Mayor’s message

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan; the plan provides a vision for the sustainable provision of aquatic leisure centres within Moonee Valley. It will also assist Council to provide for the future development and funding of its aquatic leisure centres.

Moonee Valley residents have a deep affinity with our iconic swimming pools such as the Queens Park Pool, which every summer attracts thousands of families to swim and play in its beautiful park setting.

Aquatic leisure centres play an important role in providing health benefits to people from infancy right through to the older years. As our population continues to age, aquatic leisure centres can help in maintaining and improving health outcomes. These health benefits are gained through swimming, exercise, leisure water activities, and a wide range of aquatic programs like aqua-aerobics. Allied to this, these centres have formed the core of tremendous social hubs where people have formed lifelong friendships.

Council acknowledges the importance of swimming centres and activities in the lives of Moonee Valley residents and has developed the Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan to help guide the current and future provision of aquatic leisure centres and to ensure the needs of our diverse community are met.

Cr Narelle Sharpe
Mayor
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of our Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we’ve prepared the Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles underpinning our Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of modern aquatic leisure centres</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What the community thinks of our centres</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trends in aquatic leisure centres</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal provision</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do we have the right number of aquatic leisure centres?</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are centres located in the right areas?</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future direction</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current service gaps</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moonee Valley aquatic leisure centre health check 2014</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving service delivery</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Keilor Leisure Centre</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascot Vale Leisure Centre</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens Park Swimming Pool</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windy Hill Fitness Centre</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan implementation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The City of Moonee Valley has a population in excess of 118,000 and covers approximately 43 square kilometers. Moonee Valley City Council provides three aquatic leisure centres for the community - East Keilor Leisure Centre (EKLC), Ascot Vale Leisure Centre (AVLC) and Queens Park Swimming Pool (QPSP) – which provide a range of health, fitness, leisure, aquatic and rehabilitation activities to the Moonee Valley community. Services and programs are also provided at the Windy Hill Fitness Centre, which is owned and operated by the Essendon Football Club and whilst taken into account is not guided by this aquatic plan.

Moonee Valley’s aquatic leisure centres like many across Victoria were once stand-alone public swimming pools built in the 1950s and 1960s, which over time, have been developed into extensive aquatic leisure centres. Given that the centres are ageing and the original swimming pools in particular are nearing the end of their serviceable life, further planning must now be undertaken to ensure these centres meet the future needs of the community.

The Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan is a ten year strategic plan which will guide long-term planning and development of aquatic leisure services within the City of Moonee Valley. The Plan focuses on delivering modern facilities which will maximise participation by all sectors of Moonee Valley’s diverse community and will help to achieve improved health and wellbeing outcomes.
The purpose of our Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan

Moonee Valley’s aquatic leisure centres like many across Australia were constructed after the 1956 Olympics. Council’s vision for the future of aquatic leisure in Moonee Valley is focused on moving towards a 21st century model that fits the community’s desire for vibrant contemporary community hubs. This model will ensure that all aspects of service delivery including centre provision will meet the needs of the community into the future.

The purpose of the plan is to:

- Provide a vision for the long term provision of aquatic leisure centres within the municipality
- Identify the community’s expectations of our existing aquatic leisure centres
- Identify gaps, challenges, opportunities and synergies in the provision of aquatic and leisure services
- Identify centre developments that will increase participation in a broad range of activities for the improved health and wellbeing of the community

Aquatic leisure centres provide many health and wellbeing and leisure services to the community and are complex and expensive centres to manage, program and develop for the community. This being the case the Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan is by necessity a broad strategic document that provides clarity to future service provision which guides improvement to the service and potential developments for existing centres. The Plan will not define the final developments at each site, as any development will require detailed planning and feasibility assessment prior to implementation. This will take into account budgetary constraints and responsible fiscal management ensuring viability.
How we’ve prepared the Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan

The development of this Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan is based on extensive community and stakeholder engagement, as shown in the diagram below:

- What you have told us already:
  - Household Survey
  - Information gathered through past consultations

- Information gathered for the Aquatic Plan
  - User Survey
  - Swim Clubs, operators, schools, peak bodies, LGA’s

- Councillor input:
  - Councillor Workshops throughout project

- Demographics and industry trends
- Council Vision
  - Council Strategies

- Strategy
  - Key themes
  - Vision
  - Principles
  - Strategic Objectives

- Councillors

- Community Feedback

- Final Strategy
Principles underpinning our Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan

The key principles of Council’s Leisure Strategy have guided the Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan.

