

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study focuses on the provision of aquatic recreation and sporting opportunities for the residents of the Shire of Kalamunda. The investigation was prompted by the impending expiry of the commercial lease agreement for the operation of Kalamunda Wet 'n' Wild, the Shire's only aquatic facility; and the need to consider the future of this ageing facility. The lease agreement will expire at the end of a 21 year term in June 2009. The venue is in poor to medium condition and despite the fact that it offers some of the more challenging water slides available in metropolitan Perth, does not meet contemporary standards.

Whilst the Kalamunda Aquatic Centre (trading and generally known as Wet 'n' Wild) is the only venue owned by the Shire it is not the only facility available to residents. There is a privately owned indoor 6 lane 25 m lap pool in Maida Vale and a purpose built hydrotherapy pool in Kalamunda. School facilities in the area include a 6 lane 25m indoor heated facility at the Forrestfield High School and a new state of the art 8 lane 25m indoor heated lap pool and a smaller learn to swim pool at St Brigid's School in Lesmurdie. Despite the existence of these local facilities the majority of swimmers in Kalamunda choose to travel to venues outside the Shire with Belmont Oasis the dominant or most popular venue.

Aquatic sport and recreation needs are not generic and there are many different facility types required to satisfy these requirements. Examples of the different needs include:

Activity	Specialised requirements
Competition swimming	10 lane 50m pool uniform depth of 2m with electronic timing and spectator capacity and a water temp of 26°C
Lap/fitness swimming	25m or 50m lanes at least 1.2m deep and a water temp of 26°C
Learn to swim	Shallow water from 300mm to 1.2m with readily segmented areas and a water temperature of around 30°C
Aquarobics	Readily segmented water areas with a depth in the range 1.0 to 1.5m and a water temperature of around 30°C
Leisure play	Shallow to deep water with features such as jets sprays mists slides and streams with a water temperature of around 30°C
Injury rehabilitation	Also known as hydrotherapy, usually a discrete water body with uniform depth of around 1.2 and a water temperature of up to 34°C
Diving	1m and 3m springboards and 5, 7.5 and 10m towers, deep water (4-5m) and bubble machine
SCUBA Diving	deep water of 4-5m
Underwater hockey	flat tiled floor, uniform depth around 2m
Canoe polo	goals and minimum pool dimensions
Water polo	goals and minimum pool dimensions (33 x 25m), minimum pool depth (1.8m)
Aerobics	music and associated equipment
Deep water aerobics	music and associated equipment

By noting those requirements and then seeking to accommodate the needs of the community it is not simply a matter of digging a hole and filling it with water. Each segment needs to be considered and a mechanism to accommodate their needs devised.

For the Shire of Kalamunda the following strategy is proposed.

### **Swimming clubs**

These groups currently operate from the Forrestfield Senior High School and from St Brigid's College, Lesmurdie. A small club also is based at the Maida Vale indoor heated pool. Whilst the swimming club at St Brigid's is still in its infancy and caters primarily to the needs of the school community, it will grow and evolve to become an established club with priority access to the school's pool. The Kalamunda club is based at the Forrestfield High school and similarly enjoys almost unrestricted access and control over the pool.

St Brigid's pool is a new quality facility with extensive support amenities. The Forrestfield pool is an older facility that is lacking in amenity and aesthetics. The recommendation is for the clubs to be encouraged to remain at the venues they currently use and for the Shire to work with the Department of Education and Training and the School to enhance the Forrestfield facility to provide for greater amenity for the Kalamunda Club.

### **Learn to Swim**

This element is currently dominated by the Maida Vale facility. The population projections indicate that there will be considerable growth in this market in the High Wycombe, Maida Vale and Forrestfield areas. It is recommended that additional accommodation for this activity be considered as part of any new development, ideally in the vicinity of the population growth.

### **Fitness and health pursuits**

Participants in this market segment are predominately involved in lap swimming, however, a range of other activities are also undertaken including resistance walking, aquarobics, deep water running and skill development classes such as learn to swim. Fitness swimmers also are high level users of dry fitness facilities such as gymnasiums and many facilities do well with a mix of wet and dry fitness features. It is recommended that accommodation for these activities feature strongly as part of any new development.

