

7.7. Future of Aquatic Services

Kylie Floyd addressed Council in relation to item 7.7

Author:

Kerrie Hawkes, Acting Recreation Manager

Attachments:

7.7.1 Future of Councils Aquatic Facilities Discussion Paper, 2016

7.7.2 Council Minutes, 16 August 2016, Item 6.2: Campaspe Aquatic Service Review

7.7.3 Council Minutes, 19 April 2016, Item 6.9: Aquatic Services Review Discussion Paper

1. Purpose

This report seeks to advise Council on the progress made in implementing its decision regarding the future of its Aquatic services and to provide recommendations on the way forward.

2. COUNCILLORS NEELE/MUNRO

That Council:

- 1. Note the need for an Aquatics and Leisure Strategy to establish a service vision, objectives and desired outcomes. The strategy would provide the framework for the future provision of Aquatic and Leisure Services inclusive of service models, programs and infrastructure.**
- 2. Note the urgency to begin the planning for new facilities in Kyabram and Rochester due to the age and condition of these facilities.**
- 3. Note that funding for the Strategy and business cases for Rochester and Kyabram Aquatic facilities has been referred to the 2019/20 Budget process for consideration and that these two facilities have priority due to their location/service catchment and condition.**
- 4. Extend the time frame until the end of 2021 for determination on the future of Colbinabbin, Lockington, Stanhope and Tongala pools to enable the consideration of recommendations from the yet to be developed Aquatic and Leisure Strategy and Community Place based plans.**
- 5. Note the Council will only provide essential operational requirements and maintenance works at Colbinabbin, Lockington, Stanhope and Tongala until their future is determined.**

CARRIED

Cr Vickers left the Chamber at 5:55pm

Cr Vickers re-entered the Chamber at 5:57pm

4. Conflict of Interest

In accordance with Section 80B of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the officer preparing this report declares no conflict of interest regarding this matter.

5. Charter of Human Rights

This report has considered and complies with the Human Rights and Responsibilities contained in the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

6. Instrument of Delegation

This report has considered and complies with the Instrument of Sub-Delegation by the Chief Executive Officer in so far as this report is not contrary to the existing policy or strategy previously adopted by Council.

7. Background

In August 2016 after a three year process of data collection and community engagement Council established its position in relation to Aquatic Services through undertaking a detailed Review, the findings of which are published in an associated Discussion Paper.

The review of Aquatic services was driven by a number of challenges to the long term sustainability of the service and the facilities.

Age, Condition and Number of Facilities

The most significant challenge is the age of outdoor pool facilities. The current facilities average age is over 50 years, and ranges from 18 to 85 years. As a consequence, a majority of the facilities are in very poor condition, and reaching the end of their serviceable lives. General condition assessments were carried out for each pool. This activity clearly indicated that significant and expensive works are required to maintain all existing facilities in serviceable condition.

Increasing Operational Costs

The main costs associated with running pools include staff, power, water, chemicals, asset maintenance, cleaning, administration and supervision. In past years these costs have risen significantly above CPI. There have been increases to entry fees over recent years, but these provide only minor offset against rising costs.

Adding to the net cost of operating pools, there is a nationwide decline in the use of small, cold-water seasonal swimming pools. Despite small recent increases in attendances over the past few years Campaspe is no exception and has experienced significant declines in attendance at most outdoor pools over the past decade.

Changing Population and Community Expectations

The Australian and Campaspe population is ageing. The use of cold-water outdoor pools significantly decreases with age, as water temperatures and access become relevant. Corresponding with an ageing population, is also a decrease in younger age groups in many Campaspe towns. These younger groups have been typically the highest users of outdoor swimming pools; however they represent a much lower proportion of the population and will continue to decline further as the overall population changes.

Community Place Based Planning and Prior Council Decisions

The previous Council Decision from August 2016 (see attachment 7.7.2) required the preparation of Community Place Based Plans for Colbinabbin, Stanhope, Lockington and Tongala to be completed by August 2019 with the aquatic facilities to be maintained until this point in time.

8. Content

A number of challenges have emerged since the establishment of Councils position that have impacted the ability of the organisation to implement the adopted position.

Community Placed Based Plans

The Local Government sector has been on a steep learning curve regards asset and service planning. It is expected in years to come that without comprehensive service planning Councils will be unable to make application to vary the rate cap and potentially ruled ineligible for grants. Initial expectations regarding the level of complexity and the amount of data collection and verification required to develop these plans were ambitious.

It has also become increasingly clear that service planning is fundamental to long term financial planning and sustainability. Service planning documents the service level, the service costs and the assets required to support the service both now and into the future. Significant progress has been made regarding asset management and service planning however the work will not be complete for some time to come and industry understanding of what best practice looks like is still evolving.

The development of service plans requires consultation with communities to determine the service types, setting of service level and the financial impacts of these choices. Without a comprehensive service and asset plans, comprehensive Place Based Planning for activation, services and infrastructure cannot be effectively conducted. It is recommended that it would be prudent to wait until the organisation has completed appropriate asset management and service planning work prior to the development of comprehensive Place Based Plans for infrastructure and services in Lockington, Stanhope, Colbinabbin and Tongala.

