



# National Aquatics Symposium 2023 - Summary Report



**ROYAL LIFE SAVING**  
AUSTRALIA

SUPPORTED BY



Australian Government

# National Aquatics Symposium 2023

## > Foreword

The National Aquatics Symposium represents a continuation of more than a decade of work to investigate solutions and provide opportunities for all children in Australia to learn essential swimming and water safety skills and knowledge, regardless of their cultural background, location, or economic status.

The first National Swimming and Water Safety Education Symposium held in 2017 produced a set of statements and actions aimed at building a national approach to increasing swimming and water safety education for all Australian children.

The first Symposium statements represented a six-lane plan to improve swimming and water safety outcomes in Australia:

- Strengthen school and vacation swimming and water safety programs in the community;
- Revise the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework;
- Set and report progress against a National Benchmark;
- Devise strategies to increase access and participation for those 'at risk';
- Improve availability and access to aquatic facilities;
- Increase the swimming and lifesaving skills of Secondary School students.

The second symposium held in 2018 continued an open, inclusive, and collaborative approach. It brought together 55 representatives from across government, industry, the private sector, and academia to continue the discussion on a shared set of objectives:

- Support the Australian Water Safety Strategy Goal 1 – Reduce drowning deaths in children aged 0-14 years and Goal 2 – Reduce drowning deaths in young people aged 15-24 years, specifically key objectives vi and vii relating to swimming and water safety education and ii relating to participation in lifesaving education programs during secondary school years, respectively.
- Continue to engage and collaborate with a range of key stakeholders from across industry, government, the private sector and academia.
- Report on progress against the first symposium statements and actions.
- Facilitate presentations and workshop discussions including the revision of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

Since the first two symposia, the world has experienced the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. Royal Life Saving Society - Australia estimates more than 10 million swimming lessons were missed, compounding already concerning gaps in children's swimming abilities. Furthermore, our research has shown there are significant infrastructure challenges: in the next 10 years, up to 40 per cent of public aquatic facilities owned by local governments are likely to need serious refurbishment or outright replacement at a cost of more than \$8 billion. There are workforce challenges; there is a significant shortage of workers for the 2113 publicly accessible pools in Australia - swim teachers, pool lifeguards, and other frontline aquatic and leisure centre staff.

These challenges are all interconnected. Without collaboration we cannot expect to meet the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 goal of reducing drowning by 50 per cent by 2030.

We came into this symposium with a reported 90 people drowning over summer – an average of one person dying from drowning every day from 1 December to 28 February. No state or territory was immune. The 2021/22 Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report recorded the worst year for drowning in the past 20 years with families, friends, and colleagues mourning 339 people who died from drowning.

The National Aquatic Symposium at which we gathered was unique, bringing together more than 150 respected and experienced leaders in policy, aquatic safety, education and research.

Despite the challenges, we have seen the national aquatic industry and drowning prevention organisations re-emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns with a renewed resolve: to collaborate; to activate systemic change; foster more inclusive and welcoming environments; and to deliver more critical lifesaving services, including swimming and water safety education, to more members of the community than ever before.

We have also been inspired by the recent United Nations Resolution on Drowning Prevention and resolved that this Symposium would not just share information and ideas but would develop a roadmap to guide our collective actions.

The action statements contained at the end of this report detail the collective strategic priorities of the national aquatic industry, governments, and water safety organisations when it comes to:

- Swimming skills – ensuring that all children have access to swimming and water safety programs and achieve the National Benchmarks for Swimming and Water Safety.
- Workforce – raising the profile of the industry as a career opportunity and ensuring the workforce is sustainable, supported, and capable.
- Infrastructure – ensuring the availability and sustainability of fit-for-purpose aquatic facilities.

Thank you to the symposium hosts, organisers, presenters and participants who discussed issues openly and worked together to find solutions and opportunities to explore. The room was filled with people sharing their expertise, listening to others, and working together collaboratively.

**Justin Scarr**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Royal Life Saving Society - Australia



#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We respectfully acknowledge the Bunurong People of the South Eastern Kulin Nation, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which the National Aquatics Symposium was held. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present recognising their continued connection to land, waters and communities.

# Statement from the 2023 National Aquatics Symposium

## > Declaration

The National Aquatics Symposium delegates commit to working collaboratively towards achieving the following strategic objectives:

- I. Ensuring that all people living in Australia have universal access to a swimming and water safety education aligned to the national swimming and water safety benchmarks, which will make them safer in on and around water for life. This will be achieved by:

### LOWERING BARRIERS TO ACCESS

1. Expanding the funding for new and existing voucher, school and holiday swimming and water safety programs.
2. Expanding strategies which lower barriers to access swimming and water safety programs, particularly for children aged 7-12 years who missed out during the COVID-19 lockdowns, and particularly for children from groups at higher risk of drowning.

### IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY FRAMEWORK

3. Calling for all relevant groups to align swimming and water safety curricula and delivery with the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework, which if incorporated provides a basis for high-quality and evidence-based swimming and water safety education, leading to a stronger reduction in drowning across Australia.

### STRENGTHENING BENCHMARK AND OUTCOME REPORTING

4. Calling for strengthening of systems which track, report, and benchmark children's achievement of national swimming and water safety benchmarks, to identify and address gaps, and strengthen advocacy of the aquatic industry's impact on drowning prevention.

- II. Strengthening the aquatic workforce by attracting and developing talent and addressing sector-wide risk, gaps, and opportunities by:

### IMPROVING DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION, STRENGTHENING CAREER PATHWAYS AND ADDRESSING SHORTAGES

1. Encouraging governments, employers, and other groups to develop incentives, programs and strategies that attract and retain quality staff, raise the profile of the aquatic sector as a career / pathway and the positive impacts of the industry, and promote recruiting and supporting staff from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, so that the workforce reflects community.

### FURTHER DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

2. Committing to supporting training and professional development programs, lowering barriers to access skills and qualifications and supporting the further professionalisation of the workforce which will promote greater attraction, retention and pathways for talent.

### IMPROVING SAFETY, QUALITY AND CONSISTENCY AND REDUCING SECTOR RISK

3. Encouraging the development of a national workforce development framework and system to strengthen the quality, safety and consistency of service delivery and work environments, better advocate development pathways and enhance the attractiveness of employment in, and the reputation of, the sector.

- III. Ensuring that all communities have access to sustainable, accessible, inclusive, and safe aquatic facilities, for health and well-being, for fun, for fitness, for learning to swim, for safe places to swim, and for social connection, now and in the future, by:

### NATIONAL AQUATIC INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

1. Urging all governments to develop a national strategy to address the issue of aging aquatic infrastructure and the need for new and upgraded aquatic facilities, with a focus on ensuring that disadvantaged communities and regional areas have equitable access to fit-for-purpose aquatic facilities.

### STRATEGIC APPROACH TO AQUATIC FACILITY FUNDING

2. Encouraging all governments to establish strategic funding programs to support the construction, refurbishment, and maintenance of fit-for-purpose aquatic facilities.

### ENCOURAGING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AND SUSTAINABLY RESPONSIBLE PLANNING

3. Encouraging responsible planning and innovation including exploration of new opportunities in public-private partnerships, social enterprise, sustainability, and other alternative approaches to infrastructure provisioning.

Finally, the National Aquatics Symposium Delegates urge all stakeholders, including governments, industry leaders, educators, and community members, to work collaboratively towards achieving these strategic objectives.

# National Aquatics Symposium

## > Day 1: Swimming and Water Safety Skills

### SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY SKILLS SESSION 1

Theme: Who is missing out and why?

#### OBJECTIVE:

To explore the issue of swimming and water safety advocacy, detail the journey so far and provide an assessment of progress to date on the implementation of the updated National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

#### QUESTIONS RAISED:

- How can we ensure one voice when it comes to advocating this issue to governments?
- How can we anchor and embed the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework into every program?
- How can we ensure bottom-up implementation, not just top-down?

