

YARRA RANGES COUNCIL CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT



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Otium Planning Group acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and to Elders, past, present and emerging. Otium is committed to national reconciliation and respect for indigenous peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to society.

Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Summary of Feedback.....	1
1. Introduction.....	3
1.1 Background.....	3
2. Yarra Ranges Council aquatic facility locations.....	4
3. Consultation, Engagement and Research.....	5
3.1 Introduction.....	5
3.2 Community Survey.....	5
3.2.1 Respondent Profile.....	6
3.2.2 Use of Yarra Ranges Council Aquatics Facilities.....	6
3.2.3 Visitation to the Council pools.....	7
3.2.4 Rating of Facilities and Services.....	10
3.2.5 Future Visitation.....	12
3.2.6 Other reasons for decision to visit pools (privately or outside Yarra Ranges).....	12
3.3 School Survey.....	12
3.3.1 Visitation to Council Pools.....	13
3.4 Key Stakeholder and Advisory Groups Sessions.....	16
3.4.1 Internal Council Officers.....	16
3.4.2 Current Facility Members.....	17
3.4.3 Yarra Ranges Swimming Club and Facility Managers.....	17
3.4.4 Young People Focus Group.....	18
3.4.5 Health and Well-Being Advisory Group.....	18
3.4.6 Positive Ageing Advisory Group.....	18
3.4.7 Key themes from focus group consultations.....	19
3.5 Social media.....	20
3.5.1 Facebook.....	20
3.5.2 Instagram.....	21
3.5.3 Newsletters.....	21
3.5.4 Social media feedback summary.....	21
3.5.5 Key findings from social media feedback.....	22
4. Warranties and Disclaimers.....	23

Executive Summary

The first aquatic facility built in the Yarra Ranges was the Lilydale Baths in the 1920s. Now, Yarra Ranges' eleven aquatic facilities include swimming pools, leisure centres (with gym and program areas), and water play parks. The facilities play a key role in supporting the health and wellbeing needs of the Yarra Ranges community. Although several facilities have been upgraded over the years, some are reaching the end of their serviceable life and require redevelopment.

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the detailed community engagement undertaken by Council to obtain feedback on the residents' experience of using these facilities, and to get an understanding of the future need for aquatic services and programs across the municipality. This report provides the context for the project; engagement approach; and a summary of the key issues identified through the engagement process.

Consultation for the Yarra Ranges Council owned pools was conducted predominantly over a two-month period, between February and April 2023. The consultation included a wide range of interviews and online workshops with various key stakeholder community groups via alternative means including:

- 'Shaping Yarra' website
- Online video conferencing
- Online surveys – residents and schools.
- Social Media.

The consultation platforms were implemented in order to gain an understanding of the thoughts and opinions of different sectors of the community including:

- General community
- Schools in the Yarra Ranges Council
- Council Advisory Groups.

Summary of Feedback

The issues identified from the engagement were:

- Residents value having facilities that remain open throughout the year, allowing them to enjoy recreational activities regardless of the season.
- Residents value the availability of therapy programs and dedicated therapy pools within swimming facilities, citing the benefits of aquatic therapy for rehabilitation, relaxation, and overall well-being.
- The community expressed the need for an increased number of 50-metre pools within the council, which will provide ample space for swimming and competitive events, accommodating the needs of both athletes and recreational swimmers. They also mentioned the need of dry-land training spaces around the pools.
- Residents appreciate the importance of creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere within the swimming facilities, ensuring that individuals of all abilities and backgrounds feel comfortable and encouraged to participate.

- Respondents emphasised the significance of having accessible areas within swimming facilities, including ramps, elevators, Pelican Pool hoists and other accommodations, to enable individuals with disabilities to fully enjoy and participate in aquatic activities.
- Many community members placed heavy importance on the regular upkeep and cleanliness of the change rooms within the swimming facilities, recognising the importance of maintaining hygiene standards for the comfort and convenience of all visitors.
- Multiple schools indicated that a dedicated changing room facility for school children would be really appreciated to mitigate general public related risks.
- A multi-pool facility with 25m pool, Learn to Swim pool and a beach entry pool is highly requested as well. Overall, schools appreciate clean and hygienic facilities with infrastructure enough to support learn to swim classes and school carnivals.

1. Introduction

An extensive community engagement plan was developed to inform the Yarra Ranges Aquatics Strategy 2023 to 2033. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the detailed community engagement undertaken by the Yarra Ranges Council to obtain feedback on the current aquatic facilities. The report provides the context for the project; engagement approach and results; and a summary of the key issues identified through the engagement process.

1.1 Background

The Yarra Ranges Consultation Report will inform the Yarra Ranges Aquatic Strategy 2023 to 2033, which will provide a 10-year road map towards a diverse network of aquatic and leisure facilities. Yarra Ranges Council facilities will deliver adventure and leisure, education, health and fitness and therapy-based programs and participation opportunities for the community. The vision of the Aquatic Strategy is:

“To provide a diverse and sustainable network of aquatic and leisure facilities that brings Yarra Ranges residents together to access and enjoy health and wellbeing, education, fitness, leisure and play experiences”.

The Strategy will be a summary of market research, facility operating information and stakeholder consultation. It will consider the upgrade and renewal requirements of the existing facilities, the current and future needs of residents, population growth and demographic influences, emerging participation, usage and facility trends and the financial impact for Council. The strategy will define the role aquatic facilities play in providing aquatic and leisure services across Yarra Ranges.

Yarra Ranges Council’s eleven aquatics facilities include swimming pools, leisure centres (with gym and program areas), and water play parks. Yarra Ranges Council’s aquatic facilities include:

Pool & Leisure Centres

- Monbulk Aquatic Centre
- Yarra Centre (Yarra Junction)
- Belgrave Outdoor Pool
- Healesville Outdoor Pool
- Jack Hort Memorial Community Pool (Healesville)
- Kilsyth Centenary Pool*
- Lilydale Outdoor Pool
- Olinda Outdoor Pool.

*Kilsyth Pool was closed in March 2023 and remains closed to date.

Water Play Parks

- Lilydale Lake Water Play
- Seville Water Play Park
- Warburton Water World.

The map on the following page details the location of each facility and the usage number for each site for the 2022/2023 year.

