



Victorian public pools

State of the sector report / 2021 – 22



Glossary of terms

Community issue-based working group

A stakeholder group formally engaged to address a Victorian aquatic industry, or drowning prevention related matter.

Guidelines for safe pool operations (GSPO)

The GSPO is the recognised national industry standard that describes and makes recommendations as to the appropriate minimum standards of safety that should be attached to the design, ownership and operations of aquatic facilities, thereby providing a recognised standard of care.

Platinum pool

Pools that successfully complete a series of annual assessment activities and adhere to a strict code of practice, accredited under LSV's platinum pool program.

Pool safety assessment (PSA)

An audit of a pool's operational performance against known industry standards, behaviours and expectations, specific to staff and patron safety.

Public pool

Under the National aquatic facility classification and definition system the following facilities are considered public pools:

- council-owned pools
- learn-to-swim pools
- early childhood care, tertiary education and higher education venue pools
- any pool where swimming lessons are conducted is considered public for the duration of the lesson/s
- any pool offering access on a pay-per-usage basis is considered public for the duration of the pay-per-access usage

Methods

This report includes unintentional fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents reported in Victoria, Australia.

Information on fatal drowning incidents was collected using information obtained from the Coroners Court of Victoria, and the National Coroners Information System. Deaths due to natural causes, suicide or homicide are excluded. Coronial information relates to both open and closed cases.

While all care is taken to ensure the results are as accurate as possible, these figures are provisional only, as coronial investigations and findings relating to open cases may alter the reported drowning figures.

Information on non-fatal drownings was provided by Ambulance Victoria. Details of non-fatal and immersion-related injuries attended by Ambulance Victoria paramedics were extracted from the VACIS® clinical information system.

Potential drowning data was identified for this report via a database search for all drowning-related dispatch codes identified at the emergency call-taker level, as well as cases in which paramedics reported a final assessment of 'post immersion'. Only patients reported as suffering respiratory compromise or vomiting because of immersion were included in analyses.

Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

Life Saving Victoria and Aquatics and Recreation Victoria respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land and waterways in which we swim, explore, play and meet. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

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About Life Saving Victoria

Established in 2002, Life Saving Victoria (LSV) is **Victoria's peak body for water safety**. LSV is an initiative of the Royal Life Saving Society Australia Victoria Branch (est. 1904) and Surf Life Saving Victoria (est. 1947), formed through the merger of the Royal Life Saving Society Australia - Victoria Branch and Surf Life Saving Victoria.

LSV's mission is to prevent aquatic-related death and injury in all Victorian communities, and its vision is that all Victorians will learn water safety, swimming and resuscitation, and be provided with safe aquatic environments and venues.

With more than 500 staff and 43,000 volunteer members, LSV works with communities, educational institutions,

government agencies, businesses and the broader aquatic industry to deliver a wide range of industry-leading management and support services including:

- awareness and advocacy, support and activities,
- water safety and emergency response training,
- design, risk management and operational safety services,
- water safety education programs,
- people and leadership development, and
- research and services, and evaluation activities.

About Aquatics & Recreation Victoria

Aquatics & Recreation Victoria (ARV) is **Victoria's peak industry body for the aquatic and recreation industries**. ARV services those who plan, build, own, manage, operate or service aquatic and recreation facilities across Victoria.

ARV is a not-for-profit, member-based association that represents and provides support, professional development, training, advocacy, research and networking opportunities for the aquatic and recreation industries.

With more than 350 members and sponsors, ARV's vision is to be the voice for the aquatic and recreation

industries. Its mission is to facilitate and develop effective relationships and partnerships with stakeholders across the aquatic and recreation, commercial, health, local government and state government sectors, to work together for a better industry.

ARV's objectives include:

- building, developing and supporting the ARV community,
- leading industry advocacy, coordination and engagement,
- delivering industry aquatic and recreation services,
- enabling corporate and community sustainability,
- increasing industry equity, inclusion and diversity, and
- enabling strong research, resources and partnerships.

Acknowledgments

LSV and ARV gratefully acknowledge the public pool representatives, government and industry agencies that contribute to water safety across Victoria by:

- participating in industry committees and working groups,
- attending industry conferences and events,
- adhering to industry best practice guidelines,
- investing in staff training and professional development,
- developing and/or supporting industry resources,
- participating in and/or supporting industry research and evaluation,
- supplying and delivering industry services and activities, and
- funding industry organisations and initiatives.

Aim

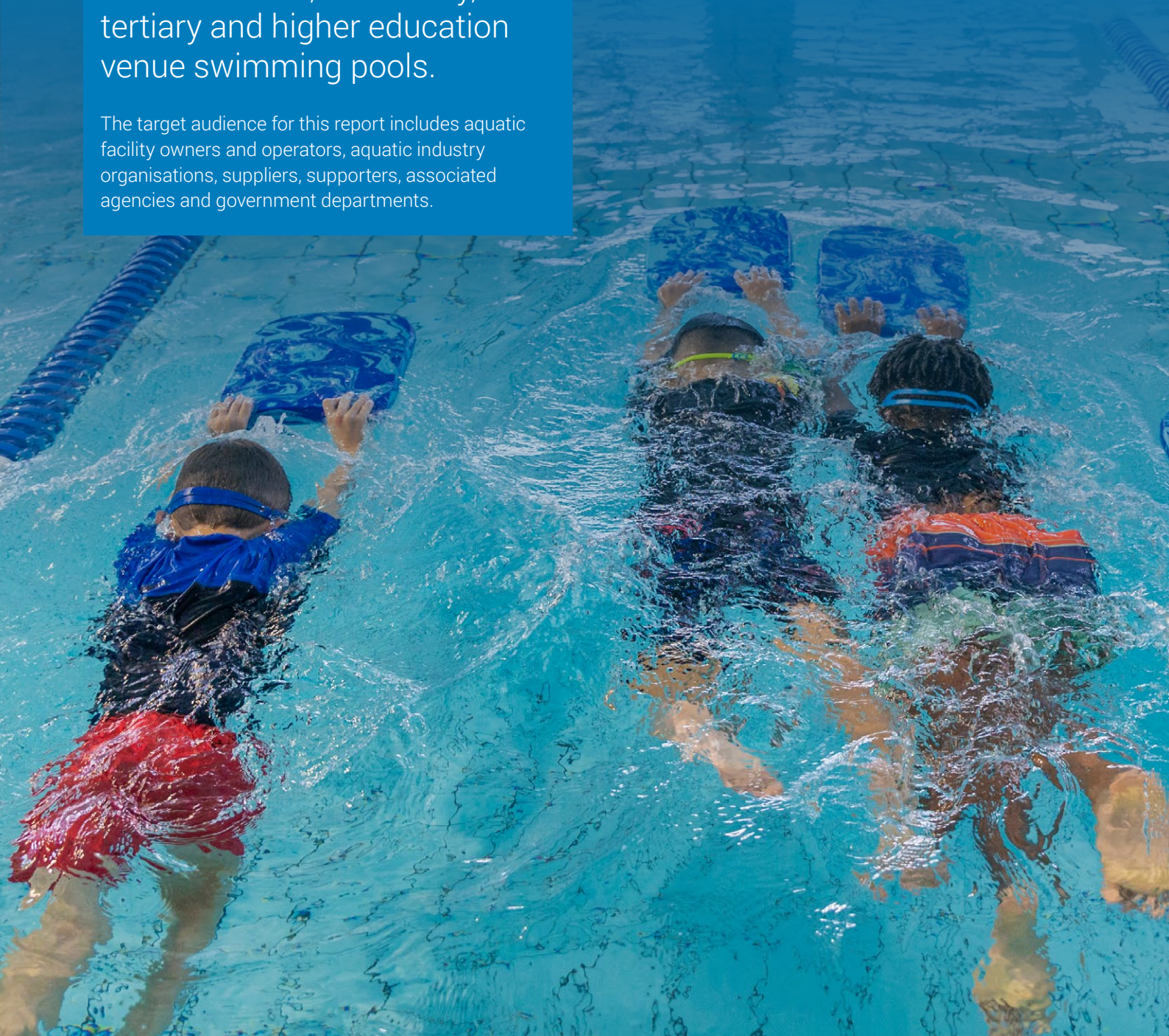
The *Victorian public pools - State of the sector report* provides a snapshot of the past 12 months in the public pool industry. The public pool industry comprises council-owned aquatic facilities, learn-to-swim centres, and early childhood care, secondary, tertiary and higher education venue swimming pools.

