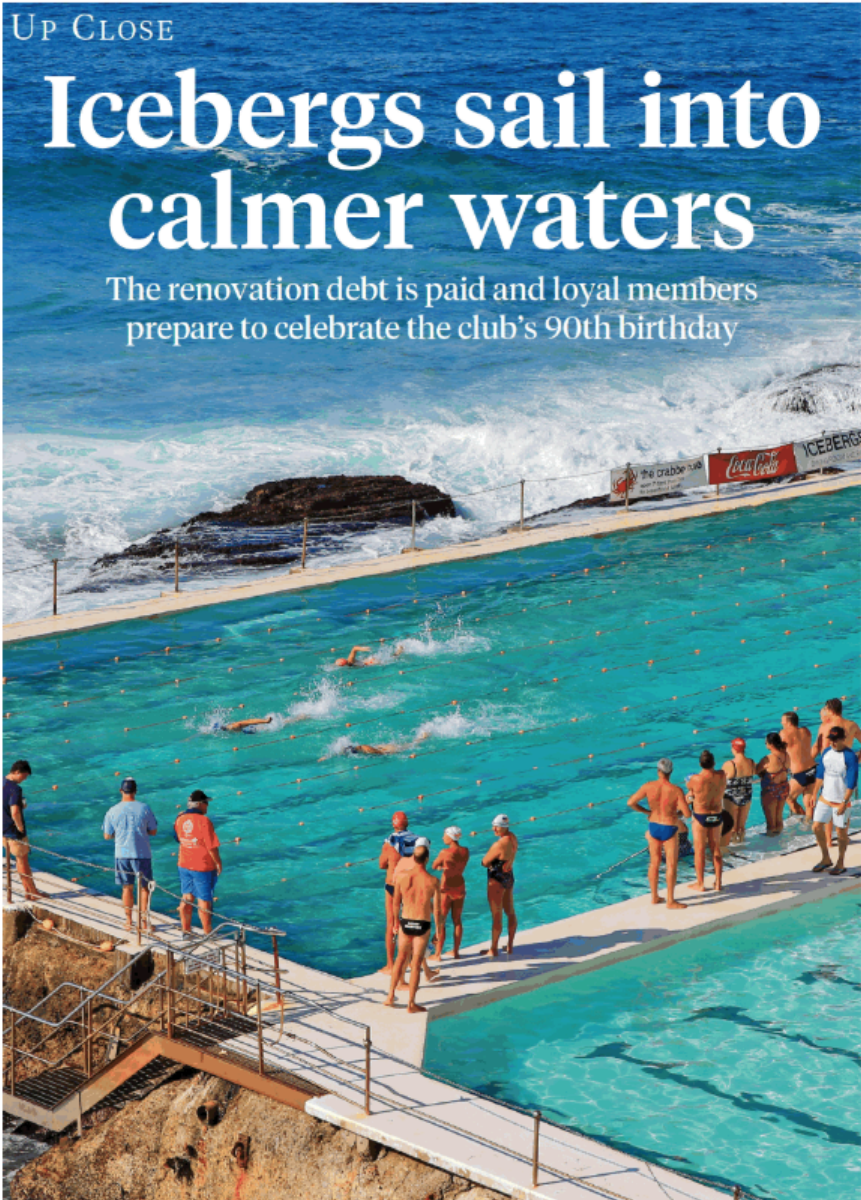


UP CLOSE

# Icebergs sail into calmer waters

## The renovation debt is paid and loyal members prepare to celebrate the club's 90th birthday



Picture: Roy Zinn

Caroline Jumpertz

**H**aving weathered a few storms, the Bondi Icebergs Club is entering a new era ahead of its 90th birthday. The club, where members famously swim races every Sunday throughout winter, lost its president David Hall to cancer late last month, and until recently, was saddled with a 40-year loan, since its massive upgrade to its crumbling building in 2002.

Arguably Australia's most recognisable ocean pool, the Bondi Baths is listed under the NSW Heritage Act and is part of the National Heritage register, is the venue for fashion parades, photo shoots, TV shows and commercials.

The Icebergs complex beside the pool houses one of Sydney's best restaurants.

"The Icebergs is like church. People are very accepting of who you are," said fourth-generation Bondi resident and Iceberg of eight years, Annie Parnell.