- Social inclusion
- Access for all
- Building community health and well being

We have interpreted these principles for the aquatic leisure centre environment and complemented them with two additional principles.

- Affordability
- Viability

Social, inclusive city

Being involved and engaged in local activities and groups helps to build a more resilient, safer and thriving community. Aquatic leisure centres can become a meeting place for the community and should provide centre elements and programs that foster these social interactions and cater for diverse communities. Importantly, future programs will need to ensure that the profile of users reflects the community profile.

Access for all

This principle requires that centres provide services and programs that encourage use by all sectors of the community. Consequently, aquatic leisure centres should cater for a diverse active and interactive community with a range of abilities, backgrounds, skills and interests.

Universal Design Principles (ie. optimised access for all ages and abilities) will underpin planning and design of aquatic leisure centres. All members of the community should have a similar opportunity and ability to access aquatic leisure centres. The standard of centre provision should be consistent across the community.

Building community health and wellbeing

People who are physically and socially active are mentally and physically healthier. The ability to be part of fun, inclusive and active leisure activities helps people through their various life stages.

Centres need to have a broad range of elements, programs and communication tools to attract and encourage users throughout their various life stages.
Affordable

The development of centres needs to reflect the service planning undertaken to avoid over servicing given the many competing demands for Council expenditure.

Pricing strategies should ensure use of the centre is affordable for all members of the community, particularly those on low incomes.

Viable

Aquatic leisure centres will have a sufficient range of commercial activities to ensure ongoing financial performance is sustainable.

Aquatic leisure centres, financially, should aim to operate as close to breakeven as possible to ensure a continued high level of service to the community is possible.
The benefits of modern aquatic leisure centres

Moonee Valley’s aquatic leisure centres like many across Victoria were once stand-alone public swimming pools built in the 1950s and 1960s, which over time, have been developed into extensive aquatic leisure centres. Whilst past developments expanded Council’s centres from stand-alone swimming pools to extensive aquatic leisure centres, further planning must now be undertaken to ensure these centres are designed to meet the future needs of the community.

The decision to invest in the development of aquatic leisure centres is one that can have a significant impact on Council’s broad infrastructure program. It is consequently important to reflect on the benefits modern aquatic leisure centres deliver compared with past models which were typically representative of the following:

- Stand-alone unheated outdoor pools used only in the warmer months
- Regular use by a narrow cross section of the community
- Delivered minimal learn to swim programs
- Did not offer warm water rehabilitation facilities
- Provided limited access and programs for people with disabilities and from CALD backgrounds
- Experienced lower annual usage and were unviable to operate

**Improved local health outcomes**

Aquatic leisure centres are ideally placed to deliver both disease prevention and health rehabilitation services through low impact aquatic exercise opportunities and specialist staff to assist people most at risk.

Traditional aquatic leisure centres do not fully meet the needs of the growing numbers of people suffering from diabetes, obesity, heart conditions and other diseases related to inactivity and poor nutrition. In order to capitalise on the opportunity to improve community health outcomes, Council will need to invest in centre infrastructure focusing in particular on warm water exercise pools and accessibility.

**Social hub – social interaction**

Swimming pools have always provided a meeting place for the community particularly during spells of hot weather. With modern indoor, year-round centres to encourage regular use by a broader cross section of the community Council can provide greater opportunity for interaction and community connection.
Safe environment

The perception of safety is a key factor in the willingness to exercise for older adults and females. By focusing on meeting the needs of a diverse community, modern aquatic leisure centres create a sense of safety, inclusion and belonging. Staffed centres which include a variety of services attract greater numbers of visitors creating busy community hubs resulting in a perception of increased safety by the community.

Servicing a diverse community

If local government did not develop aquatic leisure centres many people from disadvantaged groups would be unable to access programs that can assist with improving health and fitness.

Use of centres by groups and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds is encouraged through concession pricing policies and the provision of targeted programs. The types of groups that access these services include people with physical and intellectual disabilities, people from low socio economic backgrounds, those from culturally linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with chronic health issues and older adults. Modern aquatic leisure centres can better meet the needs of these groups with a variety of centre and program options when compared with traditional swimming pools.

Without aquatic leisure centres, access to swimming pools, gymnasiums, hydrotherapy activities, group fitness and swim lessons would be unlikely to be available to people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Whilst the private sector may provide some of these services, they are not provided at a price that is accessible to people with low incomes.

Increasingly, Councils are including provisions for targeted groups in centre design as they see it as being important for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to be able to exercise in safe and controlled environments as well as having the opportunity to connect with others in the community.