#### PRESENTATIONS

**Overview of swimming and water safety advocacy, and why this issue matters**  
Peter Leaversuch, Chief Executive Officer, Royal Life Saving – Western Australia

**Water Skills for Life - a New Zealand perspective on the issues and solutions on missing out on learning to swim**

Daniel Gerrard, Chief Executive Officer, Water Safety New Zealand

**Who's at risk, what they need and how can it be done?**

Dr Hannah Calverley PhD, Manager – Research and Evaluation, Life Saving Victoria

**Insights into the implementation of the National Framework and value in measuring against the National Benchmark for Swimming and Water Safety**

Penny Larsen, National Manager Education, Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

#### PANEL DISCUSSION

**How can we better leverage the advocacy and frameworks in place to ensure no child misses out?**

Daniel Gerrard, Chief Executive Officer, Water Safety New

Zealand Bradley Low, Chief Executive Officer, AUSTSWIM

Kate Simpson, General Manager, Governance, Club Support & Education, Life Saving Victoria

Grant Connors, General Manager Programs, Belgravia Leisure

#### SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

- There are three key elements to successful swimming and water safety programs: kids have fun; parents can see their children are making progress; parents and children want to come back.
- The elements of creating collective impact are:
  - A common agenda
  - Shared measurement
  - Mutually reinforcing activities
  - Continuous communication to build trust
  - A backbone support organisation (sometimes walking together means walking in front or behind)
- Victorian research: demand for swimming lessons outweighs the provision of lessons.
- National Swimming and Water Safety Benchmarks and Framework Implementation Research: 75 per cent of respondents are interested in participating in a data collection project on the National Benchmarks.
- Improving the evidence and reporting base is critical to advocating the importance of ongoing support for benchmark achievements.



## National Aquatics Symposium 2023



ROYAL LIFE SAVING AUSTRALIA

THURSDAY 9<sup>th</sup> MARCH  
PORT MELBOURNE PART 1

THIS IS A LIFE SKILL FOR EVERYONE

WALKING TOGETHER

KOBI SAINTY, BUNURONG LAND COUNCIL ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

LESSONS & CONTRIBUTION

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

STRONG BONDS BETWEEN US

REFLECTION

SYMPOSIUM OPENING ADDRESS

JUSTIN SCARR, CEO ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY - AUSTRALIA

WORKING TOGETHER TOWARD A DECLARATION

BREAKING DOWN SILOS

PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT



POWERFUL

CHANGING THE CURRICULUM



KIDS IN SCHOOL MISSING OUT

WORKFORCE (?)

TIP OF THE ICEBERG!



REVITALISING SWIMMING POOL INFRASTRUCTURE



NOT JUST ELECTION-CYCLE DEPENDENT

### SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY SKILLS

WHO IS MISSING OUT AND WHY?

OVERVIEW OF SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY ADVOCACY AND WHY THIS ISSUE MATTERS

PETER LEAVERSUCH, CEO ROYAL LIFE SAVING, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WATER SKILLS FOR LIFE A NEW ZEALAND PERSPECTIVE

DANIEL GERRARD, CEO WATER SAFETY NEW ZEALAND

WORKING COLLECTIVELY

WALKING TOGETHER

ACHIEVING BETTER OUTCOMES

THINKING STRATEGICALLY TO BUILD A NATIONAL APPROACH

IF YOU ONLY HAD 30 MINUTES, WHAT WOULD YOU TEACH?

50m SWIM

WE ARE CONNECTED TO WATER "IT IS LIFE"

WATER SKILLS FOR OUR KIDS MEANS LIFE

ENABLING WATER EXPERIENCE

DROWNING HAPPENS OUT DOORS

HOW CAN WE BETTER LEVERAGE ADVOCACY AND FRAMEWORKS TO ENSURE NO CHILD MISSES OUT?

PREPARING FOR THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

IT'S GREAT FOR OUR WORKFORCE "UNDERSTANDING STANDARDS & PRACTICE"

GOOD STRUCTURE & CONFIDENCE

INCLUSIVITY WELCOMING

STILL SOLVING

USING DATA & TECHNOLOGY TO ADDRESS DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

LOWER SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND CAN MEAN POOR KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITY

CREATE PROGRAMS - ADDRESSING ACCESS & EDUCATION

COVID CREATED DIFFICULTIES

WHO'S AT RISK, WHAT THEY NEED AND HOW IT CAN BE DONE

DR HANNAH CALVERLEY PHD MANAGER - RESEARCH AND EVALUATION, LIFE SAVING VICTORIA

INSIGHTS INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

PENNY LARSEN, NATIONAL MANAGER EDUCATION, ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY, AUSTRALIA

ADDRESSING & CHANGING PRIORITIES

WE DON'T HAVE TIME!

CAN'T AFFORD IT...

BENCHMARKS

NOT ENOUGH ATTENTION PAID TO SURVIVAL & SAFETY SKILLS

"AND DROPPING OUT OF SWIMMING AT SECONDARY SCHOOL"

90% LEAVING PRIMARY SCHOOL WITHOUT MEETING BENCHMARKS

FALLING BEHIND

I MISSED OUT DURING COVID

MUM AND DAD NEED TO KNOW WHAT I'M ACHIEVING!

PANEL DISCUSSION

COLLECTIVE FRAMEWORK

TELLING OUR STORY UP THE CHAIN

WE NEED CONSISTENT MESSAGING

HELPS GOVERNMENT UNDERSTANDING & FUNDING SUPPORT

BETTER MEASUREMENT & TRACKING

- DATA COLLECTION

SCALE HELPS! IN THIS CASE

## SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY SKILLS SESSION 2

Theme: Lowering barriers to access

### OBJECTIVE:

To explore programs and initiatives which reduce barriers and increase participation in swimming and water safety education for all children in Australia, so that no child misses out.

### QUESTIONS RAISED:

- How do we shift the definition of success to ensure all children can swim, not just that swim schools are full?
- If you only had 30 minutes with a child, and not a term's worth of lessons, or years of lessons, what would that lesson look like? How could you impart enough water safety to that child in 30 minutes that would make them safer for life in and around water?
- Are vouchers for sport the best policy instrument for water safety? Shouldn't this have a more dedicated focus than just physical activity?

### SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

- You can grow your own swim teachers and have no swim teacher shortage if you think outside the box.
- Full swim schools are a good thing, but not if there's not enough capacity for the community so that all children can access a swimming and water safety program. Increasing supply and broadening engagement must be a key priority for all.
- Swimming vouchers are a great policy mechanism of government, but the sector needs to do more work with governments to refine what the vouchers are looking to achieve, particularly whether they reach vulnerable groups and facilitate increased engagement with life-saving swimming and water safety education programs.
- Investment in swimming in schools are a critical safety net, however, in most cases school principals get to decide how the money is spent, making them a powerful stakeholder and gatekeeper in achieving the intended outcomes of policy interventions.
- Programs need to be relevant to migrant communities as well as First Nations communities and people with disabilities.

### PRESENTATIONS

#### **Localising strategy so 'no child misses out' - lessons from Frankston**

Kath Thom, Chief Executive Officer, Peninsula Leisure

#### **Analysis of sport and swimming vouchers in Australia and their impacts on children's participation in swimming and water safety programs**

Katrien Pickles, Senior Project Officer Research & Policy, Royal Life Saving Society - Australia (delivered by Justin Scarr)

### PANEL DISCUSSION

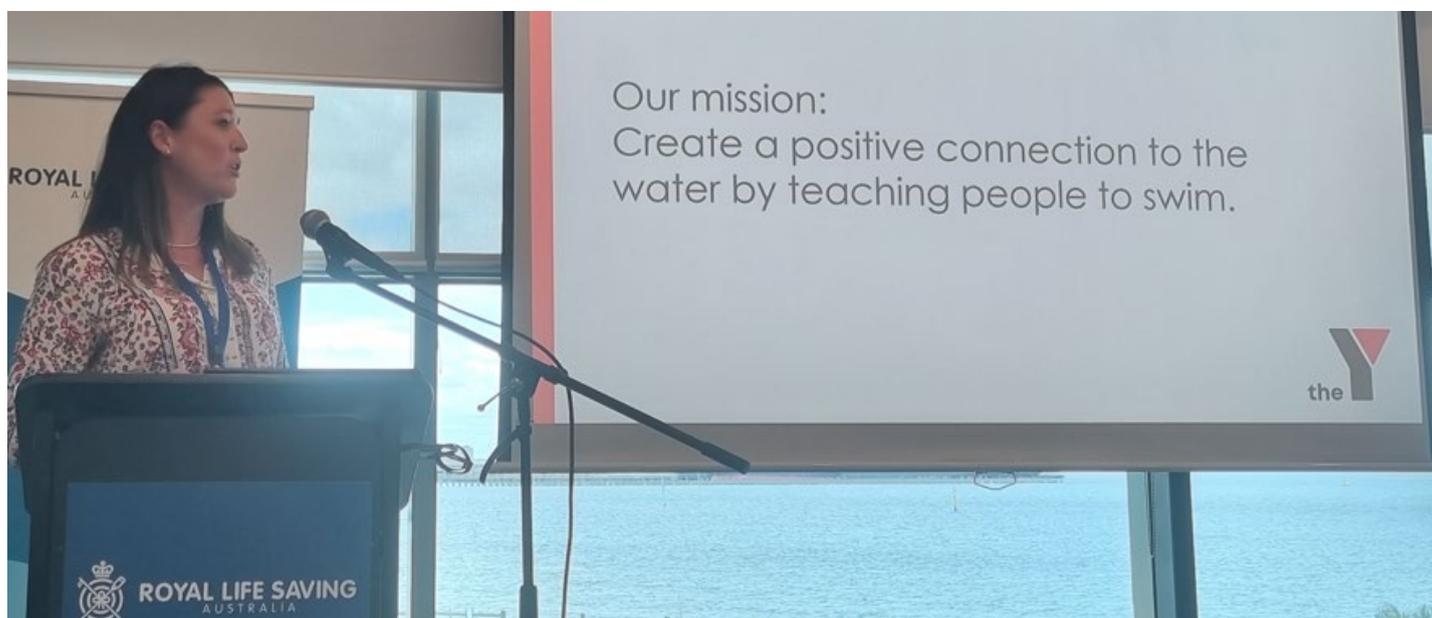
#### **How to strengthen programs which support lowering barriers to access swimming and water safety programs?**