The target audience for this report includes aquatic facility owners and operators, aquatic industry organisations, suppliers, supporters, associated agencies and government departments.

Objectives

This report provides:

- an overview of **industry size, scope** and **value**,
- insight into **customer usage trends** and patterns,
- analysis of industry **safety standards**,
- an overview of sector **initiatives** and **research projects**,
- details of key industry **award winners**,
- analysis of **Covid-19 impacts**, and
- key industry **leader profiles**.



Introduction

The Hon. Ros Spence Minister for Community Sport



With **53 Victorians tragically losing their life to drowning** during 2021-22, we're working even more closely with our partners like Aquatics and Recreation Victoria and Life Saving Victoria to stem the tide and ensure more Victorians get their chance to learn swimming basics.

Recently I was proud to announce more than \$1.5 million towards two new programs - the *Youth Aquatic Accreditation Program* and the *VICSWIM Workforce Project* - that will create hundreds of new jobs and ensure even more Victorian kids can learn to swim and have fun safely.

As we all know, the pandemic has created a shortage of accredited swim teachers and the new programs aim to address this by creating more jobs for young people in the sector and providing an important pathway to a rewarding career.

The inaugural round of the *Youth Aquatic Accreditation Program* is giving 17 to 25-year-olds the opportunity to teach swimming skills and water safety.

The program will deliver grants for new Teachers of Swimming and Water Safety, Infant and Preschool Aquatics, and renewal of Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety qualifications.

Together, the new programs provide an important entry point for instructors to pursue or continue careers in the aquatic sector, helping Victorians of all ages learn vital water safety skills and survival knowledge.

I would like to commend our aquatic sector partners Aquatics and Recreation Victoria and Life Saving Victoria for your outstanding efforts to facilitate service delivery, industry development, and advocacy.

I look forward to continuing our work to ensure even more Victorians can access outstanding aquatic facilities and critical water safety initiatives in local communities as well as get involved in workforce opportunities in the sector.



The Hon. Ros Spence MP
Minister for Community Sport

Introduction

Andrew Crisp, AM APM Emergency Management Commissioner



Emergency Management Victoria is **proud to support LSV and its commitment to education, public safety and the aquatic industry**, creating safer and more enjoyable aquatic environments for all Victorians.

Swimming and water safety lessons and education have been a critical pillar of Victorian water safety over the last 50 years. Victorian learn-to-swim programs have a proven track record for teaching kids how to be safe in a pool-based environment and are a critical part of water safety skills development. The sector faces several emerging challenges to maintain and build on this success, as COVID 19 has exacerbated challenges in swim lesson availability, aquatic workforce capacity and swimming infrastructure.

As chair of the water safety taskforce, which brings together Victorian government stakeholders in water safety, I have been impressed by the commitment of taskforce member agencies to work collaboratively to address sector challenges.

Through sharing information, improving coordination and strong government investment, the sector has built capacity to increase swim teacher and lifesaver workforce, expand access to swimming and lifesaving skills, coordinate and improve response to incidents, and increase the reach of public information.

The taskforce has also coordinated the development of the Victorian Water Safety Strategy 2021-25. The strategy prioritises enhancing water safety education and improving recruitment and retention of the workforce by engaging with the network of water safety sector stakeholders. The strategy reflects the sector's work to improve workforce recruitment and retention by coordinating initiatives, developing resources and promoting swimming and water safety education accreditation.

By supporting water safety education and the workforce that delivers it, we can empower Victorians to enjoy the physical, social and emotional benefits that are gained by being in, on or around water.

LSV continues to work with Victorian Government partners to ensure successful aquatic education programs are expanded to improve water safety skills, supervision practices and risk awareness, with communities. LSV also continues to work with industry partners to jointly embed best practice water safety standards in public pools.

Keeping safe by the water has never been as important as it is now. I would like to thank our lifeguards, swim teachers and all other staff working at our public pools for their continued and valuable contribution to keeping Victorians safe.

Andrew Crisp AM APM

Emergency management
commissioner



Welcome from Life Saving Victoria and Aquatics & Recreation Victoria

LSV and ARV are proud to present the fifth annual Victorian public pools - state of the sector report, leveraging information and data from a wide range of industry and government sources. Understanding and interpreting this information and data will provide valuable insight into our sector's purpose, activities, performance and future direction.

The 2021-22 period has benefitted from a partial recovery post COVID-19, but other challenges have been highlighted including mental health, jobs and skills shortages, changing demand patterns, and unwelcome matters including increased instances of occupational violence.

Without a doubt these issues have impacted everyone from facility owners and operators to staff and patrons, as well as the various government and non-government organisations and agencies which contribute to our industry through product and service supply, advocacy, funding and support.

While the times continue to be testing, they have also highlighted the importance of a healthy aquatic industry and the role it plays within Victorian communities and the broader economic context.

By working together, LSV and ARV are creating a greater understanding of our sector, and better outcomes for members and stakeholders. However, our work is ongoing as we adapt to meet evolving industry needs, changing demand, increasing complexities, and emerging challenges and opportunities.

Thank you for your tireless work in creating safer, healthier and more enjoyable Victorian communities. We look forward to continuing to support the sector.

Catherine Greaves
Chief executive officer
Life Saving Victoria



Kathy Parton
Chief executive officer
Aquatics & Recreation Victoria

"I am incredibly proud of the resilience shown by the aquatic industry and its people during the past two years. The importance of your work and its significance in the prevention of drowning through teaching Victorians how to swim, sharing water safety skills, and ensuring our pools are safe cannot be overstated."

Catherine Greaves



"2021-22 has been another year of change and challenge for our industry. Evolving from a significant period of shut down in 2020-2021 with a reduced workforce, our industry has emerged with new challenges, however continues to review and reflect, innovate, and collaborate to enable a positive future."

Kathy Parton



Sector value and reach



Sector size

- **290** council-owned aquatic facilities Source: LSV 2022
- **89** school and university pools Source: LSV 2022
- **193** learn to swim pools Source: LSV 2022



Value

- **\$3.8 billion** national social value Source: RLSSA 2021
- **\$2.5 billion** national health value Source: RLSSA 2021
- **\$2.8 billion** national economic value Source: RLSSA 2021



Participation

- Swimming is the **third most popular sport and physical activity** in Australia Source: AusActive 2021
- Sport participation decreased by **29 per cent** in 2021-22 for females due to COVID-19 Source: VicHealth 2021
- Sport participation decreased by **25 per cent** in 2021-22 for males due to COVID-19 Source: VicHealth 2021



Workforce

- **73 per cent** is female Source: RLSSA, 2020
- **46 per cent** is employed casually Source: RLSSA, 2020
- **49 per cent** has a second job Source: RLSSA, 2020
- **47 per cent** is studying while working Source: RLSSA, 2020



Water safety

- **4.3 million** swimming lessons lost due to COVID-19 Source: LSV 2022
- **53 fatal drownings** Source: LSV 2022
- **32 aquatic related incidents** resulting in injury Source: LSV 2022
- **24 non-fatal drowning incidents** Source: LSV 2022
- **1 public pool drowning incident** Source: LSV 2022



Swimming clubs

- **121** registered swimming clubs Source: Swimming Victoria 2022
- **11,016** club members Source: Swimming Victoria 2022
- Average club size of **91 members** Source: Swimming Victoria 2022