"It's an incredible bunch of people from 80-plus-year-olds right down to the little ones.

"Swimming in the ocean, in the pool, invigorates you. You feel so alive, you feel that the world is a beautiful place. It's a very healing thing," said Parnell whose father was an Iceberg also.

Waverley Mayor Sally Betts sums it up: "When you talk about the club, it's like the heart of Bondi and of Waverley.

"It's the essence of what Bondi is, there are young and old people, and nobody stands on ceremony.

"The soul and essence of the club shows what Bondi is all about and what Waverley is all about.

"It's the most amazing thing. If you want to take an overseas visitor out to dinner, and you take them to the club, they are astounded that you have a club where the food is good and relatively cheap, and you have this amazing view."

But back in the late 1990s, the club's outlook wasn't so rosy. Its finances were shaky and its building was in disrepair.

The club, which started in 1929, upgraded from a tin shed to actual premises in 1960, the same year it gained

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The traditional ritual of diving into the pool with blocks of ice to start the season.

a liquor licence. It expanded over two floors a decade later.

Renovation in the early 2000s changed the course of the club's history, with the new four-storey premises opening in 2002. A "facilitation fee" that was effectively a 40-year loan from the developer Warpo was paid off in late 2016, in less than half the allocated time, meaning this is the first time the club has been debt free since the 2002 renovation.

The board appointed an interim president, Benn Dullard, last week, ahead of the annual general meeting later this year where all positions will be up for grabs.

Much of the financial stability the club enjoys is due to the stewardship of the late David Hall and his predecessor Alan Gow, a semi-retired company director.

Gow, who was president from 2008 to 2012, was instrumental in securing the club's future by making changes to the management of the building.

David Hall took over from Gow and was president from 2013 until his death.

The Icebergs Club operates a wedding venue, bistro and licensed bar with a small number of poker machines on the second floor.

"It was mostly done during my term, the turnaround from non-profitability to profitability, you might

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"The soul and essence of the club shows what Bondi is all about and what Waverley is all about"

say," Gow told *Wentworth Courier*.

"Alan started the ball rolling, and David picked it up and scored a try," said current vice-president Noel O'Dwyer, of the club's financial security.

"This goes a long way to securing (the club's future), but you never know in this industry. We're a lot better off than a lot of little clubs," O'Dwyer said.

With some 1100 swimming

members and between three and four thousand social members, Icebergs is attracting new members all the time, thanks to the power of social media.

The Icebergs swimming membership opens each April ahead of the winter season and swimmers must compete three out of four weekends each month to remain an Iceberg. A social membership has no swimming requirements and

costs \$55, or \$25 if you're in a local postcode.

Lenore Kulakauskas, the convener of the Bondi Beach Precinct, who was born in Clovelly and has lived in Bondi since 2008, is a staunch supporter of the Icebergs pool.

"Anything that is intimately connected with the beach needs to be protected and looked after," Kulakauskas said. "It's an integral part of that landscape".



The challenge of the ocean adds another element to Icebergs pool.

Up Close



Members must swim three of four Sundays to maintain their membership.



President David Hall (above), remembered for helping turn around the club's finances and nurturing the great camaraderie. Above centre: swimmers gather in 1954. Pictures courtesy: Icebergs.

Bondi and Districts Chamber of Commerce president Mary Anne Cronin agrees on Bondi Iceberg's place on the city's landscape.

"It goes across wealth and social strata and knows no boundaries like that, it's all encompassing," Cronin said of the Icebergs Club.

"You don't have to be a fabulous swimmer, you just have to be able to swim a lap. Everyone can swim a lap."

Cronin strongly believes the club will survive in the long term.

"There's a niche for places like surf clubs, like RSLs and golf clubs. The Icebergs does such a great job for its community."

As a high-profile tenant of the Icebergs complex, the successful Icebergs Dining Room and Bar has no direct financial relationship with the club, but its director Maurice Terzini said he was "forever thankful" for being invited to run the dining room, which opened in 2002.

As well as trading off the Icebergs' name, Terzini said his business shared a common goal with the club — promoting this special corner of Sydney.

"I love being here," Terzini said of his Bondi foothold. "People around the world know about it. Bondi is quite iconic, as is the Icebergs Dining Room and Bar. We have a massive following in LA, New York, London."

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