



Aquatics, Health & Wellbeing Department

GSCC - Splash Park Operational Review

July
2024





Council Notice of Motion:

At the scheduled Council meeting of **February 2024**, Council resolved the following Notice of Motion:

That the Council:

Present a report to assess the feasibility of providing free access to the Aquamoves Splash Park.

www.aquamoves.com.au



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Report Overview

Five key operational points were explored.

- Free Access to the Aquamoves Splash Park via a wristband access policy
- Fence the current Aquamoves Splash Park off to restrict movement of users between Aquamoves and the Splash Park.



- Locate a new Splash Park in the Shepparton All Abilities Playground
- Locate a new Splash Park near SAM and the Victoria Lake Holiday Park
- Locate a new Splash Park at KidsTown, or next to Tatura and/or Mooroopna seasonal pools



Impact on Paying Customers

Reduced Value Perception, if part of the same services are offered for free to others.

Possible decline in customer satisfaction and loyalty,

Potential drop in future revenue as paying customers seek alternative access or try to get away without paying for the full-service option.



Wrist bands honour system - Hope these patrons do not try and access other parts of Aquamoves.

The wrist bands could be easily removed.

Free entry patrons would be able to blend in with the paying customers.

Increased Attendance

Free access would likely lead to a significant increase in the number of visitors, far exceeding the Splash Park hourly capacity

Overcrowding starts to become an operational issue once user number start exceeding 30 users.



Overcrowded facilities pose increased health and safety risks.

Lockout policies triggered when user capacity is reached.





Financial Implications

Charging for access for Aquatic Services provides a steady revenue stream

(October23 to April24), casual child swims - \$109,615.75

22,013 casual child visitors (3 to 15 years)

Does not include attendance data from our 1400 Learn To Swim students or our other aquatic facility Members

These free and complementary entries are not tracked via the Point-of-Sale system as there is no monetary transaction that takes place.

Standard Child Swim = \$4.70, Concession Child Swim = \$3.00

Movies – Child 3 to 14 = \$11.50, Rebound - 1 to 10 = \$10- \$15,

10yrs+ = \$18

Free or Low Cost Activities – KidsTown, other Playgrounds, Activities In The Park, Library's and Museum

Activities

The Learn To Swim students or our aquatic facility members attendance are included in the facilities total attendance. 2023-2024 – 433,305

**Free Splash Park access at Aquamoves would have no Tourism Economical Benefit
Splash Parks alone are not a tourism attraction.**

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Splash Park - New Build

Major Benefit - No impact on the current aquatic services Aquamoves offers the community.

Current Project Costs for a new Splash Park \$1,500,000

- Similar size to Merrigum swimming pool & the Yarrowonga foreshore.

Concrete splash pad, Spray and Splash features & Small Shade



Project cost would increase as extra elements are included in the project brief;

- ✓ **New Changing Places facilities**
- ✓ **Extra lighting options**
- ✓ **More car parking**
- ✓ **Larger shade structures**



Increase to Council Asset Management, therefore increasing operational costs, maintenance costs and whole of life costs.

Free Access to the Aquamoves Splash Park

Conclusion

Free access to the Aquamoves Splash Park may initially appear beneficial for community engagement, the long-term consequences are likely to outweigh the perceived benefits.

This operational approach could jeopardise the quality and sustainability of the community services provided by the Council at Aquamoves.



Due to the current financial constraints on the council's operational budget, it is not recommended for the council to proceed with this option.

It is also not recommended for the council to proceed with adding any new splash park facilities.



THANK YOU

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OPERATIONAL REVIEW

GREATER SHEPPARTON CITY COUNCIL

SPLASH PARKS



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Introduction

2010 Greater Shepparton City Council officially opened its first outdoor Splash Park located at Aquamoves. The interactive outdoor water playground is equipped with a rubber flooring surface and is fully equipped with a splashing rain forest, water mushrooms, water cannons, squirting toys, aqua fountains and water shooters.

The play space has zero water depth which allows for fun to be had by all ages and abilities creating an adventurous aquatic journey for all.

Access to the Aquamoves Splash Park and all the other Aquamoves Aquatic services is via the Aquamoves main entry. Children under the age of 2 can gain a free entry into Aquamoves with a paying adult supervisor/carer (16+).

All 1,400 Aquamoves Learn To Swim students and aquatic facility members have unlimited complimentary access to the indoor Water Slide, Rapid River, interactive Leisure Pool and the 25-metre pool all year round. When opened seasonally the Learn To Swim students and aquatic facility members also have complimentary access to the Outdoor Leisure Pool, 50 metre pool and the Splash Park at no extra charge.