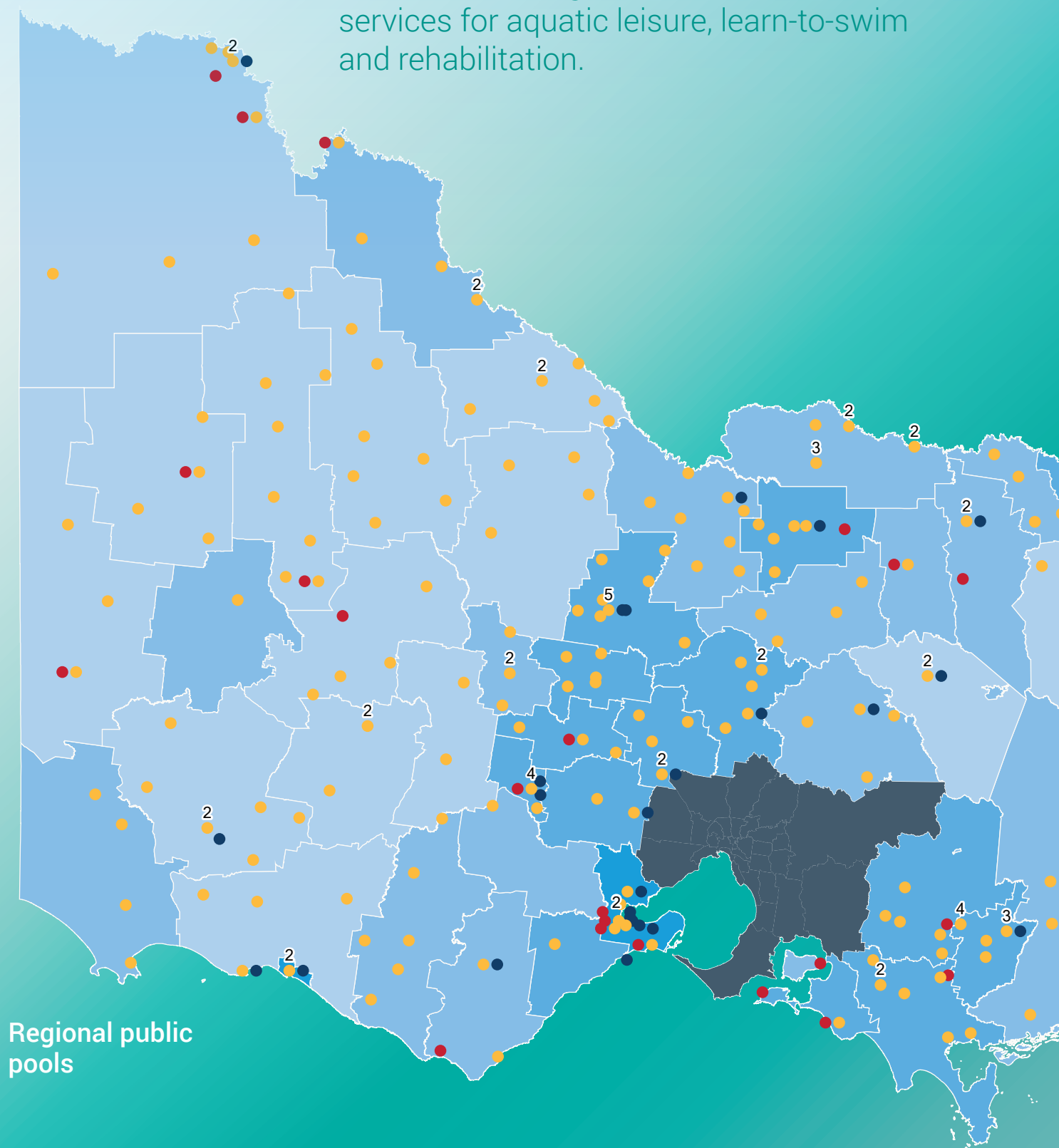


COVID impacts

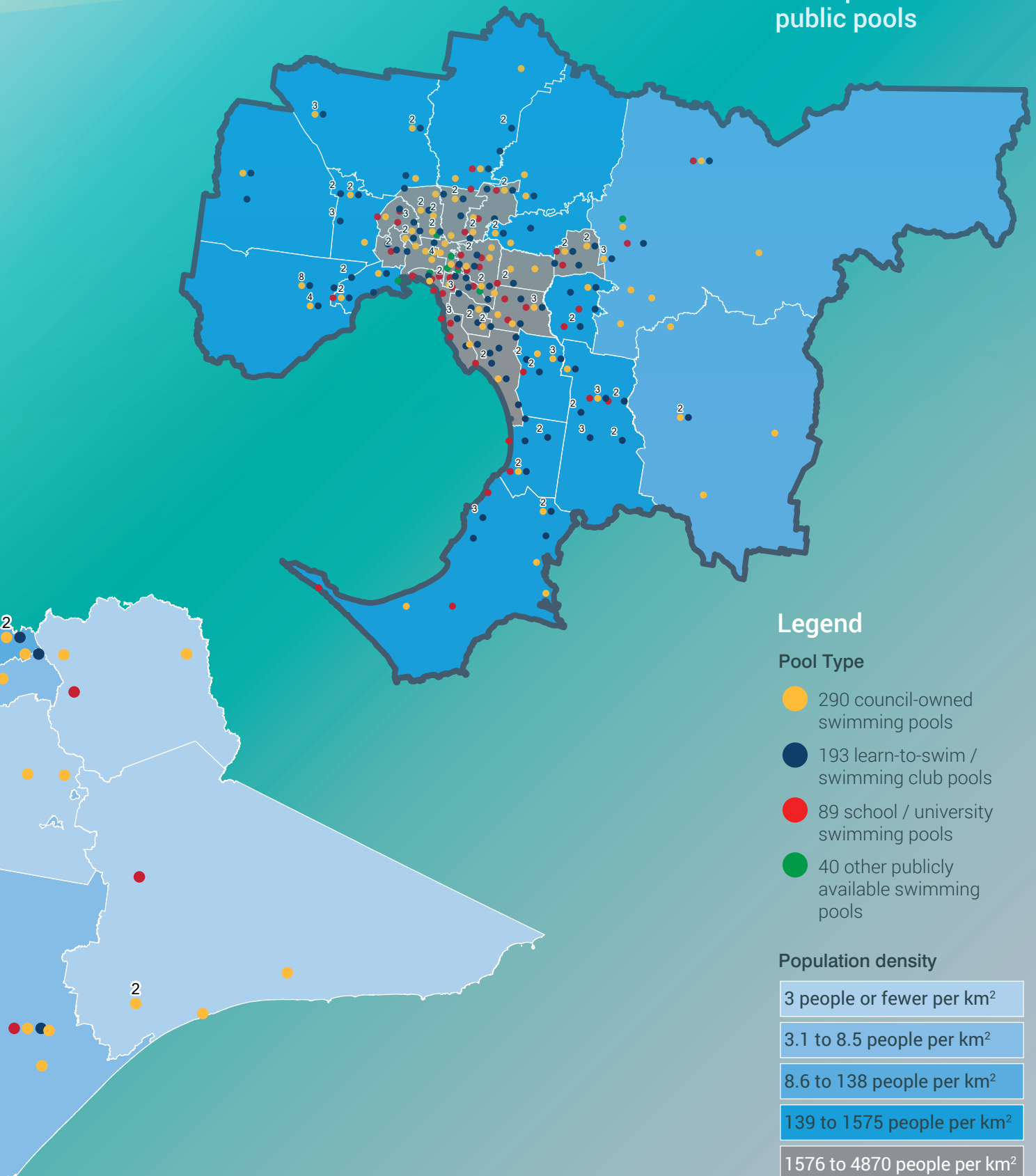
- Memberships **confidence 62.6 per cent** Source: ARV 2022
- Learn-to-swim (LTS) **enrolment confidence 89.1 per cent** Source: ARV 2022
- Community sport / stadium-based program **confidence 66.7 per cent** Source: ARV 2022
- Gym and health club **attendance confidence 65.4 per cent** Source: ARV 2022

Distribution of Victorian public pools

There are more than 580 public pools in Victoria, providing infrastructure and services for aquatic leisure, learn-to-swim and rehabilitation.



Metropolitan public pools



**not shown on map:
approximately 100 communal pools*

Drowning statistics and sector safety

During 2021-22, 24 non-fatal drowning incidents in Victorian public pools were attended by paramedics. A further 32 aquatic related incidents resulting in injury also occurred and required paramedic attendance. Tragically, there was one fatal drowning death, of a patron with a pre-existing medical condition.

Fatal drowning incidents

Since July 2000 there have been **11 drowning deaths in public swimming pools** in Victoria, accounting for approximately 1.2 per cent of the total unintentional drowning deaths in Victoria (2000-01 to 2021-22).

Key factors contributing to drowning deaths at public swimming pools are lack of supervision and pre-existing medical conditions. (LSV, 2018; Mahony et al, 2018)



9 out of 11

Most (82 per cent) of the deceased were male



̄ 28 years

The mean age was 28 years old (range two to 54 years)



>64%

More than half (seven) of the fatal drownings occurred on a weekday, and eight of these incidents occurred during summer and autumn

Non-fatal drowning incidents 2021-22

The 24 non-fatal drowning incidents that occurred at public swimming pools in Victoria this year is eight more than the five-year average, and 14 more than the previous year, which was most likely impacted by the closure of facilities due to COVID-19.