2. Yarra Ranges Council aquatic facility locations

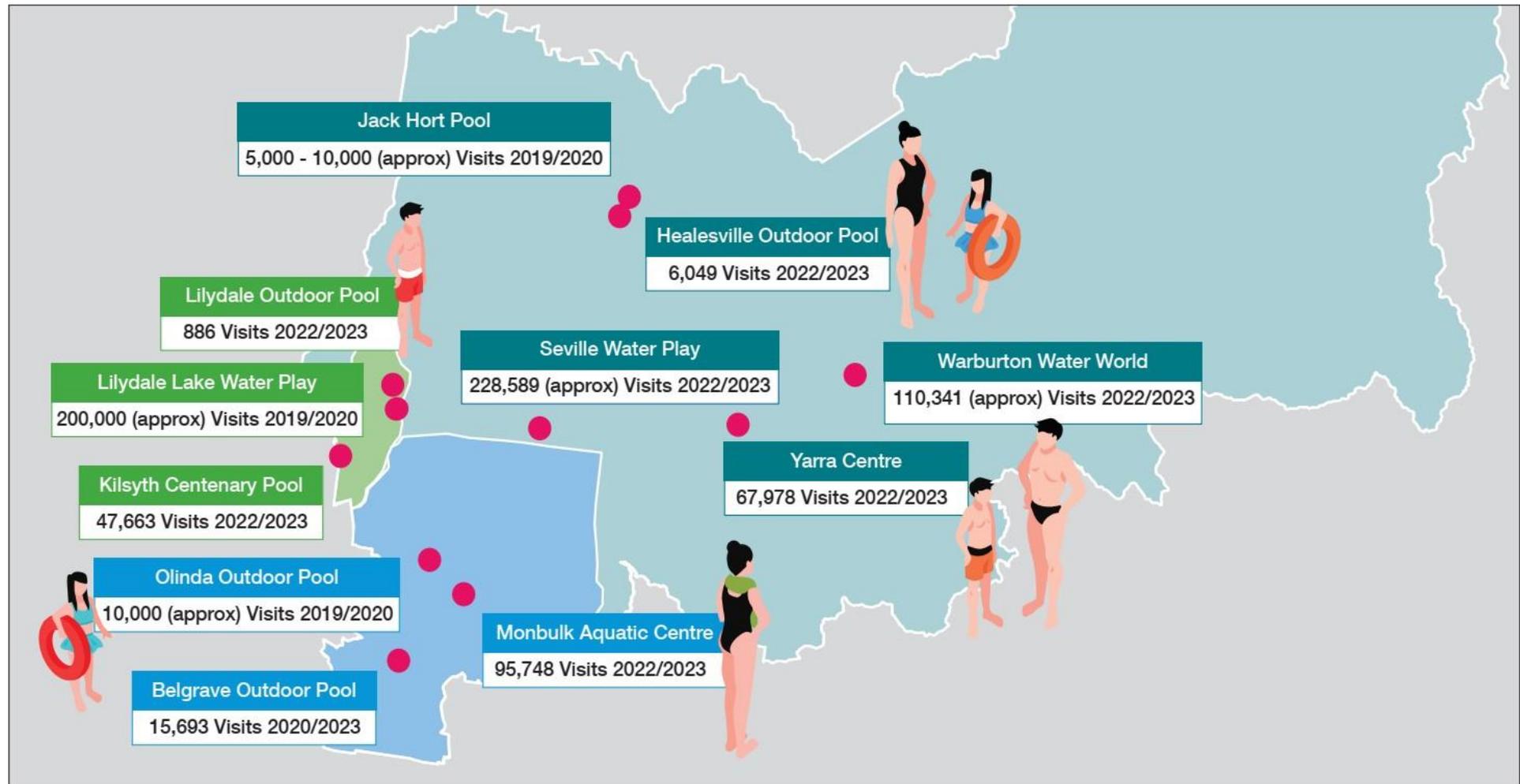


Figure 1: Visitation figures for Yarra Ranges Aquatic Facilities

*Updated figures for Olinda Outdoor Pool, Jack Hort Pool and Lilydale Lake Water Play were unavailable at the time of the completion of this report.

3. Consultation, Engagement and Research

3.1 Introduction

Consultation for the Yarra Ranges Council aquatic facilities was conducted predominantly over a two-month period, between February and April 2023. The consultation included a wide range of surveys, interviews and workshops with key stakeholders, community groups and Council officers via the following engagement processes.

- Face to Face focus groups
- Online video focus groups
- Discussion with relevant Advisory Groups
- Online surveys – residents and schools.
- Pop up sessions

The above engagement sessions were advertised using Councils “Shaping Yarra” website and Councils Facebook page.

The key findings from the consultation and engagement are presented under the following headings.

- Community survey
- School survey
- Resident, Advisory Groups and Key Stakeholder consultation sessions.

3.2 Community Survey

This section summarises the key findings from the community survey conducted online through Council’s ‘Shaping Yarra’ webpage. This survey took place between 27 February 2023 and 26 April 2023. A total of 2,040 people completed the survey. The following information provides details on who was responding to the survey.



The majority (78.8%) of respondents were female.



Age group that represents the highest percentage of the respondents is 35 to 44 years (34.4%) followed by 45 to 54 years (22.6%).



The predominant postcodes where respondents lived were Mooroolbark 3138 (15.8%), followed by Kilsyth 3137 (8.1%), Lilydale 3140 (7.8%) and Healesville 3777 (7%) .

Figure 2: Respondent Characteristics

3.2.1 Respondent Profile

The following tables summarise the user survey respondents' sample for the Yarra Ranges Council pools.

Table 1: User Survey Respondent Sample

Category	Sub-group	Number	%
Gender	Male	364	18.7
	Female	1532	78.8
	Prefer not to specify	42	2.1
Age Range	16 years and under	14	0.7
	16 to 24	32	1.6
	25 to 34	276	14.1
	35 to 44	671	34.4
	45 to 54	441	22.6
	55 to 64	277	14.2
	65 to 74	204	10.4
	75 to 84	34	1.7
	85 or over	0	0

Table 2: User survey population statistics

Suburb	% of Yarra Ranges Council population	Count	% of the survey respondents
Mooroolbark (3138)	14.8	308	15.8
Kilsyth (3137)	6.3	159	8.1
Lilydale (3140)	11.1	152	7.8
Healesville (3777)	6.6	137	7
Mount Evelyn (3796)	6.2	99	5
Chirnside Park (3116)	7.7	87	4.4
Montrose (3765)	4.4	78	4
Belgrave (3160)	6.3	68	3.5
Other	36.6	857	44

A review of the survey respondents indicates that:

- More females (78.8%) than males (18.7%) responded to the survey.
- The age group that represents the highest percentage of respondents is 35 to 44 years (34.4%) followed by 45 to 54 years (22.6%).
- The predominant postcodes where respondents lived were Mooroolbark 3138 (15.8%), followed by Kilsyth 3137 (8.1%), Lilydale 3140 (7.8%) and Healesville 3777 (7%).

