

**SEASONAL  
POOLS  
REVIEW  
AND  
STRATEGY**  
SUMMARY  
DOCUMENT



GREATER  
SHEPPARTON





GREATER  
SHEPPARTON



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Seasonal Pools Review and Strategy Project Team acknowledges the input and support from a range of Council staff and representatives from external agencies and organisations. The Project Team acknowledges the invaluable contribution by members of the community in completing surveys and speaking with staff and consultants throughout the consultation period.

## DISCLAIMER

This document has been developed by the Greater Shepparton City Council's Active Living Department. Information contained in this document is based on available information at the time of production. All figures, tables and diagrams are indicative only and should be referred to as such. This is a strategic document which deals with technical matters in a summary way only. Council or its officers accept no responsibility for any loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from acting in reliance upon any material contained in this document.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council owns and manages seasonal outdoor pools in Merrigum, Mooroopna and Tatura. The provision of swimming pools is a traditional service delivered by Council's right across Australia and provides a number of physical and social health benefits to communities. The following table provides an overview of key information for each pool:

	Merrigum	Mooroopna	Tatura
Constructed	1985	1962 (War Memorial Pool)	1970
Features	26m x 12m main pool, toddler pool, shade, change rooms, kiosk, BBQ.	34.5m x 13.5m main pool, toddler pool, shade, change rooms, kiosk.	34.5m x 13.5m main pool, toddler pool, shade, change rooms, kiosk, BBQ.
Operational Cost (3 year average)	\$54,592	\$71,565	\$61,167
Population Catchment	672	7,837	4,362
Attendance (3 year average)	2,628	4,107	6,194
Cost Per Visit (3 year average)	\$21.73	\$17.47	\$10.06
Star Rating (out of 5)	2 Star - Local Facility	2 Star - Local Facility	2 Star - Local Facility

The Murchison Pool is on Crown Land and is managed by a volunteer committee who are undertaking their own strategic planning. The pool has been receiving a \$70,000 annual contribution from Council for a number of years of which \$20,000 is to support the operation of the pools, and \$50,000 is to support the upgrade of the pools ageing facilities. The Aquamoves 50m pool and associated seasonal aquatic areas will undergo a separate detailed strategic planning process for the entire facility.

## Strategic Context

An extensive analysis of relevant strategic documentation was undertaken including key strategic Council documents, town plans, industry guidelines and articles. This analysis provided context for the provision of seasonal pool facilities within Greater Shepparton and assisted the development of the review and strategy by providing guidance and information for consideration. Key linkages included:

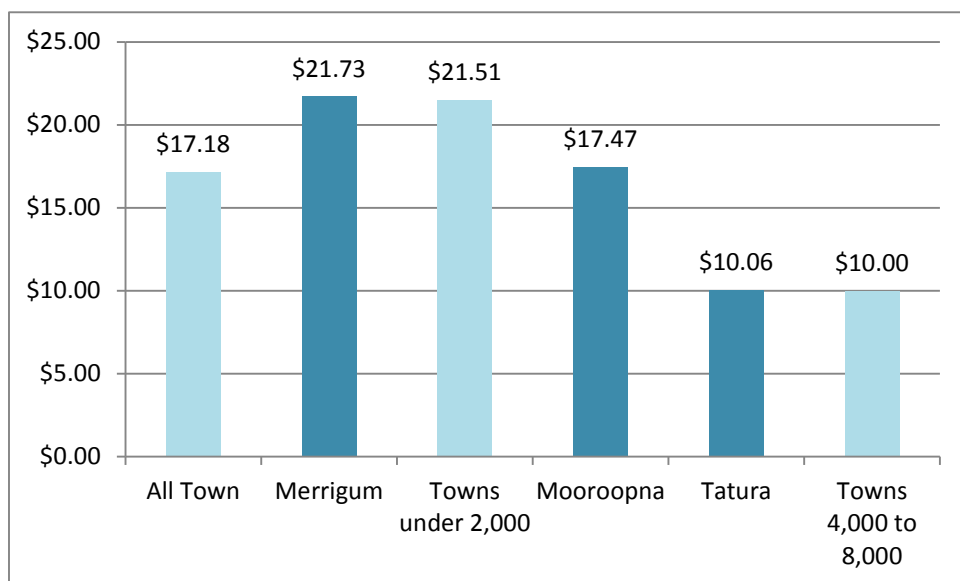
- Council Plan 2013 – 2017: Active and Engaged Communities
- Greater Shepparton 2030: Community Life
- Strategic Resource Plan
- Asset Management Policy
- Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan
- Community Development Framework
- Merrigum, Mooroopna and Tatura Community Plans