Low cost family activities

The provision of water play attractions at modern centres has provided families with low cost family entertainment. Typically modern centres include giant tipping buckets, water cannons, sprinklers, play equipment that feature mini slides, and other aquatic play features. Statistics have shown this has resulted in families using aquatic leisure centres more often than in the past. The benefits that flow from increased family participation are enhanced community connection, strengthening family through shared activity, health benefits from increased activity and the development of community pride in the centre.
Learn to swim, water awareness and confidence

Modern indoor aquatic leisure centres provide purpose-built centres for the development of water awareness, confidence and swimming skills. Programs delivered by skilled teachers in these centres have encouraged more children to attend swim lessons than in the past. This service is particularly important given our diverse community, which includes many families who have not grown up with Australia’s aquatic culture or within close proximity to coastal areas.

General health and wellbeing

Aquatic leisure centres provide a safe and controlled environment for the community to improve their health, fitness and wellbeing. Using aquatic leisure centres becomes part of the weekly routine for many customers and becomes critical in helping members maintain and improve physical and mental wellbeing, training for fitness, weight loss and competition. Alternatively, many may be starting a new health regime, recovering from injury, managing work stress, having some me time or trying not to grow old. They use centres because exercise makes them feel better.

A sense of community pride

The planning and design of high quality community centres are important to the community. Creating a sense of community pride is playing an increasing role in determining the scope and quality of council centres throughout Australia. Council recognises that by investing in quality aquatic leisure centres we can develop centres that act as community hubs and generate significant pride in the local community. Moonee Valley’s aquatic leisure centres provide value to the local community and continued development of centres can enhance a region as a desirable place to work and live.

Opportunities for competition and sport

The traditional role of swimming pools to provide training and competition for young swimmers is as valid today as it has ever been. Moreover, whilst most swimming pools do not service elite training squads for Olympians they are an important part of the pathway from learn to swim to local swim club and onwards all the way to state and national representation.

Local swimming clubs are extremely valuable in keeping young people involved in healthy activity. They also provide opportunities for connection with a broad cross section of the community in a safe environment.
What the community thinks of our centres

A municipal wide survey was developed to collect information regarding Councils aquatic leisure centres. The survey was conducted online from December 2013 to March 2014. There were 910 respondents to the survey.

Customer Satisfaction – Top three and bottom three attributes

Using a zero to ten scale, where zero was extremely dissatisfied and ten was extremely satisfied, respondents were asked to rate a number of attributes with respect to the centre they attended most often. The tables below highlight the top three and bottom three attributes at Council’s centres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Top three attributes - aquatic leisure centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EKLC</td>
<td>• space and comfort of the entry foyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ease and efficiency of entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• pool lane widths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVLC</td>
<td>• space and comfort of the entry foyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ease and efficiency of entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• convenience of car parking spaces to the centre entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QPSM</td>
<td>• pool depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• temperature (interpreted as pool temperature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• class numbers and comfort (lap lane crowding)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Top three attributes - aquatic leisure centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Bottom three attributes - aquatic leisure centres</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EKLC</td>
<td>• leisure water and water play features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• access to equipment at peak times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the availability of lanes and pool space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVLC</td>
<td>• leisure water and water play features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• change room maintenance and overall condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the availability of lanes and pool space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QPSM</td>
<td>• change room maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the availability of car parking spaces and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• convenience of car parking spaces</td>
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</table>

Bottom three attributes - aquatic leisure centres
Trends in aquatic leisure centres

In the past five years, development and renewal of aquatic leisure centres within greater metropolitan Melbourne have been significant. These developments are in direct response to the changing needs of users and the increasing role that aquatic leisure centres can play in the provision of health and leisure activities for individuals, groups and families.

Hydrotherapy pools

Hydrotherapy pools are a heated pool specifically designed for the use of people having severe and multiple disabilities and for other therapeutic purposes. Whilst the pool is generally heated at 34 degrees Celsius it can be utilised for other aquatic activities such as aqua aerobics.

As the population continues to age, the demand for venues to deliver aquatic therapies will grow. Physiotherapists, general practitioners, personal trainers and other healthcare professionals are increasingly prescribing aquatic exercise programs for patients and clients. Studies have demonstrated the benefits of aquatic exercise for rehabilitation, injury prevention and pain management. Arthritis patients have an increased range of movement and more flexibility in water, allowing them to improve their physical condition.

