



State of Anticipation

Nigel Benton looks forward to the opening of the South Australian State Aquatic Centre

It may well be a product of the information age that we live in, but never before has the opening of a major aquatic facility in Australia attracted so much attention.

The first Australian State aquatic centre to open in this millennium, each step of the development of the South Australian State Aquatic Centre has been in the news; from its planning, through its construction, the installation of equipment, the filling of its pools, the appointment of its managers and the recruitment of the Centre's staff.

Now, with the Centre nearing completion and set to host Swimming Australia's National Age Championships from 18th to 23rd April, followed by its opening to the public in the following week, it is timely to preview what by Swimming South Australia General Manager Craig Hobart has called "the best aquatic facility in the southern hemisphere".

Located in what is known as the 'Marion Domain' in the Adelaide suburb of Oaklands Park, the \$100 million facility is part of a master-planned aquatic, recreation and health precinct; that will also include a purpose-built GP Plus Health Care Centre creating a new model of health care for Adelaide's southern suburbs, accommodating a range of health specialists including doctors, nurses, dentists, psychologists, social workers and health workers.

The development also includes multi-storey and underground carparks and a central pedestrian plaza.

At the heart of the development, the 19,500 metre² aquatic centre is being delivered by Adelaide-based Candetti Constructions in conjunction with the Federal and South Australian Governments and the City of Marion.

As will be evident on 18th April, the Centre will be capable

of hosting major state, national and selected international aquatic events and will be compliant with the requirements of world swimming governing body FINA for diving, water polo, synchronised and open water swimming.

Designed to host both national and international aquatic events and bring elite aquatic sport back to South Australia, the construction brief called for up to 4,500 spectators to be accommodated in the facility and an elevated catwalk to service events including lighting and media coverage requirements.

Candetti's in-house design team worked closely with lead structural engineers, GHD and the architectural team of Woodhead and Peddle Thorp Architects (PTA) to deliver a





project with optimal consideration of water activities and clear sightlines in keeping with its status as an international standard sporting facility.

Candetti's focus on implementing leading technologies and innovation from around the world and introducing this into the local setting has been the key to the project's success.

At the core of the Centre, AVP Commercial Pools were engaged to design and construct the competition and dive pools along with the facility's leisure water area. AVP's \$10 million plus contract has seen the provision of two FINA compliant 50 metre pools, one for competition and the other for water polo and diving.

The ten-lane competition pool, measuring 52 metres x 25 metre x 3 metres deep, includes viewing windows, a movable boom, starting blocks and associated pool equipment and features while the dive pool has an additional five metre deep dive bowl. The water polo/dive pool, measuring 55 metres x 25 metres, also contains viewing windows, movable boom, starting block, dive air sparges, starting blocks and associated equipment and features.

The facility also features a 25 metre program pool, a 15 metre x 12 metre x 1 metre deep Learn to Swim Pool, a toddler Pool, a 'splashpad' deck with interactive play features and a slide entry pool.

AVP's Water Treatment Manager John Mandelt adds that "three spas (two Thermal Hydro Spas and one Polar chilled hydro spa) have also been part of our scope, one (sited) adjacent to the dive tower and the remaining two located in the recovery room."

All pools are constructed using Myrtha stainless steel technology.

The Centre's leisure water include a 29 metre x 15 metre leisure pool with variable depth from 0 to 0.9 metres and an interactive water playground structure with mini waterslides, valves, water cannons, dump bucket and many other attractions. The play structure, the Aquatower Type 160 has been provided by Turkish waterpark suppliers Polin Waterparks and Pool Systems.

Polin have also supplied the Centre's two waterslides, both of which flow from a 15 metre high access tower. The 72 metre long Space Hole is a bowl ride for speed riding incorporating the excitement of an enclosed flume exiting into a huge open bowl and continuing with several whirls around the sides of the bowl with centrifugal force and ending with a big splash into the 'hole'.

The 102 metre long Aquatube Tunnel Slide is an enclosed tube slide featuring twists and turns. Both slides have been manufactured using resin transfer moulding (RTM) technology to ensure a smooth and shiny finish.

In terms of water treatment, Mandelt explains that "the pools use Ultra Fine Filters and Defender Regenerative Media Filters

from Neptune Benson, which provide superior water quality by filtering down to 1 Micron and removing over 99.9% of crypto in a single pass. These filters also save significant amounts of money on backwash water and associated energy costs .

"Water chemistry is controlled using chlorine gas and soda ash (while) Ultra Violet units are also provided to ensure advanced water and air quality is maintained."

Mandelt adds that "a state of the art water treatment distribution board complete with touch screen display and integrated controls provides the operator trend logging (and) remote alarm capabilities."

The Centre also features a well-equipped health club, group fitness studio and function rooms.

As of the beginning of March, the South Australian Government



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announced that the YMCA had been appointed as the preferred operator of the Centre.

Following the announcement, YMCA spokesperson Peter Schwarz explained that the 'Y' was honoured to be partnering with the SA Government in managing the facility and was looking forward to building relationships with both state and community organisations interested in using the centre's facilities. As Schwarz stated "the Centre is here for everyone, from recreational and community users to the elite. We're really excited about the prospect of having both our current and future champions of swimming, diving and water polo, training and performing at the centre."

Appointed just five weeks before the opening of the Centre, Schwarz hinted at the challenge ahead, adding "we're now very focused on getting everything in place to open the doors of the Centre."

The beginning of March also saw the process of recruitment for the Centre's 250 new staff members, from senior management positions through to casual/part time lifeguard and attendant roles. The ten-day period during which the vacancies were advertised yielded close to 1,700 applicants, with recruitment consultants Sportspeople, shortlisting and interviewing potential staff prior to their induction and training - noted as commencing in "late March".

Beyond the National Age Championships, the Centre is already scheduled to host five other major events (including the 2011 Short Course Championships and 2012 World Life Saving Championships), showcasing the centre to both Australian and international athletes, and is aiming to host the 2012 Olympic swimming trials.

South Australia has not hosted an elite national swimming competition since 1996, following a disastrous string of incidents at the Adelaide Aquatic Centre - including the infamous failure to register Glen Housman's 1500 metre world record in 1989.

The bid for the trials, scheduled for the first quarter of

2012, has received the full backing of the South Australia Government, with its events arm already involved in the submission process.

If successful, the State could expect a multi-million dollar economic boost from the associated influx of visitors keen to catch a glimpse of the country's swimming elite. The week-long trials would also be broadcast to a national and international audience.

Craig Hobart believes the Centre is a frontrunner in its bid to host the event, stating "we've a 90% chance of getting it ... the facility has been benchmarked against the best in the world (and is) FINA-compliant."

Earlier in the year, then South Australian Sports Minister Michael Wright backed the bid, stating "this facility will see Adelaide recognised as Australian swimming's latest destination."

Minister Wright added that "the Government would like to see as many events as possible in Adelaide, including the Olympic swimming trials."

As a community facility, the Centre will host South Australia's elite swimming development programs, with elite swimming and diving training set to move from the Adelaide Aquatic Centre, which is due to temporarily close for refurbishment after the Marion Centre opens.

Peter Schwarz adds that "we'll be introducing a number of programs at the centre to cater for people of all ages and abilities, helping to realise the shared vision of the South Australian Government and the YMCA to build a healthier, stronger and happier community."

As for its overall impact, Candetti Constructions Executive Chairman Alex Candetti believes that the new facility is truly world-class, stating "this is one of the first master-planned, mixed-use aquatic and health precincts in the nation."

Nigel Benton is Publisher of Australasian Leisure Management.