

Recommendations from the Assembly

September - October 2025

**“What type of aquatic facility
would best meet the needs,
values, and priorities of the
Napier community, and where
should it be located?”**

Napier's First
**Citizens'
Assembly**



Introduction:

A citizens' assembly is a form of public involvement in decision making where a representative sample of the public is invited to deliberate and develop recommendations in response to a remit question on an issue affecting the community. The organisation that posed the question then commits to taking on board the recommendations in future decision making.

Napier's first Citizens' Assembly took place over four consecutive Saturdays in September and October 2025. Planning for the Assembly was overseen by a group of advisors including representatives from mana whenua, youth and the multicultural association, disability advocates, elected members and Council officers.

Recruitment for Assembly members began in July 2025, with targeted and wide-reaching communications distributed throughout Napier, encouraging people to apply. By 11 August 652 people applied, and a final Assembly of 40 people representative of Napier's demography was confirmed on 3 September. A group of different ages, genders, ethnicities, living situations and experience with political engagement - the objective being 'Napier in a room'. All members attended an orientation and pōwhiri at Pukemokimoki Marae, followed by the four Saturday Assembly sessions.

Overview

Day 1 of the Assembly on 13 September was 'Immersion Day'

Speakers (day 1)

Derryn Finlayson

Napier Aquatic Centre Manager

Tina Haslett

Regional Lead, Spaces and Places – Sport Hawke's Bay

Blanche Paewai-Ashcroft

Disability and Inclusion Advisor

Sioned Oliver

Deputy Principal Fairhaven School

Andrew Clibborn

Building Contracts & Asset Manager

Tipene Cottrell

Director & Owner Pā Environmental

Talia Foster

Financial Controller Napier City Council

Paul Lloyd

Executive Director Apollo Construction

On Day One, the Assembly heard presentations from various professionals who have vested interests in the local aquatic facility from local and regional perspectives. The Assembly took particular interest in how our facility fits within the local, regional and national structure of aquatic sports facilities. We also heard about the costs, the services delivered, and the accessibility of those services. There were a lot of questions for each speaker. These presentations set the way forward for the Assembly to determine the needs, values and priorities of the Napier community and where the facility should be located.

Derryn Finlayson, Tipene Cottrell and Tina Haslett spoke on how to best meet Napier's needs with respect to maximising the social returns of our recommendations. We were given financial and technical advice from Andrew Clibborn and Paul Lloyd and financial sustainability information from Talia Foster. Lastly, Sioned Oliver and Blanche Paewai-Ashcroft advised on how to best meet the needs of all, including those with disabilities or neurodiversities.

Day 2 on 20 September was 'Discovery Day'

The Assembly toured various aquatic centres: Ocean Spa, Hastings Regional Aquatic Centre, Clive Pool and Napier Aquatic Centre. We asked each manager about what was and wasn't working. Hearing the specific operating and maintenance costs of these facilities was confronting for some Assembly members. It was good to hear from each manager about what they would do differently if they were to build the facility today.

Upon return, we heard from leading representatives of various groups that currently use the facilities at the Napier Aquatic Centre. The discussions highlighted that the pools are viewed as essential to community health, wellbeing, and connection, with a strong emphasis on ensuring facilities are accessible for all ages and abilities. Key priorities included keeping shallow and accessible pools, providing more suitable changing rooms, and planning for increased future demand.

Pool specifications were discussed, with interest in a 50m facility but acknowledgment that a 25m, 10-lane pool may be a more practical compromise, alongside the need for adequate seating, waterproof infrastructure, and club or meeting rooms for broader community use. Each speaker had a diverse set of wants and needs specific to their need set. For example, Rhian Tamanui recommended that a learn-to-swim pool would provide high value for money because a small and

shallow pool would provide space for many young children *and* provide valuable social good such as happiness and safety for young children and parents.

Finally, Richard Munneke summarised Napier City Council's information on possible locations. He gave valuable information about the strengths and weaknesses of the main locations, mainly information about the current Onekawa site and the previous location choice Prebensen Drive, then briefed us quickly on seventeen other locations. Many Assembly members felt there was not enough information to recommend a specific location. In the intervening week, clarity came from the organisers that we were to give guiding recommendations about location but would not be expected to choose a specific site. Given this, our report has provided location priorities but not specific location guidance.