Kath Thom, Chief Executive Officer, Peninsula Leisure

Peter Leaversuch, Chief Executive Officer, Royal Life Saving – Western Australia

Megan Kerr, A/Director, Statewide Services, Victorian Department of Education

Jodie Freund, Senior Project Officer, Sector Capability, South Australian Office for Recreation, Sport & Racing



## Theme: Increasing participation

### OBJECTIVE:

To explore programs and initiatives which increase participation and enhance participation pathways.

### QUESTIONS RAISED:

- How do we ensure that programs and facilities reflect the growing diversity of Australia and attract and retain diverse groups?
- How do we retain children in programs post learn-to-swim?

### SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

- A third of the Australian population is born overseas, half have a parent born overseas.
- There are 429 languages spoken in Australia, of which 183 are Indigenous languages. One-quarter of households speak a language other than English at home.
- 4.4 million Australians are living with a disability (around one in five), of which 25 per cent have a mental or behavioural disability.
- Eleven per cent of Australians identify as LGBTIQ+.
- The benefits of creating more inclusive clubs, facilities and programs are significant.
- Strengthening the base through diversity is a key strategy for securing the future.
- Partnering with local swimming and lifesaving clubs is critical. Mapping out a pathway for youth to continue to engage with aquatics is a key strategy for increasing life-long participation and safeguarding industry.
- Life-long safe aquatic participation should be the goal.

### PRESENTATIONS

#### Increasing the user base for sport and physical activity at the grassroots by leveraging diversity and inclusion

Kym McMahon, AFL National Diversity and Inclusion Participation Manager

#### Tackling retention and increasing participation with a post learn to swim pathway using a local lens

Janelle Falkingham, Aquatic Product Manager, the Y Victoria

**All Western Australians have swimming and water safety skills - that no one misses out.**

Teaching children essential survival skills is the most proven investment that communities can make to reduce drowning. In the past year we had a combined 247,264 participants in all our swimming and water safety programs from Infant Aquatics to Bronze Medallion.

This statistic would not have been possible without our extensive network of 437 local aquatic centres, 152 endorsed swim schools, 88 Junior Lifeguard and affiliated youth lifesaving clubs and the involvement of 81 schools.

The challenges we face is to ensure every new generation acquired these skills in time and that no one misses out. Community sectors of all backgrounds from diverse cultural backgrounds, different aged demographics and regional areas all need their responsibility, and we have acted by delivering a total of 196 funded programs.

**247,364** participants

Programs for all ages	Count
Infant Aquatics	23,520
Swim and Survive	211,720
Bronze Rescue	10,114
Junior Lifeguard Club/Sport Members	920

Statistical overview of program provision	Count
Endorsed Swim Schools	152
Junior Lifeguard & Lifesaving Clubs	88
primary schools	911
sport and school competitors	100

Skilled aquatic resources	Count
trained swim instructors	1,942
aquatic trainers	437

Support for vulnerable communities	Count
Aboriginal programs	28
multicultural programs	50
disability programs	17
regional programs	29
Swim and Survive sponsor grants	240,000

**10-year average drowning deaths by age group (2012/13 - 2021/22)**

Age Group	Average Drowning Deaths
0-4 years	22
5-9 years	7
10-14 years	4
15-19 years	3
20-24 years	28
25-29 years	42
30-34 years	37
35-39 years	38
40-44 years	34
45-49 years	31
50+ years	27

**OBJECTIVE:**

To explore programs and initiatives which target youth development and empowerment, particularly in communities with increased barriers to participation.

**QUESTIONS RAISED:**

- How do we ensure programs are fun and inclusive for young people?
- How can we ensure more inclusive and welcoming facilities and programs which take into account the specific needs of key groups?

**PRESENTATIONS**

**Learning from Bambigi: a grassroots youth-lead First Nations swimming initiative**

Piper Stewart, Founder, Bambigi

**Personal journey from learning to swim to teaching lifesaving to other CALD community members**

Sahar Ehsani, Life Saving Victoria CALD program participant

**PANEL DISCUSSION – EMERGING WOMEN LEADERS**

**How can we create pathways and programs that excite and engage youth and young people into life-long enjoyment of swimming, lifesaving and aquatic recreation?**

Piper Stewart, Founder, Bambigi

Sahar Ehsani, Life Saving Victoria CALD program participant

Bianca DeFazio, Senior Aquatics Coordinator, the Y Victoria

Georgina Laws, Black Rock Life Saving Club, Youth Advisory Committee Member

**SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:**

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 1.7 times more likely to drown than non-Aboriginal people.
- Not all schools provide free swimming and water safety lessons.
- Not all towns have funded swimming instructors.
- Emphasised the importance of female-only programs, particularly for CALD communities.
- Highlighted the importance of culturally safe swimwear (e.g. burkini).
- Emphasised the importance of role models and empowering ambassadors.
- Discussed the importance of culturally safe and welcoming facility design.
- Emphasised the importance of friendships and fun for engaging and retaining older children and youth.
- Driving lessons are compulsory for young people in schools, why aren't swimming and water safety lessons?
- Key barriers such as bathing suits and goggles, as well as entry fees can be a real barrier for migrants or First Nations youth. Anything which lowers those barriers can have a big impact and should be seen as an investment.
- Swimming and lifesaving are fun – but friends and competition are key, as well as older kids mentoring younger kids.



# Session 2: Graphic Recording

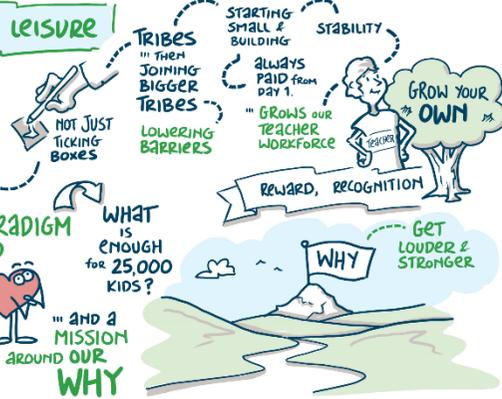
## SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY SKILLS

**LOCALISING STRATEGY** so NO CHILD MISSES OUT - LESSONS FROM FRANKSTON

KATH THOM, CEO, PENINSULA LEISURE

### PENINSULA LEISURE

We need to become GREAT PROBLEM-SOLVERS



**ANALYSIS OF SPORT AND SWIMMING VOUCHERS** IN AUSTRALIA AND THEIR IMPACTS ON CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY PROGRAMS

KATHRINE PICKLES, SENIOR PROJECT OFFICER, RESEARCH & POLICY, ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY - AUSTRALIA

### VOUCHER PROGRAMS

**KIDS 8-12 YRS** are MISSING OUT

SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY SKILLS ARE MORE THAN JUST PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**TARGET & REACH** those we care about MOST

Language & consistency

Really know what you want

**VOUCHER PROGRAMS** - DON'T SPEAK ABOUT THEM GENERALLY

**BIG BUCKS**

**BIG INVESTMENT** FROM GOVERNMENT

**AN EASIER SOLUTION**

## National Aquatics Symposium 2023



ROYAL LIFE SAVING AUSTRALIA

THURSDAY 9th MARCH  
PORT MELBOURNE  
PART 2

### INCREASING PARTICIPATION



PUSHING THE INCLUSIVITY DIAL

**INCREASING THE USER BASE FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY** AT THE GRASS ROOTS BY LEVERAGING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