### **Leisure swimmers**

Whilst this group remains the dominant user segment its needs must be considered. Activities for families and children should feature strongly in any new development.

Accommodation and attraction for youth and the more adventurous members of the community also requires consideration.

### **The current situation**

The Kalamunda Aquatic Centre operates primarily as a water slide park (Wet 'n' Wild), with the majority of its revenues coming from water park patrons. The venue looks tired and is not of contemporary standard to attract larger numbers of regular swimmers, swimming clubs or learn to swim programs. The universal detractor for these groups is the cold water in the 50m pool (despite solar heating) with poor changeroom and ground amenities also cited as inhibitors to greater use.

Whilst it is anticipated that the pool structures have further life (to be confirmed by core sample testing at the end of the season) it is estimated that the pool structures and filtration systems are carrying a maintenance deficit in the vicinity of \$1,200,000. The existing water treatment system does not comply with the new Code for Swimming Pool Design, Construction, Operation and Maintenance about to be adopted in Western Australia.

Works necessary to achieve compliance with this Code include replacement of large elements of the water treatment system including hair and lint pots, pumps and delivery and return for all pools. The centre inlet lines also require replacement. A separate water treatment system of the toddlers and learners pools is required. Additionally all pools require resurfacing and resealing and the gutters should be refurbished. These works would merely improve the functional or technical compliance of the complex and do nothing to improve patron amenity or the swimming experience.

The addition of gas heating to the outdoor 50m pool and the smaller toddlers and learners pools would require a capital outlay of approximately \$215,000. The operating cost for heating of the existing water bodies to 27°C without an enclosure would likely be in excess of \$165,000 per annum for a November to March season. An enclosure for the existing complex would cost in excess of \$10,000,000 for the building alone. Moving to an indoor facility would also raise expectations that the venue would be open year round. This would raise the annual heating cost to approximately \$210,000, however, all other operating costs, in particular labour costs would rise dramatically.

Further, to extend the life and amenity of the existing complex there is a real need to refurbish the changerooms, showers and toilets, improve the kiosk/café operation, provide greater shade areas both within the grounds and in the water and to generally improve the landscaping of the grounds. An estimate of cost for these refurbishment works is in the vicinity of \$400,000.

We have not undertaken any cost appraisal on the works required to refurbish or update the water slides. These elements were added to the complex by the commercial operator (lessee) and have been maintained exclusively by the lessee since the 1980's. The latest engineering assessment indicates that they are in adequate condition for further recreational use, subject to some routine maintenance.

The cost to upgrade the existing facility as an indoor swimming complex comprising the existing 50m pool, learners and toddlers' pools, together with refurbishment to the changerooms, toilets and showers and an upgrade of the landscaping and general amenity of the complex is estimated to be in the vicinity of \$15,000,000. This figure does not allow for any works to the water slides.

This cost is considerable and believed to be unsuited to the main needs of the community when the end result would be a facility with a design most suited to lap and competition swimming and yet not of a contemporary competition design or to FINA standards. This cost estimate does not allow for the addition of leisure water features or new amenities such as gymnasium, hydrotherapy pool or a 'Nordic Suite' comprising spa, sauna and steam room. The addition of these amenities would add a further cost impost of around \$8,000,000 bringing the total redevelopment cost to around \$22,000,000 in 2007 terms

With the majority of the population within the Shire living at the base of the foothills and the majority of new population growth forecast to be in this area a major

development in the current facility location would be disconnected from the largest population cluster.

Accordingly the option of upgrading the existing facility as the principal swimming venue for the Shire is seen to be of limited value in meeting the needs of the community.

