



Frequently Asked Questions

Project overview

Whitehorse City Council is transforming the Whitehorse Centre into a highly accessible, flexible and contemporary venue that meets the diverse and changing needs of its users and patrons, and provides an expanded array of arts and cultural opportunities for the entire Whitehorse community for generations to come.

Preliminary design of the building has commenced and the new facility is expected to open in late 2023. The Whitehorse Centre will continue to operate throughout 2019.

1. Why is Council building a new performing arts facility?

The Whitehorse Centre is Council's performing arts and cultural venue and a beloved community facility, attracting over 100,000 attendees and 40,000 festival goers annually. However, now more than 30 years old, it is nearing the end of its functional working life.

Understanding the enormous value of the Whitehorse Centre to the entire Whitehorse community—for the many local performing arts groups, schools, community groups, private hirers and commercial clients as well as the loyal patrons — construction of a new facility is a strategic investment by Council for the long-term future.

The new facility will deliver on Council's arts and cultural vision "to be a creative community that is vibrant, diverse and engaged through our arts, culture and heritage".

2. What features will the new facility have?

Council will build the new facility to cater for current and future use. This includes:

- 600-seat auditorium with larger stage and modern back stage area
- 200-seat studio theatre enabling smaller scale works
- multipurpose rehearsal/dance studio
- multipurpose function room
- a greatly expanded range of shows, functions and events

- improved soundshell capability for community festival season
- multi-deck car park at the rear of the Nunawading Police Station to accommodate visitors to the Whitehorse Centre, Nunawading Library, Whitehorse Civic Centre and the Walker Park sports precinct.

An estimated 80% of usage will come from community groups and community-based Council programs such as the Whitehorse Centre professional season, midweek matinee season, sports awards and women's forum, amongst others.

3. How will a new performing arts facility benefit user groups and patrons?

The redevelopment of the centre will have improved facilities and infrastructure including; more space and flexibility, updated equipment while also addressing accessibility needs. Research conducted as part of the independent business case indicated that usage will improve overall user experience and dramatically increase participation opportunities for the community, user groups and patrons once the redevelopment is complete.

4. How will a new performing arts venue benefit the broader Whitehorse community?

A larger, purpose-built performing arts facility will enable a greatly expanded range and number of performing arts, events and function opportunities for the wider community to participate in and enjoy.

Council recognises that arts and culture are as important to the community's mental health and wellbeing as sport and recreation are to physical health and wellbeing. As such, Council is committed to its responsibility of providing arts and cultural activities as part of the more than 100 different services it delivers to the community every week.

5. Who will design the new facility?

To achieve the most effective and sustainable outcomes for the project—functionally, operationally and financially—Council will conduct a design competition in the first half of 2019. The competition will bring together some of Australia's most accomplished architectural minds to propose a new vision for the Whitehorse Centre.

The design competition process delivers innovative site planning and skilled architectural design to progress the project from the early concept design drawings to the next stage of design development. This process will deliver an exciting new vision for the Whitehorse Centre and the Civic Precinct. This design stage outcome will proactively:

- maximise green space to neighbouring residents by considering the position of the centre and its connectivity to the Library and Council Offices
- increase the useable space of the amphitheatre for the popular family festivals
- improve traffic and pedestrian movement on site
- enhance the appearance and use of the parkland setting
- respond to parking demands for the precinct and locate the multi-deck car park near the rear of the Nunawading Police Station.

As part of the design competition, a Stakeholder User Group Committee, comprising of key user groups, local residents and patrons, and a Council Advisory Committee, comprising of technical specialists, will provide input for consideration by a Competition Jury, which will make the ultimate decision on the winning team. The jury will be made up of design experts and Council representatives, including the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer, as Whitehorse's two most senior positions.

6. What car parking will be provided?

Current parking is inadequate and visitors to the civic precinct often park illegally if the car park is full. With the new facility able to offer an expanded range of performances, functions and events, and cater for larger audiences, there is a need for additional parking.

A new multi-deck car park at the rear of the Nunawading Police Station will enable easy, convenient and safe access to the Whitehorse Centre, library, Council offices, local parkland and nearby Walker Park sports precinct (cricket, football, tennis and gymnastics).

7. Will the new facility cater for all abilities?

To ensure people of all ages and abilities are able to access the facility, this project will be delivered in line with universal access principles and comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act*.

8. How much will the new centre cost?

Council is investing \$68 million in the building plus an additional \$10 million in a multi-deck car park at the rear of the Nunawading Police Station to enable easy, convenient and safe access to the venue and other parts of the civic precinct. The project will be funded over several financial years without any new borrowings or rate increases.

9. What sustainability measures will be put in place?

Council is committed to building sustainable, and energy and water efficient buildings in accordance with Council's Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022.

10. What is the timeframe for the project?

Preliminary building design works have commenced. The new facility is expected to open in late 2023.

11. How will local parking and traffic flow be affected during construction?

Council will work with VicRoads, as the main road authority, to ensure that traffic and parking associated with the project is planned, managed and monitored. During the

construction phase, the appointed contractor will be required to keep local residents and other nearby property owners informed of any changes to pedestrian or traffic movements, and provide traffic management to minimise any potential disruption to local traffic flow.

12. What about potential construction impacts?

During the construction phase, the appointed contractor will mitigate against any potential construction impacts such as noise and dust, in accordance with their Construction Management Plan.

13. What will happen to the current Whitehorse Centre performances, functions and other activities during the construction phase?

The current Whitehorse Centre will continue to operate throughout 2019. As construction and site planning is confirmed, Council will advise on the closure date of the existing centre and the transition planning for clients and patrons during construction.

14. How will Council communicate with the community during the project?

Council will communicate regularly with user groups and patrons of the Whitehorse Centre as well as local residents and others in the immediate vicinity of the site.

People can stay informed of this project and/or sign up to regular email updates, by visiting www.whitehorsecentre.com.au/redevelopment.html or contacting the project team by sending an email to whitehorsecentre.redevelopment@whitehorse.vic.gov.au or calling 9262 6165.