

**Save Mayfield Swimming Pool Campaign**  
**Newcastle City Council Public Voice Presentation**  
**June 2011**

[slide #1: montage of pool scenes]

**Introduction**

Lord Mayor and Councillors, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today, to give you an update on Mayfield Swimming Pool as a thriving community asset, one that is rich with potential, and one that provides a remarkable opportunity for Council to be a model of community engagement and cooperation.

My name is Liam Phelan and this is Stephen Clarke. We're here representing the Save Mayfield Swimming Pool Campaign, and we'll be sharing the honours today.

The constructive relationship between our group and Council dates back to the Extraordinary Meeting of 11th December 2007, when Council resolved to retain Mayfield Pool and to work with our group to improve and promote it.

We are very happy to have this opportunity to present a summary of the efforts we have made since then, and the progress that has been accomplished. We also want to outline, and seek your support for, our plans for the continued success of the pool in the coming season and beyond.

**1. Thriving Community Asset**

Mayfield Swimming Pool is a thriving community asset. The images behind me are one way of telling that story. Since we began working together in late 2007, we've seen the Pool move ahead in leaps and bounds.

This is a story that can be told with statistics – for example, a 20% increase in Pool attendance numbers. It's a story that can be told in terms of landmarks: Council and the community working together for the introduction of new play equipment and shaded areas at the Pool, and holding several community events that have drawn people to the pool and raised its profile. Council, the community and Port Waratah working together to install solar heating at the Pool.

It's a story too that can be told by the attention given to the effort to ensure the Pool's future – from the local media, as well as in collaborative work with the University of Newcastle and the writing of an extraordinary piece of theatre that tells the story of the Pool and what it means for our community.

It's a story that can be told by looking at the diverse ways the Pool is used. Here you see a listing of activity bookings at the Pool for the 2010-11 season.

[slide #2: the calendar of the past season]

This listing includes school swimming carnivals, scuba lessons, swimming lessons, kids parties, the daily early swimmers group, the Newcastle Premiers Swim Club and others.

Save Mayfield Swimming Pool Campaign has worked hard – and creatively – to ensure the Pool’s future. We’ve created a web site at [mayfieldpool.com](http://mayfieldpool.com) to support and promote the pool. We’ve organised a trial of regular Sunday afternoon concerts at the Pool under the banner of Sound Waves at Mayfield Pool. We’ve organised Season Opening and Closing Community Picnics, and we celebrate the Pool’s birthday in November as a special event. A good working relationship between Council and the community means these sorts of things can be achieved.

[slide #3: mosaic designs]

We’ve also worked closely with Council’s Public Art Committee over the past 4 years to bring a Community Tile Project to fruition at the Pool. This is a project designed to add even more beauty to the already gorgeous Pool parklands – the designs behind me are simply stunning, and are the result of the tireless work of two community artists, as well as contributions from the Mayfield and wider community, through workshops involving primary and secondary school students, older folks and others, sharing their stories about what the Pool means for them.

We’re thrilled that after all this work, the project has now been given Council approval to proceed. And so we want to say thank you for this, and for the other support you have shown since 2007 for our Pool, and our community.

## **2. Rich With Potential**

We see Mayfield Pool as a wonderful community asset that is rich with potential. It is unfortunate that Mayfield in general has relatively few public spaces, perhaps because of its location or its history as a working class suburb. And yet in the pool we have a real gem of a property, spacious and grassy, well suited to a wide range of community use - including family recreation, sports and classes - whether based around the water or not.

Liam referred to the broad diversity of uses that the community already makes of Mayfield Swimming Pool. And yet we believe that much more can be done with this property to make it a venue that is highly integrated with the social fabric of everyday life in Mayfield and surrounding suburbs.

Many of our group's activities to date have been focused on value-adding to the pool by staging events such as Sound Waves and community picnics. These have received an excellent response and demonstrated a community demand for local events and activities at a comfortable venue such as the pool.

We would now like to extend this by planning in cooperation with Council a formal calendar of events at the pool for the 2011-12 season. This would include community picnics and Sound Waves, but also new events such as yoga or pilates classes, Christmas carols, youth programs, open air cinema nights and so on.

The possibilities for our calendar of events are endless once we start to explore, and the potential returns in terms of increased patronage and community building are very substantial. But it will require commitment both from ourselves and from Council to achieve these returns and it will require access to publicity for us to promote these events and ensure high levels of awareness and attendance by the community.

This brings me to another point I would like to touch on briefly. Council have always done an excellent job of operating the pool. It is clean, safe, well maintained and supervised, and has benefited greatly from several recent capital works.

But we feel that not enough effort has been devoted to marketing this exceptional property and achieving the high levels of patronage that it deserves. We understand that Council has a large portfolio of properties and limited time to focus on each one. But this is where we can help.

The pool is currently not a big feature of Ingall St. It is set back behind its car park, hidden from view by a plain 1960s brick facade. Time and again, we hear people express surprise at discovering the pool and its wonderful interior after years of living in or around Mayfield.

We feel it is essential to promote the physical presence of the pool site so that the community are made aware of its existence, and its role as a vibrant and dynamic community hub.

We have tried to address this over the last years with repeated requests and submissions to council for better signage and an outside counter at the kiosk to create a cafe style setting outside the turnstile, but unfortunately these efforts have not come to fruition yet.

None of these measures need to be particularly expensive. Something as simple as a changeable-letter sign out the front with pool opening hours, water temperature and current events would add enormously to its streetfront profile and would be essential to support our calendar of events. Here is a vision of how it would look.

[slide #4: Pool front with kiosk setup and changeable signage]

### **3. Opportunity for Council**

In short, Mayfield Pool presents a remarkable opportunity to Council. The Pool is rich with potential – and potential that does not require significant outlay.

We describe our working relationship with Council since late 2007 as constructive and fruitful. And the evidence of our effectiveness, the impact of our joint efforts, is there in spades.

However, we feel some concern that in more recent years, the commitment of Council's officers to the future of Mayfield Pool has lessened somewhat. Even as Mayfield Pool's future is so bright, we are concerned that if Council officers' attention is overly directed to Lambton Pool, then we run the real risk of Mayfield Pool suffering a slow death. So, as we see it, our working relationship with Council remains one with a strong foundation, but one that is calling for some attention. For example, through 2008 and 2009 we met roughly quarterly with Council officers. More recently that has fallen away. We are aware that there has been a significant amount of change within Council, restructuring and so on. We appreciate that may have contributed to some disruption.

And so we ask you today to reaffirm Council's earlier commitment to work together with us to ensure the Pool's future. The specific language passed by Council refers to establishing a business case for the Pool. Our view is that we are doing our part in that regard.

We would like to work with Council officers to:

- Develop a strategic approach to Pool marketing. There's plenty that can be done here, at modest cost, as we have outlined.
- Develop a strategic approach to promoting and maximising the diverse uses of the Pool and parklands. For example, we understand that there is at least one school that wishes to make more use of the Pool, but has been unable to do so because of other competing uses
- Explore how the existing kiosk could be changed to maximise patrons' experience of the Pool. This is something we've been pursuing for some time . Again, developing this concept further is less about financial outlay and more about attention and commitment.

## **Conclusion**

[slide #5: repeat of #1, montage again]

We are proud of the way Council and community have come together towards ensuring the future of Mayfield Swimming Pool and we commend Councillors for showing leadership in support of our community. We thank you for this opportunity to share with you our efforts and plans for the Pool and ask you to reaffirm your commitment to our Pool, and to our community.