What is proposed is for the Shire to take advantage of the amenity of the existing facilities in the area and to construct a new facility that picks up the gaps in current provision. In general terms the following approach is recommended:

1. Retain Kalamunda Wet 'n' Wild as a commercially operated water park with future developments (post 2009) determined and funded by the lessee
2. Maintain the focus of club and competition swimming at the Forrestfield Senior High School Pool with Council support to improve amenities for club activities and spectators
3. Permit public access to St Brigid's College Pool by removing the planning condition restriction imposed by the Shire, thereby providing year round swimming opportunities at the top of the hill
4. Develop a new indoor heated swimming complex at Hartfield Park Recreation Centre focusing on leisure and play activities for children and families with improvements to the existing fitness facilities.
5. Should the community demonstrate additional demand for water space in future years, add facilities that meet for club and competition swimming as a stage 2 development.

With respect to the existing Kalamunda Aquatic Centre the following is recommended.

1. At the end of the 2006-2007 season prepare an expression of interest (EOI) or tender specification for an operator to take on the lease of the Kalamunda Aquatic Centre and the Wet 'n' Wild water slides from July 2009.
2. Advertise this EOI /tender opportunity in the summer of 2007-2008 indicating that the Shire is seeking to execute a commercial lease of the Kalamunda Aquatic Centre for a full 21 years commencing July 2009.
3. Include in the specification that the Shire retains the right to negotiate a contract with the preferred tenderer to provide a commercially driven aquatic experience to the community without constraints other than:
  - The facility being maintained as an aquatic facility available to the community
  - A 50m pool being maintained for public access for the period 1 November to 15 March each year as a minimum
  - There being no requirement for the Council to contribute to the structural, maintenance or operating costs of the facility for the term of the lease (i.e. the lessee takes on the facility as is, in the condition it is and does with it what they choose, subject to the normal statutory approvals process)
  - All infrastructure on site being accessed by the public to be maintained in accordance with current occupational health and safety standards and with water treatment systems to meet Health Department requirements or the Code of Practice for the Design Construction Operation and Management of Aquatic Centres
  - The operator being required to submit for endorsement by the Council the fee to enter the facility for swimming only (no access to additional features)

where the fee shall not vary by more than 10% from the average of similar entry fees for Belmont Oasis, Swan Park and Riverton Leisureplex pools.

4. Include in the specification that at the end of the 21 year term the lessee shall be permitted to remove any fixture or fitting from the site as they may choose and shall subsequently pass all remaining infrastructure and improvements on the land unencumbered and at no cost to the Shire.

Based on these recommendations the concept plan shown on the following page has been developed for the expansion of Hartfield Park Recreation Centre to include aquatic features.

Stage 1 as shown in the concept plan comprises the addition of 482.5m<sup>2</sup> of leisure water in 3 water bodies. The first is a 3 lane 25m lap pool with depth ranging from 1.0m to 1.2m. Whilst the pool is ideal for lap swimming it is more specifically designed to accommodate a variety of program activities including aquarobics and learn to swim.

The slide pool is also useful for learn to swim and aquarobics activities and serves as the splash pool for an in-situ concrete formed water slide. The target age range for this slide is 5 to 14 years. The final water body is a free form leisure pool suitable for family play and general enjoyment. It has a zero beach entry to allow for toddlers, wheelchair and seniors entry and can also be used for learn to swim, aquarobics and other water based exercise programs.

The capital construction estimate in 2007 terms is around \$5.2M with a total project cost of \$7.125M. Assuming this facility is built in the 2010-2011, and assuming that the current escalation rate of 12% per annum will continue unabated<sup>1</sup>, this raises the project cost in 2011 dollars to \$12.167M.

A similar cost schedule for stage 2 of the project places a 2007 cost of \$7.27M on the construction of a 10 lane 25m indoor heated pool. Assuming that stage 2 of the project is undertaken in 2015; this causes an escalation in the total project cost to \$22.56M. Escalation is projected at 12% per annum until 2011 and then reducing to 11% in 2012, 10% in 2013 and so on.

From a capital cost perspective, a two stage development of aquatic facilities at Hartfield Park as shown in the concept plan will cost just under \$17.5M in 2007 dollar terms. The projected costs to 2011 and 2015 indicate the considerable impact that building cost escalation is having on construction projects at present.

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<sup>1</sup> Construction cost escalation projections by the Western Australian Department of Housing and Works