## Review and Strategy Purpose

The core focus of the 'Seasonal Pools Review and Strategy' is to assess the current status and performance of Council's three seasonal pools, and to provide guidance to Council in relation to the provision of services and the development of facilities for swimming in Greater Shepparton. The document sets targets to achieve well run and utilised services, at a sustainable cost to Council, and provides direction for operational management.

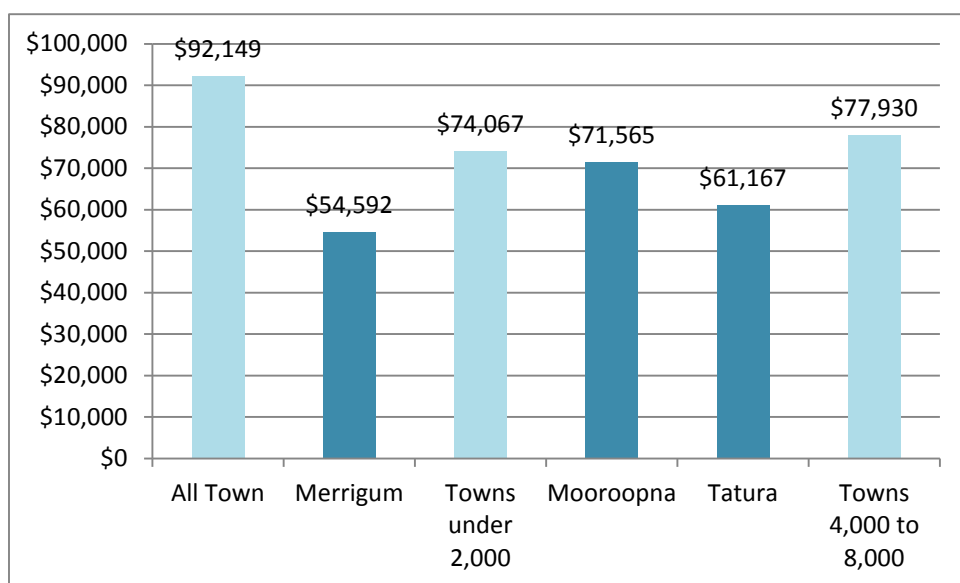
## Situational Analysis

### Cost Per Visit



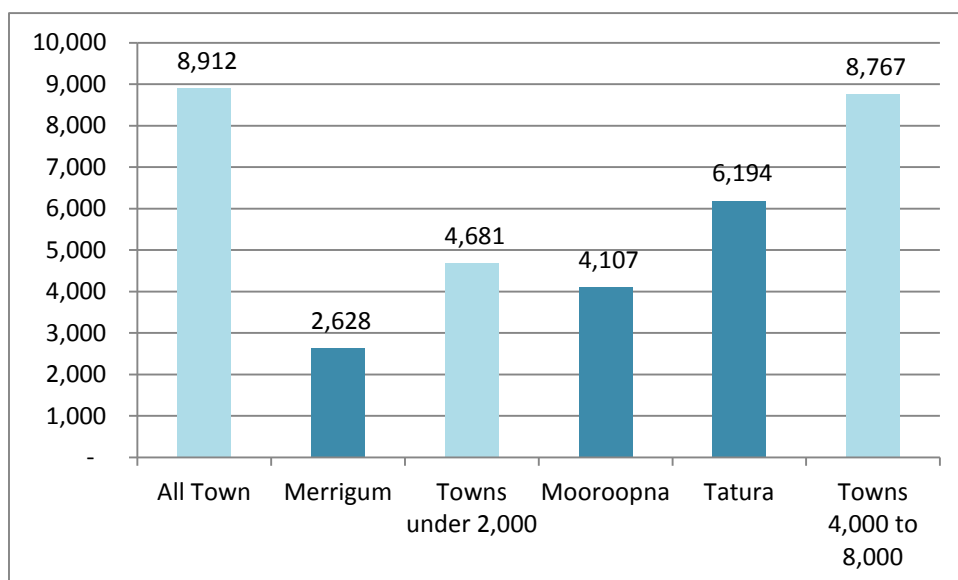
Benchmarking data and three year averages for the Merrigum, Mooroopna and Tatura Pools for the 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 seasons indicate that Merrigum Pool's cost per visit (\$21.73) is higher than the average of all individual benchmarked pools (\$17.18), and the average of individual benchmarked pools in towns with populations under 2,000 (\$21.51). Mooroopna Pool's cost per visit (\$17.47) is also higher than the average of all individual benchmarked pools (\$17.18), and well above the average of individual benchmarked pools in towns with populations between 4,000 – 8,000 (\$10.00). Only Tatura Pool's cost per visit (\$10.06) was below the average of all individual benchmarked pools (\$17.18). However when compared with the average of individual benchmarked pools in towns with populations between 4,000 – 8,000 (\$10.00), Tatura is still slightly higher than this average. Overall, this data indicates that Merrigum and Mooroopna are performing poorly when benchmarked against other facilities. Tatura performed reasonably well however improvement is required.