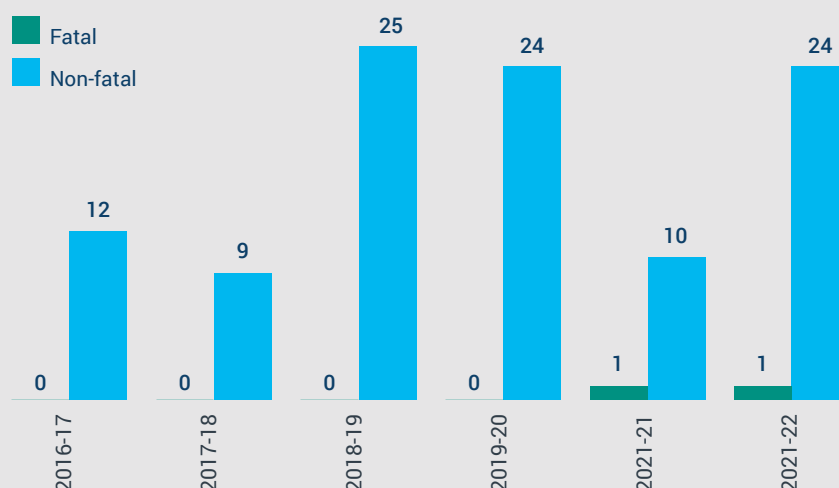
Children remained at the greatest risk of non-fatal drowning in public pools. In particular, children aged five to 14 years represent 48 per cent of incidents during the year, and 36 per cent of incidents during the previous five year period. There was a decrease in the number of young children aged zero to four years experiencing non-fatal drowning during 2021-22,

representing eight per cent of incidents compared to an average of 27 per cent during the previous five year period.

Incidents with children typically involved a brief distraction from supervision, getting into the water beyond their depth and starting to struggle, or a pre-existing medical condition.

The next highest age group represented were adults aged 25 to 44 years, accounting for 16 per cent of incidents during the past year, which is consistent with the previous five year period. Incidents involving adults typically involved pre-existing medical conditions.

FREQUENCY OF FATAL AND NON-FATAL DROWNING AT PUBLIC POOLS 2016-17 TO 2021-22*



*Public pools only open during some months due to COVID-19 restrictions

Sector safety

During 2021-22, 198 of Victoria's public pool facilities undertook a pool safety assessment (PSA), which audited performance against a range of industry, state and national standards, guidelines and legislative provisions.

LSV gratefully acknowledges all facilities that have committed to this assessment process and directed time and resources to help ensure their facilities meet industry standards for the safety and wellbeing of patrons.

Completing an assessment enables an aquatic facility to:

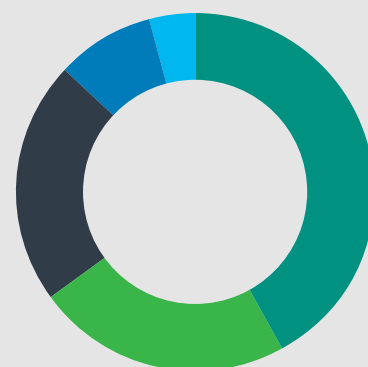
- access updated information and advice,
- demonstrate performance standards against best practice safety,
- understand and improve internal safety standards and management systems,
- assist with determining exposure relating to aquatic risk,

- receive independent, expert information and advice, and
- demonstrate the use of appropriate risk management processes

Of the 198 assessed facilities:

- 90 (45 per cent) operated year-round
- 37 (19 per cent) were LSV Platinum Pools
- 79 (40 per cent) undertake a PSA process annually

FIGURE 1: PSA BREAKDOWN BY MANAGEMENT IN 2021-22



- 42% Council
- 23% YMCA
- 22% Belgravia Leisure
- 9% Aligned Leisure
- 4% Other

Overview of pool safety assessment results for 2021-22



Year-round pools achieved compliance scores that were **20.1 per cent higher** than **seasonal pools**



Mean **safety score is 82 per cent**, down by 1.7 per cent on three-year average



Mean **compliance score is 83 per cent**, down by 1.9 per cent on three-year average



Year-round pools achieved safety scores that were **8.6 per cent higher** than **seasonal pools**



Pools assessed annually achieved compliance scores that were **35.4 per cent higher** than those **assessed every three years**



Pools assessed annually achieved safety scores that were **32.2 per cent higher** than those **assessed every three years**

Victorian public pools register

The Victorian public pools register provides an overview of services, features and safety standards at local public pools. The register is a component of the Victorian Government Safer Public Pools project, jointly developed in response to coronial recommendations.



Victorian public pool register endorsement requirements:

Gold Compliance score of 100 per cent and safety score of more than 95 per cent in a pool safety assessment

Silver Compliance score of more than 90 per cent and safety score of more than 90 per cent in a pool safety assessment

Bronze Compliance score of more than 80 per cent and safety score of more than 80 per cent in a pool safety assessment



47



26



37

FIGURE: NUMBER OF AQUATIC FACILITIES ENDORSED THROUGH THE PSA IN 2021-22.



Pool safety assessments

Key section scores

This section compares **safety scores achieved in 11 of the 20 assessment sections in 2021-22** against the previous three-year average (2018-19 to 2020-21). Safety scores across eight of the 11 sections were lower in 2021-22 compared to the previous three-year average.

Key observations:

- Highest performing sections in 2021-22 were spa pools (97.3 per cent), lap and lane pools (91.4 per cent), and first aid (90.4 per cent)
- Lowest performing sections in 2021-22 were qualifications and training (77.3 per cent), plant and chemical (79.8 per cent), and emergency planning (80.3 per cent)
- The sections that saw the biggest improvements were slides and flumes (3.6 per cent higher than the previous three-year average), and supervision (2.6 per cent higher than the previous three-year average)
- The sections that saw the biggest deterioration were inflatables (4.8 per cent below the previous three-year average), and plant and chemicals (4.6 per cent below the previous three-year average)

FIGURE 2A: COMPARISON OF KEY ASSESSMENT SECTIONS - 2021-22 VS PREVIOUS THREE-YEAR AVERAGE

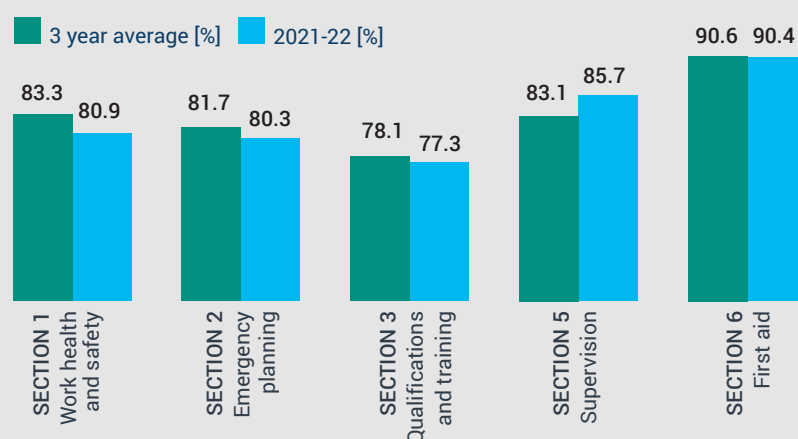
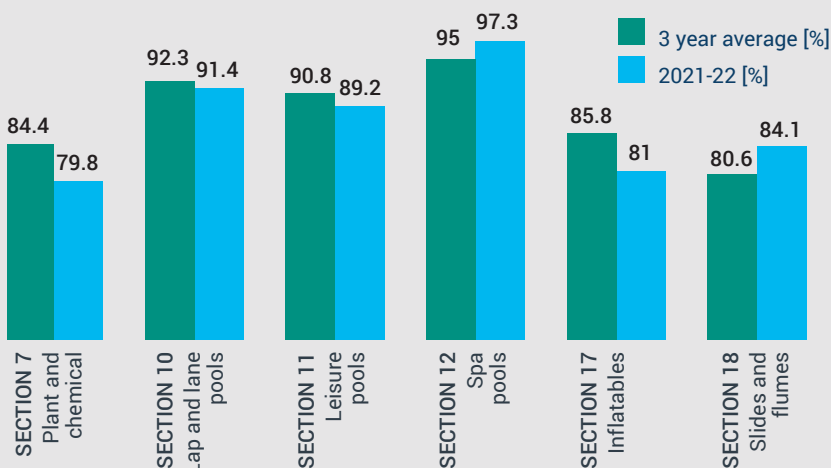


FIGURE 2B: COMPARISON OF KEY ASSESSMENT SECTIONS - 2021-22 VS PREVIOUS THREE-YEAR AVERAGE



Year-round vs seasonal facilities

Year-round facilities scored 20.6 per cent higher in compliance and 18.6 per cent higher in safety than facilities open seasonally (Figure 3).

