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The Guardian
New South Wales politics

NSW government dumps Olympic stadium redevelopment as Covid-19 restrictions set to ease

Plans to relocate Sydney's Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta will still go ahead

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The [New South Wales](#) government will walk away from its planned \$810m redevelopment of the former Olympic stadium in Sydney as the state grapples with the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

On Sunday the premier, [Gladys Berejiklian](#), will announce that the state government will dump the stadium redevelopment, a key but controversial plank of its election pitch last year, instead announcing a \$3bn fund for smaller, “shovel-ready projects”.

The announcement will come a day before NSW seeks to boost its flailing economy by further loosening the lockdown restrictions introduced at the height of the pandemic, including [increasing the number of patrons allowed at venues from 10 to 50 and allowing regional travel](#) for the first time since March.

In a statement issued to media before a formal announcement, Berejiklian said the decision to dump the stadium redevelopment was part of a wider plan to increase the state's infrastructure spend to about \$100bn.

“This guaranteed pipeline of \$100bn will be our best chance of supporting the hundreds of thousands of people who have already lost their jobs in NSW,” Berejiklian said.



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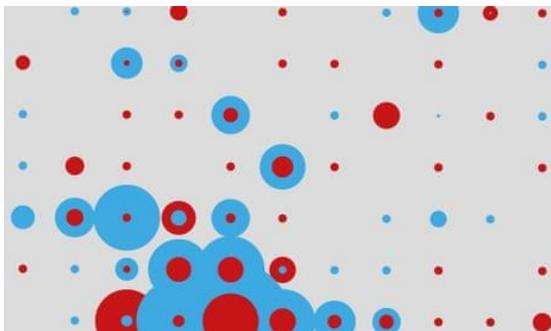
“We are now not only guaranteeing our infrastructure pipeline, we will be looking for opportunities to fast-track projects to provide jobs as early as we can.”

But Berejiklian will say on Sunday that the government's controversial \$1.1bn decision to relocate the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta will go ahead. The premier says the project, which is [opposed by NSW Labor, the Greens and the crossbench Shooters, Fishers and Farmers party](#), will create 1,100 construction jobs in western Sydney.

Coupled with the rebuild of the former [Sydney](#) Football Stadium at Moore Park, the planned redevelopment of the former Olympic stadium was a key plank of the government's re-election pitch.

It would have seen the Homebush stadium converted into a 70,000-seat venue with a rectangular playing field which would have hosted major events in the city including the NRL grand final and State of Origin matches.

But in the media statement, the deputy premier, John Barilaro, said the economic pain wrought by Covid-19 had forced the government to abandon the plan.



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“The communities of NSW have been through an incredibly tough period with continued drought, horrific bushfires and now Covid-19 and the best path to recovery is creating jobs,” he 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.”

As Covid-19 infection rates in NSW continue to fall, the state will from Monday increase the number of patrons allowed in cafes, restaurants, bars and places of worship from 10 to 50. Regional travel will also be allowed in the state. Also from Monday, museums, galleries and libraries will be allowed to reopen to guests, as long as four square metres is allowed per person.

The [Sydney Morning Herald reports](#) that late on Friday the state’s health minister, Brad Hazzard, signed off on a public health order to allow the city’s Star casino to trade from Monday tomorrow, with up to 50 people in each “existing separate seated food or drink area”.

The order will allow the casino to 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 1,000 of its 4,500 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,” the Star’s chief executive, Matt Bekier, told the Herald. “However, the primary objective is returning our team members to work and re-engaging with guests.”

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