KYM McMAHON, AFL NATIONAL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PARTICIPATION MANAGER

Schools are where diversity barriers can be reduced

**SCHOOL PROGRAMS** ARE SO IMPORTANT

WE HAVE REMARKABLE DIVERSITY IN AUSTRALIAN HOUSEHOLDS

ENSURES LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF PROGRAMS  
SOCIAL COHESION

WORKFORCE MAKE UP TO REFLECT COMMUNITY DIVERSITY

### WELCOMING AND SAFE

WORKING WITH COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS

AMPLIFY the Story TELLING

GREAT PARTICIPATION RESULTS

LOOK AT INNOVATIVE FORMATS THAT ACKNOWLEDGE CULTURAL DIVERSITY

**TACKLING RETENTION AND INCREASING PARTICIPATION** WITH A POST LEARN TO SWIM PATHWAY USING A LOCAL LENS

JANELLE FALKINGHAM, AQUATIC PRODUCT MANAGER, THE Y VICTORIA

### PANEL DISCUSSION

WE'VE GOT TO GET TO OUR MOST VULNERABLE

WORK ON TARGETING INDIVIDUAL GROUPS

BUT make the VOUCHER system effective & sensible

THE HIGHEST CLAIMED VOUCHER IN SA AT THE MOMENT



UNDERSTAND WHAT REALLY WORKS

AND HOW WE MIGHT REACH OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY

IT NEEDS TO BE MORE THAN AN ANGLO OFFERING

IT'S NOT JUST AN EDUCATION SYSTEM ISSUE

**WE RELY ON SCHOOLS** TO ALLOCATE FUNDING FOR WATER SAFETY - AND KIDS ARE MISSING OUT ON IN-WATER OPPORTUNITIES



WORK TO ensure PRINCIPALS INVEST IN GETTING KIDS BACK IN THE POOL

STILL CATCHING UP

CAN'T LEARN TO SWIM ON-LINE OR IN A CLASSROOM

### PANEL DISCUSSION

#### POST COVID

JUST TAKING A LITTLE LONGER TO KEEP KIDS (AND PEOPLE) INVOLVED A LITTLE LONGER

**STRONG PARTNERSHIPS**

**AQUATIC PATHWAYS**

SWIMMING & LIFE-SAVING CLUBS

NON-COMPETITIVE PATHWAYS

EMPLOYMENT

FUN FITNESS AND FRIENDS

**LIFE-LONG & LONG-TERM PARTICIPATION**

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

**LEARNING FROM BAMBIGI:** A GRASS ROOTS YOUTH-LEAD FIRST NATIONS SWIMMING INITIATIVE  
PIPER STEWART, FOUNDER, BAMBIGI

**PERSONAL JOURNEY** FROM LEARNING TO SWIM TO TEACHING LIFESAVING TO OTHER CALD COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
SAHAR ENSAHI, LIFESAVING VICTORIA CALD PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

### EMPOWERING YOUTH

**COST RESTRICTIONS** CAN LEAD TO FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE DROWNING & HOSPITALISATION AT MUCH HIGHER RATES

TIME  
TRANSPORT CHALLENGES

PROGRAMS DURING SCHOOL HOURS  
REMOVING BARRIERS

PARTNERSHIPS & SHARING RESOURCES INCREASES PARTICIPATION  
PCYC LOCAL POOLS  
FIRST NATIONS ORGANISATIONS

BEING RESOURCEFUL

**ACCESS TO SWIMMING & SAFETY PROGRAMS** FOR DIVERSE CULTURAL COMMUNITIES SAVES LIVES

OFTEN WHERE WE COME FROM THERE IS NO SWIMMING  
OR IT CAN BE A MASCULINE ACTIVITY  
OR NOT CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE

LANGUAGE SCHOOL - AN ENTRY POINT  
**WE NEED MORE TARGETED PROGRAMS**

**WE WANT TO HELP OTHERS AND OUR COMMUNITY**

**WE WANT TO GIVE BACK, SAVE LIVES**

**WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ALL THE PATHWAYS**

TARGETED EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS IS IMPORTANT

SO OUR PARENTS KNOW

**FUNDING** IN REGIONAL AREAS IS CRITICAL

# Workshop 1: Swimming and Water Safety Skills

## AIM:

To review and discuss draft action statements towards achieving the overarching vision that all children, regardless of circumstances, should have the universal right of access to swimming and water safety education.

## SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP FEEDBACK:

- Statement should be adjusted to be more concise.
- Statement should be adjusted to 'all people living in Australia'.
- Statement should be adjusted to be more expansive and include adults.
- Emphasise the importance of partnerships.
- Calls for a national campaign targeting parents reinforcing the importance of the benchmarks and that children should attain the benchmarks.
- Calls for consistency of messaging and a single voice.
- Calls for increased culturally appropriate and inclusive programs.
- Calls for strengthened alignment on pathways into sport, education, high order skills, and employment.
- Questions about benchmarks being tied to age, could an open-age benchmark be explored?
- Calls for greater listening to, and collaboration with, youth.



# Workshop 1: Graphic Recording

## WORKSHOP SESSION SETTING A COLLECTIVE AGENDA - DEVELOPING ACTION STATEMENTS

### National Aquatics Symposium 2023



THURSDAY 9<sup>th</sup> MARCH  
PORT MELBOURNE PART 3

UNIVERSAL  
RIGHT OF  
ACCESS

#### FURTHERING YOUTH ACCESS

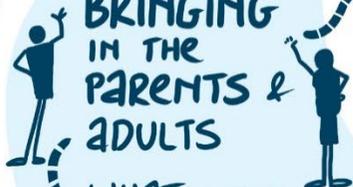


LANGUAGE -  
"CHILDREN IN  
AUSTRALIA"



ADVOCATING &  
GIVING BACK

BRINGING  
IN THE  
PARENTS &  
ADULTS



WHAT IS THE  
NATIONAL  
CONSISTENCY?

#### YOUTH PATHWAYS FOR PARTICIPATION & WORKFORCE

MORE  
ACCESS to  
SAFE SWIMMING  
SPACES  
... AND  
EDUCATION



SKILL  
PROGRESSION  
AS BENCHMARK?



WHO'S  
RESPONSIBLE?  
IS A COMPLEX  
QUESTION

#### STAFFING CHALLENGES AROUND ATTRACTION & RETENTION



HOW DO WE  
CREATE  
APPROPRIATELY  
MODERN  
FACILITIES WHICH  
ARE AFFORDABLE?



CONSISTENT  
MESSAGING

ONE  
NATIONAL  
CAMPAIGN



WE DON'T HAVE  
SIGNIFICANT BUDGET

WE NEED TO  
LOOK AT WHAT  
OTHER  
SUCCESSFUL  
SECTORS  
ARE DOING



WHAT ENGAGES  
YOUNG PEOPLE



FRIENDS  
?

LOOK AT  
MEDIA  
EFFECTIVENESS

" YOUTH ON  
PHONES, MAYBE  
NOT AS MUCH TV



COMMS PLAN  
TO FAMILIES

# National Aquatics Symposium

## > Day 1: Workforce

### WORKFORCE

Theme: Workforce profile, issues, and opportunities

#### OBJECTIVE:

To profile the aquatic workforce post COVID-19 lockdowns and examine emerging and existing workforce strategic challenges.

#### QUESTIONS RAISED:

- How are we going to ensure a sustainable workforce in regional areas?  
Barriers are high, incentives / pathways are low.
- How can we ensure sufficient quality and consistency in entry level staff, while ensuring there are enough staff to service community needs?

#### PRESENTATIONS

National aquatic workforce survey 2022: results & insights  
Shaun Jackson, National Manager Training & Workforce Development,  
Royal Life Saving Society - Australia

Attracting the right people - a tale of two cities

Adam Luscombe, General Manager, South Australia Aquatic and Leisure Centre

Victorian swim teacher retention project

Kate Simpson, General Manager, Governance, Club Support & Education,  
Life Saving Victoria

#### PANEL DISCUSSION

How do we raise the profile of aquatic industry jobs and opportunities, and better access local talent pools?

