INNER WEST



Engagement outcomes report Dawn Fraser Baths Accessibility Upgrades

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Summary

Improving access to the water at Dawn Fraser Baths was the subject of engagement in February and March 2022 by Inner West Council. Residents and members of Council's Access Advisory Committee participated. Council also sought feedback on getting to Dawn Fraser Baths, as part of an Accessibility Audit.

Council employed a suite of tailored methods to engage with the community including:

- One to one phone calls to community members who expressed an interest in participating
- A Community Conversation - face-to-face onsite meeting
- Subsequent individual meetings
- An onsite discussion with the access consultant and Council's cultural advisor
- Engagement with Council's Access Advisory Committee.

Four community members received phone calls from Council to provide their feedback, nine people attended the onsite engagement and 15 members of the Access Advisory Committee discussed the broad access challenges, the feedback from the community conversations and the potential access ramp locations.

Overall, there was strong endorsement for the proposal to build a ramp for improved water access from the deck to the water. Some minor amendments to the concept designs presented were suggested for ease of access and minimal disruption to other users of the baths. None of the proposed locations for a ramp were favoured.

Beyond access to the water, other key issues highlighted were:

- challenges accessing the pool site from the Fitzroy Reserve car park owing to uneven surfaces adjacent to the water
- challenges accessing the pool site from the stairs down from Elkington Park
- limited parking availability in the vicinity and accessible parking in particular
- a challenge for local residents of locating suitable parking at peak pool use times.

Community feedback will be incorporated into future design iterations. Those who participated in the engagement will be updated on future developments by email or phone.

Background

Dawn Fraser Baths is home to the oldest pool and swimming club in Australia and is listed as a nationally significant heritage item. The Baths are located on a harbourside peninsula within the grounds of Elkington Park at 42 Glassop Street, Balmain.

The draft Dawn Fraser Baths Master Plan was on public exhibition from 31 August 2018 to 28 September 2018. The plans received more than 94% approval from the community with minor changes requested during the exhibition period.

In 2019, works commenced to refurbish the pool and on 8 September 2021, Council opened the newly refurbished Baths to the public following the issuing of a public health order specifically allowing the historic harbourside pool to reopen during the COVID-19 lockdown for NSW and Greater Sydney.

In September 2021 Council resolved to:

'Consult with the disability community in the inner west including the IWC Access Committee and key individual and organisational stakeholders on what changes are needed at the Dawn Fraser Baths to make them completely accessible'. In response, Council contracted a consultant to conduct an accessibility audit. Deliverables include:

- Priority 1 (short term) solution to provide access into the water from the deck. This will include review of local examples of access solutions at tidal baths such as Watsons Bay Baths for suitability at Dawn Fraser Baths.
- Priority 2 (medium term) holistic site audit report addressing access to and from the site. The report is to consider access within Fitzroy Avenue, lower parking spaces and across the sandstone pathway; wheelchair storage and personal storage near the proposed ramp into the water; accessible amenities and facilities; external access paths and options such as lifts if required.
- Council has contracted an access consultant, a marine engineer and an architect to develop concept designs for an access ramp to the pool

Engagement Methods

The following engagement methods were used:

Community Conversation

An onsite face-to-face Community Conversation was held on Saturday 12 March 2022, with local residents, and Council's external architect and accessibility consultant. Also in attendance were Councillor John Stamolis and Council officers.





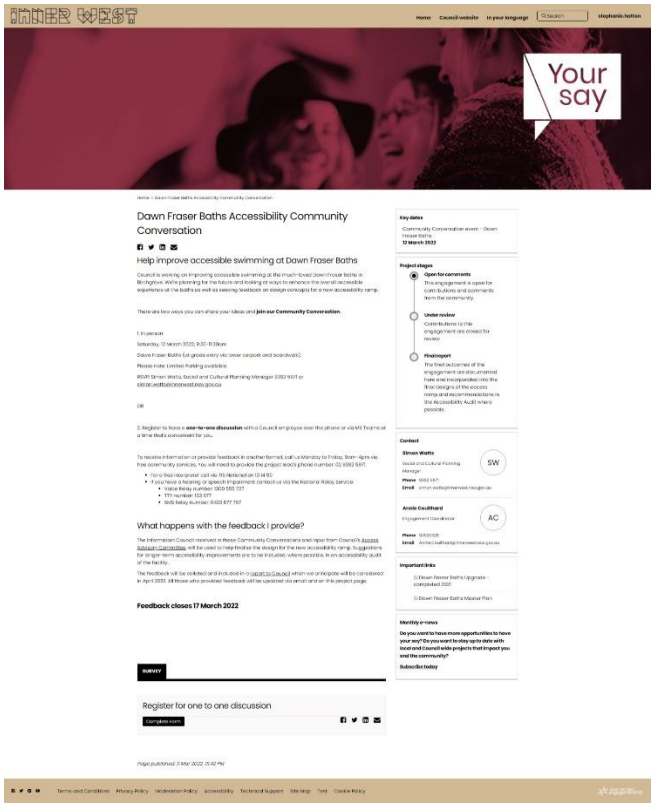


One-to-one community conversations

In addition to the onsite event, a number of residents received phone calls from Council officers to provide their feedback.