Panel participants and speaker (day 2)

Brendon Rope

Active Recreation and Sport Facilities Consultant specialising in aquatic facilities
Co-owner Dolphin Academy Swim School, Taradale

James McNally

Hawke's Bay Gannets coach

Rachel Gunson and Vee

Team Lead Active Living Advisor in the Green Prescription Team for 17 years

Rhian Tamanui

Community Service Coordinator for Whānau Āwhina Plunket

Andrew Torrens

Aquahawks Grants & Funding Manager

Richard Munneke

Commercial & Property Manager Napier City Council

Day 3 of the Assembly on 27 September was 'Deliberation Day'

On Day 3 we worked collectively to turn all that information into a draft recommendation document. Working in groups, we deliberated on the various components of our proposal. This included our initial list of wants and needs, along with our shared values, priorities, and considerations regarding the location and type of facility. Each group engaged in collective discussion to form the first iteration of the recommendations. These drafts were then presented to the wider Assembly, where we assessed the level of support for each recommendation. Feedback was gathered on the different elements, and this input informed the development of a second draft.

Day 4 of the Assembly on 4 October was 'Delivery Day'

Day 4 was finalising recommendations as best we could. This topic is complicated and has historically been quite contentious. There are a variety of issues at play and the Assembly has done the best it can with the information and time available. We found drafting recommendations in the allotted time to be quite challenging.

NB: The Citizen's Assembly was provided a large amount of research and studies in guiding its decisions. These materials can be found on the Napier Citizen's Assembly website.

Napier Community Priorities, Values, and Needs for the Future Aquatic Facility

The Assembly would like the Napier City Council to use the following priorities, values, and needs to guide the process of designing and building our future aquatic centre:

Leisure and Functionality

The facility must be a vibrant community resource, balancing leisure and recreation, health and wellbeing. The new facility should provide a variety of cost-effective activities.

Affordability

Affordability for both users and ratepayers is a top priority. Upfront investment in sustainable infrastructure can lower operating costs long-term. A balance must be struck between capital costs and lifetime value.

Accessibility

Location must be central and well-connected, ideally in close proximity to an arterial route. Design must meet accessibility standards of the facility both internally and externally. Additionally, the new aquatic facility needs to be built with security and safety in mind.

Cultural Awareness

It is important that we honour our Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and respect culturally significant locations, resources and narratives in the design and maintenance of the pools. The Assembly respects that water and the environment is of cultural significance.

Sustainability

The new aquatic facility should be designed with a focus on the future, being able to adapt to technological advancements, with the ability to expand and to continue to ensure energy efficiency.

Napier Assembly Recommendations for the Type of the Future Aquatic Facility

Recommendation:

The Assembly has determined that our future aquatic centre be built with the following considerations.

At a high level, we recommend the pool is community focused and should have leisure and recreation spaces, and health and wellbeing areas (acknowledging Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapawha model). Furthermore, we recommend that it is multipurpose and includes multifunctional spaces.

The Assembly group's shared understanding of the terms are:

Community focused. This means the facility is designed and managed with the needs, wellbeing and engagement of the local community in mind, rather than just being a place for swimming, as per the Aquatic Facility Development Guidelines.

Leisure. This could include relaxation, lifestyle, spa, outdoor activities and pool.

Recreation. May include water play, slides, fun, a bbq area.

Health and Wellbeing. For example, supporting Green Prescription, hydrotherapy, lane swimming, etc.

We acknowledge that the key areas above often intersect and may contribute to one or more or all areas.

We would like to express that we do not want anything taken away from the services currently provided at NAC. Competitive facilities (such as those provided at Hastings Sports Park) are out of scope for this project.

The Assembly has used the QEII as a reference point, adopting from that design ideas about how to meet our community needs.

Must haves (in order of priority):

25 x 25m lane pool (multiple use, e.g. lane swimming, aquaerobics, inflatables)

Learn to swim 25 x 10m / neurodiverse pool (separate area enabling quiet, low stimulation space)

Large hydrotherapy pool (one body of water with chairlifts, appropriate water temperature, ramps, handrails)

A shallow pool for young children with splash and play options

BBQ area, tables as well as outdoor play e.g volleyball, chess

Universal accessibility - must include adequate supply to meet the needs of changing population and projected growth. Building should be above code and standard for truly accessible facilities (National Aquatic Facilities Strategy) including ramps, chairlift / hoists, handrails, and accessible changing rooms (2+), family room (2+) and unisex bathrooms.

Adequate safe parking for disability, families, buses (school groups etc), safe drop off zones.

Hydroslides

Water bombing pool

Outdoor pool

Spa pool

Medium Priority: (Nice to haves)

Aqua climbing wall

Sauna, steam room

Low Priorities: (Seen as not needed)

Lazy river

Gym

Cafe

Rationale:

There are a couple of reasons why the Assembly has made these recommendations.

We have an ageing population and therefore a need for therapeutic facilities such as hydrotherapy pools. Data on our community suggests that currently we have plenty of water space overall, but an over representation of competition facilities. This is based on the Napier Disability Strategy 2019-2023. Over half of Napier is over 55, and many have disability needs. Furthermore, only 15% have been accessing the Onekawa Pool which may refer for better accessibility for this demographic.