3.2.2 Use of Yarra Ranges Council Aquatics Facilities

The majority of survey respondents (90.8%) had made use of a swimming pool in the previous twelve months. The following analysis relates to the respondents who had used a pool in the past twelve months.

3.2.3 Visitation to the Council pools

The main times that people used Yarra Ranges Council pools are detailed in the following table.

Table 3: Yarra Ranges Council Pools Arrival Times

Time Slot	% of Respondents
Before 9.00am	30.7
9.00am to 12.00pm	24.7
Midday to 2.00pm	6.0
2.00pm to 5.00pm	18.6
5.00pm to 8.00pm	19.5
After 8.00pm	0.2

The most popular timeslots identified were before 9.00am (30.7%), followed by 9.00am to 12.00pm (24.7%), and 5.00pm to 8.00pm (19.5%).

Length of visitation time

The length of time that respondents spent at the facilities on an average visit is detailed below.

Table 4: Yarra Ranges Council Pools Length of Visit

Length of Visit	% of Respondents
Less than 0.5 hours	0.4
0.5 hours to 1 hour	32.1
1 hour to 1.5 hours	42.4
1.5 hours to 2 hours	16.0
More than 2 hours	8.9

Most respondents spend 1 to 1.5 hours at the Centre (42.4%), followed by 0.5 to 1 hour (32.1%) and 1.5 to 2 hours (16%).

Reason for facility usage

Table 5: Yarra Ranges Council pools main reason for visit

Main reason for visit	% of Respondents	Count
Social and Recreation	32.3	1146
Health and Fitness	30.0	1064
Swimming lessons (for myself or others)	18.0	742
Training	17.6	564
Rehabilitation or therapy	15.3	487

The survey results indicate that the most popular reason to visit the pools was to meet friends and family and social recreation (32.2%) and the second most popular reason was health and fitness (30%).

Visit companions

Table 6: Yarra Ranges Council pools visit companions

Visit companions	% of Respondents	Count
By myself	48.2	889
Family members, other than children	39.0	718
Primary school aged children in care	35.5	654
Friends	29.8	549

Visit companions	% of Respondents	Count
Children under six in care	29.6	564
Secondary school aged children in care	18.6	344
Club members	3.9	73

Almost half of the respondents (48.29%) visited the Council pools by themselves. The second largest group was family members other than dependents (39%). The smallest group of companions was club members (3.97%).

Locations of visitation

Table 7: Locations of visitation

Location	% of Respondents	Count
Council pools in Yarra Ranges	60.9	1,122
Council pools both in Yarra Ranges and other Council areas	20.8	383
Pools in other council areas (e.g., Knox, Maroondah, Casey)	14.2	262
Private pools in Yarra Ranges and/ or other council areas	4.0	73

More than half of the respondents (60.9%) indicated that they most visited the local council pools in Yarra Ranges Council area. It should be noted that this percentage is lower when compared to other LGAs. Only 4% of the respondents chose private swimming pools over Yarra Ranges or other council pools.

Reasons for not visiting Yarra Ranges Council pools.

Table 8: Reason for not visiting Yarra Ranges Council pools

Reasons for not visiting	% of Respondents	Count
No suitable pools close to where I live	27.8	52
I am too busy with family/ work/ other commitments	22.0	41
I was a user when my kids were young, but we are not at that stage anymore	15.5	29
Unhygienic/ pools are not clean	15.0	28
Can use my own (friends or family's) pool	14.4	27
Prefer natural swimming areas	10.7	20
Health problems	10.2	19

Of the 187 respondents that indicated that they have not visited a council pool in the last 12 months, 27.8% indicated the lack of close proximity to local pools being the main reason. Twenty-two percent were too busy to visit and 15.5% stopped visiting after their children grew up.

Yarra Ranges Council pools most visited

Table 9: Yarra Ranges Council swimming pools locations

Locations	% of respondents used most	% of respondent also visited	Count
Kilsyth Centenary Pool	79.3	20.6	669
Olinda Outdoor Pool	57.7	42.2	421
Monbulk Aquatic Centre	45.6	54.3	366
Belgrave Outdoor Pool	51.9	48.0	360
Yarra Centre	59.7	40.2	288
Lilydale Outdoor Pool	21.5	78.4	209
Healesville Outdoor Pool	37.0	62.9	189
Jack Hort	47.4	52.6	154

Survey results indicate that the most popular first choice of pool for visitors has been the Kilsyth Centenary Pool (79.3%) followed by Yarra Centre (59.7%).

Transport to the Centre

The following table summarises how respondents travelled to the facilities and where they came from.

Table 10: Transport to Yarra Ranges Council swimming pools

Category	Sub-Group	Number	% of Respondents
Location of Origin	Home	1439	95.8
	Work	27	1.8
	School	34	2.2
	Other	2	0.1
Mode of Transport	Bike	18	0.9
	Bus	7	0.3
	Car (on own)	970	53.2
	Car (with others)	710	39.0
	Taxi	3	0.1
	Train	1	0.05
	Walk	5.93	1.08
	Other	4	0.2

Most survey respondents indicated that they travel to the Centre from their home (95.8%), followed by work (1.8%).

The majority of respondents travelled by car either on their own (53.2%) or with others (39%). Walking and taking a train were not as popular modes of transport (1.08% and 0.05% respectively) indicating that the location of the facility is a crucial factor in their decision to choose the facility.

Frequency of Visitation

The following figure summarises the frequency of visits to the facilities.