Alexandra Ash, Chief Executive Officer, Gymnastics Australia

Ben Tudhope, General Manager - Partnerships, Aligned Leisure

John Clark, Chief Executive Officer, South East Leisure

Adam Luscombe, General Manager, South Australia Aquatic and Leisure Centre

#### SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

- An estimated 23,000 people in our industry could not access Job Keeper during the pandemic shutdowns.
- 44% of industry works in regional areas.
- Many of Australia's regional pools were built by community members with their hands. Hundreds are memorial pools, lasting legacies to the many young men who sacrificed their lives so the next generation would have a better life. Closing these pools across Australia due to lack of resources is unthinkable.
- Attracting and retaining talent is difficult, and there is a lot of competition.
- Removing barriers to entry is critical.
- You can't be what you can't see – highlight success stories.
- A national framework for the workforce is needed to establish a common language for capabilities, attributes and career pathways and enables us to better promote employment in the industry, while ensuring greater safeguards.



Theme: Career pathways, retaining and developing talent

OBJECTIVE:

To explore how to attract, develop, nurture, and retain talent.

QUESTIONS RAISED:

- How can we articulate a strong purpose or 'why' to work in the industry?
- How can we develop and strengthen the profile of key roles like 'swimming and water safety teacher' or 'lifeguard' and elevate the standing in broader society?

PRESENTATIONS

The Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System - what does it mean for aquatic industry roles?

Bill Mollison, Manager Victoria, Skills Programs, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Creating a work environment that people want to stay in

Nicky Sloan, People and Culture, City Venue Management

Developing your people to grow and lead your organisation through new opportunities and challenges

Kara Monaghan, Regional Manager VIC/TAS, Belgravia Leisure

PANEL DISCUSSION

What career pathways are available and how do we retain and develop talent?

Victoria Clarke, Project Manager, Swim Jobs Victoria

Nicky Sloan, People and Culture, City Venue Management

Emma Jackson, Manager, Active Recreation, Sport and Recreation Victoria

Kathy Parton, Chief Executive Officer, Aquatics and Recreation Victoria

Kara Monaghan, Regional Manager VIC/TAS, Belgravia Leisure

SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

- People want a lifestyle, not just a job.
- New generations reshaping workforce.
- Invest in leadership and purpose.
- Use employee brand to attract attention to the lifestyle imagery the role conjures.
- Invest in existing capability and interest – upskill your people.
- Invest in engagement and connection.
- Regularly check in with people about their career.
- Leadership circles as a way of connecting junior and senior staff.
- Articulate and reinforce purpose.





# National Aquatics Symposium

## > Day 2: Friday 10th March 2023

### WORKFORCE

Theme: Diversity and inclusion in the workforce

#### OBJECTIVE:

Exploring the imperative of creating more inclusive, welcoming, diverse and equitable workplaces, programs and community places.

Building an inclusive culture in leisure facilities

Matthew Haanappel OAM PLY, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, AUSTSWIM

Creating welcoming and inclusive sports workplaces and facilities for the LGBTQIA+ community

Emily Fox, Manager - Capacity Building, Proud2Play

#### QUESTIONS RAISED:

- How can we stop talking and start doing?
- Are quotas a good way to go to?
- How can we use storytelling to build stronger connections with community?

Why diversity matters in grassroots sport

Richard Quail, National AusKick and Alternative Formats Manager, AFL

Kym McMahon, National Diversity and Inclusion Participation Manager, AFL

Collective leisure: a work integration social enterprise (WISE)

David Burns, Chief Executive Officer, Collective Leisure

#### PANEL DISCUSSION

Why is diversity and inclusion important, what are we doing well, and what can we do differently?

Emily Fox, Manager - Capacity Building, Proud2Play

Richard Quail, National AusKick and Alternative Formats Manager, AFL

Kym McMahon, National Diversity and Inclusion Participation Manager, AFL

Matthew Haanappel OAM PLY, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, AUSTSWIM

Stan Wall, Chief Executive Officer, Lifeguarding Services Australia & Board Member HumanAbility

#### SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

- Workplaces must become more diverse and inclusive; ensuring the workforce is reflective of the community is vital.
- Do an accessibility review of your facility / workplace. For example, something as simple as a toilet without a colour contrast seat can be very difficult for someone with vision impairment.
- Fifteen per cent of population identify as LGBTQIA+. Young people from the LGBTQIA+ community are five times more likely to attempt suicide, and four times more likely to be a victim of violent crime. It's critical that we create more welcoming and inclusive places and spaces for LGBTQIA+ community.
- The trans community in particular often find aquatic facilities difficult, feel bodies have been policed there - all-gender bathrooms are greatly needed for the trans community.
- Engaging with First Nations communities, critical to speak to families, to learn about culture and journey.
- It's not just about delivering a service, it's about building a community, and adding value to the broader social fabric.



## National Aquatics Symposium 2023



FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup> MARCH  
PORT MELBOURNE PART 1

### WORKFORCE

#### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKFORCE

##### BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE IN LEISURE FACILITIES

MATTHEW HAHNAPPEL OAM PLY,  
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION  
MANAGER  
AUSTSWIM



CREATING A BETTER FUTURE FOR EVERYONE

LEGITIMATELY HEARD



##### CREATING WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE SPORTS WORKPLACES AND FACILITIES FOR THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

EMILY FOX,  
-CAPACITY MANAGER,  
PROUD2 PLAY

##### PASSIVE INCLUSION vs ACTIVE INCLUSION



##### LITTLE CHANGES MATTER

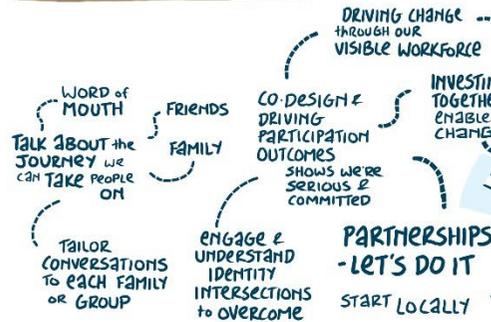
HOW DO WE ADJUST FACILITIES TO INCLUDE TRANS-GENDER PEOPLE?

SAFE AFTER-SCHOOL SPACES NEEDED

LANGUAGE

WHO ARE WE REALLY PROTECTING?

##### PANEL DISCUSSION



##### COLLECTIVE LEISURE: A WORK INTEGRATION SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (WISE)

DAVID BURNS, CEO,  
COLLECTIVE LEISURE

##### WHY DIVERSITY MATTERS IN GRASS ROOTS SPORTS

RICHARD QUAIL, NATIONAL AUSKICK AND ALTERNATIVE FORMATS MANAGER, AFL



GLOBAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IS TRACKING POORLY

COLLECTIVE LEISURE IS A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE THAT REACHES OUT TO UNDER SERVED, HARD TO REACH COMMUNITIES, SUSTAINABLY

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CONTRIBUTES 1.6% OF THE WORKFORCE AND \$20 BILLION TO OUR ECONOMY



##### IT'S TIME FOR DOING!



# Workshop 2: Workforce

## AIM:

To review and discuss draft action statements towards strengthening the aquatic workforce.

## SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP FEEDBACK:

- Reaffirm the importance of aquatic industry workforce reflecting community living in Australia.
- Strengthen and reaffirm the social impact of industry.
- Calls for a national workforce framework.
- Calls for training and professionalisation systems to align and strengthen quality, consistency, performance, and safety.
- Calls to strengthen specific actions needed around diversity and inclusion, including consideration towards quotas.
- Calls for industry associations and peak bodies like Royal Life Saving to sustain advocacy and share success stories.
- Calls to strengthen the availability of Certificate II, III and IV level qualification across industry, and industry adoption of strengthened and broader qualifications.
- Calls for employers to 'pay to train' new staff.
- Calls for RTO consistency and quality, "one system".
- Questions as to whether Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations should be expanded to include Guidelines for Inclusion & Diversity, Cultural Safety, Workforce Development, and other broader industry issues of national strategic importance.
- Calls for national 'State of Sector' style reporting.
- Questions as to whether there are greater NDIS opportunities for career pathways from aquatics.
- Calls to ensure staff are represented in decision making and strategy.



## WORKSHOP SESSION SETTING a collective agenda - DEVELOPING ACTION STATEMENTS

## National Aquatics Symposium 2023



FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup> MARCH  
PORT MELBOURNE  
PART 2

LOOK AT NARRATIVE AROUND SOCIAL VALUE



DEVELOP TOOLS AROUND INTERPERSONAL LIFE SKILLS



DEVELOP a NATIONAL WORKFORCE FRAMEWORK



PROUD OF THIS INDUSTRY SING IT FROM THE ROOF TOPS



UTILISING LIVED EXPERIENCES, STORY-TELLING AROUND DIVERSITY



SKILLS LEARNED CAN BE APPLIED TO SO MANY INDUSTRIES

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNITY TO EMPOWER AND IMPROVE



IMMENSE SOCIAL VALUE

ROLE IN a BIGGER SYSTEM, PLACE-BASED SOLUTIONS



TOILETS & CHANGEROOMS - LEGACY CHALLENGES



HOLDING TO ACCOUNT "We are ..."

