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MOUNT BARKER
DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

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Mount Barker Dives into New Aquatic Centre

Mount Barker District Council has revealed the detailed concept design for stage one of the new aquatic and leisure centre being co-funded with the Government of South Australia's Local Government Infrastructure Partnership Program and Australian Government's Community Development Grant Scheme.

The new facility, which will replace the ageing Mountain Pool complex in Mount Barker, is to be built on council owned land bordered by Bald Hills and Springs Roads.

The council's General Manager Planning and Community, Marc Voortman said the centre will be the catalyst for activating the broader recreation and sport precinct.

"The site already contains stage one of the Summit Sport and Recreation Park and heritage barns, and the new facility will connect with these and the Laratinga Wetlands by existing and new linear trails," Mr Voortman said.

The scope of the design, which was informed by extensive community consultation, was approved by the council in August 2021.

Architects from DesignInc were appointed in 2022 to lead the design process with the council and community, through a Community Reference Group, to produce an outstanding centre that will deliver the best outcomes for the region.

The design of the indoor aquatic and leisure centre, features a competition capable 25m lap pool, leisure pool, toddler splash and play area, warm water therapy pool, gymnasium, café, crèche, and community and wellness rooms.

Other features include sensitive integration with the site's existing native trees and heritage barns and careful consideration of the topography of the land. The building orientation and design enables an attractive outlook to the Summit and adjacent creek corridor.

“Council is working hard to build a high quality, contemporary aquatic and leisure centre that will serve the needs of our community well into the future, Mr Voortman said,

“The centre offers a rare opportunity to consider a new form of social space for Mount Barker, the simple joys of swimming and playing, and gathering with family and friends. Our vision for this contemporary facility strikes a balance between providing for the needs of a growing and diverse community whilst ensuring its operation is financially sustainable.”

The facility has been designed to allow for expansion in the future with additional structures such as water slides, outdoor 50m lap pool and indoor sports courts able to be accommodated.

The council has been successful in obtaining \$22.3 million in grant funding from both the Federal and State governments towards the 2019 preliminary cost estimate of \$28.5m - \$30m.

COVID-19, global market influences, inflationary pressures, resource availability, fuel and freight price increases, and other factors have resulted in a significant escalation in the cost of construction since 2019.

An extensive review of the detailed concept design in light of current market influences has been made by the council which estimates an overall increase in the project cost of up to 35 per cent.

“The significant increases in construction costs are challenging and will require the project team to test all aspects of the detailed design and validate decisions through a robust cost benefit analysis process, Mr Voortman said.

“The forecast escalated cost to deliver this project and others as a result of market conditions, and overall timing of Council’s capital works program including this project will be considered in preparing the 2023 - 2033 Long Term Financial Plan.

“We will continue to actively pursue all additional funding opportunities, including developer contributions and further State and Federal government grants; robustly challenge design decisions; and continue to monitor market sentiment and project timing to mitigate any shortfall in capital funding.”

The council will soon lodge a development application for the new indoor aquatic and leisure centre before going out to tender for construction targeted to start in May 2023 with completion by October 2024.

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