Aquatic and Leisure Services Strategy

While Council has done a vast amount of research and data collection regards the current aquatics service, its infrastructure and costs, there is currently no high level position on the reasons behind why Council should be involved in such a service i.e. Does Council deliver this service for health and wellbeing outcomes or does it seek to support an elite swimming program aimed at delivering Olympic success etc.

The delay in being able to begin Place Based Planning can be used to develop an Aquatics and Leisure Services Strategy. The strategy would take the Aquatic Service Review Discussion Paper and work with the community to develop an overarching future vision for the service provision across the Shire, inclusive of infrastructure requirements and programs/service levels.

The availability of an Aquatic and Leisure Services strategy will provide the framework in which communities that are developing a placed based plan can consider their options in relation to Aquatics and Leisure services and facilities.

Business Planning for Kyabram and Rochester

These facilities are at a condition that requires renewal in the near future. All require increasingly costly maintenance to remain open and both the Rochester and Kyabram pools leak extensively. The replacement of facilities of this nature require extensive planning. The community engagement required to determine the future service provision for Kyabram, and Rochester is a resource intensive activity however could be conducted simultaneously with the development of a Strategy.

The level of community engagement and research is well in excess of what can be facilitated by the Recreation team as part of their regular activities. Appropriate resources must be available to facilitate quality community engagement and to develop detailed plans for these long lived, high cost facilities that are of such community interest. Officers recommend that Business Cases for Rochester and Kyabram be developed at the same time as an aquatics and leisure services strategy is developed.

These two facilities, along with Rushworth and EWMAC, form part of any future service envisioned in the Discussion Paper as the municipalities Regional and District Facilities and were identified in the August 2016 Council Decision (See attachments 7.7.1 and 7.7.2). Please see Figure 1 below for a demonstration of aquatic locations and catchments of these four facilities.

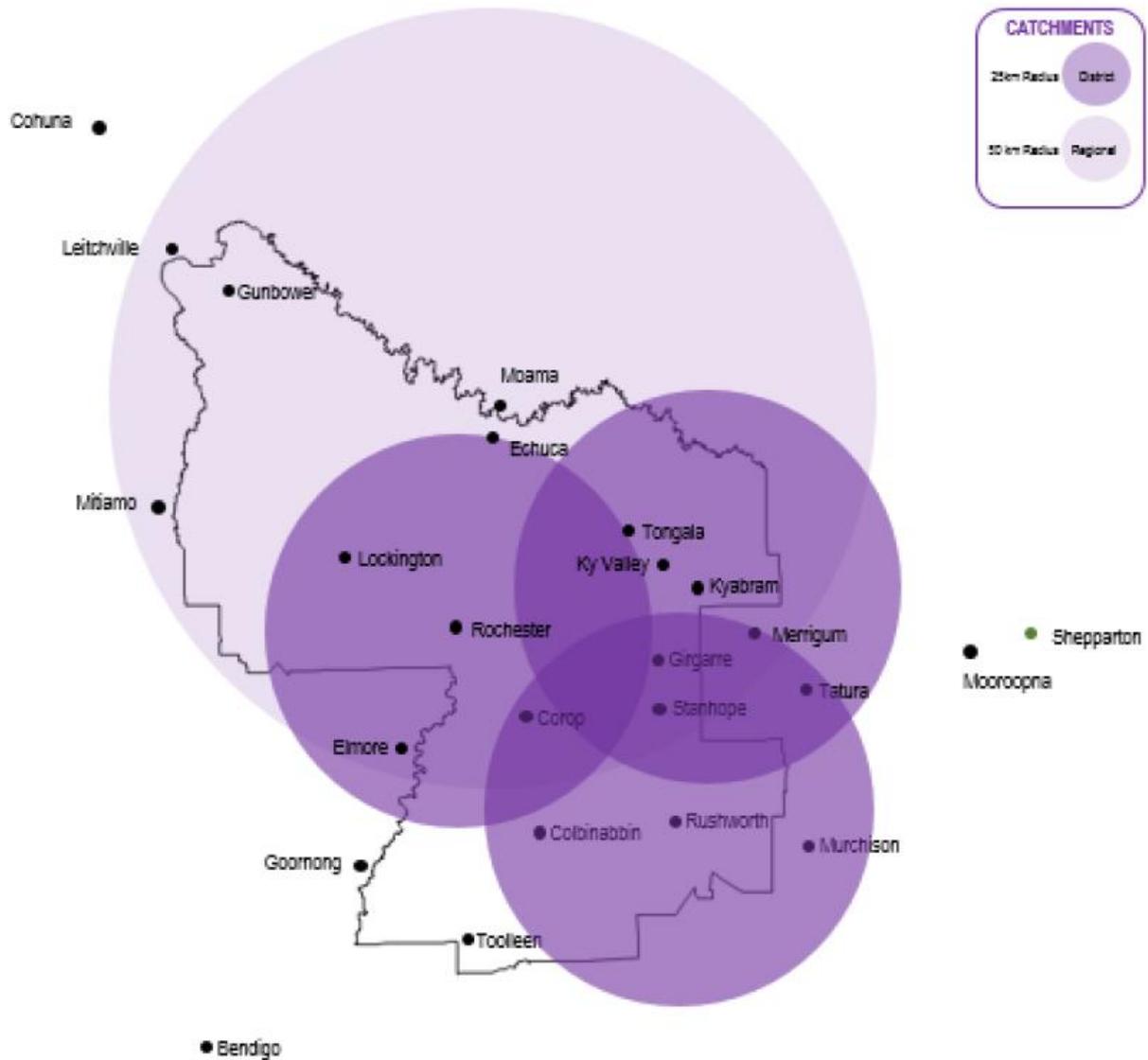


Figure 1: A map showing the location and catchments of District and Regional Facilities as identified by the 2016 Aquatic Services Discussion Paper