Leisure water areas – water play

The provision of leisure water has been the most obvious development in centre design over the past five years. Leisure water can include beach entry, sprays, tipping buckets, fountains and small water slides. Water play installations are highly interactive and can transform aquatic centres into entertainment destinations and increase activity levels in children aged from two -14 years of age. Water slides have also become particularly popular in new centres replacing wave pools as a major attraction.

Leisure water provides an alternate to play spaces in parks and often complements the playspace provision when there is a lack of playspaces in the local neighbourhood. It provides disadvantaged families with a relatively low cost alternative aquatic play experience. Leisure water is often referred to as zero depth water play, highlighting the opportunity for those who are not confident in the pool, babies, and toddlers accompanying adults to play together.

Disability access

Indoor heated pools are widely used by disability groups and individuals. Changes to government legislation with regard to disability access now require modern centres to have ramp access into all pools and accessible change facilities. Added to this is the growing range of programs and activities offered to people of different abilities and physical condition.
Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) and management

Reducing energy usage is an increasingly critical part of centre design and operations. Energy and water cost are predicted to continue to rise therefore requiring increased capital investment in ESD to assist with long term viability. Future initiatives within Mooney Valley’s aquatic leisure centres will focus broadly on reducing water usage, improving energy efficiency and the reduction of carbon emissions.

Family change facilities

The popularity of aquatic leisure centres, combined with increased variety of wet and dry activities where users require a place to change, is placing increasing pressure on change facilities. The industry has responded by developing family change villages. Change villages generally consist of cubicles but do not include showers or toilets. On deck (poolside) showers complement change villages and enable people to rinse off prior to changing into their clothes. Change villages are a practical way of increasing overall change facility capacity and to providing dedicated facilities for families.

Self-entry options

Changes in technology have made the implementation of self-entry options possible in aquatic leisure centres. Self-entry systems have many benefits including quick entry for members, reduction of queues, enhanced capacity to manage over the counter enquiries and a reduction in staff costs.

Self-entry systems are enhanced through the implementation of sales kiosks that act as a virtual customer service agent. They can handle membership sales, multi-visit pass sales and top ups, along with group fitness check-in and casual sales. Payments at kiosks can be made using cash or credit card and are fully integrated with the point of sale system.

Customer expectations

Expectations in terms of centre quality and customer service have increased significantly in the past ten years. Change room quality, car parking and overall centre presentation can have a significant effect on customer satisfaction and retention. In instances where centre quality does not meet customer expectations, participation and revenue levels can fall quite dramatically.
Children and obesity

With childhood obesity growing at an alarming rate, health and fitness professionals see the need to create programs and centres tailored to overweight and obese children. Some centers now offer fitness programs targeted at kids and teenagers. The future design of centres will need to consider opportunities to maximise these programs for young people.

Fitness programs for older adults

Older adults are a major growth area for health and fitness memberships. By providing programs and services for older adults throughout the day the centre will increase visitations at a time which traditionally experiences low demand. Council will respond to this opportunity by delivering a range of programs that meet the diverse needs and fitness levels of older adults. This includes warm water exercise classes, targeted fitness classes of varying intensity and specific business strategies to attract and retain people in this age group.

24-hour gyms

The past two-three years has seen a dramatic increase in the number of 24-hour gymnasiums. The 24-hour fitness concept provides low cost and low service approach with these gyms providing minimal or at times no staff. As a result, there is significantly more competition and local government owned centres are losing market share. 24-hour gymnasiums provide an alternative service for the community which is part of the overall provision for the municipality. Council will not be competing with this market and will continue to staff centres providing a high level of customer service contributing to safe and vibrant community hubs.
Municipal provision

Do we have the right number of aquatic leisure centres?

When developing this plan it was important to ascertain if the provision of service was adequate to meet the needs of the community now and in the future. Do we have centres that are well located to provide the best service to the community?

Forecasts of the population suggest that the City of Moonee Valley will grow from an estimated 118,340 in 2014 to an estimated 134,890 in 2031. Population growth continues to exceed predicted forecasts, however whilst growth is likely to increase demand at a local centre level they are unlikely to necessitate the development of a new aquatic leisure centre. Any local spike in demand is usually sufficiently met by the private market.

“The Moonee Valley City population forecast for 2014 is 118,340, and is currently forecast to grow to 134,890 by 2031.”

There is an expectation of growth in all age groups, with residents aged over 65 years experiencing the most significant growth. The most notable trend in household type is a projected increase in the ‘couple with no children’ households.

