

## THE STATE OF AQUATIC FACILITY INFRASTRUCTURE IN AUSTRALIA: KEY FINDINGS

In Australia, in 2022, there are **1,306 public pools** built and owned by government and 807 publicly accessible pools provided by the private sector.

**79%**

of aquatic facilities located in areas with the lowest SEIFA decile are publicly owned.

**74%**

of aquatic facilities located in areas with the highest SEIFA decile are privately owned.

**77%**

of aquatic facilities in regional areas are publicly owned.

The average public pool in Australia was **built in 1968**.

500 (40%) of public pools will reach the **end of their lifespan this decade**.



**\$910 million annually** would be the likely social, health and economic cost should 10% of aquatic facilities fail to be renewed by the end of this decade.

**\$8 Billion**

is needed to replace Australia's **500 aging public pools**, whose functional lifespan will end by 2030.



A further **\$3 billion** will be needed to replace facilities ending their lifespan by 2035.

**\$10 Million**

The basic cost to replace an outdoor swimming pool.

**64%**

of all renewal or new aquatic facility construction is currently financed by local government.

**Many Councils struggle to afford to maintain or replace swimming pools,** and increasingly councils are considering closing their pools.



**Regional and remote** communities are most at risk of missing out on updated or new aquatic facilities.



**Rising energy costs and labour shortages** pose a serious threat to the ongoing availability and sustainability of aquatic facilities across Australia.



**Closing community pools** is inherently very unpopular and consistently aggravates community sentiment and mobilises communities towards involvement in the political process.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Beyond a straight 'like-for-like' replacement of all aging aquatic facilities, which is likely unrealistic, several case studies show opportunities to rethink the Australian approach to aquatic facility provisioning in Australia.

### These include:

- Prioritising function over form and keeping new designs simple, modular and scalable.
- Exploring new ways of funding swimming pool infrastructure, such as Public-Private-Partnerships, which can spread both risks and rewards.
- Considering lowering access barriers to increase the use and impact of existing aquatic facilities. In some cases, removing entry fees has resulted in net neutral operating costs while increasing asset utilisation and social value.
- Exploring opportunities for local governments to collaborate and partner on aquatic facility provisioning and sharing of costs and benefits.
- Considering how the private sector can provide benefits traditionally serviced by local governments while being mindful that some activities and facilities require subsidies, such as lap swimming and recreational swimming.



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