Year-round facilities scored higher than seasonal facilities in all sections, apart from Section 17: Inflatables (Year-round pools: 80.8 per cent and seasonal pools: 82.4 per cent) (Figures 4a and 4b).

FIGURE 3: MEAN COMPLIANCE AND SAFETY SCORES - YEAR-ROUND VS SEASONAL FACILITIES

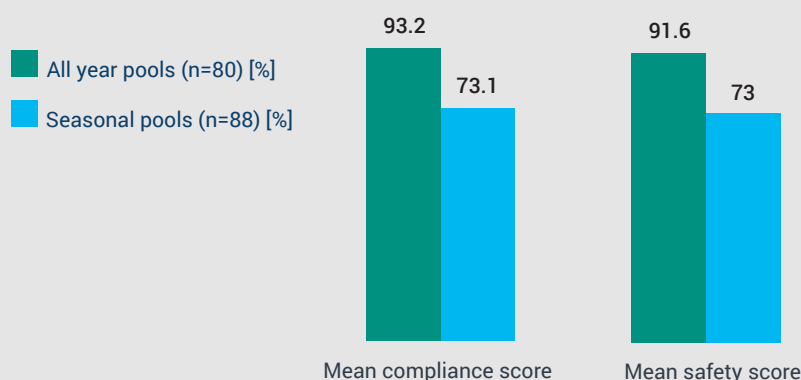


FIGURE 4A: MEAN SECTION SCORES - YEAR-ROUND VS SEASONAL FACILITIES

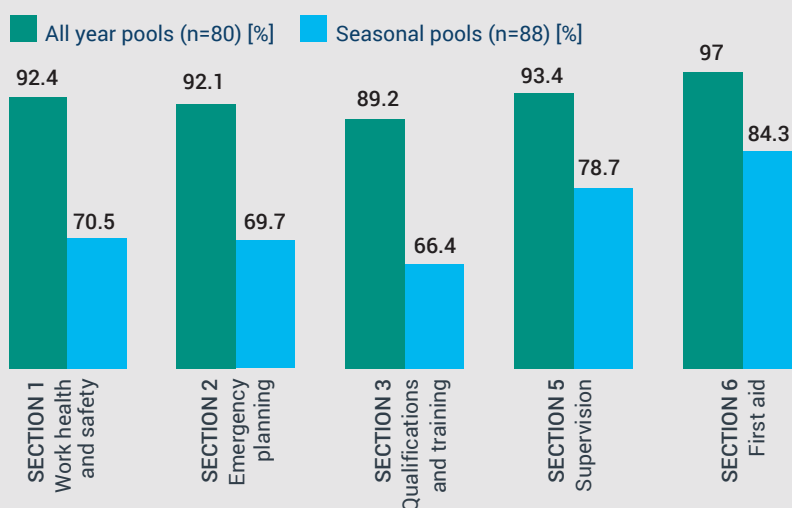
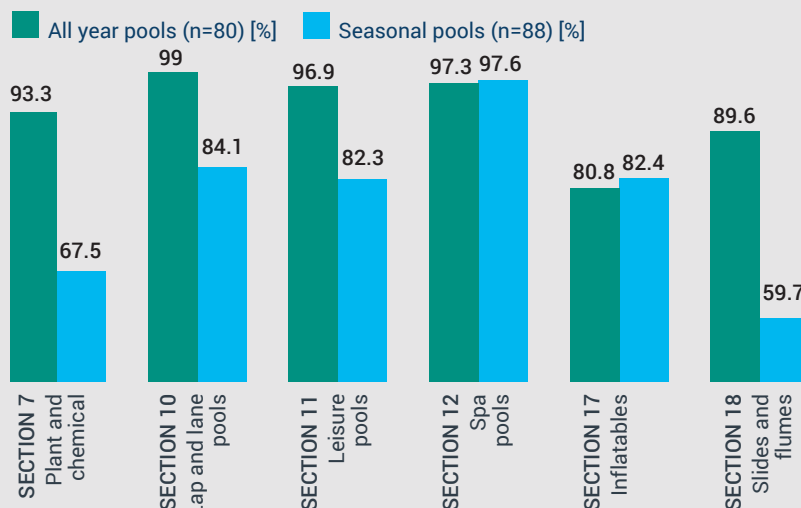


FIGURE 4B: MEAN SECTION SCORES - YEAR-ROUND VS SEASONAL FACILITIES



Emerging post-COVID-19

Overview

Like many industries the aquatic sector is slowly recovering from the devastating impact of COVID-19. Lockdowns cost the industry and Victorians dearly, by removing access to the key community assets so many rely on for relaxation, recreation, connection, exercise, swimming and water safety activities. Equally devastating was the impact of lockdowns on the industry workforce, balance sheet, professionalisation efforts, and new projects and initiatives.



These impacts continue to be felt with membership numbers remaining low, staff recruitment and retention remaining problematic, and time and funding for new initiatives difficult to find. Acknowledging the impact of external factors such as the rising cost of living and changing attitudes to employment, collective efforts to address these challenges are more important than ever.

It is critical for the industry to continue prioritising and improving the member experience, energy efficiency, regional

pool standards, safety management and technology. These efforts must be coherent, cohesive and research-based, whilst not duplicating existing or similar work. Additionally, with resources remaining constrained it is important these efforts are delivered in an effective manner, including the collection and distribution of outcomes and outputs.

Whilst employment, increased membership and project delivery remain key priorities, how these matters are approached requires

the most attention. Key to this is attendance and contribution relating to industry groups and committees, open and honest communication, and a willingness to share ideas and work together. Underpinning all of this is the need to be generous with and prioritise the time needed for activities supporting medium and long-term improvements. Moving a range of initiatives forward will help to build momentum and lay the foundations for future industry growth and success.

Changing consumer behaviour

COVID-19 impacted the behaviour of how Victorians engage with aquatic facilities. While many people have returned to pre-pandemic habits, certain changes are likely here to stay. During lockdowns, Victorians searched for alternative ways to stay active outdoors, rather than attending an aquatic facility. Due to extended closures, people lost confidence that things would eventually return to normal. Furthermore, the perceived risk of contracting COVID-19 amongst vulnerable cohorts contributed to

a hesitancy amongst the public to return to the pool.

Another key consideration is technology usage during the pandemic. A study by Deakin University found 39 per cent of Australians used digital platforms to exercise during lockdowns. During this time, home fitness equipment sales soared by 411 per cent, and downloads of fitness related apps increased by 47 per cent across Asia Pacific. The study also found

that people were increasingly likely to continue to invest in wearable fitness technology, at-home fitness equipment and fitness apps.

Whilst some of these behavioural trends were temporary, several have continued. The industry must therefore consider changes to demand when re-engaging with communities and prioritise the creation of viable alternatives, with increased flexibility and the inclusion of remote opportunities.

Workforce strategy

The widespread exodus of qualified staff throughout the pandemic was felt across all areas of the industry. While initial government support was provided in 2022, an ongoing response will be required. This response must be customised to meet the specific needs of the industry if it is to genuinely support a sustainable recovery effort.

A comprehensive and contemporary strategy is required to address the fragility of the workforce, consider its fundamental flaws, and lay the foundation for future growth.

The largely casual nature of the workforce, especially in relation to frontline service delivery staff, requires immediate consideration so that facilities can continue to offer services safely and effectively.

The relative inexperience of the new cohort of swim teachers, lifeguards, customer service personnel, supervisors and managers also requires consideration, in terms of how the industry can upskill and develop new entrants.

Recruitment is a complex and time-consuming investment. Therefore,

reviewing the transient nature of the workforce to see how turnover can be reduced and recruitment efforts better maximised is a worthwhile investment.

Job descriptions should be accurate, interviews open and honest, onboarding effective, remuneration competitive, and career pathways clear and attainable. Each of these aspects must be achieved for the aquatic industry to be seen as a viable option for prospective talent.