Current centre coverage is adequate for the current and future population with no need for additional centres. This is supported by the Indoor Aquatic and Recreation Facility Development Guidelines developed by Aquatics and Recreation Victoria in 2011 which suggests that aquatic leisure centres such as EKLC and AVLC can serve a catchment population of between 50,000 and 70,000 people.

When Windy Hill Fitness Centre, which is of similar size to EKLC, is combined with Council’s current centres, the population that can be serviced is in the vicinity of 150,000 to 200,000 people. Further, if the opportunities for community members to access services in adjacent municipalities and the private sector centres are considered it is reasonable to conclude that the current number of aquatic leisure centres is adequate for current and future population growth. It is apparent however that some sections of the community who do not own their own vehicle have difficulty accessing centres and opportunities to improve access will be explored.
Are centres located in the right areas?

Analysis of current user data for our centres was used to gain an understanding of where people come from to visit our centres and if our centres are located in the correct areas. Industry analysis of travel behaviours suggests that people who have to travel more than 5kms are less likely to access an aquatic leisure centre.

The analysis shows that residents in all Moonee Valley City Council suburbs are accessing aquatic leisure centres. In addition, travel distance analysis shows that the majority of residents live within 5km of an aquatic leisure centre. These factors suggest that centres are accessible in terms of travel distance to the majority of the community. This provides a favourable environment for encouraging more use by the Moonee Valley community.

The analysis highlighted the following:

- The majority of EKLC members (74%) reside in East Keilor, Avondale Heights, Airport West, Niddrie and Essendon. These suburbs are within 5km of the centre.
- Residents from Avondale Heights represent 18% of gymnasium members but only 11% of learn to swim customers. It is likely these residents choose Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre due to its proximity and superior quality.
- The majority (75%) of AVLC members come from suburbs that are less the 5kms from the centre including Ascot Vale, Flemington, Kensington, Moonee Ponds, Essendon, Maribyrnong and North Melbourne.
- Residents of Essendon represent 9% of members at both AVLC and EKLC and 37% at Windy Hill Fitness Centre. The central location of Essendon provides residents with more choice compared with those in the north and south.
Future direction

Current service gaps

Taking into account a review of services and elements at existing centres, the findings of the community consultation and a review of industry trends, a number of gaps in municipal wide service provision have been identified. These gaps are likely to restrict Council’s ability to deliver on the key principles of this Plan.

- People in the north of the community do not have good access to warm water exercise and rehabilitation facilities
- There is a lack of year round lap swimming provision across the municipality. This has an impact on lap swimmers and swim clubs
- There are limited water play opportunities for both children and families at all centres
- Change room quality is poor at all centres
- Disability access is poor at all centres

When we undertake a health check of individual centres by overlaying the 21st century aquatic leisure centre model, we can see that there are service areas that are currently adequate and areas where a service gap exists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>AVLC</th>
<th>EKLC</th>
<th>QPSP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
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<td>Indoor lap swimming</td>
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<td>Outdoor lap swimming</td>
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<td>Learn to swim</td>
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<td>Rehab and gentle exercise</td>
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<td>Childcare</td>
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<td>Health and wellbeing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water play</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Safe and accessible</td>
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Moonee Valley aquatic leisure centre health check 2014
Improving service delivery

Community consultation continues to tell us that Moonee Valley’s aquatic leisure centres are highly valued by the community and swimming in particular continues to be the number one activity for our residents. We have an ageing community and will continue to experience significant population growth into the future. Council’s aquatic leisure centres are also ageing and many of the swimming pools require significant restoration work or replacement to meet the key principles within this plan.

The community highly value vibrant community hubs which are safe and accessible and Council is committed to providing aquatic leisure centres which will meet the needs of the community into the future.

The research undertaken for this plan has shown that there are several areas where Council will be able to improve service delivery to the community. The growth in the ageing population supports the need for the development of hydrotherapy opportunities. The highly diverse nature of the municipality shows there is a need for a similarly diverse range of programs to encourage use by the whole of community. It will also be necessary to implement centre design initiatives to cater for the requirements of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The projected growth in, couple with no children, households will provide strong market conditions for health and fitness facilities and programs. Concession pricing strategies need to ensure that centres are affordable and accessible for the whole community.

Council branding

Contractors manage the day to day activities of the Council’s aquatic leisure centres in line with Council specifications and values. One of the disadvantages of outsourcing operation to external contractors is the loss of Council presence and branding. The contractor logo is predominant on all signage and promotional material and there has been limited space for Council’s logo.