9. Issues and Risk Management

Issues:

Councils aging aquatic facilities require increasing levels of maintenance and there is no guarantee that a catastrophic failure of the asset will not occur resulting in having to close the facility. It is also important to recognise that the cost involved in developing four new facilities will be significant. Understanding the quantum of this is essential for the development of long term financial planning and to facilitate the overall balancing of the cost of these new facilities with Councils total services and assets. To meet the new timeline for Community place based planning it will be important to have the Aquatics and Leisure Services Strategy available so that the context for the Community engagement and business case development can be completed in an efficient and timely manner.

Issue 1: Age and condition of aquatic facilities

Council's aquatic facilities are of variable age and quality, varying between those built in the 1950's through to the 1990's. The aging of these facilities results in increasing levels of maintenance and investment with an

increasing likelihood of catastrophic failure and the subsequent closure of the facility. This is an important consideration in relation to any matter than may delay the modernisation of Campaspe's aquatic services.

Issue 2: Potential cost of any solutions and the sustainability of any offering

The cost in developing and operating any new facilities will be significant. Developing a solid understanding of the quantum involved is essential to the development of long term financial plans and accommodating these within Council's long term vision. This requires a solid strategic grounding to ensure that any facilities developed will accord with the future needs of the community and are supported by both Council and State policy to increase the likelihood of success when seeking funds from external sources.

Risk:

Risk management has been considered in the preparation of this report and no risks with a high or extreme rating have been identified in this process. However it is important to recognise that Councils aging aquatic facilities require increasing levels of maintenance and there is no guarantee that a catastrophic failure of the asset that results in having to shut the facility will not occur. It is also important to recognise that the cost involved in developing four new facilities will be significant. Understanding the quantum of this is essential for the development of long term financial planning and to facilitate the overall balancing of the cost of these new facilities with Councils total services and assets.

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Rating	Mitigation action
Pools close due to inability to fund emergency maintenance works	Possible	Moderate	Moderate	Council to keep the community informed should a major breakdown occur and not be feasible for repair Provision of free access to other Council aquatic facilities and shuttle bus for transport on weekends up to a value of \$10,000
Failure to develop costed designs for inclusion in the long term financial plan	Possible	Moderate	Moderate	Council funds community engagement and design of facilities in the 2019/20 budget

10. Options

Option 1: Council adopts the recommendation provided.

This includes:

- Identifying the need for further planning in this space including the development of a holistic Aquatics and Leisure Services Strategy and site specific planning for new facilities in Kyabram and Rochester;
- Extending the timeframe until 2021 for determining the future of the Colbinabbin, Lockington, Tongala and Stanhope facilities to allow the yet to be developed Aquatics and Leisure Strategy and Community Place Based Plans to be considered in the deliberations;
- To note that only essential operational and maintenance works will be undertaken at Colbinabbin, Lockington, Stanhope and Tongala Pools until the future service has been determined.

This option is recommended by officers.

Option 2: Maintain the current position adopted in August 2016

This option is not recommended by officers. Local governments across Victoria continue to grapple with Service and Asset Planning. While Council has progressed significantly there is still much work to be done prior to being ready to provide this essential information. Placed Based Planning has the potential to engage Communities in the decision making process and increase ownership of the outcomes. However, without the necessary data, there is the potential that Communities will become frustrated and disengaged.

11. Strategic Planning Environments

Strong and Engaged Communities:	The development of the existing Aquatics position has involved significant community consultation. This will continue under Placed Based Planning and in the development of plans of new aquatic facilities with focus on increasing participation and engagement within the community.
Resilient Economy:	No impact
Healthy Environment:	No Impact
Balanced Services and Infrastructure:	The development of a considered Aquatics and Leisure Strategy will ensure that any future service provision: meets community needs; is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; and maximises access and usage. The work, when considered in conjunction with the existing Discussion Paper and the Community Place Based Plans will allow Council to relinquish assets that no longer meet community need.
Responsible Management:	The affirmation of Councils current Aquatic Service position and the endorsement of planning activities for new aquatic facilities enables the organisation to plan for its future financial sustainability

12. Consultation

Consultation was undertaken with the Recreation Team, General Manager for Community and Regulatory Services, the Strategy Manager and Executive Management Team. Council has also received a number of presentations on the matter at briefing sessions.

These Briefing Sessions occurred on:

- 22 May 2018
- 9 October 2018
- 20 November 2018