### Operational Subsidy



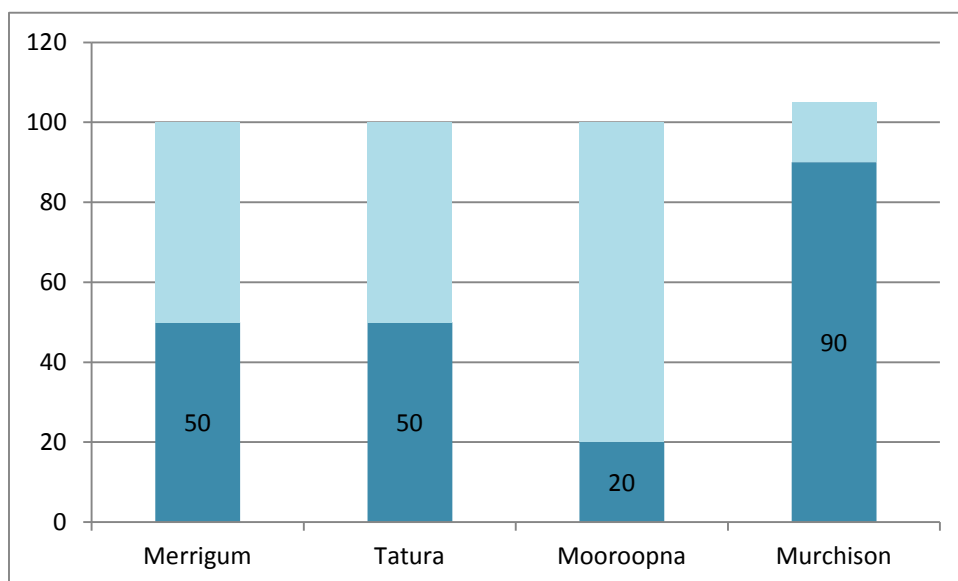
Council's seasonal pools three year averages for operating subsidy perform well when compared to the average of individual benchmarked pools. Further, Merrigum (\$54,592) is significantly below the average of individual benchmarked pools in towns with populations under 2,000 (\$74,067), whilst Mooroopna (\$71,565) and Tatura (\$61,167) are also below the average of individual benchmarked pools in towns with populations between 4,000 – 8,000 (\$77,930).