Improved Council branding will create greater awareness of Council’s programs and services, encouraging healthy lifestyle choices and promotion residents to be active physically, mentally and socially.

Reciprocal rights

An issue that many councils are working to address is reciprocal membership rights between centres. This is particularly difficult when different contractors manage multiple centres. Sophisticated point of sale and data collection systems can be used to assist with reciprocal rights initiatives. Despite the challenges Council will continue to investigate opportunities for a single access card.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Priority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review management contracts to ensure alignment with Council values</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investigate provision of a single access card across all Council aquatic leisure centres</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investigate opportunities to incorporate aquatic clubs into centres</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve wayfinding signage to and at all centres</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce Council branding across all centres</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore ways to effectively address heat wave response</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult with identified stakeholders to increase participation from at risk groups</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate ways for the community to make better use of aquatic leisure centres</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify different approaches to providing health initiatives at centres</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision to use aquatic leisure centres as emergency relief centres</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outcomes**

✓ Planned centre developments and improvements will have the capacity to service a much broader cross section of the community and provide a range of services to all age groups and fitness levels.

✓ Improved accessibility will be achieved through the introduction of ramps to new aquatic spaces and introduction of the warm water exercise pools.

✓ New centre elements including leisure water, warm water program pool, additional lap lanes and significant improvement to centre quality will encourage more people to be more active, more often.

✓ Future developments will deliver improved viability through introduction of the learn to swim pool, improved health club, programs spaces, parking and general centre improvement.
East Keilor Leisure Centre

EKLC located in Quinn Grove East Keilor services the northern sector of the municipality, covering Keilor East, Airport West, and Avondale Heights. EKLC caters for lap swimming, swimming lessons and health and fitness programs. The Centre's facilities include a fully equipped gym, a dedicated cardio room, functional training area, and a group exercise and cycle studio.

The individual areas of the centre are:

- Six lane, indoor 25m pool
- Indoor toddler’s pool
- Spa and steam room
- Gymnasium and cardio room
- Aerobics hall and spin room
- Café
- Crèche
- Solar heated outdoor pools - 50m, diving, learners and toddlers (seasonal)
- Water slide (seasonal)
- Synthetic pitch

EKLC provides an adequate, however outdated mix of elements but is performing well when taking into account the internal layout of the Centre, which has no family change rooms on pool deck, limited accessibility and many of the Centre’s elements are severely ageing. It is popular with the local community who express a high level of ownership and a sense of pride in the Centre.

There is competition from other aquatic leisure centres with Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre, Windy Hill Fitness Centre, St Albans Leisure Centre and Sunshine Leisure Centre competing for customers within the EKLC catchment.

The number of learn to swim operators within the Centre’s catchment is high. This combined with the very poor quality of the EKLC aquatic elements is the key driver of the relatively low enrolments in the learn to swim program.

The local gymnasium market is comparatively less crowded than that of AVLC; consequently, the recent refurbishment works in the EKLC gym combining updated equipment has enabled EKLC to maintain its market position.
Membership - Gym and Learn to Swim

Membership numbers have grown from 1,900 in 2009, to 2,800 in 2014. Improved management practices, new equipment, development of a new cardio room and an improved entry foyer all have contributed to the growth.

Conversely, learn to swim enrolments have remained relatively stable at around 550 to 600. Enrolment numbers are slightly below industry expectations of approximately 1,000 due predominantly to the quality of aquatic facilities and the relatively high level of competition in the Centre catchment.

Attendance

Annual attendances are approximately 250,000 per annum which is slightly below expectations. A centre of this scale would be expected to have between 300,000 and 350,000 visits per annum. It is reasonable to suggest that centre quality and a lack of warm water rehabilitation options are contributing to low attendance figures.

The quality of the EKLC puts it at a disadvantage to attract customers who have the choice to use multiple aquatic leisure centres. This appears to be particularly relevant for residents of Avondale Heights as they are located between EKLC and Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre.

Centre

2011-12 Redevelopment

Between February 2011 and August 2012 a significant centre redevelopment was undertaken. The redevelopment work included:

- Administration area and café
- First aid room
- Refurbished change rooms
- New family and disabled change rooms
- Solar heating to the outdoor pools
- New change rooms to service the synthetic pitch and outdoor pool
- Refurbishment of crèche
- New cardio room
- New spa and steam facilities
Whilst the 2011-12 work has delivered some improvements to the Centre, the layout is poor. In addition, the physical condition of the untouched sections of the centre has deteriorated significantly over the past ten years with some elements at the end of their effective life. Any future development at EKLC should seek to utilise as much of the development undertaken in 2011 as possible.