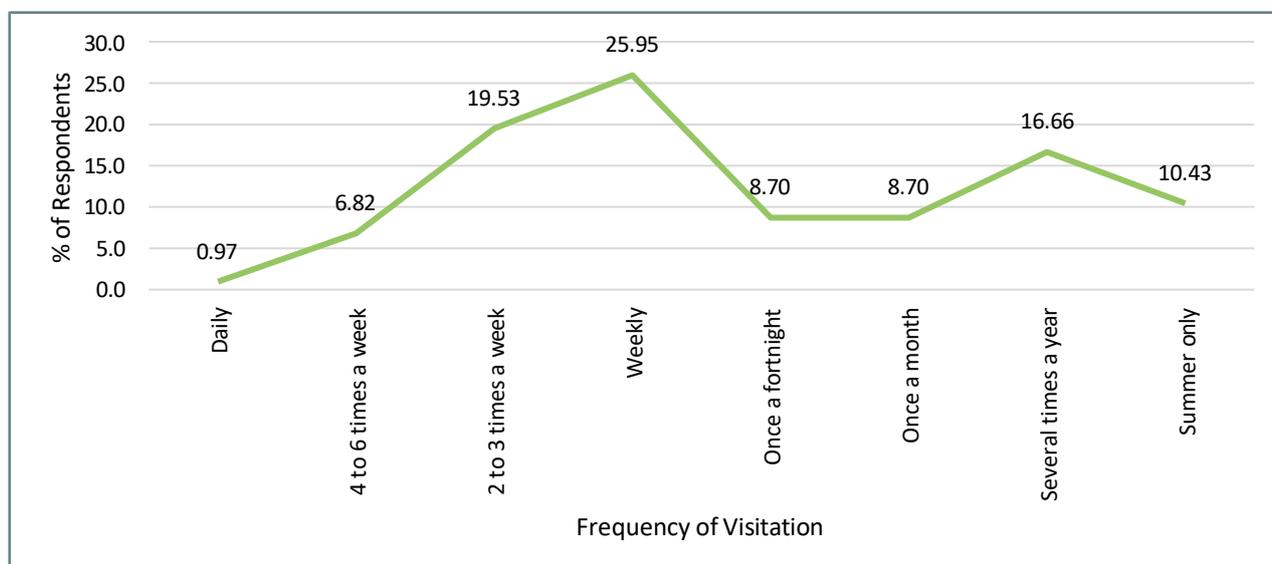


Figure 3: Yarra Ranges Council Pools Frequency of Visitation

The results indicate that the majority of respondents are regular users of the Yarra Ranges Council pools. More than half of the respondents (55.1%) use the Centre once a week or more with the most common being weekly (25.9%), followed by 2 to 3 times a week (19.5%).

Reasons for visiting a particular pool

Respondents provided a range of reasons why they chose which pool to visit. The key reasons listed in order of frequency of response were:

- Close to home 73.7%
- Indoor pool/s 30.6%
- Low entry charges 29.6%
- Friends/family go there 22.3%
- Outdoor pool/s 19.3%
- Learn to Swim pools and programs 17.5%
- Accessible facilities 13.2%
- Aquatic programs (e.g., aquarobics) 10.8%
- Range of indoor/outdoor pools 9.9%
- Close to work/school 7.4%
- Hydrotherapy/rehabilitation 7.2%

The main reason for respondents to choose which pool to visit is the proximity to their home (73.7%) followed by availability of indoor pools (30.6%) and low entry charges (29.6%).

Main activities during visit

- Cool down in hot weather 46.5%
- Swim laps 44%
- Meet with friends and family 43.9%
- Swimming lessons 29.4%
- Spectator/ supervising 17.8%
- Water based fitness activities 11.7%
- Rehabilitation programs 9.8%
- Other recreation 4.2%

3.2.4 Rating of Facilities and Services

Survey respondents were asked to rate the current facilities and services at Yarra Ranges Council pools under a five-point rating system. Those respondents that rated the facilities and/or services as poor or very poor were asked to identify which facilities and/or services in particular they were unhappy with.

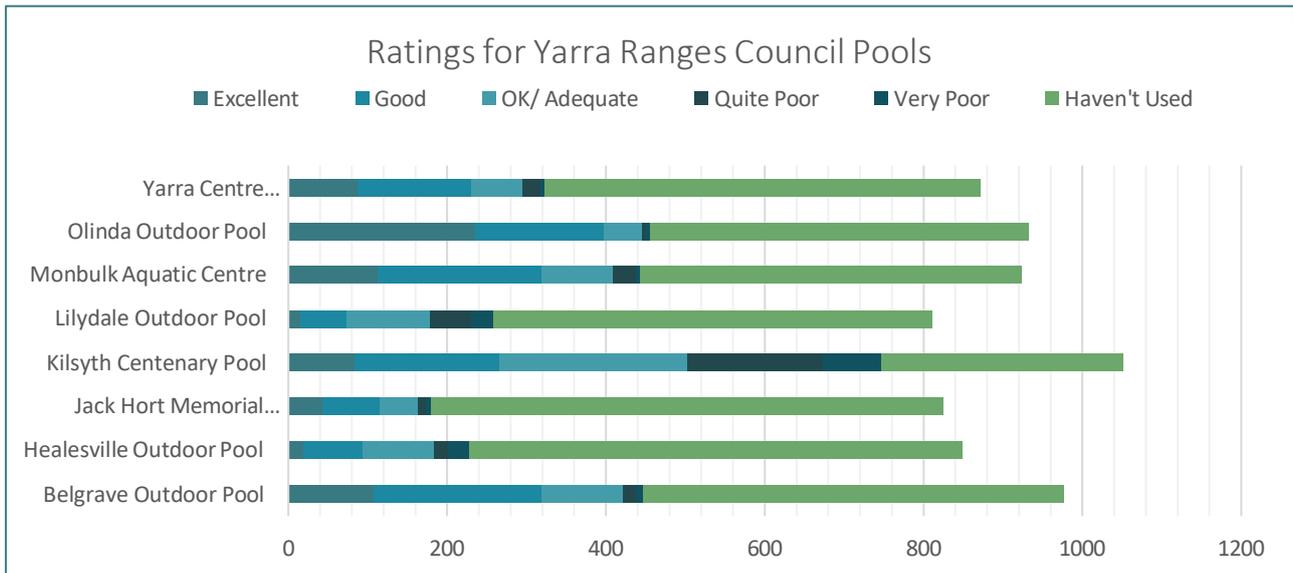


Figure 4: Ratings for all Yarra Ranges Council Pools

Table 11: Ratings for all Yarra Ranges council pools breakdown

Swimming Pools	Excellent + Good %	OK/ Adequate %	Quite Poor + Very Poor %	Have not used %
Belgrave Outdoor Pool	32.6	10.4	2.6	54.2
Healesville Outdoor Pool	11.0	10.4	5.3	73.1
Jack Hort Memorial Community Pool	13.9	5.8	1.9	78.2
Kilsyth Centenary Pool	25.2	22.6	23.2	28.9
Lilydale Outdoor Pool	8.0	13	9.7	68.19
Monbulk Aquatic Centre	34.5	9.7	3.6	52.0
Olinda Outdoor Pool	42.5	5.2	1.0	51.1
Yarra Centre (Yarra Junction)	17.4	7.3	3.2	63.0

The ratings suggest that the pools which most respondents rated “Excellent or Good” were Olinda Outdoor Pool (42.5%) and Monbulk Aquatic Centre (34.5%). The pool that was most rated “Quite Poor” or “Very Poor” was Kilsyth Centenary Pool (23.2%). It should be noted that Kilsyth Pool also had relatively more attendance than other pools, only 28.9% of respondents have not visited the pool.