## Attendance



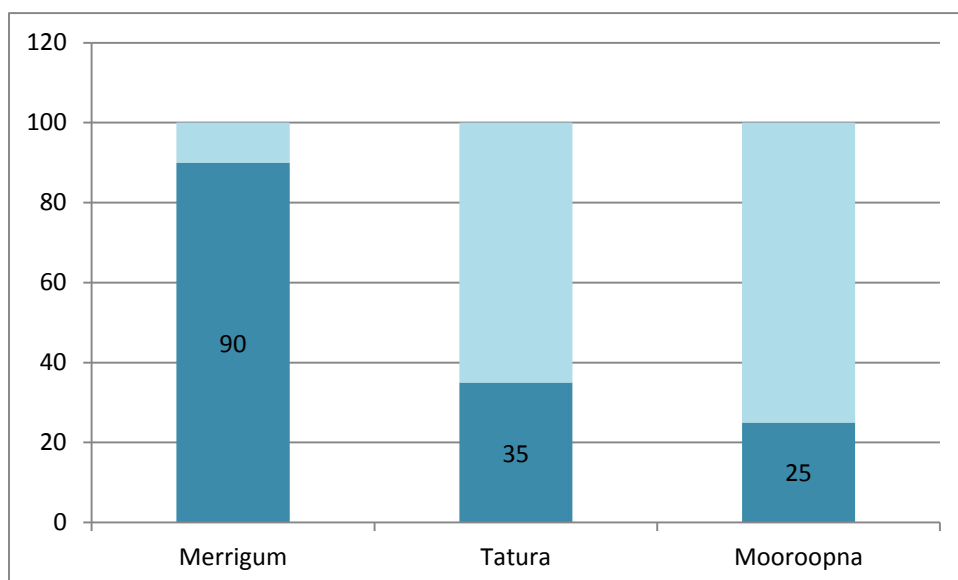
Three year attendance averages for Council's seasonal pools perform poorly when compared to the average attendances of individual benchmarked pools (8,912). Merrigum (2,638) is well below the average of individual benchmarked pools in towns with populations under 2,000 (4,681), whilst Mooroopna (4,107) and Tatura (6,194) are well below the average of individual benchmarked pools in towns with populations between 4,000 – 8,000 (8,767).

## Community Involvement



Community Involvement is deemed a key indicator in analysing the performance of Council's seasonal pools. Scoring each pool out of a possible 100, with Murchison Pool as a committee-managed facility scoring 90, Merrigum and Tatura pools scored 50 for differing types of involvement. Merrigum have formed a Community Plan Pool Subgroup undertaking fundraising activities including an annual event, and have listed installation of water play features as a priority for the Community Plan. The Tatura community formed a Pool Advisory Group in 2014 and have run community events on Friday evenings to increase socialisation and provide an opportunity for community groups to fundraise. Mooroopna Pool scored 20 as there is no community involvement, other than the pool been identified as a priority in the Community Plan.

## Condition of Major Assets (Useful Life)



Condition of Major Assets (Useful Life) is deemed a key indicator in analysing the performance of Council's seasonal pools. Scoring each pool out of a possible 100, Merrigum scored 90 with pools at 49 years and buildings at 24 years, rating the facility as a reasonable 'fit for purpose'. Tatura scored 35 with pools at 14 years and buildings at 9 years, rating the facility as a questionable 'fit for purpose'. Mooroopna scored 25 with pools at 14 years and buildings at 1 year, rating the facility as a questionable 'fit for purpose' with particular concern about the remaining useful life of the buildings.

## Industry and Societal Trends

The report highlights a number of industry and societal trends that impact on the provision of Council's seasonal pools. One of the most significant factors impacting the current use of seasonal pools is the variety of opportunities for our communities to recreate in summer. Societal trends have improved the home environment (including backyard pools and indoor climate control) and provided various entertainment options that are seen by many people as more appealing than visiting seasonal pools in the summer. Further to these, community's expectations of aquatic provision are changing, with the emergence of splash parks and water play facilities influencing people's expectations on what should be provided locally.

## Consultation

Extensive consultation consisting of over 1200 interactions was undertaken with our community and staff to aid in a thorough review of the pools and in the development of relevant recommendations. Consultation focussed on positive aspects of the pools, as well as issues or areas for improvement that will assist in providing enjoyable experiences for the community. Current users of Council's seasonal pools expressed strong levels of satisfaction with the provision of these facilities and associated services.