These free and complimentary entries are not tracked via the Point-of-Sale system as there is no monetary transaction. Consequently, we do not have any data of how many children are taking this offer up and are using the different aquatic services.

The Aquamoves Splash Park operates over the warmer months of the year, October to April weather depending.



Nine years later, (Nov2019) a second Splash Park was opened by the Greater Shepparton City Council in Merrigum. The Splash Park is located within the grounds of the Merrigum Seasonal Pool.

Operating daily from 10am to 8pm the Merrigum Splash Park is open in line with the Rural Seasonal pool Season, December to the March long weekend.

Outside of the pools operating hours patrons can access the Splash Park for free via an access gate from Judd Park which is located next door to the facility.

Once the pool is opened to the public the free access gate is closed, and all users must gain access via the main pool entry gate.



The Merrigum Splash Park project was a long-term community town project. The town raised over a 10-year period \$10,000 which went into the project cost alongside of funding from the State Government and the Greater Shepparton City Council. The projects budget was \$850,000.00

The project included the renewed site boundary fencing, upgrades to pool filtration and chemical dosing systems and the Splash Park equipment and play pad.

The 150m² play space complements the seasonal swimming pool and provides a fun and safe alternative for toddlers and children who are still learning to swim.

Simple and classic in design the play space includes a large bucket dumper, two showering arches, 2 interactive water cannons, 10 random ground sprays peppered across the play space, a large showering flower feature, a large cone ground spray and two fully interactive cascading mushroom features that offer the ability for children to adjust the flow and arc of water by rotating the head unit of the feature.

During pool operating hours children aged 2 years and under can access the outdoor 25-metre pool, change rooms, Splash Park and a toddler's pool for free with a paying adult supervisor/carer (16+).

Executive summary

The following report reviews the current operational policies of the Greater Shepparton City Council Splash Parks, possible future new facilities and free entry options for the Aquamoves Splash Park.

Five key points will be explored.

- Free Access to the Aquamoves Splash Park via a wristband access policy
- Fence the current Aquamoves Splash Park off to restrict movement of users between Aquamoves and the Splash Park.
- Locate a new Splash Park in the Shepparton All Abilities Playground
- Locate a new Splash Park near SAM and the Victoria Lake Holiday Park
- Locate a new Splash Park at KidsTown, or next to Tatura and/or Mooroopna seasonal pools

1. Free Access to the Aquamoves Splash Park via a wristband limited access policy

Operational Project Summary One

Splash Park users could gain free access to the Splash Park by entering Aquamoves and informing staff that they wish to use the Splash Park only. The staff would issue them a wrist band to identify Patrons just in case they try and use other parts of the facility that they have not paid for.

Offering free access to the Splash Park seems to be an attractive proposal to encourage community engagement and promote health and well-being to all potential users. A thorough investigation of this operational option has been explored.

We have identified some major financial, operational, and social implications if such a decision was to be implemented.

Financial Implications

Charging for access to the Aquamoves Aquatic Services provides a steady revenue stream essential for offsetting operational costs and maintaining facilities. Offering free access would reduce this revenue stream, leading to a significant potential financial shortfall.

Over the most recent 7-month period that the Splash Park was open to the public, (October23 to April24), casual child swims only total income equated to \$109,615.75 or 22,013 casual child visitors that had access to all the Aquamoves aquatic facilities which includes the Splash Park.

The total casual child swim figures only include children aged from 3 years to 15 years old and does not include attendance data from our 1400 Learn To Swim students or our other aquatic facility Members. These free and complementary entries are not tracked via the Point-of-Sale system as there is no monetary transaction that takes place, so we do not have any data of how many children are taking this offer up or what parts of the facilities they are using.

The Aquamoves Splash Park only operates over the warmer months of the year, October to April weather depending.



Impact on Paying Customers

Reduced Value Perception, customers who have paid for the full aquatic services may feel their expenditure is undervalued if part of the same services are offered for free to others.

This could lead to a decline in customer satisfaction and loyalty, resulting in a potential drop in future revenue as paying customers seek alternative access or try to get away without paying for the full-service option.



Increased Attendance

Free access would likely lead to a significant increase in the number of visitors, far exceeding the Splash Park hourly capacity. This overcrowding can reduce the overall experience quality, with longer wait times and less space for individual activities. The maximum number of users on the splash pad at once per hour is 80 users. Unfortunately, while the aquatic filtration and treatment systems can handle this numbers of users, overcrowding starts to become an operational issue once user number start exceeding 30 users. This can be seen in the photos to the right and below

Overcrowded facilities pose increased health and safety risks, making it difficult for lifeguards and staff to effectively monitor and ensure the safety of all patrons.