Accessibility of swimming lessons

A key aspect of industry recovery is the ongoing accessibility of swimming lessons. According to the Customer Experience Research Metrics performance indicator (CERM PI) operational benchmarks, the average national annual learn-to-swim membership for aquatic facilities is \$836. Research from the Royal Life Saving Society Australia (RLSSA) identifies the average lesson cost in Victoria is \$15.50. For many families, particularly those in lower socioeconomic groups or those with multiple children, participation in ongoing swimming lessons can be cost prohibitive.

RLSSA research also shows children who stop taking lessons at the age of six or seven miss out on essential swimming and water safety skills, and fail to reach national benchmarks. For this reason, it is important that children continue to participate in swimming lessons throughout their school years. Ongoing investment from state governments in programs like VICSWIM and Get Active Kids Vouchers is vital to ensuring essential swimming and water safety skills are accessible to all Victorian families.



COVID-19 recovery survey

In April 2022, ARV published the COVID-19 impacts and recovery survey report, which quantified the impacts of COVID-19 on Victorian council-owned aquatic facilities and local communities.

Detailing the period between January 2019 and June 2021, the findings of the report reinforced the importance of advocacy, planning and support activities, and provided an evidence base to guide decision-making and inform future priorities.

In August 2022, a follow up COVID-19 recovery survey was distributed amongst local government authorities, to help determine the extent to which the Victorian industry has been able to recover.

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected to identify the impacts of COVID-19 on factors such as participation rates, workforce composition, and financial performance.

33 responses were received, representing 75 aquatic facilities.

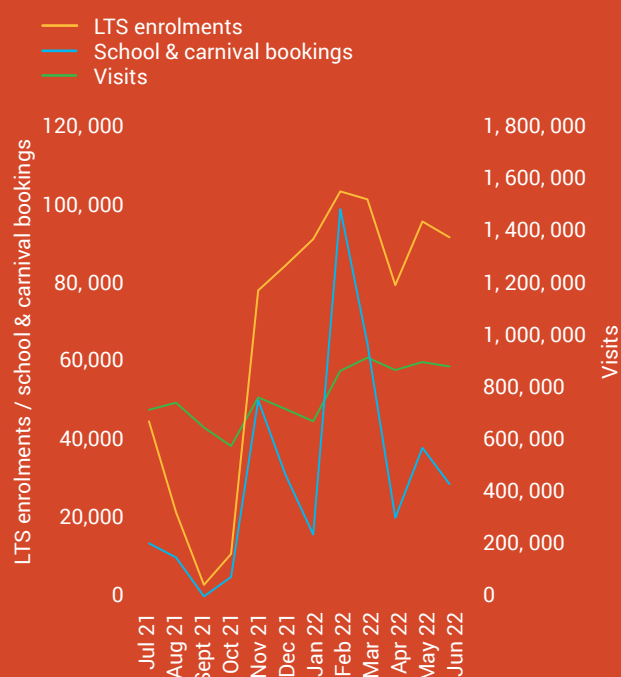
Data was sorted into various groups to enable analysis and comparison:

- Interface council | 15 per cent
- Large shire council | 24 per cent
- Metropolitan council | 33 per cent
- Regional city council | 18 per cent
- Small shire council | 9 per cent

Findings Participation

Unsurprisingly, participation rates across all programs and services were impacted heavily during Victoria's fifth (July 14 to July 27, 2021) and sixth (August 5 to October 12, 2021) lockdowns. However, once the final lockdown was lifted, learn-to-swim enrolments, school and carnival bookings spiked (November 2021) and overall visitation rates remained relatively high until June 2022.

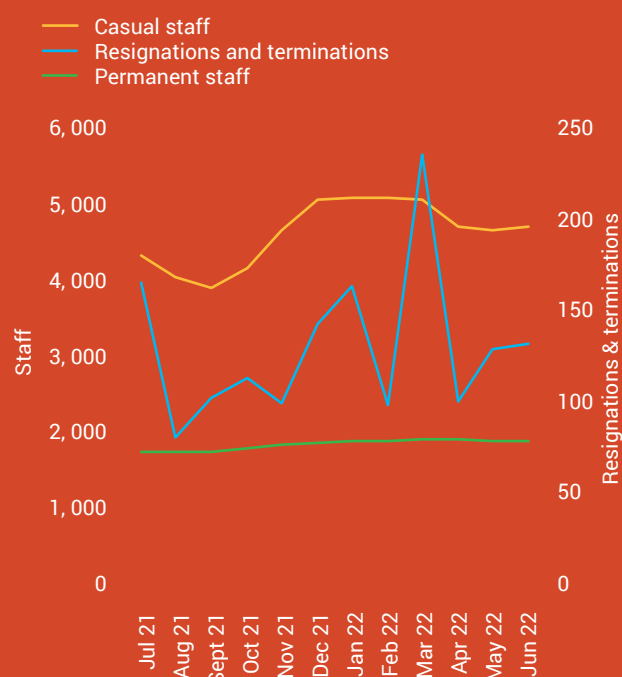
FIGURE 5: PARTICIPATION - ALL FACILITIES



Findings Industry workforce

The aquatic industry workforce was most heavily impacted during the sixth and final lockdown. September 2021 represented a low point of 3,869 casual staff across the 75 facilities surveyed, compared with 5,065 in January 2022. The workforce trends identified a consistent impact across both indoor facilities and outdoor seasonal pools.

FIGURE 6: WORKFORCE



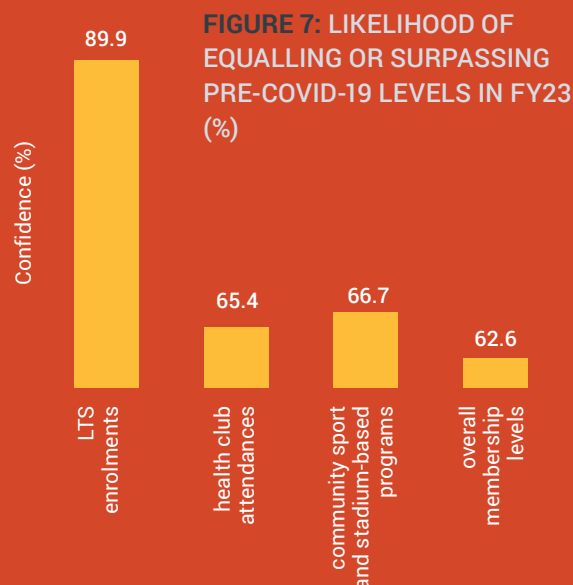
Findings

Industry confidence

Following the re-opening of pools in October 2021, patrons have returned to aquatic facilities to differing degrees. Some programs and services, including learn-to-swim, remain hugely popular, while others are struggling to successfully re-engage communities.

Participating local government authorities have supported this finding, identifying an 89.1 per cent chance that learn-to-swim enrolments will equal or surpass pre-COVID-19 levels by late-2022 or early-2023.

There was less confidence about the return of fitness and health club attendances (65.4 per cent), community sport and stadium-based programs (66.7 per cent), and overall membership levels (62.6 per cent).



Findings

Future priorities

Perhaps the most striking change when assessing different local government authorities was the increased focus on staff recruitment and retention. Those surveyed have recognised the exodus of staff from their facilities during the pandemic and the associated cost of lost skills and knowledge.

The nature of the casual workforce remains and ongoing challenge across the industry. In addition, replacing managers and senior leaders is emerging as a newer challenge for facility owners and operators, with a smaller pool of suitably qualified and experienced personnel to choose from in an increasingly competitive employment market.

Local Government Priorities	FY22	FY23	YOY Change
Support community health and wellbeing	5.94	5.7	-0.24
Assess service/facility viability	4.14	3.72	-0.42
Review management models and/or contract arrangements	3.05	2.86	-0.19
Better link service delivery with council plan and policies	3.35	4.26	0.91
Support implementation of child safe standards	-	3.56	-
Support implementation of Gender Equality Act	2.55	-	-
Staff recruitment and retention	4.48	6.09	1.61
Membership acquisition and retention	4.49	5.51	1.02
Access, equity, and inclusion	-	4.3	-

KEY: Weighted average scores shown (n=43). Participants were asked to rank their current local government priority actions from 1-8, with 1 representing lowest priority and 8 representing highest priority. (ARV, 2022)

Facility closures during 2021-22

Metropolitan Melbourne COVID-19 facility closure

July	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27	28 29 30 31
August	1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27 28 29 30 31	
September	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27 28 29 30		
October	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	22 23 24 25 27 28 29 30 31	
November	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27 28 29 30		
December	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27 28 29 30 31	

Regional Victoria COVID-19 facility closure

July	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27	28 29 30 31
August	1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27 28 29 30 31	
September	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27 28 29 30	
October	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27 28 29 30 31		
November	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27 28 29 30		
December	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 27 28 29 30 31	

● Pools open without restrictions on patron numbers
 ● Pools open with restrictions on patron numbers
 ● Pools closed



New industry initiatives



Swim City

LSV's Swim City is a new and exciting online adventure game, designed to educate Victorian children about how to stay safe around water.