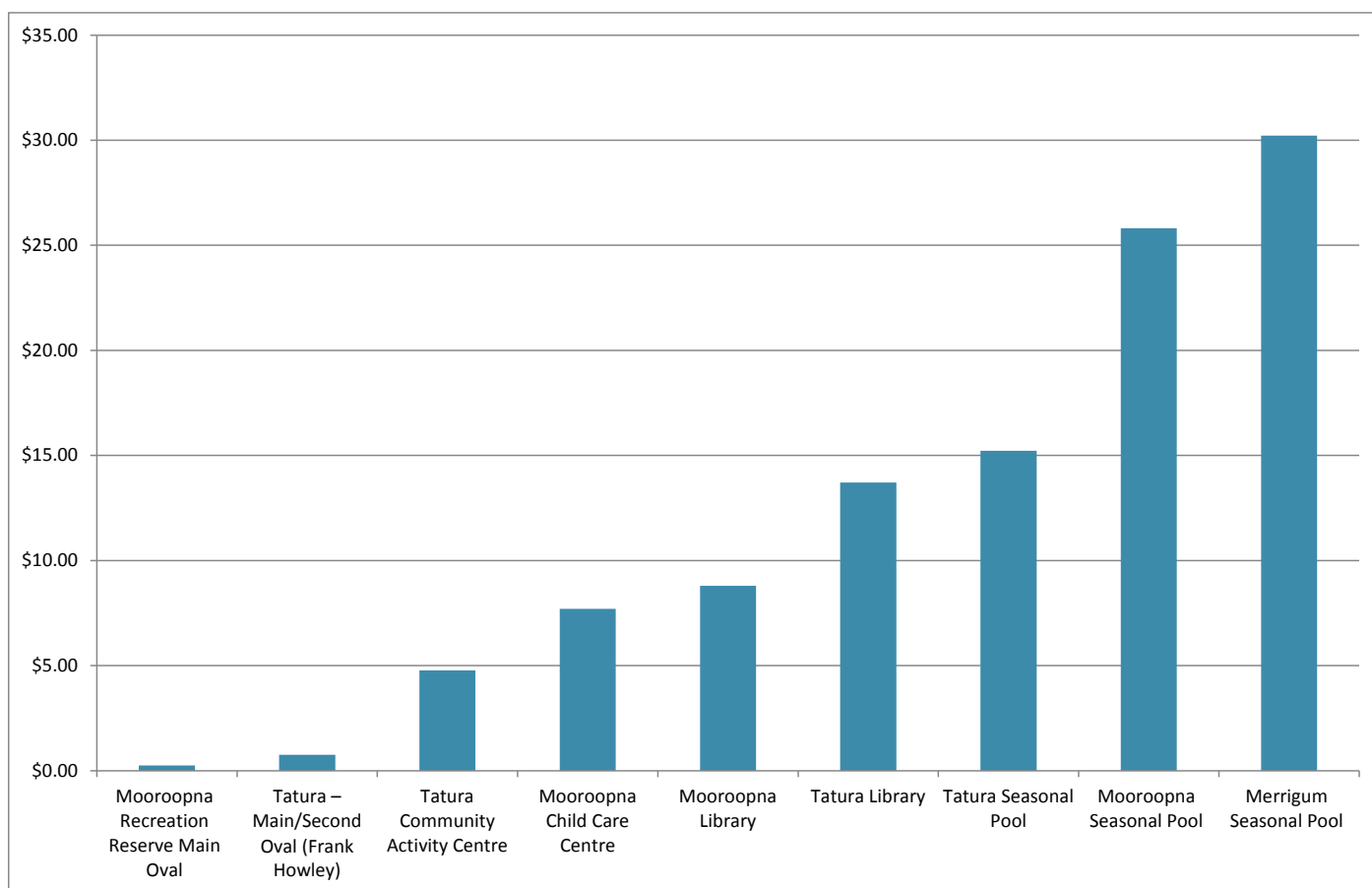
The consultation highlighted that there is high value placed on the need for ongoing provision, including 91% of the survey respondents indicating that Council should continue to fund pools. It was evident that community members value the physical benefits of participating in recreational swimming, the educational benefits of learning to swim, the social health benefits of interacting with other members of the community in a welcoming environment and the mental health benefits of physical activity and socialisation.

Survey respondents believed that swimming pools should have equal importance in receiving financial support as other Council services with 68% believing spending by Council on aquatics has the same priority as other services, while a further 16% believe that it should have a higher priority.

Recent research supported by Aquatics and Recreation Victoria and Sport & Recreation Victoria and conducted by Victoria University and the University of South Australia further supported the consultation outcomes suggesting that with 12,060 visits in the 2014/15 season, the investment by Council of \$191,645 into the rural seasonal pools provided a perceived \$578,880 in personal benefits to our community.

