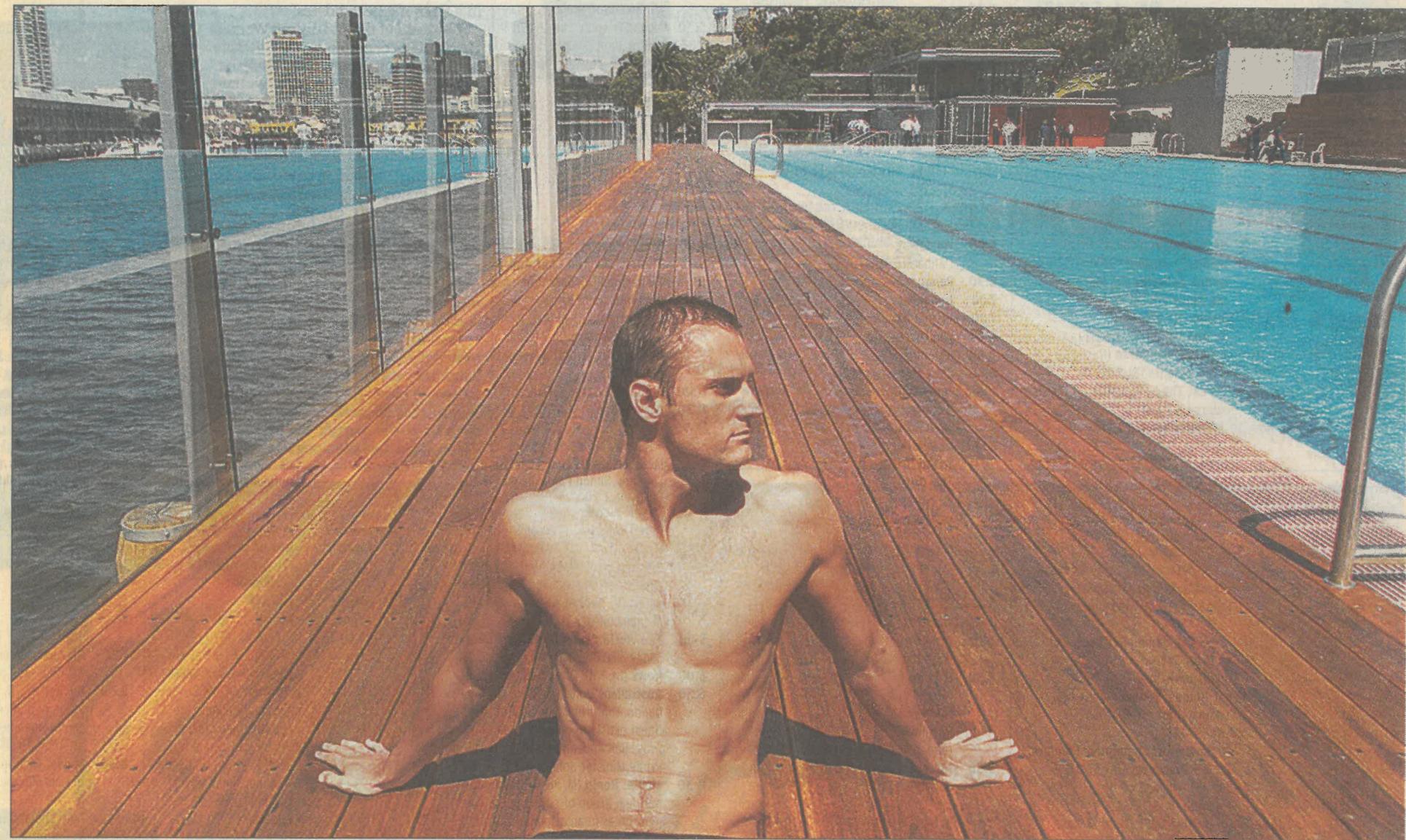


It's time to meet the world's latest Boy wonder



Hitting the deck . . . Australia's 50m freestyle champion Brett Hawke has given the new Andrew Boy Charlton pool the thumbs up. Photo: Steven Siewert

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With its glass entry pavilion, rooftop pool rim and dramatic view of Garden Island, the new Andrew Boy Charlton pool is being lauded as one of the best swimming spots in the world.

People have always bathed from the western shore of Woolloomooloo Bay and since white settlement, various enclosures have been built for swimmers. The first was built in the

late 1820s. By the 1850s, the City Council had applied for a land grant for public baths, although they were not built until 1860 and were restricted to men. Women could bathe next door at Mrs Biggs' Boat House.

In various guises, the pools survived into the 1950s but, with increasing harbour pollution, the sea baths were replaced in 1968 with the Andrew Boy Charlton Pool, named for the 1500m freestyle winner at the 1924 Paris Olympics who had trained at the Domain baths. By 1998, how-

ever, this pool was in such poor condition that the council held a design competition - won by architect Ed Lippmann - for a replacement.

The new \$10 million complex is all glass, steel beams, and timber decking, under a pebble-topped floating roof and a deck with edges defined by a narrow, shallow trough of water.

A steel-mesh bridge leads to the entrance and kiosk, with a cafe (open by Christmas) at its northern end and a meeting or yoga room at the southern.

On the deck below, louvre-

screened change rooms sit at either end of the platform, with shaded learners and babies' pools plus an eight-lane 50m heated outdoor pool. The old concrete bleachers have been retained but are now timber-clad.

The Lord Mayor, Frank Sartor, leading a tour of the pool yesterday ahead of today's official opening, said: "With every pool we build we're getting better." He said there was ample demand for the Boy Charlton and Cook & Phillip Park pools, as well as the new, Harry Seidler-

designed pool in Ultimo. But he refused to discuss the future of the neglected Prince Alfred pool, which serves Surry Hills and Redfern, saying it would remain open until the Ultimo pool was built.

Australia's 50m freestyle champion, Brett Hawke, tested the main pool yesterday, declaring it up to serious swimming scratch.

And while he swam, a gaggle of models prepared for a fashion shoot, suggesting the new pool is another Sydney icon in the making.