Areas of Concern

Table 12: Areas of Concern with Facilities

Area Concern	% of Respondents
Cleaning and presentation	43.4
Change rooms	40.4
Air quality in pool hall	28.8
Size and quality of swimming pools	27.4
Water temperature of the pools	17.1
Outdoor water play/children’s water areas	10.3
Pools are too crowded	9.9

The area that respondents were most unhappy with at Yarra Ranges Council swimming pools was the cleanliness and presentation, with this being identified by 43.4% of respondents who rated the facilities as poor or very poor. This was closely followed by change rooms (40.4%) as the second most problematic area in the facilities. Through consultations, it was mentioned that female changerooms in Yarra Centre felt unsafe due to dark and narrow corridors.

3.2.5 Future Visitation

95.77% of the respondents mentioned that they will make of or greater use of Yarra Ranges Council pools in the future while 4.34% indicated they would not make use or greater use in the future.

Table 13: Areas for improvement to make greater use of facilities.

Improvement areas	Percentage %	Count
Clean, hygienic facilities	57.3	1051
Children’s pools, water play/Splash zones	37.1	6680
Outdoor heated pools	33.8	621
Longer opening hours	27.9	513
Warm water pool for therapy/ rehabilitation	27.1	498
Water slides/ adventurous elements	25.9	475
Membership packages/Discount offers	24.0	441
Outdoor grass/shaded area	22.2	408

The survey results indicate that more than half of respondents (57.4%) identified improved “Clean, hygienic facilities” as the reason to make greater use of the pool facilities in the Yarra Ranges. This was followed by improved children’s pool options (37.1%) and the availability of outdoor heated pools (33.8%).

3.2.6 Other reasons for decision to visit pools (privately or outside Yarra Ranges)

- Close to home 45.4%
- Indoor pool 39.9%
- Low entry charges 28.3%
- Range of activities (e.g., water slides) 23.4%
- Learn to swim pools and programs 23.1%
- Hydrotherapy/Rehabilitation 19.8%
- Accessible facilities 15.9%
- Range of indoor/outdoor pools 13.2%

3.3 School Survey

An online survey was provided to schools as one of the largest stakeholder groups that make use of swimming pools. The survey was open between the months February and April 2023 and 12 schools responded. The aim of the survey was to identify current and future issues that may impact the future use of the facilities by school.

3.3.1 Visitation to Council Pools

Of the twelve schools, seven schools mentioned that they visit facilities in the Yarra Ranges Council, five indicated that they visit facilities, both, in Yarra Ranges and other council areas. One school visits facilities exclusively outside the Yarra Ranges. All schools indicated that they had visited at least one aquatics facility in the last twelve months. Between the thirteen schools, the following pools had visitations.

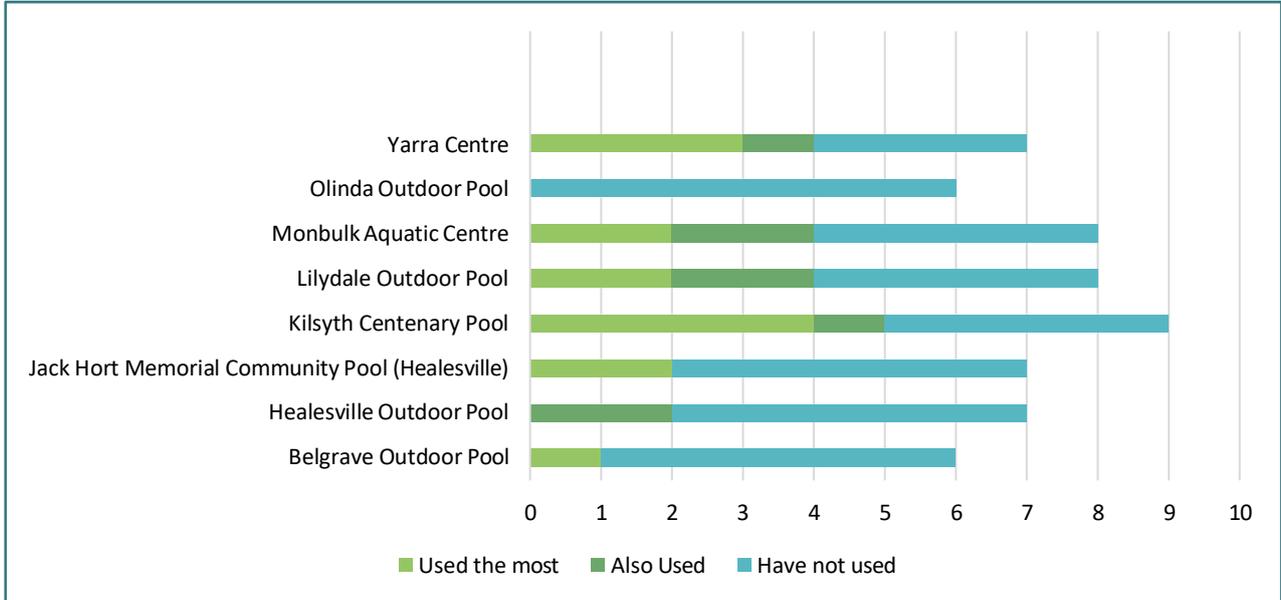


Figure 5: Visitation to Council pools

The data indicates that the pools that were most visited by the schools were Kilsyth Centenary Pool (five schools) and Yarra Centre (four schools). It is also important to note that schools are the most regular repeat visitors of swimming pools and favour facilities with multiple components such as warm water pool and play area.

Visitation to pools outside of Yarra Ranges (public or private)

Table 14: Aquatics facilities visited outside of Yarra Ranges Council

Pool used
Aquanation Ringwood
Knox Leisure Works
WaterMarc
Croydon Memorial Pool and Croydon Aquahub

Main reason for visit

Table 15: Main reason for visit

School	Main reason for use
Learn To Swim lessons	10
Swim Carnivals	6
Fun day events	6
Water safety and survival programs	2
Surf Lifesaving Bronze Medallion program training	1

The main reason schools indicated they visit the aquatic centres was for learn to swim programs, followed by carnivals and fun event days.