The game is intended to help primary school-aged children to achieve the knowledge component of the Victorian Water Safety Certificate, following almost two years of interruptions to swimming lessons and water safety education.

By playing Swim City students meet the characters Finn, Pod and Splash, and explore their favourite aquatic environments, all whilst learning about water safety.



Partners for change

ARV partnered with the Department of Health to deliver the Partners for change program. Three active health days were delivered across three lower socioeconomic communities within the Hume, Dandenong and Latrobe local government authority areas. These active health days aimed to increase participation, physical activity, social inclusion, health and wellness outcomes, leveraging aquatic and leisure facility assets.

The sessions were delivered at Splash Aquatic Centre (Hume City Council), Dandenong Oasis (City of Greater Dandenong) and Gippsland Recreation Aquatic Centre (La Trobe City Council), in partnership with the respective facility operators.

Partners in Wellbeing



Partners in wellbeing

Supported by Business Victoria, the Partners in wellbeing program has enabled ARV to employ a mental health clinician to support members of the aquatic industry. The clinician is available to provide free support, advice, team workshops and seminars for the improvement of individual and collective wellbeing. The program also enables the provision of free confidential, one-on-one support to small businesses for the improvement of financial, business and emotional wellbeing. This program is currently funded until June 2023.



EMERGENT leadership program

In February 2022 ARV launched its inaugural leadership program, EMERGENT - a professional development program supporting 25 emerging aquatic and leisure industry leaders.

The goals of the program are to:

- provide practical learning and development opportunities,
- develop the future of the aquatic and recreation industry,
- provide tools to support impactful and influential leadership,
- enhance personal and team effectiveness,
- connect current and emerging leaders with proven industry mentors, and
- enhance cross-sector networking opportunities.

Throughout 2022, EMERGENT participants developed unique leadership motivational profiles, attended four program workshops, three masterclasses, and facilitated mentoring through the Ministry of Leadership.



Seniors recreation program

LSV prioritises programs and initiatives aimed at seniors - an age group considered high risk, with the number of drowning incidents amongst people aged 65 and over doubling in the last 12 months when compared with the ten-year average.

These programs include the seniors recreation pool program and grey medallion. The objective is to provide seniors with a safe pathway to return to aquatic facilities and participate in activities such as aqua exercise and hydrotherapy.

In addition to having fun and getting fitter, participants say the programs allow them to explore their limits in and around water, with 100 per cent saying they would return to their facility.

Seniors shine in lifesaving employment program

LSV engaged with 16 new community partners to deliver seniors programs at the pool, beach, and in the classroom.

Through these partnerships, 620 older adults were able to participate in 74 LSV water safety activities.

A seniors employment program also saw 26 older adults complete swim teacher or pool lifeguard training. Happily, 12 of these participants have been employed so far, and hopefully more to follow.

Water safety education pilot for English language school students

In 2021, the Victorian Government introduced funding for the delivery of swimming and water safety education to English language school (ELS) students. The first part of the program involved equipping swim teachers with specific skills to enable the effective teaching of ELS students.

A pilot program then commenced, involving a five-day intensive swimming program for 50 ELS students from Noble Park English Language School, delivered by the newly upskilled swim teachers. The program was evaluated and found it significantly increased student knowledge and skills.



Updates to ongoing industry initiatives

Safer public pools - Code of practice

Supported by Emergency Management Victoria, LSV launched the second iteration of the Safer public pools - Code of practice in October 2021. The objective of the code is to provide practical guidance to facilities with responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Updates include:

- key statistics demonstrating industry scope, scale and value,
- updated legislation and regulations,
- newly developed industry guidelines, such as those from the Department of Health,
- revised training requirements to meet changes in legislation, Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations (GSPO), water quality guidelines, and the most and current training packages, and
- updated references and appendices.

The code remains the centrepiece of the State Government's Victorian safer public pools project. If successfully implemented, Victorian aquatic facilities can improve their capability and capacity to support the provision of the highest standards of aquatic safety for both patrons and staff.



Working for Victoria

As part of the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria initiative, seven full time equivalent employees were recruited across six aquatic industry organisations, to support industry recovery efforts. The overall focus of the initiative was to:

- assist industry recovery efforts,
- minimise future pandemic impacts on industry, and
- improve the health and wellbeing of Victorian communities.

In April 2022, ARV launched six targeted projects at the Danny Frawley Centre. These projects were:

Aligned Leisure, focused on driving improved facility attendances by implementing a digital engagement strategy, including an increased online social media presence and improved analysis and reporting to measure success.

ARV conducted a state-wide research project to measure the impacts of COVID-19 on council-owned aquatic facilities and their communities. The resultant report identified key impacts, such as interrupted service delivery, decreased participation, financial hardship and reduced workforce. The report also celebrated industry problem-solving, innovation and agility, along with future considerations for continued recovery.

Belgravia Leisure designed an access and inclusion guide to support underrepresented and vulnerable communities to access aquatic and leisure facilities. The guide aims to educate the industry and help them to more effectively welcome, support and include these cohorts in aquatic, leisure, health and employment activities. It also supports organisations, leaders and local champions to better service the needs of all local community groups.

Bluefit developed a workforce strategy to improve retention and attract new entrants into the industry. The Bluefit team recorded the statistics, key learnings, and recruitment strategies of six targeted industry case studies.

Clublinks produced a resource to assist the industry to protect itself against the future impact of COVID-19 or future pandemics. The resource includes advice on avoiding forced closures, meeting changing consumer demands, and supporting remote engagement and activities. It also includes recommendations for future best practice and sustained recovery efforts during current and future reopening.

YMCA spearheaded an environmental sustainability initiative, which investigated how aquatic facilities can minimise their carbon footprint and reduce operational costs. The results of the initiative include an outline of industry impact on climate change, an action-based approach for facility owners and operators, and a framework to help drive future change. It is supported by practical examples, and associated research and resources.



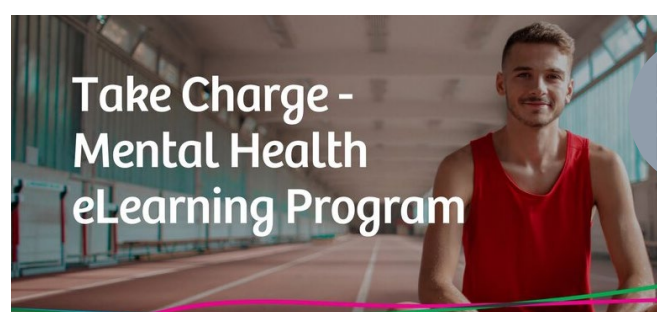
Find out more about bouncing back from COVID-19 –showcasing the outcomes of the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria Initiative.

Mental health eLearning program (MHeLP)

In response to rising mental health concerns compounded by the impacts of COVID-19, the Belgravia Foundation partnered with 25 leading industry organisations to launch MHeLP, a tailored eLearning program for the leisure and community sport sectors to equip workers and volunteers with strategies to support the mental health of their colleagues and stakeholders.

The program is free, available online, evidence-based, and has been completed by more than 2,000 participants since its launch.

Participant feedback suggests the program has helped improve understanding of mental health, the positive impact of exercise on mental health, and how to better adapt sport and aquatic programming for those who may be living with a mental health condition. Most importantly, the program results demonstrate improved confidence and readiness to support the mental health of their own people, and others.



