UniSA's Pridham Hall.

Additional Sports Vouchers to be made available to all Learn to Swim program participants at the existing Aquatic Centre, to ease the cost on families during the construction period.

The revised approach will allow for the shortest possible construction timeframe, reducing the ongoing impact on Park 2, its users and the local community by up to 12 months.

This also means that new recreation spaces in the north-west section of the park can be delivered significantly sooner, with recreational spaces to be available for use by schools and sporting clubs six months earlier than previously envisioned.

The State Government is in discussions with the Adelaide City Council about its role in the closure of the existing centre, covering the cost of demolishing and remediating the site of the existing council-run facility and returning the existing centre site back to Park Lands.

An Expression of Interest has been released for potential builders to construct the facility.

Quotes attributable to Peter Malinauskas

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a new state-of-the-art Aquatic Centre that will serve the needs of South Australians for decades to come.

This will be a facility with something for every South Australian, and it's important we do it right.

To create this landmark facility, an extra \$55 million has been allocated in this year's State Budget across the next three years, allowing us to include several exciting new features – indoor and outdoor pools, a deep-water and a warm-water option, a dedicated learn-to-swim facility, café, gym, steam, sauna and spa as well as indoor and outdoor play spaces with water slides, a bombing pool and splash zones.

We've listened to the community about what they want to see in this facility and we're making it happen.

And we've been able to not just retain but enhance open space for Park Lands – the new aquatic centre will not merely have no net impact on the existing Park Lands, it will return an additional 1000 square metres that isn't currently available, with the new design set more comfortably in its Park Lands location.

We acknowledge there will be some inconvenience for users of the current facility during the transition phase, but the end result will be an Adelaide Aquatic Centre South Australians can enjoy for generations.

Quotes attributable to Tom Koutsantonis

We asked the community what they wanted in a new centre – and more than 1200 people shared their views.

They told us they wanted a world-class, sustainable and accessible facility that could be used by all age groups – and that is exactly what we're delivering.

We expect interest will be strong among major construction firms to build this landmark new centre, and we look forward to contracting a builder later this year.

Quotes attributable to Stephen Mullighan

This will be a centre packed with leisure, recreation and wellbeing features that will serve the needs of South Australians well into the future, built on a smaller footprint than the existing facility.

We'll also expand the Sports Voucher program for children enrolled in the Learn to Swim programs at the centre to help ease the cost on families during the construction period.

By giving 14 months' notice before the closure of the existing pool, we'll be able to work with users to find temporary alternative venues to minimise any disruption.

Quotes attributable to City of Adelaide Lord Mayor Jane Lomax-Smith

I want to thank the State Government for listening to the concerns of North Adelaide residents and altering their designs to be more sympathetic to those living in the immediate area.

The new facility's smaller footprint than the existing structure and being located further away from the edge of Barton Terrace West, will lessen the impact on the neighbouring residents' daily lives.

Of course, that provides some added challenges to design and construction so we will keep working with the department to see how the new centre can be integrated into its Park Lands surrounds with more trees and vegetation.

As a Council we will now go through our processes to discuss remediation of the old site and development of new surrounding park lands amenities.

I encourage the public to continue to use the current Aquatic Centre and we will work with our dedicated staff as we transition towards the centre's closure.

Quotes attributable to Lucy Hood

The new Adelaide Aquatic Centre will be a gamechanger for our local area.

This project will deliver more Park Lands, more facilities and more play areas for families.

I cannot wait to see the centre open and become a thriving recreation, wellbeing and community hub that will keep people active, connected and healthy.

As a parent who attends swimming lessons at the centre with my two children, I understand there will be inconvenience during the construction phase. The Government will work with the centre's users in the lead-up to this period to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

The end result will be a state-of-the-art centre that locals, families and the wider community can be incredibly proud of.