

10.5. The Coal Loader - budget redirection

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ATTACHMENTS	Nil
CSP LINK	1. Our Living Environment 1.2 Environmentally sustainable community 2. Our Built Infrastructure 2.1 Infrastructure and assets meet diverse community needs 4. Our Social Vitality 4.3 North Sydney's history is preserved and recognised

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the redirection of The Coal Loader education project funds to priority asset maintenance and repair works.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- In September 2024, funds were allocated to The Coal Loader digital wall project, forming part of the Genia McCaffery Display Room upgrade.
- Anticipated costs of the project totalled \$150,000.
- The digital wall was planned to be in the Genia McCaffery Building, however, this building is experiencing significant deterioration, needing urgent asset maintenance to address priority issues.
- It is proposed that funds be redirected from the digital wall project to priority asset maintenance.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council approve the redirection of The Coal Loader education project funds to priority asset maintenance and repair works.

Background

In September 2024, Council approved \$150,000 of Environment Levy funds to fund an education project at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability. The digital wall project was proposed as an interactive visitor experience that would blend the Coal Loader's rich heritage with digital interactions, to allow visitors to dynamically engage with stories and information about the site, fostering a deep connection with the site's past and its ongoing role in promoting sustainability.

Report

The digital wall project formed part of the Genia McCaffery Display Room Upgrade which was initiated in January 2024. To date, the project has resulted in a new floor plan, two new display cabinets being installed, the design of interpretive material for the display cabinets, and the installation of a touch table interactive display. The final component of the project was to deliver an interactive digital touch display on the northern wall of the display room. Consultants Grumpy Sailor Creative Pty Ltd were engaged to design the interactive display and to date have delivered a Stage One Concept Proposal.

Quoting on the subsequent stages of the project provided an estimated costing of \$148,980 for a large format multi-user digital display, with further additional costs for illustrative work and content creation (if necessary). There is no budget allocation for these additional costs.

The digital wall was planned to be located within the Genia McCaffery building at The Coal Loader, however, this State Heritage-listed building is experiencing significant deterioration, particularly in its roof and drainage infrastructure. The building decline has led to water ingress into the display room and has caused rising damp along the eastern walls, and mould on the ceilings.

Given these structural concerns, coupled with the unbudgeted additional costs, proceeding with the digital wall project is thought to be financially imprudent at this stage. Redirecting these funds to address urgent maintenance will help preserve the building's integrity and ensure the long-term sustainability of the site.

Furthermore, the redirection of funds to the repair of the Genia McCaffery infrastructure will assist Council in continuing to meet environmental and sustainability outcomes outlined in Council's Community Strategic Plan and its Environment Strategy, through the continued operation of The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability.

The Draft Delivery Program E4.7 includes an action to prepare a strategic plan for The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability to inform priorities. The digital wall project could be revisited as part of this plan.

Options

Council has the following options in relation to this matter:

1. Do nothing/take no action.
2. Approve the redirection of funds.

These options are assessed in the table below.

Option	Finance/Resourcing	Risk/Opportunity	Consultation
1.	Funds allocated to the Digital Wall project will be reabsorbed. Coal Loader staff time not required for project management.	The Genia McCaffery building will be at risk of further decline and deterioration due to unavailability of funds to address urgent asset maintenance priorities.	Not required.
2.	Funds would be reallocated to priority asset maintenance works that are currently unfunded.	Opportunity to address urgent asset maintenance issues and prevent the further deterioration of a heritage listed building.	Not required.

Option 2, is recommended for the following reasons:

- Currently unfunded priority asset maintenance issues can be addressed, preventing further deterioration of the building.

Consultation requirements

Community engagement is not required.

Financial/Resource Implications

Redirection of funds from the Digital Wall education project to currently unfunded asset maintenance projects is required.

Staff from the different areas of Council will work together to prioritise asset maintenance projects.