The issuing of wrist bands to the free Splash Park users would for the most part have to be an honour system with the hope that these patrons do not try and access other parts of Aquamoves.

The wrist bands could also be easily removed by the patrons and the staff would have no way of identifying them post the removal of the band and they would then be able to blend in with the paying customers who do not have wrist bands.

Unfortunately, it is human nature for some individuals to try and take advantage of good faith of others. Extra lifeguards and security guards would be required to police the free access patrons when they try and use other aquatic areas they should not have access to.

To manage the possible influx of free access users, may see the need for management to implement lockout policies when user capacity is reached. This can be particularly problematic during peak times, leading to frustration and disappointment among paying visitors, especially those who travelled specifically to use the facilities.

Lockouts could disproportionately affect those willing to pay for guaranteed access, thus deterring potential paying customers from using the facility.



Increase in Antisocial Behaviour



Devaluation of Services

Free services can sometimes be perceived as having less value, leading to a lack of respect and care for the facilities, staff and services one may be offering for free. Paying for access often instils a sense of responsibility among users. Without the deterrent of a fee, the facility may see an increase in antisocial behaviour, including vandalism, littering, and disruptive activities, which can negatively impact the experience for all users.

This issue has been highlighted over the summer at the Orange Aquatic Centre. Orange Aquatic Centre management reported to the Orange City Council an increase in the amount of abuse suffered by staff at the Aquatic Centre during a free admission trial period during the Christmas 2023/24 holidays.

Orange City Council suspended entry fees to its aquatic centre for five weeks from late December until the end of January this year during which staff at Orange Aquatic Centre were subjected to personal threats and abusive behaviour.

The free entry attracted record visitors with the number of patrons visiting the pool during this time period more than doubling from 12,423 to 28,992.

During the five-week period, 250 people were ejected from the aquatic centre for bad behaviour.



The Pools Management advised that the biggest issues were the refusal to follow instructions, abuse of staff or other patrons and a higher-than-normal rate of theft with a number of phones and watches being stolen from bags. A patron's car was stolen from the car park after keys were stolen from his bag.

Orange City Council community, recreation and cultural services director, Scott Maunder said many of the lifeguards on the receiving end of the threats were aged in their late teens and early 20s and noted that even for more experienced staff, it was very confronting.

Police were engaged a number of times to report poor behaviour and to request patrols through the centre. Council engaged security guards to manage behaviour at a cost of about \$30,000 over the second half of the free entry period.

Council also received an increase in complaints from regular patrons. Anecdotal complaints included "ruined by small minority (of users)", "very unsafe", "scared" and "out of control".

The report also found the number of patrons who took up the free entry would have generated \$210,000 (Source – Splash Magazine issue 153 April/May 2024)



Additional Operational Costs

Higher usage rates will naturally increase the wear and tear on equipment and other facilities, requiring more frequent maintenance and repairs. This will increase operational costs and potentially lead to more frequent closures for repairs, affecting service availability.



Managing larger crowds safely and efficiently will require hiring additional lifeguards, security and cleaning staff. This will also increase staffing cost and in turn reduce the cost-effectiveness of the facility.

With more staff means increased training, management, and administrative costs, all of which contribute to the financial burden of offering free access.

Conclusion

While the idea of offering free access to the Aquamoves Splash Park may initially seem beneficial for community engagement, the long-term consequences are likely to outweigh the perceived benefits.

The potential revenue loss, increased operational costs, overcrowding issues, and a possible rise in antisocial behaviour and the additional operational costs could significantly degrade the quality and sustainability of the services council provides to the community.

Therefore, maintaining a user pay access system is essential and highly recommended to ensure the facility remains financially viable, safe, and enjoyable for all users. This operational option could be detrimental to the quality and sustainability of the services we offer at Aquamoves.