The Centre has a number of gaps in service provision including:

- Indoor aquatic areas do not comply with current guidelines
- The outdoor 50m pool is in very poor condition
- Indoor pool and associated plant is in poor condition
- No warm water exercise pool for older adults or rehabilitation exercise in aquatic areas
- Disability access to aquatic areas is extremely poor
- Aquatic spaces provide a sub-standard environment to teach aquatic education
- The disconnection of group fitness rooms from the Centre affects customer experience and operational efficiency
- Leisure water and water play options are poor
- Car parking is insufficient during peak periods

**Feasibility assessment**

Given the extent of refurbishment works required at EKLC and in order to identify the options and implications for redevelopment, including cost assessment, a feasibility study is necessary. The feasibility study will also review the current and future possibilities for outdoor aquatic elements. Any future development at EKLC should seek to utilise as much of the development undertaken in 2011-12 as possible.
Outcomes

✓ Through the preparation of a feasibility study, work towards options and improvements that provide a range of services to all age groups, fitness levels and abilities.
Ascot Vale Leisure Centre

AVLC, located on the corner of Langs and Epsom Road Ascot Vale, services the southern sector of the municipality, covering Ascot Vale, Kensington, Flemington, Travancore and parts of the Cities of Maribyrnong and Melbourne. Catering for lap swimming, swimming lessons and health and fitness programs, the Centre’s facilities include a fully equipped gym, a dedicated cycle studio, cardio room, program room, sports medicine suit, and a 70 seat café.

The individual areas of the centre are:

- Health club
- Cycle studio
- Group fitness stadium
- Program room
- Health consulting suites
- 6 lane, indoor 25m pool
- Learn to swim pool
- Warm water pool
- Heated indoor toddler’s pool
- Spa, sauna and steam
- Child care centre
- Café

There are a number of aquatic leisure centres operating within the AVLC catchment including Kensington Aquatic Centre, Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre, Windy Hill Fitness Centre and North Melbourne Recreation Centre. The relative quality of AVLC, particularly in relation to the areas refurbished in 2007 enables it to compete with other aquatic leisure centres.

**Membership - Gym and Learn to Swim**

AVLC does have some weaknesses compared to Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre in the provision of water play activities for children. This manifests itself in two ways; firstly, through relatively low casual aquatic use by children and families and secondly the relatively low enrolment numbers in the learn to swim program.

There are high levels of competition from private gymnasium operators and smaller boutique operators such as personal training and yoga studios. This has created a very difficult environment for AVLC and has partly contributed to a reduction in membership numbers.
Attendance

Gymnasium membership numbers have dropped from a peak of 5,900 in 2008 to 4,300 in 2014. This is largely due to increased competition. Learn to swim enrolments have been relatively stable over this period at between 1,050 and 1,150. Attendances have remained at 600,000 per annum. Overall AVLC’s performance substantially exceeds industry benchmarks for attendances and financial performance.

Previous redevelopment

In 2007, Council implemented a significant refurbishment and expansion of AVLC. The 2007 development included:

- A new entry foyer and café
- Health consulting suites
- Expansion of the health club
- Learn to swim pool
- New warm water pool
- Change room refurbishment
- Café
- Programs room
- Spin room

Challenges

These works vastly improved customer amenity in the targeted areas, however they also created variable quality issues, with areas that received minimal or no attention being of inferior condition visually and in some cases structurally.

The quality issues noted have resulted in the AVLC no longer being at the equivalent standard of contemporary aquatic leisure centre in terms of service range and centre quality. The major gaps are:

- Limited lane availability for lap swimming
- 25m pool is nearing the end of its effective life
- There is a lack of indoor and outdoor leisure water and water play features
- The existing spa is nearing the end of its effective life
- General presentation particularly in the change rooms is poor
- The group fitness rooms are of relatively poor quality and are in need of an upgrade or refurbishment
- Disability access is not consistent with contemporary facilities
Service improvement options and priority

The current financial performance, attendance and customer satisfaction levels at AVLC indicate that major redevelopment is not of high priority in comparison with the works required at EKLC. However, works are required to the 25m pool and to assist with delivering on the guiding principles a number of key development options have been identified. These will be further tested through a detailed planning phase in the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Priority</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigate options for remediation works to the 25m pool concourse and water galleries</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide ramp access to the 25m pool</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install an elevator to provide access to second story program areas</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase 25m pool by a minimum of two lanes</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refurbish and expand change room</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install leisure water area and associated water play features</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refurbish spa</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refurbish group fitness hall to suitable program room standard</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outcomes