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONALISATION SYSTEMS TO DRIVE QUALITY AND CONSISTENCY IN SERVICE DELIVERY, PERFORMANCE AND SAFETY



WHERE IT'S WORKING, SUPPORT US



COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION BEST PRACTICE

BUDGET CONSTRAINTS AROUND TOO-HIGH STANDARDS



COLLABORATIVE, INCLUSIVE, DIVERSE WORKFORCE

" ATTRACTING PEOPLE FROM OTHER INDUSTRIES



COMMUNITY NEEDS TO SEE ITSELF IN THE WORKFORCE

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY OF WORKFORCE



GETTING CLEAR ON VALUES & HIERARCHY



WE ARE IMMATURE AS AN INDUSTRY



the WHY

- WHAT'S WORKING THAT WE CAN SCALE?



BE MORE ASPIRATIONAL ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER



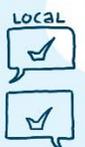
" AND SAFE " AND FUN

BRING MORE PEOPLE INTO THE INDUSTRY



MORE, MORE, MORE " IT'S A BALANCING ACT

" over-academicise " the RIGHT LOCAL STORY-TELLING



ALIGNING WITH PROFESSIONAL INDUSTRY



TARGETING DEVELOPING DIVERSITY PROGRAMS



RAISE THE PROFILE OF THE STAFF 'INDUSTRY MATURITY'



CAREER OPPORTUNITIES TARGETING DIVERSITY

FOCUS ON THE HOW IN a TRANSIENT ENVIRONMENT



INCENTIVISING ROLES, ADDRESS THE PAY SYSTEM



SPECIFIC ACTIONS NEEDED AROUND DIVERSITY



HIERARCHY & BARRIERS STILL THERE " AND NEED REMOVING ...



ALIGNMENT AROUND VISION, HEART, CULTURE & INCLUSIVITY TO GET MEANINGFUL ACTION



START BY LIFTING VISIBILITY ADDRESSING LANGUAGE ALIGNMENT



CAREER IN AQUATIC CAN BE LIFE LONG IN a NATIONAL SYSTEM



OPPORTUNITIES AROUND TRAINING: 18 YOLAS IN CHARGE OF MASSIVE EXPENSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

# Workshop 2: Workforce



# National Aquatics Symposium

## > Day 2: Infrastructure

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Theme: Understanding the current state of aquatic infrastructure in Australia

#### OBJECTIVE:

Examining the current state of aquatic infrastructure across Australia as well as current challenges for construction and operations

#### QUESTIONS RAISED:

- How can we approach facility provisioning in a more sustainably responsible model?
- How can we ensure equitable access to facilities, particularly in regional and remote locations?
- How can we provide facilities that community needs, not what community wants?

#### PRESENTATIONS

Overview of state of aquatic facility infrastructure

John Summers, Managing Director, Leisure Management Excellence

Challenges maintaining regional swimming pools

Steve Good, Executive Director, Leisure Institute of Western Australia Aquatics (LIWA)

Current challenges in swimming pool construction

Steve Meikle, General Manager - Victoria, Commercial Aquatics Australia

#### PANEL DISCUSSION

Understanding the impact of rising utility costs on aquatic facilities now and into the future

Steve Good, Executive Director, Leisure Institute of Western Australia Aquatics (LIWA)

Steve Meikle, General Manager - Victoria, Commercial Aquatics Australia

Jay Clarke, Managing Director, City Venue Management

Amanda Locke, Manager of Leisure and Recreation, City of Greater Geelong

Barry Harrison, General Manager Aquatic Facilities, Western Leisure Services

#### SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

- \$8 billion is needed just to maintain existing aquatic facility infrastructure.
- Unprecedented rise in construction costs, materials are up between 40 and 160 per cent for basics like concrete, steel, PVC pipes.
- Gas heating is gone for good, all electric on almost all new builds, due to a tripling of gas costs.
- To meet the sustainability needs, it is likely pool operating hours will need to be reviewed, which will involve a cultural shift for communities. Session times like in Canada or Europe are a likely reality in the future.



## National Aquatics Symposium 2023



FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup> MARCH  
PORT MELBOURNE  
PART 3

### INFRASTRUCTURE

#### OVERVIEW OF STATE OF AQUATIC FACILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

JOHN SUMMERS, MANAGING DIRECTOR, LEISURE MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE

THE AVERAGE POOL WAS BUILT IN 1968

**POOL CLOSURE CRISIS**

THE LOSS OF POOLS WILL RESULT IN THE LOSS OF JOBS, ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND SAFETY

1306 PUBLIC  
807 PRIVATE

REGIONAL AREAS HAVE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF POOLS IN A 'POOR' STATE



WE NEED A STRATEGIC AND EQUITABLE FUNDING SYSTEM

ALTERNATE APPROACHES INCLUDING PARTNERSHIPS  
" BETWEEN ORGS AND LOCAL GOVS

GOVERNMENTS NEED TO THINK DIFFERENTLY

#### CHALLENGES MAINTAINING REGIONAL SWIMMING POOLS

STEVE GOOD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LEISURE INSTITUTE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA AQUATICS (LIWA)

IN W.A.

50% OF FACILITIES ARE REGIONAL OR REMOTE

REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE SUPPLY CHALLENGES CAN MEAN LONG DELAYS

AGEING INFRASTRUCTURE - WE NEED TO CATER FOR GROUPS NOW!  
" RETROFITTING

COSTS ARE RISING - FUNDING ISN'T KEEPING PACE



**WE HAVE TO ACT NOW!**  
- WE KNOW A CRISIS IS COMING

LOOKING AT PROGRAMS FOR COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT

HELPING VULNERABLE PEOPLE, DIVERSITY

WATER-SAVING PROGRAMS

### UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT STATE OF AQUATIC INFRASTRUCTURE IN AUSTRALIA

#### CURRENT CHALLENGES IN SWIMMING POOL CONSTRUCTION

STEVE MEIKLE, GENERAL MANAGER - VICTORIA, COMMERCIAL AQUATICS AUSTRALIA

WE'RE BUILDING AQUATIC CENTRES WITH ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY " THAT STAFF DON'T HAVE THE SKILLS TO USE!



BIG CHANGE: NO MORE GAS " GOING ELECTRIC

BUILDING CODES CHANGING - BUT SUPPLY OF MATERIALS IS POOR



TIME BETWEEN QUOTE & BUILD IS WHEN MATERIAL COSTS SKYROCKET

WE ALL HAVE TO PLAY OUR PART

BE A POOL OPERATOR!

TRAIN & LEARN TO OPERATE FACILITIES CORRECTLY

COSTS ARE OUT OF CONTROL  
THINGS HAVE ESCALATED QUICKLY



WHAT HAPPENS IF WE KEEP GETTING 'BIGGER & BETTER' ?

THINK ABOUT SMALLER THINGS YOU CAN DO TO EXISTING FACILITIES TO MAKE SAVINGS

GO GREEN " BUT THERE'S A COST

TURN THE HEAT DOWN 1 DEGREE & USE A POOL BLANKET

DO WE HAVE THE RIGHT POOLS & FACILITIES FOR THE COMMUNITY ?

HOW ARE WE EDUCATING COUNCILS TO HELP US BE BETTER OPERATORS

#### PANEL DISCUSSION

COUNCILS HAVING CONVERSATIONS AROUND DRIVING EFFICIENCY: " IS MANAGEMENT THE RIGHT MANAGEMENT ? "

" BECAUSE MY LABOUR COSTS ARE RISING

WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO TRAIN & UPSKILL OPERATORS



TRAINING COSTS NEED TO BE FACTORED IN " AND COMPLIANCE

## Theme: Current approaches to aquatic facility planning and delivery

### OBJECTIVE:

Exploring current planning approach to aquatic facilities.

Reflections and lessons from recent Australian projects

Miranda Markovic, Senior Consultant, Otium Planning Group

### QUESTIONS RAISED:

- How can we advocate better to decision-makers that pools should be build based on community need, not community want?
- How can we emphasise a wellbeing agenda, not a swimming agenda, like in Europe and Canada?
- How can we incorporate, modularisation and universal design principles to create multifunctional community hubs at lower cost and at scale?
- How do we cut through the noise of unrealistic local expectations, lack of local project expertise?