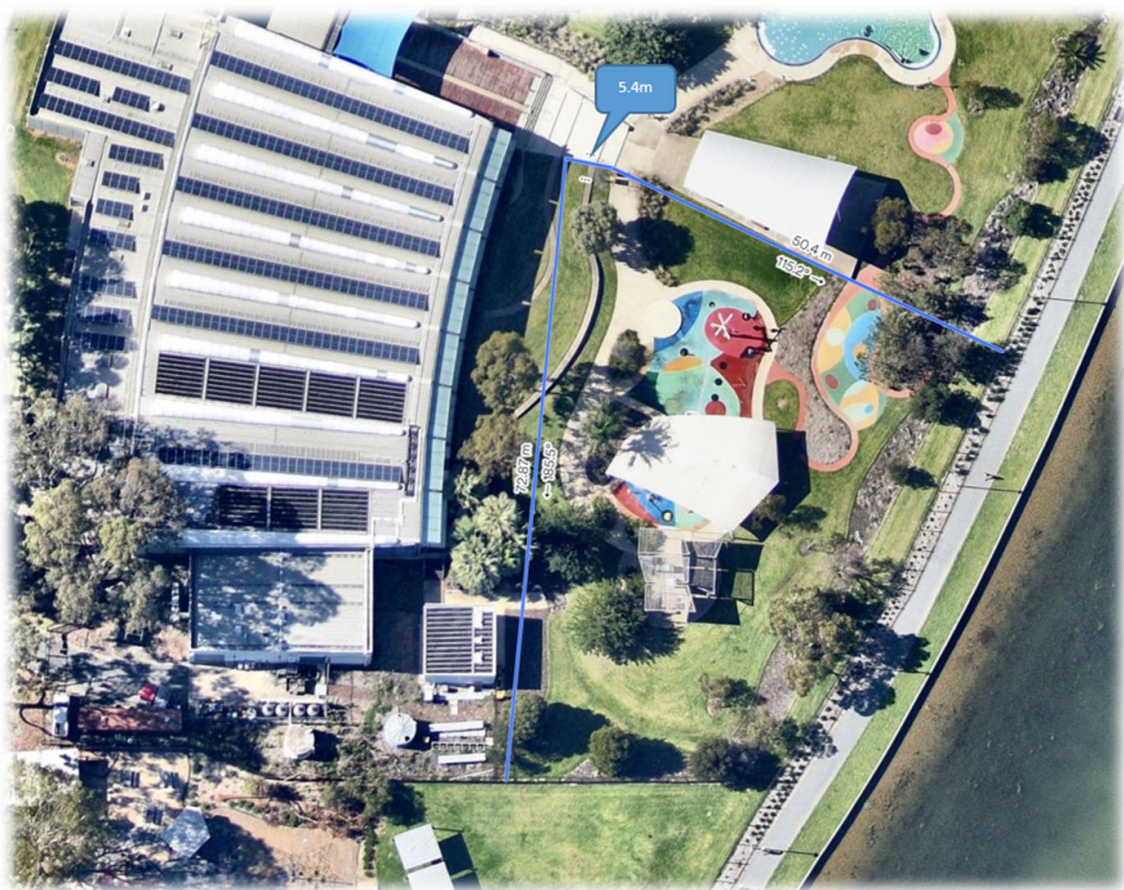


2. Fence the current Aquamoves Splash Park restricting the paying user of Aquamoves access

Operational Project Summary Two

The current Aquamoves Splash Park could be fenced off from the main building and access can only be done via a gate system either from the All Abilities Playground or Victoria park lake foot path.

The initial costs for this project to supply and install approximately 130metres of 2100mm high Square Top Panel Fencing will be \$25,000. This cost does not include any access gates, landscaping or project planning fees.



The **Blue Line** above indicates the possible location and fence alignment

Financial Implications

This project will have a similar financial impact on the Aquamoves operational budget as operational review one - Free Splash Park access by a wrist band.

This option could potentially limit the number of new customers Aquamoves may be able to engage with. The Splash Park users would be able to use the Splash Park facilities for free and the Aquamoves paying customers will have their level of service reduced because they will no longer have access to the Splash Park facilities because of the physical barrier of the fence stopping the interaction of the two different user groups.

The cost of running a free Splash Park service on the current site will still have the same operational tasks needed to be completed but no income to offset these costs.

Devaluation of Services and Impact on Paying Customers

The current Aquamoves users would have their level of service reduced and the question may be asked by these users why they are paying the same fees as they did before the Splash Park was offered for free.

The 1400 Learn to Swim Students and the Aquamoves aquatic members would no longer be able to access the Splash Park before and after their swim lessons or swimming days unless they leave the Aquamoves grounds and enter the Splash Park via the free entry gates located either in the All Abilities Playground or along the Victoria Park Lake walking path.



The future users of the free Splash Park would no longer have access to the Aquamoves toilets, showers or changerooms. Without a major upgrade to the playground toilets and change facilities, the Splash Park users would have to use the All Abilities Playground toilets to get changed in if they did not arrive on site in their bathers or if they wish to get changed into dry clothes before they leave the site.

The Aquamoves indoor facilities has a pair of 'Changing Places' change rooms for our ability users. The changeroom assist users and carers to prepare themselves pre and post an aquatic experience. Aquamoves also has ramps throughout the facilities for people who have mobility issues.