Yoursay.innerwest.nsw.gov.au

An online page was set up to promote the onsite Community Conversation session and allow members of the public who were unable to attend to register and receive a call from Council officers instead.



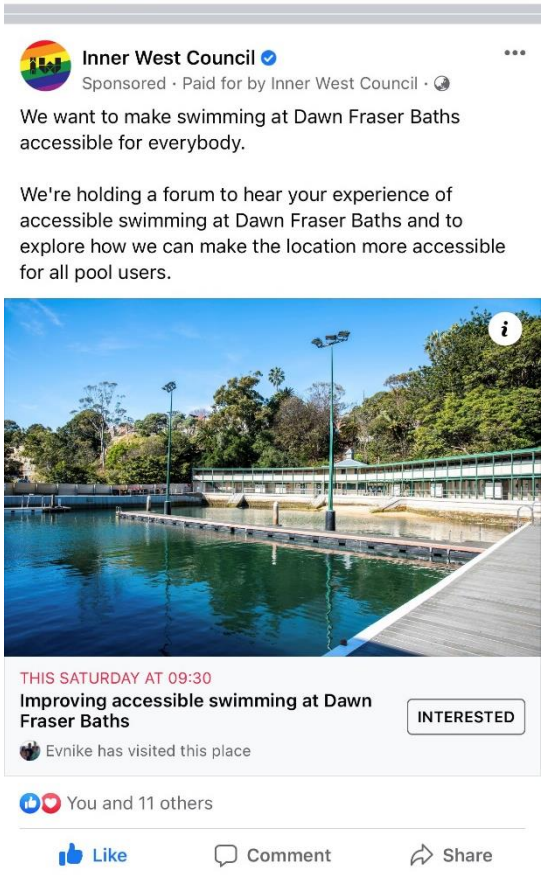
Access Advisory Committee Meeting

Council's local democracy group, the Access Advisory Committee met on 16 March 2022 to discuss the issue. They discussed options for improving water access and the broader accessibility issues at the site.

Promotion

The engagement was promoted using the following methods:

- Inner West Council newsletter
- Social media – Facebook event listing for the Community Conversation
- Onsite poster at Dawn Fraser Baths
- Listing in Council's 'What's On'
- Your Say Inner West website page





Engagement outcomes

Who did we hear from?

Council heard from members of the local community with access needs as well as local residents.

- 7 people attended the onsite face-to-face Community Conversation session
- 4 people participated in in-depth phone discussions with Council officers
- 10 people attended the Access Advisory Committee meeting presentation

What did they say?

Face-to-face Community Conversation session at Dawn Fraser Baths

- The consensus from the engagement is that the proposed ramp into the water would be a valuable addition.
- Some people reported that the steps into the pool are too steep for them to navigate. The railing on the steps into the pool can be too hot to hold and is too wide for a grip on both sides. People reported that the ladders down to the pontoons were too steep to be navigated confidently.
- Overall, there is significant support for a ramp entry to the water.

Site access

- The accessibility to the baths remains an issue.
- The steps down from Elkington Park are steep, uneven and tough to navigate given that it's the most direct route down to the baths.
- The pool's front entrance is slippery and can be very wet during and following rain.
- Another entrance is available via the side doors (by arrangement), and this is via the accessible parking in the lower carparking area in Fitzroy Reserve.
- The most accessible pathway to get to the pool is to arrive at the lower carpark and follow the boardwalk to gain access to the side or front entrance. There is no general public parking in that car park only accessible parking and a Council space.
- The pathway from the carpark to the pool entry could be more accessible.

Parking issues

- Parking in the immediate vicinity is in high demand, including the accessible parking spaces in Fitzroy Reserve.
- The roadway down to Fitzroy Reserve and the accessible parking area is steep, narrow and challenging to navigate on foot. It is however the only possible pedestrian pathway that does not involve stairs.
- People without authority use the accessible parking area illegally.
- Sometimes people are reported to park illegally in Elkington Park when using the pool.
- Timed and resident parking is supported by some residents.

Meeting of Council's Access Advisory Committee

- Members of the Committee were pleased with the work underway to improve accessibility and thanked those responsible in developing the options presented. They appreciated the attention given to improve access to each element of the pool including the beach area.
- They did not favour any one option. Their primary interest was that any option chosen provides safe, easy, independent and integrated access to/from the water and is supported by related facilities.
- They outlined the need to provide for both independent and assisted access to equitably address the scope of capabilities within the community who may use the baths.
- That it is important to plan for the secure storage of personal and/or disability related aids noting some will have need to keep a mobility device close to the ramp/pontoon and others will prefer proximity to a transfer location.
- Members asked about options for where people could transfer from their own wheelchair to the aquatic chair particularly if they need assistance. This may require a hoist (possibly a portable one) to be available that could be used on the boardwalk.
- Assisted transfer within an accessible change area was another option discussed along with a need for an adult change table facility.
- Members noted difficulties approaching the pool via available pathways and noted both the distance and uneven surfaces in getting to the entry from the lower carpark.