Vision, leadership and future proofing new facilities – Are we master planning for current thinking and the squeaky wheels in the community or for future generations of participants and managers?

Martin Sheppard, Managing Director, Smart Connection Consultancy

Rejuvenating regional public pools – pitching a new model

Andy Dennis, General Manager - Training & Aquatic Industry, Life Saving Victoria

Research into planning of aquatic facilities - key learnings

Dr Katie McDonald, Adjunct Research Fellow - Victoria University & Recreation Planner - @leisure

### PANEL DISCUSSION

Are we planning for swimming pools appropriately?

Tim Goward, Executive Coordinator Aquatics, City of Gold Coast

Phil Saikaly, Lead Director Community Sports Infrastructure, Sport & Recreation Victoria

Dr Katie McDonald, Adjunct Research Fellow - Victoria University & Recreation Planner - @leisure

Martin Sheppard, Managing Director, Smart Connection Consultancy

Miranda Markovic, Senior Consultant, Otium Planning Group

### SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

- Without a social impact or social value plan, there is no business case for an aquatic facility.
- There are too many 50m pools in Australia.
- Case studies show: unrealistic community expectations for new pools; strong desire for both indoor and outdoor pools; Councillors often interfere in planning process for political reasons; lack of local project expertise is an issue; and cost challenges for Councils are an issue.
- Many new projects did not include sufficient community engagement, many lacked sufficient objectives and planning processes.
- No leisure planning process has been evaluated appropriately.
- Need to emphasise measurement and evaluation in all leisure projects.
- Need to look at leisure facilities within broader social value context, are they creating savings to governments elsewhere, how can that be incorporated into planning process to maximise social value?



## National Aquatics Symposium 2023

### INFRASTRUCTURE

REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS FROM RECENT AUSTRALIAN PROJECTS

MIRANDA MARKOVIC, SENIOR CONSULTANT, OTIUM PLANNING GROUP

CURRENT APPROACHES TO AQUATIC FACILITY PLANNING AND DELIVERY

CONSULTATION IS AT THE HEART



BE EVIDENCE-BASED  
"TAKING STAKEHOLDERS ON THE JOURNEY"

-SHOWING CEOs & COUNCILORS THE MEANING

AGILITY & REFLECTION AROUND NEEDS TO ADJUST FACILITIES

HAVE COST PLANS AT HAND



ECONOMIC & SOCIAL BENEFITS WITHOUT THEM, YOUR PROJECT DOESN'T EXIST  
-HAVE THEM ON HAND

AVOID THE CEILING BUDGETS AT COUNCIL

DESIGNING FOR NOW "OR THE FUTURE?"

GET MULTIPLE PEOPLE TO VIEW DESIGNS

LAKE ROPES?

INVEST IN THE OPERATIONAL PLANNING STAGE

QUALITY CONTROL IS CRITICAL AT THE CONSTRUCTION STAGE



ROYAL LIFE SAVING AUSTRALIA

FRIDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> MARCH  
PORT MELBOURNE  
PART 4

VISION LEADERSHIP AND FUTURE PROOFING NEW FACILITIES - ARE WE MASTER PLANNING FOR CURRENT THINKING AND THE SQUEAKY WHEELS IN THE COMMUNITY OR FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS AND MANAGERS

MARTIN SHEPPARD, MANAGING DIRECTOR, SMART CONNECTION CONSULTANCY

VISION SHOULD BE ABOUT WHAT'S RIGHT FOR OUR COMMUNITY

"MOVE AWAY FROM SQUEAKY-WHEEL SYNDROME"

IDENTIFY, CONSULT, ACTIVATE AROUND NEEDS



DO WE NEED SO MANY 50M POOLS?

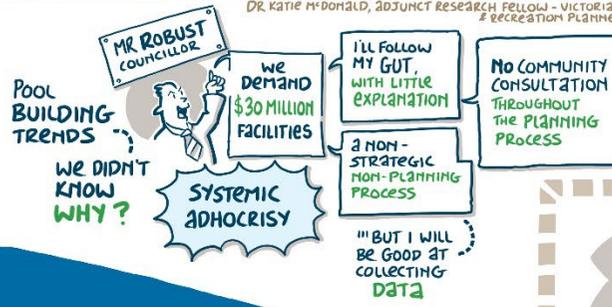
A WHOLE WELLBEING OF COMMUNITY APPROACH

AIM AT HEALTH AND WELLBEING OUTCOMES IMPACT

THIS GIVES US DESIGN FACTORS BUILD FOR 30 YEARS & FUTURE GENERATIONS

RESEARCH INTO PLANNING OF AQUATIC FACILITIES - KEY LEARNINGS

DR. KATIE McDONALD, ADJUNCT RESEARCH FELLOW - VICTORIA UNIVERSITY & RECREATION PLANNER - @LEISURE



### REJUVINATING REGIONAL PUBLIC POOLS - PITCHING A NEW MODEL

ANDY DENNIS, GENERAL MANAGER - TRAINING & AQUATIC INDUSTRY, LIFE SAVING VICTORIA

IT'S ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE NEED OVER WHAT THEY WANT



MANY FACILITIES HAVE SENTIMENTAL CULTURAL VALUE IN REGIONAL AREAS

FACILITIES DON'T STAY CLOSED

FACILITIES DON'T ALWAYS NEED 50M POOLS

INDOOR & SMALLER

WE NEED MORE MODEST COST EFFECTIVE DESIGN - APPROPRIATE FACILITIES

GREATER HEALTH & SOCIAL BENEFITS

GREATER ATTENDANCE & ENGAGEMENT

BWARE UNREALISTIC LOCAL EXPECTATIONS

COUNCILORS - SQUEAKY WHEEL



### PANEL DISCUSSION

IT'S THE BIGGEST INVESTMENT AN LGA MAKES

EMPLOYMENT EXPONENTIAL COMMUNITY BENEFITS (HEALTH SAFETY SOCIAL EDUCATION)

BUT IT RUNS AT AN OPERATIONAL LOSS

FEASIBILITY STUDIES SHOULD BE AROUND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

CHANGE THE NARRATIVE: WE CAN DEMONSTRATE COMMUNITY VALUE WORTH MILLIONS

Theme: Designing for impact and challenging the norm

OBJECTIVE:

Exploring opportunities to maximise social impact, reduce environmental footprints, support reconciliation and be better ancestors for future generations.

PRESENTATIONS

How to create community buildings with impact  
Melissa Higgs, Principal, HCMA Architects Vancouver

The social impact of the aquatic industry - the role of people and places  
Professor Emma Sherry, Co-director, Sport Innovation Research Group, Swinburne University

Building carbon neutral, or net-negative aquatic facilities – is it possible in Australia?

Brett Diprose, Associate Principal, Warren and Mahoney

Delivering pools in remote Aboriginal communities

Peter Leaversuch, Chief Executive Officer, Royal Life Saving Western Australia

QUESTIONS RAISED:

- How can better advocate the social value and social impact of aquatic facilities?
- How can we get the significant resources which are invested in emergency response, health response, into prevention and resilience through aquatic facilities?

PANEL DISCUSSION

Are we building the right facilities that communities actually need, now and in the future?

John Summers, Managing Director, Leisure Management Excellence

Professor Emma Sherry, Sport Innovation Research Group, Swinburne University

Yvette Audet, Vice President, International Leisure Facilities Association (IAKS)

Dr John Tower, Honorary Research Fellow - Victoria University & Managing Director - JRT Leisure

SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

- To design for social impact: design for everyone; find the right balance; focus on social space; include the community and collaborate; prioritise wellbeing.
- Understand the role aquatic facilities play in community, sometimes it means stepping back and allowing others to shine, collaborate with local partners to work out the best community fit.
- Australia’s timber industry needs to come up to speed to overseas markets to foster a green construction revolution.
- Bumping spaces are critical to fostering social connection. With cost pressures, creating “empty” space can be excluded from final designs, but are critical for connection.
- Remember that social impact is co-created by the users/community.



## INFRASTRUCTURE

## National Aquatics Symposium 2023



FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup> MARCH  
PORT MELBOURNE  
PART 5

### THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE AQUATIC INDUSTRY - THE ROLE OF PEOPLE AND PLACES

PROFESSOR EMMA SHERRY, CO-DIRECTOR, SPORT INNOVATION RESEARCH GROUP, SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY

### DESIGNING FOR IMPACT AND CHALLENGING THE NORM

#### HOW TO CREATE COMMUNITY BUILDINGS WITH IMPACT

MELISSA HIGGS, PRINCIPAL, HCMA ARCHITECTS VANCOUVER



### DELIVERING POOLS IN REMOTE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

PETER LEAVERSUCH, CEO, ROYAL LIFE SAVING WESTERN AUSTRALIA



### BUILDING CARBON NEUTRAL, OR NET-NEGATIVE AQUATIC FACILITIES - IS IT POSSIBLE IN AUSTRALIA

BRETT DIPROSE, ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL, WARREN AND MAHOEY



### CREATE A SAFE PLACE TO COME AND PLAY

#### SWIMMING POOLS ARE HUMANISING

all SHAPES & sizes

LET'S GET THE MESSAGE OUT ABOUT THE VALUE OF WHAT WE DO!

CHANGE ROOMS

NOT JUST PREACHING to the CONVERTED

#### MAXIMISE the SOCIAL IMPACT

ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO USE THEM

MUMS WAITING

stay & chat

OR coffee at the cafe?

PEOPLE ARE SO IMPORTANT

FRONT DESK

HARNESS THE POWER

HUMAN-CENTRED DESIGN

### PANEL DISCUSSION

LET'S GET TOGETHER AND REALLY MEASURE the IMPACT

DATA COLLECTION FOR A DECADE TO GET GOOD EVIDENCE

WE DON'T SEE OUR VALUE IN REPORTS

AFFORDABLE, SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

HOW DO WE MEASURE & WHO DO WE REPORT TO?

VERSITILE

### WHAT OUTCOMES ARE WE SEEKING?

PEOPLE CAN ATTEND CHEAPLY  
HOW CAN WE MAKE THEM MORE ACCESSIBLE?



## AIM:

To review and discuss draft action statements towards strengthening the availability and sustainability of aquatic facilities.

## SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP FEEDBACK:

- Emphasise the importance of wellbeing and play, not just health and fitness.
- Look beyond governments; leverage social procurement, social impact investment.
- Need to invest in advocacy which explains why 50m pools are not needed everywhere.
- How do we create the groundswell like 'removing all level crossings' equivalent for swimming pools?
- Re-imagine swimming facilities into community hubs.
- Facilities need greater alignment to social impact frameworks to demonstrate impact.
- Adjust language to ensure all communities have equitable access to safe facilities.

**WORKSHOP SESSION**  
SETTING a COLLECTIVE  
AGENDA - DEVELOPING  
ACTION STATEMENTS

## National Aquatics Symposium 2023



FRIDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> MARCH  
PORT MELBOURNE  
PART 6

**IT SHOULDN'T JUST BE GOVERNMENTS BUT DEVELOPERS TOO**  
- WORKING GREEN



**COMMUNITY SUPPORTED OPERATIONAL DECISIONS**



**IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT SWIM**  
!!! theres PLAY THERAPY & SOCIALISATION



**HOW DO WE COMPETE to SHOW VALUE?**



**LOOK AT SOCIAL ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**  
a HOLISTIC STRATEGY



**NAVIGATING BALANCES AROUND LAYERS of GOVERNMENT**



**DEVELOPERS DRIVEN BY NEEDING to 'BE SEEN'**

**FEASIBILITY NEEDS TO START VERY EARLY DAYS**



**FEAR AROUND COMBINED TECHNOLOGY in the ENGINEERING SPACE**



**WE NEED a MORE HOLISTIC ENERGY APPROACH**

**WE'RE BUILDING FOR WELLBEING**



**BUILD AROUND NEEDS & ENERGY EQUATION BESPOKE to COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENTAL CIRCUMSTANCES & REQUIREMENTS**



**WE NEED to LEAD BY EXAMPLE**  
NOT JUST RELYING ON GOVERNMENT



**BUILD FOR NOW AND the FUTURE**



CAPTURED BY  
MUSTIN  
ACERLEY

# Statement from the 2023 National Aquatics Symposium

## > Background

Reinforcing the importance of swimming and water safety education, increased access to and sustainability of aquatic facilities, and further professionalisation of the aquatic workforce in Australia.

The National Aquatics Symposium delegates, made up of more than 150 senior aquatic industry leaders, academics, architects, planners, and policymakers, met over two days on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in Port Melbourne and agreed to:

1. Reaffirm the fundamental importance of swimming and water safety education, noting that being able to swim and stay safe around water is a critical life skill for all.
2. Reinforce our belief in the universal right of access to safe recreational water space, including aquatic facilities for the health, wellbeing, and social connection of all people in Australia.
3. Reflect on the tragedy of drowning and its impact on society, particularly among children and young people.
4. Acknowledge the current challenges facing the aquatic sector, including factors which impact on viability, sustainability, funding, and our workforce.
5. Celebrate the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Global Drowning Prevention [10], specifically the
  - a. commitment to fostering collaboration between sectors and stakeholders.
  - b. call for all governments to ensure all children have access to swimming and water safety education, including reinforcing the important role that schools can play.
6. Align to the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030, specifically its emphasis on:
  - a. ensuring access to swimming and water safety education to people of all backgrounds and abilities;
  - b. enhancing and improving collection of data which maps the current state of skills of children, teenagers and adults;
  - c. strengthening the aquatic workforce, including increasing the diversity of the workforce;
  - d. improving systems and professionalisation of the workforce aimed at ensuring safety, quality, consistency, and accountability; and,
  - e. increasing the availability and sustainability of aquatic facilities and ensuring aquatic facilities are available and accessible to people of all backgrounds and abilities.
7. We are saddened by and deeply concerned that drowning deaths:
  - a. are reported to be 24 per cent higher last year than the 10-year average [1] and 36 per cent higher than the 10-year average for children aged 5-14 years, perhaps a reflection of children missing out on lessons during the pandemic [1];
  - b. increased across all waterways, often in areas where safe places to swim are needed; and
  - c. during our most recent summer reached 90 deaths reported in the media, 33 per cent of whom were children and five per cent of whom had drowned in a public or communal pool. [9]
8. We note that sufficient swimming and water safety skills:
  - a. are critical to safety and our enjoyment of water activities.
  - b. are a key contributor to reducing the burden of drowning. [1,5]
  - c. must have a strong focus on swimming and water safety programs delivered in all settings. [5]
  - d. are not universally achieved;

- i. up to 40 per cent of children leaving primary school unable to achieve the minimum National Benchmark for Swimming and Water Safety skills [3,5] and
  - ii. 25 per cent of adults state they are weak or non-swimmers. [6]
  - iii. research shows that participation in commercial learn to swim programs declines before eight years of age, well before many children have developed a comprehensive set of swimming and water safety skills. [5]
  - iv. access to swimming and water safety education is not evenly spread across all populations. [5]
  - v. and are less likely to be achieved by those in rural and remote communities, those from lower socioeconomic areas, multicultural communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who are all less likely to be attending swimming and water safety education programs. [5]
9. We note that the national aquatic industry:
  - a. comprises 2,113 publicly accessible aquatic facilities in Australia, which contribute \$9.1 billion annually in social, health and economic benefits. [2]
  - b. provides highly accessible leisure, fitness and learning to the 89 per cent of Australians who live within 20 minutes' drive of a public pool. [2]
  - c. generates valuable economic activity throughout regional Australia, as 57 per cent of aquatic facilities are located outside of capital cities. [2]
  - d. employs over 67,000 employees, making it one of the largest employers in the sport and recreation sector. [2]
  - e. faces challenges retaining staff due to a lack of available hours, seasonal nature of work, poor remuneration and a poor work culture and environment. [7, 8, 11]
  - f. was impacted severely by the COVID-19 pandemic and has suffered:
    - i. severe financial constraints
    - ii. workforce loss of expertise
    - iii. severe and sustained workforce shortages
    - iv. long wait lists to get kids who missed out back into swimming and water safety education.
10. We note that aquatic facilities:
  - a. are critical for the delivery of safe places to swim and swimming and water safety education. [3]
  - b. are aging, with 500 (40 per cent) approaching end of life this decade, requiring an \$8 billion investment in maintenance and replacement. [4]
  - c. are financed primarily (64 per cent) by local governments, perhaps the level of government least well placed to do so, and that regional communities are most at risk of missing out. [4]
11. We recognise the significant role of senior industry leaders, academics, drowning prevention experts, architects, planners, and policymakers in shaping and implementing effective policies and interventions to address these challenges.
12. We remain concerned about all the children who missed lessons due to pandemic related health and economic factors and call on governments and the sector to be doing everything possible to ensure that these children do not become a generation of non-swimmers.

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