Unfortunately, this option would reduce the access to the Splash Park for our ability users unless new change facilities were built, and connective ramps/pathways were put into the design brief of this project.

Conclusion

Similar to option one's review outcome, the idea of offering free access to the Aquamoves Splash Park may initially seem beneficial for community engagement, however the long-term consequences are likely to outweigh the perceived benefits.

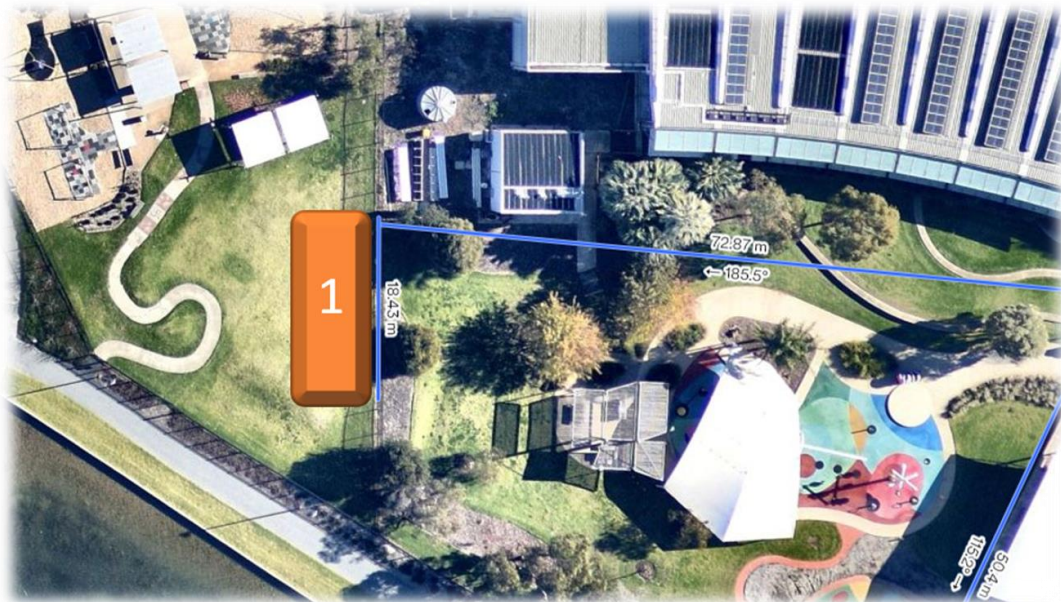
This operational option could be detrimental to the quality and sustainability of the Councils community services we offer at Aquamoves. Therefore, this option is not recommended to proceed with.



3. Locate a new Splash Park in the All-Abilities Playground

Operational Project Summary Three

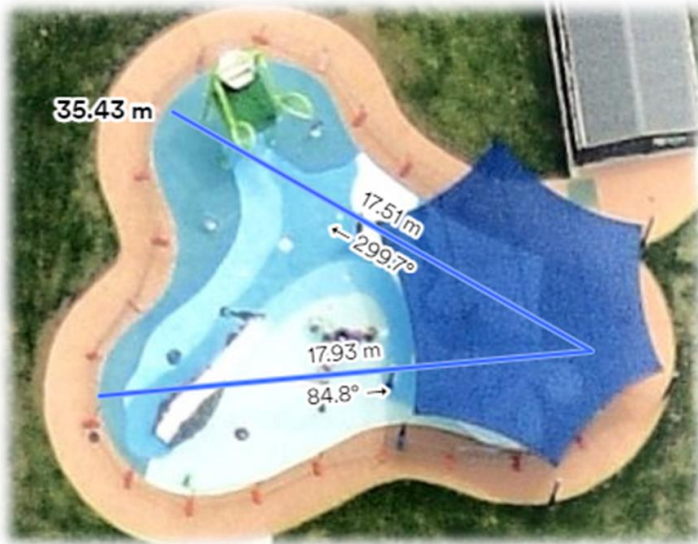
Located on the fence line of Aquamoves and the Victoria Lake All Abilities Playground could be a new build. Nature play Splash Park themed, with lights and spray interaction elements. Site can be used during the winter months and when the Splash Park is not running as a nature play climbing and social interaction areas.



This location would allow free access to the site and not impact on the current aquatic services Aquamoves offers the community. The site is close to the current outdoor Leisure Pool and Splash Park plant room so extending the current plant room could be an operational option and may reduce the plant room footprint compared to a completely new build located on a Greenfield site.