Recommendations from a 2023 survey from Sport Hawkes Bay outlined that the major demand is leisure, recreation, and health and wellbeing. Furthermore, aquatic facility development guidelines indicate the market sways 60 to 70% towards recreation and leisure.

As above we need to provide **more** leisure and recreation facilities that provide recreation for kids, families, teenagers (event specific or fun stuff: manu comps, outdoor pools, and activity based fun).

References:

Tina Haslett's presentation Sport Hawkes Bay (2023 demand)
Quarterly visitation reporting Napier aquatic centre and NCC
2015 aquatic facility guidelines
Paul Hasset QE2 facility
National Aquatic Facilities Strategy

Napier Assembly Recommendations for the Location of the Future Aquatic Facility

Recommendation:

The Assembly determined that it didn't have enough information to identify preferred sites or locations.

Given this, we recommend that the Napier City Council continues to explore and study alternative sites to the current location as discussed in the Citizens' Assembly. We have given the following principles, ordered from most to least important, for the City Council to consider when determining a location.

Accessible to those who will use it - close to schools, sports groups, close to homes, e.g., young people with families, older and retired people, high population density areas

Able to safely use both private and affordable public transport (current or built).

High value for money: maximise the social return on the money spent to deliver it (cost to ratepayer)

And we would also like to specify the following technical requirements that should be considered:

Capable of supporting the recommended facilities and services providing opportunities for future development.

Safe from natural hazards (lower risk)

We have agreed to individual site consideration guidance based on information provided by NCC. Based on the information received to date, we invite NCC to consider further information/assessment and possible feasibility studies on sites that meet the following principles:

Overall traffic in the area
Natural hazards
Bus/bike routes
Sites of special significance to local iwi

Should the NCC determine that moving the location away from its current site is best, we ask that consideration of reuse should be given to smaller outlier buildings at the current site (e.g. could Allan Pool be given to Plunket, gym leased, etc.)

Rationale:

We make the above recommendations because our purpose is to create a community pool that promotes the health and happiness of as many community members as possible. By choosing to build where demand is highest, we maximize social returns. Working towards manageable costs ensures the burdens on ratepayers is worth paying.

The location of the aquatic facility is essential for accessibility and assurance of use. The following further addresses what needs to be considered under the guiding principles:

Transport - bus routes, bikes, walk, car
Sufficient parking, to meet standard of sustainable Napier
Space to grow / room for expansion
Walking distance of approximately 6 schools
Close to shopping centre
Original site or close proximity to the current site due to its central location

For future consideration by NCC:

Investigate the demographic profile and land expansion of Napier over the next 30 years to determine where intended users of the facility will live, go to school, and retire. This information can help determine the central area within which individual sites can be identified and assessed for affordability and maximum access by intended users.

References:

We have used the guiding principles provided to assess and consider potential sites. As examples: Park Island, Onekawa and Marewa appear to meet the principles based on the information provided to date.

Supporting Information Documentation: ***Locations Additional information.***

Minority Report 1)

Minority Recommendation 1:

That the Council retain the Citizens' Assembly Voice and representation to continue assisting the Council and the community to determine the final outcome for the Napier Aquatic Centre.

Rationale:

This assembly has gone through a huge learning process and we now have significant knowledge to contribute to the development of the aquatic centre within the regional aquatic strategy.

This will also address the necessary local knowledge and information required to make realistic recommendations to Council on behalf of the community.

An ongoing working community ADVOCACY group which represents the public throughout the process and final decision making.

Community representation should be involved in the professional consultancy process engaged by Council as well as the Sport HB regional plan and other interested parties. This will guarantee assured continuity as council staff and representatives change over time.

References:

It is vitally important that research be carried out on behalf of the community to access the needs versus wants listed above

Please reference the appendices attached.

Additional research and recommendations by C Boulton.

Information Overview - Considerations and Discussion Topics.

Minority Report 2)

Minority Recommendation 2:

Facilities need to be sustainable over time with regards to the building and the costs to run it including size, products and design.

Rationale:

Example of engineering considerations could include:

Cost effective engineering design.

Sustainable & efficient products

Longevity & maintenance costs are reflected in the materials are critical

Investigate a retractable roof on potential secondary pool

Design can reflect Napier's past.

Examples to offset the financial burden on the Napier rate payer:

NCC Assets/lands that can be sold to contribute to the funding of the project. Eg. Ocean Spa

Apply for central Government funding.

Interest rates as low as possible or even exemptions/tax break

NCC sell bonds to Napier city ratepayers to help fund and also give the community a stronger sense of ownership for now and the future. Similar Napier Port ratepayer vested interest

Enduring Sponsorship/Donations from Local entities eg. Utility companies like Unison etc

Maximise natural light in the overall design which reduces energy costs.

References: