Newcastle Ocean Baths Stage 2

AMENDED DA2025/01321 | ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY SUBMISSIONS

Friends of Newcastle Ocean Baths Inc. (FONOB)
Provisional findings as at 15 October 2026

Overview

FONOB has analysed the publicly available submissions concerning the amended Stage 2 development application. While the amended proposal addresses some earlier concerns, particularly through removal of the rooftop terrace and revisions to the change-room roofs and internal arrangements, substantial community opposition remains.

The submissions demonstrate that opposition to aspects of Stage 2 should not be interpreted as opposition to restoring and improving Newcastle Ocean Baths.

Key statistical findings

- **243 PDF records examined**, including duplicates and supplementary submissions.
- **237 submission records retained** after six exclusions.
- **202 opposed (85.2%)** and **35 marked Support (14.8%)**.
- Of the 35 marked Support, **16 contained qualifications or objections to material elements** of the proposal.

These figures represent a provisional classification of submission records, not a certified count of unique individuals.

Principal concerns identified

1. Commercialisation and hospitality use

Many submitters support a modest kiosk or daytime café serving bathers but oppose the proposed scale of the Food and Drink Premises, potential alcohol service and extended operating hours. The central concern is whether hospitality remains secondary to the Baths' public bathing purpose.

2. Loss of genuinely open-air changing

A recurring objection concerns roofing the historic communal change rooms. Submitters distinguish between admitting daylight through a roof and preserving the traditional experience of changing beneath the open sky, with natural sunlight, sea air and informal social interaction.

3. Free public space and swimmer-first facilities

Submissions emphasise free seating, gathering spaces, accessibility, child supervision and safe circulation. Many express concern that commercial uses could diminish the Baths' longstanding function as an accessible public amenity.

4. Qualified support and constructive alternatives

Some submitters acknowledge improvements to the amended scheme while continuing to question particular elements. Ten submissions expressly reference architect Peter Shaddock, including his own and FONOB's submissions, with several supporting aspects of his Community Concept as an alternative approach to the redevelopment.

Heritage significance

The submissions consistently raise a fundamental question: **Will the redevelopment conserve not only the physical fabric of Newcastle Ocean Baths, but also the distinctive ways generations of people have swum, changed, gathered and enjoyed this public place?**

The community's principal concerns relate to genuinely open-air changing, the scale of commercial activity and preservation of free public amenities.

Conclusion: The amended proposal contains acknowledged improvements, but the submissions demonstrate continuing substantial opposition to elements affecting the Baths' public bathing function and living social heritage. These matters warrant careful consideration in assessing the heritage impacts of Stage 2.

Evidence: FONOB working collection of 243 PDFs, reconciled to 237 retained submission records. Findings are provisional and should not be treated as a certified count of unique submitters.