Current Project Costs for a new Splash Park build for something similar to the size of the Merrigum swimming pool or the Yarrowonga foreshore projects start at \$1,500,000. The 1.5 million dollar build would only include the splash pad, the spray and splash features, a small shade cover and the dosing and filtration systems.

Project cost would increase as extra project options are included in the project brief, this could include the building of a new Changing Places facilities to be used by the playground and the Splash Park users, extra lighting options and the need for more car parking to be located near the play space entry points.



4. Locate a new Splash Park near SAM and the Victoria Lake Holiday Park

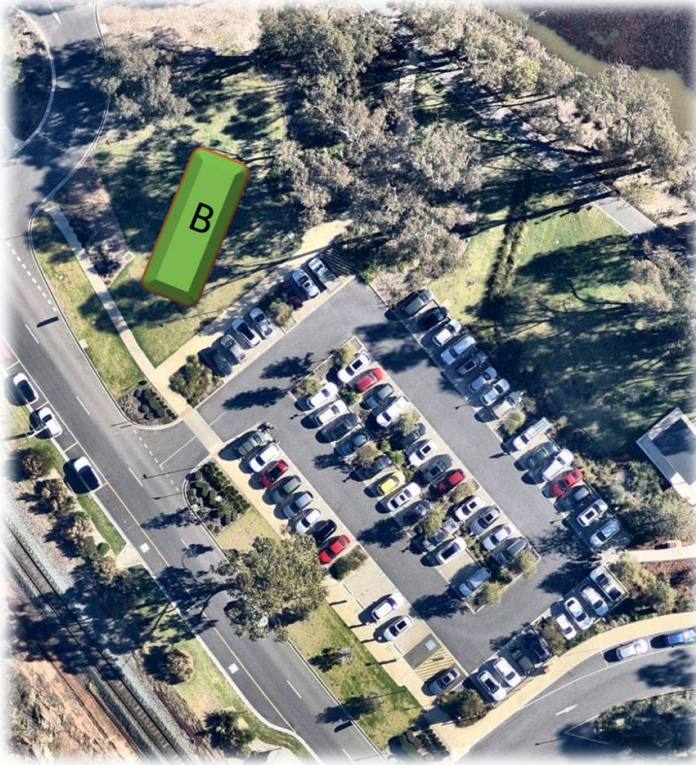
Operational Project Summary Four

Two Greenfield sites have been identified as possible new Splash Parks sites located near the Shepparton Art Museum (SAM) and the Victoria Lake Holiday Park. Nature play Splash Park themed, with lights and spray interaction elements. Site can be used during the winter months and when the Splash Park is not running as a nature play climbing and social interaction areas. The site could also interact with the different art theme which SAM the locate indigenous cultural theme

Site A would be built in an open green space area located north of the connective paths of SAM and the wider Victoria Lake precinct. It is also only a short walk to the current SAM public toilets and street parking



Site B would also be built in an open green space area located on the Southern side of the connective paths of SAM and the wider Victoria Lake precinct. It is also only a short walk to the current SAM public toilets and the SAM children’s play space.



The benefit of this location is more car parking is available for users and the Victoria Lake Holiday Park is just a short walk away. Holiday makers and in turn the Holiday Park could benefit from this location.

The pricing options for these two sites will start at a very similar price to the Aquamoves/All Abilities Playground project costs of 1.5 million dollars. The design and size of the Splash Parks would be very similar to each other.

Being Located near SAM could see the play space turn into a themed arts attraction with interactive lights and sound shows.



5. Locate a new Splash Park at KidsTown, or next to Tatura and/or Mooroopna seasonal pools

Operational Project Summary Five

Three other Splash Park Locations that could be considered into the future would be locating a Splash Park at the Tatura and Mooroopna Seasonal Pools and at our Regional Playground KidsTown.

These sites could be designed as a nature play Splash Park themed, with lights and spray interaction elements. During the winter months when the Splash Parks are not running, they could be used as a nature play climbing and social interaction areas.

The Sites would need to be included into facility master plans and the long-term financial plan of council



Planning and Feasibility

Any new Splash Park builds to be taken on by Greater Shepparton City Council will need a wide range of public consultation to be conducted prior to the design, purchase and installation of any new active water space. It is also important to include these spaces into a long-term Aquatic Strategy. By including the proposed new builds into an Aquatics Strategy, it will help identify the social and community benefits and the financial and operational risks.

As the current Aquamoves Splash Park moves towards its end of life, the current users and the wider community will be surveyed over the 2024/25 Christmas school holidays to identify which features they would like to see at a renewed Splash Park.

Ongoing Operational Cost of Splash Parks

Costs associated with the ongoing operations of a Splash Park will have a financial impact on the councils operating budget post the build period ending. Operational costs are broken down into five key areas; Staff, Utilities, Cleaning, Maintenance and Servicing and aquatic industry Occupational Health and Wellbeing requirements

Staffing – Depending on the sites location and the design we need to ask the question will additional staff be needed to operate this equipment/site safely? It is important to understand the requirements for staffing within the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation (GSPOs). Section 5 of the GSPOs deals directly with supervision and lifeguarding requirements. Guidelines have been developed for specific pieces of aqua play equipment and for various specific leisure water spaces.

Utilities - The installation of water play features will add to the costs of utilities – electricity, gas, water and pool chemicals. Many features require electric pumps and additional water to be heated and treated. Any water feature that aerates the water will also contribute to water loss through evaporation and waste through Splash Pad deck concourse drains.

Cleaning - Any equipment or features will need to be cleaned daily. What expected cleaning costs are associated? Cleaning costs may be in staff time, chemicals and equipment required. As a minimum ½ hour per day needs to be allocated to clean a small size Splash Park. More detailed cleaning will also be required periodically throughout the operational period of any aquatic features and hard surfaces.

Additional work instructions may need to be developed to cater for the cleaning of the aquatic play space. This may cover what type of cleaning materials are to be used, how often the area is cleaned, and the technique to be used. Care must be taken to comply with manufacturers guidelines, so we don't impact negatively on any warranty of the equipment. Workplace health and safety considerations should be taken into account as manual handling issues, working at heights, confined spaces, dangerous chemicals and slippery surfaces are common when cleaning aquatic play spaces.



Maintenance and servicing – Depending on the type and quality of equipment purchased, maintenance and service costs will vary. The operational budget will vary from very low cost for minor maintenance tasks through to very costly items such as pump or dosing equipment which will need replacing as they reach end of life. Periodically all moving parts will need to be purchased so they can be renewed.

Maintenance and servicing costs will vary by location. Outdoor equipment may corrode or have UV damage at a higher rate than indoor equipment. Indoor equipment may last longer due to being more protected from the environment. Regular servicing and maintenance will keep equipment in good condition and extend the equipment's lifespan. Well maintained and serviced equipment will also meet customer's expectations and reduce the likelihood of any accidents or breakdowns.

Aquatic industry Occupational Health and Wellbeing requirements

The aquatic industry is a highly regulated and specialized industry. In order to operate and maintain Splash Parks and associated equipment safely it is important to have suitable administration documentation for legal reasons in place.

This documentation should include.

- An operations manual.
- Emergency action plan.
- Staff training manuals, inductions records, qualifications and expiry dates.
- Checklists for maintenance, daily inspections and cleaning tasks.
- Maintenance and service records.
- Maintenance to specifications to ensure compliance.
- Cleaning to specifications and task instructions.



The Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation also has a wide range of specific industry requirements which facility operations manuals should comply with.

Testing frequency; many pieces of equipment come with instructions to test the equipment prior to each use. This inspection may be a simple visual inspection or may require more extensive testing. Staff and management must

ensure that compliance with manufacturer's instructions is maintained and the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation and WorkSafe regulations are all complied with.

Health requirements; all aquatic facilities open to the public must comply with the Department of Health regulations for public swimming pools. There have been some recent cases where Splash Parks or aquatic playgrounds have not demonstrated acceptable levels of



water circulation. This has occurred in the style of parks that operate when a user is present and presses a button. The problem occurs when the water sits and stagnates in underground tanks where it is not being circulated, disinfected or filtered. Care must be taken that all active water spaces comply with the relevant health standards. Regular manual water testing is required to ensure compliance with Health Department Regulations.

Staff are required to test the water quality before a facility/feature is opened to the public and then tests should take place every three hours a facility is open to the public and then again at close. A minimum of ½ hour per water body testing needs to be allocated to staff. Some water bodies will require a minimum staffing allocation of 3 hours of water testing per day.

Other aquatic industry Occupational Health and Wellbeing requirements include, signage requirements both public facing and back of house, risk management policies and procedures, handling of dangerous goods and chemical storage, WorkSafe standards and public supervision around aquatic environments.



Appendices 1- Media Release - Regional Aquatic staff abused during fee free period

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Events

ARI ready for its 58th conference

The Aquatic and Recreation Institute (ARI) conference and trade show is set to take place from May 19 to May 21, 2024 at West HQ, located in the heart of Western Sydney. West HQ is billed as the top venue in Greater Western Sydney, making it the ideal location for the ARI Annual Conference. It kicks off with a face-to-face professional development day at the Sydney Gymnastic and Aquatic Centre (SGAC) – the highly acclaimed swim school and one of the largest purpose-built gymnastics facilities in the southern hemisphere. A range of professional development opportunities will be provided for a wide array of aquatics and recreation workers, including swim teachers, pool lifeguards, aquatic technical operators and aqua aerobics instructors, delivered by industry professionals.