What time of the year are the pools visited?

Table 16: Annual visitation



The survey results indicate that Term 4 (October to December) and Term 1 (January to April) were the most popular period for use of the aquatic facilities, mainly due to the weather.

Rating of Facilities and Services

The following graph shows the ratings given by all the schools that completed the survey.

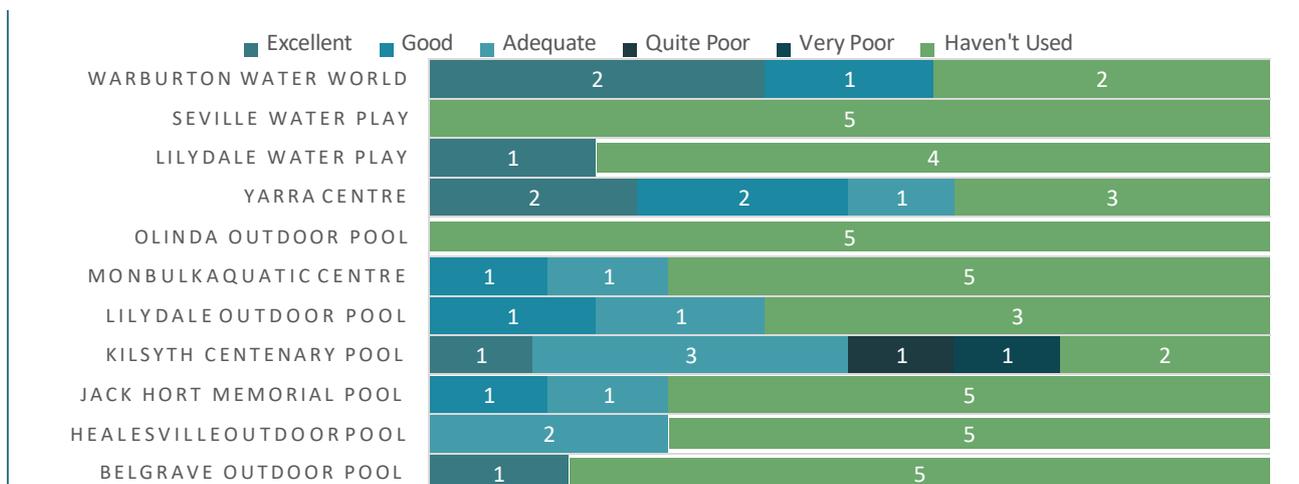


Figure 6: Rating of Facilities and Services by Schools

The results indicate that, of the facilities that were visited, Yarra Centre received the most positive rating – two schools rated it Excellent, and two schools rated it Good. Warburton Water World also had positive ratings (two excellent, one good). Kilsyth Centenary Pool received mixed feedback (one Excellent, three Adequate, one Quite Poor and one Very Poor). It should be noted that Kilsyth Centenary Pool was the most visited pool and was quite old.

What is most liked about the Yarra Ranges aquatic facilities?

Table 17: Most liked features of Yarra Ranges Aquatic facilities.

Most liked features
Open all year round except for Lilydale outdoor pool.
Great instructors and facilities are not too busy for our school size.
Early season opening to accommodate our program, Proximity to school, cost of entry, flexibility of staff to accommodate our program.
Close, somewhat affordable.
Convenient location, friendly staff/teachers, clean facilities.
Yarra Centre - clean pool and good changing room facilities - Healesville pools is location.
location and convenience.
Friendly staff, considerate of school's needs when attending a pool as a group.
Is located close to our school, so students can walk there.
Suitable for carnival (Croydon memorial pool), close to school (Lilydale outdoor), open year-round and heated (Kilsyth).
The staff are easy to work with and coordinate the booking. Location - it is the closest indoor pool to us without eating into more learning time for travel.

The above table indicates that facilities being open all year round is very important for schools. Proximity to schools is a big factor when it comes to choosing the correct aquatic facility. Several schools also indicated that friendly and professional staff are vital to their swim programs. Schools also liked the suitability of the pools for major events such as school carnivals and sport events.

Future Visitation

Table 18: Main reasons to encourage future visitation

Reasons to encourage future visitation
50 metre pool that is open for swimming training all year round.
Extended season opening beyond Labour Day weekend.
Better dedicated school change rooms, general “clean” look and feel of the place, no entry fee for school users.
More school-only changing rooms.
Access to free transport.
Specialised swimming programs - water familiarisation for juniors, survival skills for middle to senior students, water sports programs, canoeing etc.
Better quality facilities.
Upgraded facilities - heated pool at Lilydale, enough space for spectators at carnivals, open for longer season.
Not needing to transport classes a long distance and taking up more learning time for travel.

The table indicates that reasons for future visitation include a focus on enhanced amenities such as dedicated school change rooms, upgraded facilities, and extended season opening. Additionally, factors like convenient transportation options and specialised swimming programs also play a significant role in encouraging schools to choose these facilities for their visits.

3.4 Key Stakeholder and Advisory Groups Sessions

A range of focus group sessions were held to identify the current issues with existing aquatic services and facilities and future opportunities. The sessions included:

- Internal Council Officers
- Current Facility Members
- Yarra Ranges Swimming Club and Facility Managers
- Young People Focus Group.
- Health and Well-being Advisory Group
- Positive Ageing Advisory Group.

A total of 47 people attended one of the above sessions. The tables below provide a summary of the key findings identified through the engagement.

3.4.1 Internal Council Officers

The internal council focus groups represented officers from the following areas:

- Community Health and Wellbeing Officer
- Recreation and Sport Program Officer
- Capital Investment Planning
- Recreation, Parks and Facilities
- Partnership and Community Building
- Healthy Ageing Team

Table 19: Internal Council Officers

Constraints	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers for people with disabilities (ramps, pelican hoist) • Lack of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ diving facilities ○ therapy pools ○ need provisions for competitive or professional swimmers (dive blocks, dry land training areas) ○ sensory rooms ○ structures that feel like safe spaces (group fitness studios feel like “Fish bowls”) • Uncomfortable plastic chairs along the swimming pool • Women and girls change rooms feel unsafe (dark and narrow corridors) • Waterworld parking is hard to navigate • Limited opening times for gyms (gyms don’t open early enough) • Aging facilities • Limited facilities available for age groups 7 and up • Financial constraints for expansions • Geographical challenges • Poor condition of Lilydale pool • High entry fees for gyms • Poorly maintained change rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas for socialising for parents/guardians and other patrons • Blinds in group fitness studios • Improved seating options around the pool • More promotional material around the facilities to improve community spirit • Change rooms for women and girls can be made safer and more welcoming • Energy efficient operations • Change heating systems from gas to electric pumps • Need for warm water therapy pools • Increased access times (universal access) • Healthy food options around the facilities • Encourage transgender participation • Making centres not only accessible for people with disabilities but also welcoming • Adapt programs and facilities to cultural differences (dedicated programs for Muslim women) • Off-peak discounts • More indoor facilities