## Cost to Provide Council Facilities/Services

### Cost Per Visit



When benchmarked against other Greater Shepparton City Council facilities including sports ovals, libraries and child care, the 'cost per visit' to seasonal pools is high. Recreation facilities such as ovals are very low (\$0.25, \$0.76), largely due to these facilities only requiring ground maintenance, with all programming and activities undertaken by facility user groups. The Mooroopna Child Care Centre and Mooroopna Library have similar costs per visit (\$7.70, \$8.80), whilst the Tatura Community Activity Centre (\$4.77) is low. These would rate as a 'best practice' costs per visit when compared to the costs per visit of benchmarked seasonal pools. The Tatura Library (\$13.71) and Tatura Pool (\$15.22) are quite similar and around the mid-range of the costs per visit of benchmarked seasonal pools. The Merrigum Seasonal Pool (\$30.22) and Mooroopna Seasonal Pool (\$25.81) are the highest costs per visit of any Council facility and are amongst the highest of benchmarked seasonal pools. (NOTE: the pool cost per visit figures include ground maintenance costs).



## Pool Performance

### Key Performance Indicators

Seasonal pools are scored for their performance against 5 key indicators which aims to provide an overall assessment rating of the pools current status.

The 5 Key Performance Indicators that the pools are scored against are:

1. Cost per visit
2. Operational Subsidy
3. Attendance
4. Community Involvement
5. Condition of Major Assets (Useful Life)

### Pool Assessment Rating

This rating is an overall assessment of each pools performance against the Key Performance Indicators. The rating is a combination of a variety of factors and aims to demonstrate the current status of each pool.

Rating	Description
90 - 100	Excellent
80 - 89	Very Good
70 - 79	Good
60 - 69	Acceptable
50 - 59	Improvement required - possible closure
40 - 49	Significant improvement required - possible closure
20 - 39	Not acceptable - possible closure
0 - 19	Closure

### Performance Against Key Performance Indicators

Based on the investigation and consultation undertaken in preparing this report, each pool was scored for its performance against the Key Performance Indicators. Although there are some positive results, generally the pools are operating below the desired level. Merrigum Pool scored 50 out of a possible 100 rating it as 'Improvement Required', whilst Tatura Pool scored 51.25 also rating it as 'Improvement Required'. Mooroopna Pool scored 30.25 rating is as 'Not Acceptable'.

Indicator	Weighting	Merrigum	Mooroopna	Tatura
Cost Per Visit Score	40%	16	8	20
Operational Subsidy Score	20%	16	14	15
Attendance Score	20%	6	4	7
Community Involvement Score	15%	7.5	3	7.5
Condition of Major Assets (Useful Life) Score	5%	4.5	1.25	1.75
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>30.25</b>	<b>51.25</b>
<b>POOL ASSESSMENT RATING:</b>		<b>IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED</b>	<b>NOT ACCEPTABLE</b>	<b>IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED</b>



## Recommendations

This report recommends that Council continue to invest in the provision of the Merrigum, Mooroopna and Tatura seasonal pools, however there are clear actions to be achieved and key focus areas to be worked on to ensure improvement. These include efforts to increase visitation, reduce operational cost, increase community involvement, conduct more community events and activities, maintain and renew infrastructure, effectively manage operations and undertake suitable review, reporting and strategic planning.

### **Stage 1: Short Term (Years 1 – 3)**

This stage has a focus on operational improvement with the major target of '100% of pools performing at a 'Good' level or better'. The achievement of this target will require increases in community involvement, increases in visitation and a reduction in operational cost.

### **Stage 2: Mid Term (Years 4 – 6)**

If Stage 1 Key Performance Indicators do not improve and the major target is not achieved, progression to this stage may not occur, or may only occur at certain facilities.

This stage will focus on a review of services and the potential to consider and plan for capital improvement including undertaking upgrades and/or significant capital improvements to existing facilities.

### **Stage 3: Final Term (Years 7 – 9)**

If Stage 2 Key Performance Indicators do not improve and the major target is not achieved, progression to this stage may not occur, or may only occur at certain facilities.

This stage will involve undertaking significant capital development to better meet the future needs of the community and cater to the demands of increased usage.