The conference will officially commence on May 20 at the Sydney Coliseum Theatre, West HQ's performing arts venue and the only location of its type in Greater Western Sydney. It will also be the setting for the ARI Trade Show.

One of the added advantages of this venue is the on-site Novotel – offering premier hotel accommodation – and a convenient option makes it effortless for delegates coming from regional NSW, interstate and overseas.

ARI NSW chair Marco Blanco says ARI is thrilled to partner with West HQ in the delivery of the conference.

"It is promising to be our biggest ever event and we look forward to an inspiring and enlightening event that connects industry," he says.

Contact: www.arinsw.com.au

Public pools

Regional aquatic centre staff abused during fee-free period

A report to Orange City Council tabled on March 19 included worrying information about the abuse of aquatic centre lifeguards during the council's fee-free period last Christmas.

An extra 16,000 people attending the centre over that time – more than doubling the usual numbers from 12,423 to a record 28,992.

The council forwent \$300,000 in revenue during the six weeks: \$90,000 from the normal revenue over that period not collected, and a further \$210,000 from entry fees not collected from the additional patrons who attended the facility.

However, rather than being grateful for the free swim, some patrons took the opportunity to abuse staff. In fact, during that period more than 250 patrons were ejected from the centre for unruly behaviour.

The biggest issues were the refusal to follow instructions, abusing staff or other patrons, and a higher-than-normal rate of theft with a number of phones and watches being taken from patron's bags. One patron's car was stolen from the car park after keys were stolen from his bag.

Police were engaged a number of times to report poor behaviour and to request patrols through the centre.



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Council engaged security guards to manage the behaviour at a cost of about \$30,000 over the second half of the free entry period, with the guards taking responsibility for managing and preventing the troublesome behaviour.

Understandably, there had been an increase in complaints from regular patrons. Anecdotal complaints included statements such as "ruined by small minority"; "very unsafe"; "scared"; and "out of control".

In an interview with ABC Central West, Drange City Council's community, recreation and cultural services director, Scott Maunder – who manages the pool – said the trouble was caused by a relatively small group comprising both children and adults, and that it escalated very quickly.

He also said that many of the lifeguards who were on the receiving end were in their teens or early 20s, and that even for the more experienced staff it was very confronting.

Additionally, he said there was also a rise in the number of excrement and urine contamination incidents in the pool.

Maunder said the staff were very happy for the free entry period to conclude.

Orange City Council mayor Jason Hamling told the ABC it was very disappointing, and with elections due in September, it would be up to the new councillors to decide how to proceed next summer, leaving open the possibility that the fee-free component, if it goes ahead, may only apply to families in future.

See page 58-59 of SPLASH! Edition 151, *Crisis management: exploring risk at communal, public and commercial swimming pools*, which includes advice from NSW Police on dealing with unruly patron behaviour at aquatic centres.

Be courteous and respectful: Shoalhaven Council supports its workers

Meanwhile, Shoalhaven Council has opted for a zero tolerance approach to harassment of staff or any behaviour that places its workers at risk of psychological harm, and has called on its community to be courteous and respectful in their interactions.

Under Work Health and Safety legislation, psychosocial hazards and risks are now part of the obligations of all employers to provide a safe workplace environment that equally considers physical and mental health.

This includes staff at facilities such as swimming pools, works depots, animal shelters and libraries, as well as anywhere maintenance crews, rangers and other staff are required to attend as part of their duties.

"We are committed to serving the community and genuinely want to assist in the capacity of our roles, wherever we can," says CEO Robyn Stevens.

"Workers are often bound by legislation and policy in the duties that they are performing and understand that people may feel frustrated by the information they're delivering. That some customers and members of the community feel from time to time that council has not delivered as they believe it should, does not excuse behaviour that puts staff at risk of physical or psychological harm," she says.

"Amongst our core values are integrity and respect and we simply ask that our community uphold those in dealing with us as well."

To mitigate risks, the council has established its meeting practices to include a preface about respectful behaviour of all participants and attendees, and measures have been put in place at council meetings to reduce incidents of intimidation, harassment or aggressive behaviour.

Workers are also supported to remove themselves from a situation if there is any verbal confrontation that is escalating or becoming aggressive in nature and police will be contacted as needed.