3.4.2 Current Facility Members

Table 20: Current Facility Members

Strengths	Opportunities
Proximity to home	More facilities with 50m pools
Pool is well maintained and clean	Larger group fitness rooms
Pool is patrolled by lifeguards, making it safer	Increased group fitness offerings (type and frequency)
Inclusivity – wheelchair ramps, pelican hoist, special lessons for people with autism, lessons in Chinese language	Family change cubicles
Staff are proactive and friendly	Larger change rooms
staff facilitate the community spirit	Functional dome replacement (Kilsyth)
Clean pools and gym facilities	Extended opening hours
Communal areas – café	Extended seasonal pool dates
50-meter pool – rare to find	Make the facilities more appropriate for school carnivals (more area around pools)
Aqua classes availability (for full-time workers)	Access to transport to visit the pools
Toddler pools – shallow and warm	Improved play area
Variety of pools	More cafés and food areas
All gym equipment in working order	Promotion of current facilities (advertise what we do have to increase community awareness)
Variety of group fitness classes	Better locations
Variety of swimming lessons	Group fitness classes and gym equipment for elderly

3.4.3 Yarra Ranges Swimming Club and Facility Managers

- Centre Manager for Yarra Centre
- Monbulk Swimming Club President
- Aquatics Project Manager
- Program Officer
- Lilydale Swimming Club
- Monbulk Centre Manager
- Olinda Outdoor Pool
- Lilydale Swimming Club

Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing facilities • Due to Kilsyth closure, other facilities are experiencing overcrowding • Lap pool can get very congested with around 50 swimmers at the same time. (Monbulk) • Lane width is too narrow. It should be 2.5m. There are from eight to sixteen swimmers in one lane at any time • Due to lower population density in Monbulk, 50m pool may not be feasible • Splash pools only cater to kids below four-year-olds • Not enough spectator seating • No capacity for swim meets • Membership has gone down • Need to fix maintenance challenges • No disability access • Facilities are not ideal for school groups • Temperature of the pools is too cold for small kids and older people • Demand from schools in the Yarra Ranges Council cannot be met by the current facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydrotherapy pool • Allied health services • Warm water pool to alleviate congestion • Addition of 50m pool • Early open times (5.30 am) could help bring in more people • 50m indoor pool that is open all year round • Diving boards and diving pool • Possibility of federal or state grants as part of the strategy • Surf Life Saving programs for kids in the council

3.4.4 Young People Focus Group

Table 21: Young People

Which Yarra Ranges facilities have you used?	Have you visited other facilities with standout features?	What are some opportunities for improvement?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lillydale Lake Splash Pad Warburton Water World – outdoor pool Lilydale outdoor pool Lilydale outdoor pool Outside Yarra Ranges – Croydon Aquahub (swimming carnivals) 	<p>Wellingborough – The Water Garden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diving boards Multiple pools for different age groups Outdoor water play area Deep water pools <p>Merimbula – The Magic Mountain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water slides <p>Maroondah – Aquanation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple water slides <p>Mildura – Water Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sectioned-off areas for pools <p>Genesis Gym</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good machines in gym Variety of machines in gym Advanced gym machinery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install diving board Upgrade gym facilities Sectioned-off gym areas More and improved group fitness classes Upgrade/ modernise the building More outdoor pools More indoor/ warm pools for winter Better access for people with disabilities Ramps for wheelchairs Communal seating areas Shaded areas Permanent pool hoist

3.4.5 Health and Well-Being Advisory Group

Table 22: Issues and opportunities presented by Yarra Ranges Council youth group

Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Access to warm water Lack of diving boards Can get too busy and loud Outdoor pools are too cold Lack of bathrooms Car parking gets very busy Not enough shaded areas Yarra Junction play pool is too cold Lack of hydrotherapy pools No transition pathways from Learn to Swim to Squad swimming Acoustics makes it hard for Learn to Swim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcoming signage Educating staff members on gender neutral issues Spaces for sensory challenges Quiet areas Make it affordable for refugees Make outdoor pools heated Patient transport (useful for kids too) More slides – encourages social activities Inflatables for school holidays Swimming lessons built into swim programs Dedicated areas for school swimming Fully integrated facility with basketball and pool Signage for people with diverse background Important to note the role of body image Rehab services Deep water pools

3.4.6 Positive Ageing Advisory Group

- Yarra Ranges Council – 6 attendees
- Belgravia – 1 attendee
- U3A Yarra Ranges – 1 attendee
- Caladenia Dementia Care – 2 attendees

Issues	Opportunities
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of therapy and warm water pools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways for facilities to reflect the Indigenous community in the Ranges
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Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several facilities with limited access via public transport • Lack of seating or shaded areas for grandparents • Fees can be a barrier • Limited access for people with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking close to creche – making it easier to get in and out of the centre • Discounts for senior population • Programs for grandparents and grandchildren • Colour coding in facility design for people living with dementia • Social opportunities to connect. For e.g., Café’s

3.4.7 Key themes from focus group consultations

The following provides a summary of the key themes identified via the focus group sessions.

Facility Features and Maintenance: The consultation summary highlights various features of the facilities that are considered important, including proximity to home, cleanliness, variety of pools with particular emphasis on the need for warm water pools to support therapy and rehabilitation classes. Concerned was expressed about the aging facilities, lack of maintenance, inadequate change rooms and limited diving facilities.

Accessibility and Inclusivity: The data emphasises the importance of accessibility and inclusivity in the facilities, including features such as wheelchair ramps, pelican hoists, lessons for people with special needs and lessons in different languages. Barriers were identified for people with disabilities and the need for safer and welcoming change rooms including gender neutral change facility options.

Expansion and Improvement Opportunities: The feedback identified the need to expand and improve a range of facility components areas, such as the addition of 50m pools, larger fitness rooms, family change cubicles, and more facilities suitable for school carnivals. Opportunities for upgrading gym facilities, providing therapy pools, and modernising buildings are also highlighted.

