



NORTHBRIDGE
PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

Working for the advancement of Northbridge since 1919

ABN 733 956 702

PO Box 357 Northbridge 2063

March 31 2010

Mr Steven Head
Director Infrastructure Services
Willoughby City Council
PO Box 57
CHATSWOOD NSW 2057

Dear Mr Head

Re: Aquatic facility needs – a strategy plan 2010-2020

The Committee of NPA has reviewed the draft Aquatic Facility Strategy Plan produced by H M Leisure Planning Pty Ltd dated October 2009. The Committee has included its comments in this letter but notes that Leisure Centre Manager Kate Day is the NPA's guest speaker at a meeting of members on May 12 and our members may have additional comments that we can also pass on to you after that meeting.

We appreciate that Council commissioned the report to review the Council area aquatic needs given the expected population growth of younger and ageing people.

In general, NPA believes the expansion plans for the Leisure Centre will be a welcome initiative for residents and we support the expansion proposals. However, we have **serious concerns** about vehicle access to the expanded site, consequent traffic congestion, and adequate parking for users of the expanded facility. We also have questions about funding the expansion and about maintaining Northbridge Baths as an ongoing aquatic facility.

Aquatic recommendations

NPA supports the aquatic recommendations made for the Leisure Centre. We understand that these include: redevelopment of the internal eastern end for a learners' pool; construction of a warm water health pool over the outdoor lawn area car park immediately north of the pool hall (which would allow for **hydrotherapy**); upgrading and increasing the capacity of the 25m pool for lap swimming and coaching; development of an indoor/outdoor water play area to the north of the learners' pool over the staff car park; and either upgrading the 25m pool to 50m or adding a 50m pool to the south (this last recommendation is subject to completion of the prior ones).

Non-aquatic recommendations

NPA supports the proposed non-aquatic developments which we understand include: development of two indoor sports courts to the south (with car parking underneath) and installation of mezzanines for further fitness space and staff area.

Access, traffic and parking

With the planned increase in patronage of the expanded facility, traffic, parking and access are very significant issues specially for the nearby communities of Northbridge and Willoughby South. Already, traffic is chaotic in the area, particularly when Shore's playing fields are also operating. We therefore agree with H M Leisure that any redevelopment of the Leisure Centre will require careful consideration and resolution of traffic management, parking and venue access issues as a priority **before** any works programs are commenced.

We support H M Leisure's recommendations: to redevelop vacant grassed land opposite the Leisure Centre for parking (currently being used by net ball patrons); redesign Small St to create a separate resident-only access road between Marlborough Rd and Pendey St; to revise the road access to the Leisure Centre off Small St to reduce congestion; provide a shuttle bus to the Leisure Centre from the bus stop on Willoughby Rd and other suburbs poorly served by public transport; and to relocate up to three netball courts onto the lower car park as a means of freeing up land adjacent to the Leisure Centre for parking (specially for evening users). We note that Pendey St in particular is an important inward route (specially for Northbridge residents) for access to the Leisure Centre and requires special attention.

Although we are not traffic experts, we doubt that the recommendations will be adequate to cope with the considerable increase in vehicle traffic that can be expected. We urge Council to commission a major traffic study of the proposals, to cover a wide area of the surrounding district, before any further work is carried out on the expansion proposals.

As part of its traffic study, we suggest that Council examines improved intersection design at Willoughby Rd and Small St. For example, if a right turn bay north and a left slip lane south were installed on Willoughby Rd, this may enable Willoughby Rd to be the preferred point of entry/exit rather than filtering through the suburb from Alpha Rd, etc. Also, it would remove the traffic focus from Shore playing fields on weekends.

We also note that the Leisure Centre car parks are a major reason for poor traffic flow because entry and exit from the upper car park conflicts with the lower car park. Redesign could assist the problem.

We suggest that Council investigates whether the netball courts should be on top of a large secure underground car park to better utilise the space, as excavation is far cheaper than buying new open space in Willoughby. Perhaps it may be feasible for Bicentennial Oval to be upgraded with an underground car park with the oval on top. During week days, when demand is low for sports parking, such a car park could be used for commuter park-and-ride with paid spaces to offset the cost of the facility.

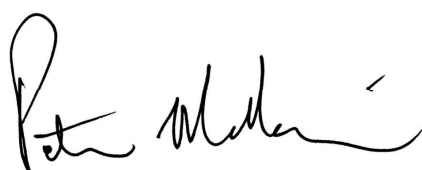
Funding

NPA is concerned about funding the substantial expense of this major expansion of Leisure Centre facilities and infrastructure. How does Council plan to finance the expansion? What is the availability of Government grants for such capital works? Will residential rates be increased or a levy be imposed on residents? If rates increase, we guess the project will appear far less attractive to ratepayers. The community needs answers to these questions before it can make sensible judgments about the attractiveness of the proposals.

Northbridge Baths

NPA assumes that the operations, maintenance and enhancements to Northbridge Baths will not be adversely affected by the expansion of the Leisure Centre.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter McNair', written in a cursive style.

Peter McNair
President

Copy: Sailors Bay Ward Councillors
Kate Day, Manager, Leisure Centre

*Northbridge Progress Association has been operating continuously since 1919.
At December 31 2009, the Association had 465 members.*