

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/premier-pulls-the-plug-on-stadium-refurb-but-will-keep-powerhouse-move-20200530-p54xzf.html>

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By Michael Koziol

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The Berejiklian government has dumped its controversial plan to redevelop ANZ Stadium and will redirect the \$800 million saving to a new \$3 billion Infrastructure and Job Acceleration Fund for "shovel-ready" projects to reboot the state's shattered economy.

The government said the stadium refurbishment remained a sensible project that was supported by voters at the election, but no longer made sense given the health and economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian will keep her pledge to move the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta, saying the project will create 1100 construction jobs in western Sydney, despite some ministers arguing for the relocation to be abandoned.

[The government has abandoned its pledge to redevelop ANZ Stadium but will proceed with the Powerhouse move. *CREDIT: JANIE BARRETT, ANNA KUCERA*]

Meanwhile, late night negotiations between The Star and the government have resulted in the casino being allowed to open from tomorrow, with more than 500 people able to spread across the venue's multiple outlets.

Ms Berejiklian said the new \$3 billion fund would increase the state's total infrastructure pipeline to \$100 billion and inject up to 20,000 extra jobs into the state's workforce.

"This guaranteed pipeline of \$100 billion will be our best chance of supporting the hundreds of thousands of people who have already lost their jobs in NSW," she said. "We will [also] be looking for opportunities to fast-track projects to provide jobs as early as we can."

The government did not provide examples of projects to be funded by the new \$3 billion fund.

Ms Berejiklian had originally wanted to knock down and rebuild ANZ Stadium but instead went to the election promising to refurbish the 85,000 seat oval venue into a 70,000 seat rectangular one. The rebuild of Allianz Stadium at Moore Park is already underway and remains ongoing.

The decision, taken by the Premier and her core leadership group, wards off internal division over what projects to jettison given budget constraints created by the pandemic.

Skills and Tertiary Education Minister Geoff Lee, who holds the seat of Parramatta, had vigorously lobbied to keep the Powerhouse Museum move, which is now projected to cost up to \$1.1 billion.

In negotiating with crossbenchers over the proposed public sector pay freeze last week, Treasurer Dominic Perrottet said the stadium redevelopment and Powerhouse move were being reviewed.

Senior Liberals said there was agreement it had to be one or the other. But even after a \$3 billion saving from the wage freeze and \$810 million from abandoning the stadium refurbishment, they were well short of the \$20 billion that could be wiped from the state's coffers by the pandemic. "That's \$4 billion down, \$16 billion to go," one senior Liberal said.

The tender for the stadium redevelopment had already progressed to a shortlist, with Multiplex, Watpac and Laing O'Rourke all vying to undertake the project. The government was due to award the design and construction contract in June.

But Deputy Premier John Barilaro said an "unprecedented crisis calls for an unprecedented recovery and redirecting funding from Stadium Australia to job-creating infrastructure builds is the right thing to do for the people of NSW".

In a separate development, Health Minister Brad Hazzard signed off on a public health order on Friday night that will allow The Star casino to trade from tomorrow, with up to 50 people in each "existing separate seated food or drink area" - the same rules that apply to hotels and clubs.

From 4pm Monday the casino will also open its private gaming rooms to up to 350 members of its loyalty program, by invitation only. The main gaming floor will not be in operation. The Star said it expected about 1000 of its 4500 Sydney staff to return to work.

"It will still leave us operating at significantly lower than usual levels and operations will not be materially profitable at this stage," said The Star's chief executive Matt Bekier. "However, the primary objective is returning our team members to work and re-engaging with guests."