Congestion and Overcrowding: Issues related to congestion and overcrowding are mentioned by the swimming clubs and centre managers, including congested lap pools, narrow lanes, limited spectator seating, and challenges in meeting the demand from schools and swim meets. Suggestions to alleviate congestion include access to warm water pools and earlier open times.

Community Engagement and Programs: The feedback highlights the role of community engagement, proactive staff, and the facilitation of a community spirit within the facilities. Opportunities to promote community awareness, Surf Life Saving programs for kids, and adapt programs and facilities to cater to cultural differences are also highlighted.

Temperature and Comfort: Concerns were expressed about the cold pool temperature, which is seen as a challenge for small children and older individuals. Suggestions for improvement include providing warm water pools for rehabilitation and hydrotherapy pools and heated outdoor pools.

Financial Constraints: Financial constraints are mentioned as a barrier to expansion and improvements in some areas, indicating the need to explore grants and alternative funding sources.

3.5 Social media

The following table provides a summary of the social media engagement by Yarra Ranges Council to gather community feedback on the Yarra Ranges aquatics facilities.

Table 23: Social media engagement

Social media platform	Engagement	
Facebook	Posts	7
	Impressions	77,299
	Link clicks	1100
	Shares	72
Newsletter	Inclusions	4
	Link clicks	1226
Instagram	Posts	4
	Reach	3988

The social media platform that engaged the greatest number of users was Facebook (77,299 impressions) followed by Instagram (3988 impressions) and Newsletters (1226 link clicks). Users also left feedback comments on Facebook posts.

3.5.1 Facebook

This section presents the engagement data from Yarra Ranges Council Facebook posts.

Table 24: Engagement statistics from Facebook posts (2023)

Post date	Post impressions	Post reach	Post engagement	Link Clicks	Comments	Shares	Reactions	Comments
February 17	19011	18194	2460	321	74	19	136	71% of people commenting offered suggestions of improvements to aquatic facilities in the region
March 8	12557	11567	1011	262	19	15	66	42% of people commenting offered suggestions of improvements to aquatic facilities in the region
March 20	3469	3250	256	45	9	5	25	33% of people commenting said they have completed the survey
March 30	2372	2273	252	17	5	1	10	60% of people commenting were discussing the sustainability and greenhouse emissions
April 6	11174	10330	701	239	4	14	57	50% of comments were people tagging their friends and family
April 13	1501	1462	156	21	4	0	5	50% of people commenting were discussing the Kilsyth Pool closure
April 20	27215	25874	1013	195	20	18	64	45% of people commenting were discussing pools and facilities in the region

In total, 77,229 impressions were gathered from Facebook posts. This is including likes, shares, and comments. People could access the link to community engagement survey, but many respondents also commented on the posts with valuable feedback. This feedback was considered also in the development of the Draft strategy.

3.5.2 Instagram

Table 25: Engagement statistics from Instagram posts

Post Date	Reach	Likes
March 8	649	8
March 20	1154	37
April 6	982	28
April 20	1203	32

A total of 3,988 impressions were gathered from 4 Instagram posts and they had a total of 105 likes. Users were directed to a Yarra Council website or Facebook post to complete the survey.

3.5.3 Newsletters

Table 26: Engagement statistics from newsletters

Date	Email addresses count	Emails opened	Aquatics link clicks
March 10	11380	4970	292
March 24	11431	5486	243
April 6	11460	5339	74
April 21	11392	4466	522

A total of 45663 email addresses received the newsletter with a link to the community engagement survey, out of which 44.3% opened the email and 2.4% clicked on the link.

3.5.4 Social media feedback summary

The following table lists themes from social media posts and presents a count of users that agreed with the comments.

Table 27: Social Media Feedback Summary

Issues	Count
Lack of 50m pools	20
Lack of Hydrotherapy pool	10
Lack of Warm pool	10
Lack of Shaded areas	17
High entry fees	20
Crowded facilities during peak season	21
Not enough use of splash parks	2
Short opening times/ short summer seasons	15
Out of date change room facilities	4
Inability to keep with up growth	5
Lack of facilities for people with disabilities	21
Outdated infrastructure	12
Not enough water parks	10

3.5.5 Key findings from social media feedback

Concerns:

- Concerns about the lack of a 50m pool and limited lane space, which hampers swimming clubs and user groups.
- Need for a warm water pool for hydrotherapy to cater to different age groups.
- Concern that swimming facilities were neglected, with inadequate upgrades and maintenance.
- Frustration was voiced regarding the slow progress in upgrading pools despite surveys and consultations.
- The transformation of community pools into splash parks was seen as limiting their usefulness.
- The need for more enclosed pools for exercise and rehabilitation purposes was emphasised.
- There were requests for a membership system allowing access to all pools and concerns about fairness in allocating resources between water parks and local children's needs.

Positive Aspects:

- Appreciation for the facilities and gratitude expressed for great facilities and experiences.
- Positive feedback about the Belgrave Outdoor Pool and its pleasant environment for morning laps.
- Satisfaction with the Seville Water Park and its positive impact on kids' enjoyment and as an affordable option.
- Recognition of the improvements in the Olinda Pool after a fight to keep it open.
- Praise for the Warburton Water Park and its appeal for children.
- Positive comments about the enjoyment of water play in open water playgrounds like the one in Seville.

Overall, these comments highlight the key concerns surrounding the aquatic facilities, including the need for better pool infrastructure, upgrades, and fair resource allocation. However, there were also positive sentiments expressed towards certain pools and water parks that provided enjoyable experiences for the community.

4. Warranties and Disclaimers

The information contained in this report is provided in good faith. While Otium Planning Group has applied their experience to the task, they have relied upon information supplied to them by other persons and organisations.

We have not conducted an audit of the information provided by others but have accepted it in good faith. Some of the information may have been provided 'commercial in confidence', and these venues or sources of information are not specifically identified. Readers should be aware that the preparation of this report may have necessitated projections of the future that are inherently uncertain and that our opinion is based on the underlying representations, assumptions and projections detailed in this report.

Otium Planning Group's advice does not extend to, or imply professional expertise in the disciplines of economics, quantity surveying, engineering or architecture. External advice in one or more of these disciplines may have been sought, where necessary to address the requirements of the project objectives. There will be differences between projected and actual results because events and circumstances frequently do not occur as expected, and those differences may be material. We do not express an opinion as to whether actual results will approximate projected results, nor can we confirm, underwrite, or guarantee the projections' achievability as it is impossible to substantiate assumptions based on future events.

This report does not constitute advice, investment advice, or opinion and must not be relied on for funding or investment decisions. Independent advice should be obtained in relation to investment decisions.

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