- Development of water play areas and increased lap lanes will encourage more use by families and provide more options for lap swimmers. This will enhance the centre as a place for community connection.
- Improved accessibility will be achieved through a ramp to the 25m pool and the construction of an elevator to the 1st floor program rooms.
- New Centre elements including leisure water, additional lap lanes and improvement to centre quality will encourage more people to be active more often.
- The proposed works will deliver some improvements to viability through increased learn to swim enrolments. Importantly, the additional elements and improved centre quality will enable the Centre to maintain market share in a very competitive market.
Queens Park Swimming Pool

QPSP is located on the corner of Pascoe Vale Road and The Strand, Moonee Ponds. The Centre has a unique relationship to Queens Park, which is Council’s premier regional park located within the busy Moonee Ponds Activity Centre. QPSP features a 50m solar heated outdoor pool established at its current site in 1958, a learn to swim pool and a toddler’s pool.

The Centre also includes:

- Kiosk
- Amenities block
- First aid room
- Meeting room

**Attendance**

QPSP is very popular with families especially on days of high temperature, with 230 season passes sold for the 2013/14 season. Added to this QPSP is very popular with local schools for swimming carnivals with 26 schools using the pool in the 2013/14 season, with more than 4,700 students attending.

The pool is open on a seasonal basis from November to March/April each year. There were approximately 25,000 visits to QPSP in the 2013/14 season. This is reasonably consistent with previous seasons.

**Challenges**

The challenges of the Centre include:

- Only operates seasonal
- Limited water play activities
- Limited shade
- Concrete pools generally have a useful life of 50 years. Consequently, it is likely that the pool shell will require replacement within the next five to 10 years
- Poor change room quality including a lack of accessibility for people with disabilities
- Poor quality entry and administration areas
Car parking

Car parking availability has been identified as an issue for users. It is a precinct wide issue with no simple solution given limited space for new car parks and high demand from precinct users.

Service improvement options and priority

The QPSP feasibility study 2013, undertaken in consultation with the community investigated potential future development options. The primary focus of the proposed development is to maintain the Centre as a seasonal pool, to improve customer experience, accessibility and to enhance the overall amenity of the site. There is no urgency for redevelopment at QPSP with the exception of improvements to the change rooms and the potential replacement of the 50m pool which is nearing the end of its serviceable life expectancy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved change room quality implementing Universal Design Principles</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide additional shade areas</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate options for replacing the 50m pool</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install leisure water area and associated water play features</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refurbish entry and administration areas</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Outcomes

- Water play will enhance user experience and attract a larger number of users each year. This also will enhance the pool as a place for community connection.
- Improvements to change rooms will improve accessibility
- The proposed works will deliver some improvements to viability through improved centre quality and the addition of water play activities. However, these changes are not likely to reduce (substantially) the subsidy to operate the Centre.
Windy Hill Fitness Centre

Windy Hill Fitness Centre is located at 74-84 Napier Street Essendon, on Crown Land leased from Council, by the Essendon Football Club. The Centre services Strathmore, Pascoe Vale, Essendon North and surrounding suburbs. It therefore forms part of the overall mix of aquatic leisure centres and provides user choice for residents.

The Centre offers lap swimming, learn to swim and health and fitness programs. The Centre's facilities include a 25m eight lane swimming pool, toddler's pool, spa and steam room, along with a fully equipped gym.

Challenges

The gaps in service provision at Windy Hill Fitness Centre are consistent with those at EKLC and AVLC and include:

- A lack of lap swimming availability
- Limited warm water area for gentle exercise and rehabilitation activities
- Poor change rooms quality
- There is limited water play opportunities for children and families

Council understands there are currently no plans to develop the Windy Hill Fitness Centre, the site has limited scope for expansion and consequently it is unlikely to contribute to increasing the level of service provision to the community. Council will however continue to work with the Essendon Football Club and the management of the Windy Hill Fitness Centre to ensure the Centre meets the expectations of the Moonee Valley community.
Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan implementation

Council will now develop an implementation plan to deliver the Aquatic Leisure Centre Plan. Council's aquatic leisure centres are complex businesses requiring extensive planning to implement both operational and centre improvements.

The implementation plan will be reviewed annually in the context of current information including condition audits, operation and visitor results and operator and customer feedback. Feasibility studies for any major development will be developed in-line with the key principles and responsible fiscal management and will include consultation with the community.