MHeLP

FIGURE 8A: PARTICIPANT KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS INCREASE

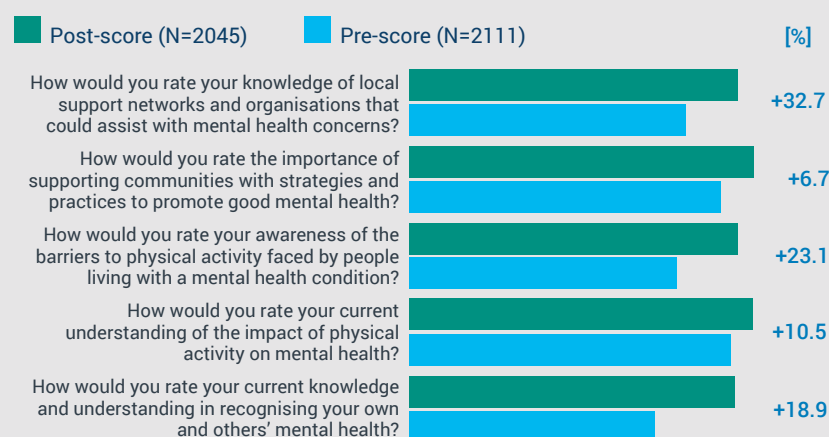
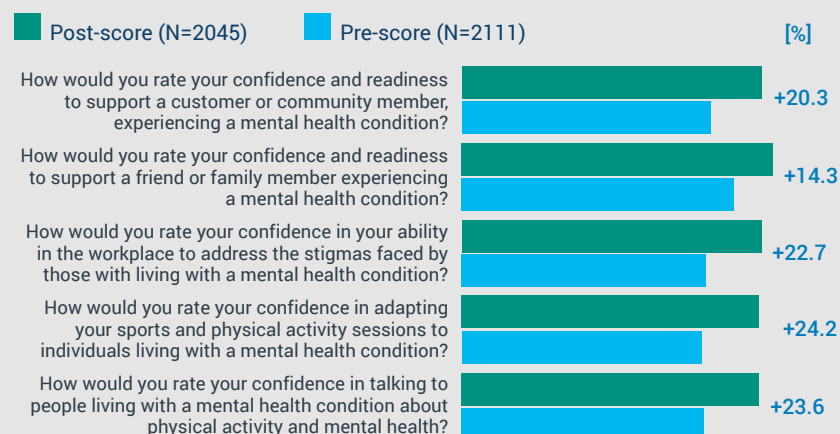


FIGURE 8B: CONFIDENCE INCREASE



Victorian Water Safety Certificate



In March 2022, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews signed off on a refreshed Victorian Water Safety Certificate (VWSC), which aligns with the new National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

The new look certificate is supported by a suite of resources to assist schools and aquatic facilities in assessing students against competencies, including videos, assessment materials and a page dedicated to parents.

Looking forward, LSV will undertake an at-risk research project to identify factors suggesting a student might be at-risk of not achieving the VWSC benchmarks by the end of primary school. This will enable appropriate interventions to be applied, and ensure support is provided.



LSV at risk research project

All In! Aquatic inclusion program

Consistently, research has shown that staff and volunteers are a key enabler for inclusion in aquatic and leisure programs. However, concerningly some are unwilling or unable to actively support inclusion.

Research from the Belgravia Foundation and Belgravia Leisure found industry employees have a lack of understanding, knowledge and confidence relating to teaching people with disability. Supplementary research by the Belgravia Foundation and Monash University revealed managers consistently reported difficulties in recruiting swim teachers to teach people with disability.

In response, the Belgravia Foundation partnered with Swimming Australia, Special Olympics Australia and Belgravia Leisure to trial All In!

All In! is a suite of online programs designed to enable swim teachers to welcome, support and include people with intellectual disabilities or autism during water safety programs.

While the trial is ongoing, early findings reveal candidates improved their understanding of the needs of people with disability, as well as their capability to understand their learning requirements and provide appropriate support.



YouMeUs

YouMeUs is a free online disability inclusion program. It aims to improve aquatic staff knowledge and understanding of disability, support needs, learning strategies and communication. The ultimate goal is to enhance the capability of the industry to welcome, support and include people with disability when accessing facilities, programs, services and employment opportunities.

Barriers to inclusion for people living with disability include price, support, accessibility of face-to-face training, and a lack of quality assurance.

Research suggests staff willingness to welcome, support and include people with disability is based on their confidence and capability to encourage inclusion.



The Belgravia Foundation evaluated evidence generated through YouMeUs around the impact of the program on the confidence of staff to support inclusion. The research found that completing the program increased staff confidence when it came to:

- including people with disability (from 70.6 per cent to 83.4 per cent)
- understanding of disability (from 60.2 per cent to 81.3 per cent)
- awareness of making facilities welcoming and inclusive for people with disability (from 64.2 per cent to 84.9 per cent)
- effective communication with people living with disability (from 64.2 per cent to 84.0 per cent)

Importantly, staff reported increased enthusiasm around the inclusion of people living with disability.



Case studies: Rejuvenating regional public pools

During the last two years, LSV partnered with industry experts and consultants on a project to identify cost effective and sustainable approach to rejuvenating regional public pools.

In 2022, two case studies were developed to support an understanding of the implications of replacing current facilities with new indoor facilities, or replacement outdoor facilities. These case studies were based on a detailed financial model and a range of underlying assumptions.

The results are summarised below:

- indoor facilities achieve increased access and visitations
- indoor facilities lead to higher membership numbers and program enrolments
- indoor facilities offer the highest health and wellbeing benefits
- indoor facilities offer the best social return on investment
- indoor facilities generate more income and offer improved employment opportunities
- indoor facilities offer better value, but cost more to operate
- Work on the project next steps are continuing

Feature Case Study One

The first case study is an outdoor regional facility in western Victoria, in a township of between 2,500 and 5,000 people, and a local government area with a population of 15,000. The population is ageing and currently in decline.

The pool was built in the early 1960s and features a lap pool and toddler pool. The pool is council-owned and its operation is outsourced to a management organisation.

Value category	Criteria (Year 3)	OPTION ONE Replacement indoor multipurpose facility	OPTION TWO Replacement outdoor multipurpose facility
Economic	Annual income	\$568,956	\$26,436
	Annual expenditure	\$843,891	\$85,246
	Annual margin	- \$274,934	- \$58,811
	Margin as a % of income	- 48 %	- 222 %
	Cost per visit	\$4.24	\$7.35
Access and utilisation	Days available	360	100
	Hours available	2,600	550
	Total Visitations	64,832	8,000
	Memberships	324	27
	Swim School enrolments	269	0
Health and social value	Health benefits*	\$1,435,389	\$238,688
	Social return on investment**	\$1,839,682	\$238,688
	Employment (FTE)	4	<1

Feature Case study two

The second case study is an outdoor regional facility in northwest Victoria in a township of between 800 and 2,500 people and a local government area with a population of 54,000, dispersed over a large area. Currently, the township has a declining population.

The pool was built in the 1930s and comprises a main lap pool and toddler pool. The pool is council-owned and its operation is outsourced to a management organisation.

Value category	Criteria (Year 3)	OPTION ONE Replacement indoor multipurpose facility	OPTION TWO Replacement outdoor multipurpose facility
Economic	Annual income	\$136,279	\$20,489
	Annual expenditure	\$320,157	\$117,674
	Annual margin	- \$183,878	- \$97,185
	Margin as a % of income	- 135%	- 474 %
	Cost per visit	\$10.96	\$21.09
Access and utilisation	Days available	360	100
	Hours available	1,200	500
	Total Visitations	16,772	4,608***
	Memberships	89	70
	Swim School enrolments	59	0
Health and social value	Health benefits*	\$371,332	\$102,02
	Social return on investment**	\$697,942	\$312,687
	Employment (FTE)	3.5	<1

Watch Around Water 200

Yawa Aquatic Centre became the 200th Victorian aquatic facility to join the Watch Around Water (WAW) program since its inception in 2008. The program puts the onus on parents and guardians to actively supervise their children while visiting aquatic facilities, to assist lifeguards in preventing drowning.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Councilor Antonella Celi and Yawa Aquatic Centre manager Dan Andrews, assistant manager Pat Otten, as well as LSV and industry personnel, celebrated the milestone at the facility, with a visit from Lachie the Lifeguard and Suzie the Swim Teacher.



Victorian Water Safety Strategy

In response to the increase in drowning deaths and the expiry of the Victorian Water Safety Strategy 2016-20, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services convened a government led Water Safety Taskforce, to address the increase in drowning by collaborating on a new water safety strategy for Victoria.

The development of the Victorian Water Safety Strategy 2021-25 was commissioned by the taskforce, in partnership with Emergency Management Victoria. It is designed to be a whole of government strategy, coordinating efforts across key agencies and stakeholders to achieve better water safety outcomes.

The strategy sets a vision to 'encourage more Victorians to safely participate and enjoy recreation in and around water, while reducing the number of drownings and water related injuries to zero.'

The way forward is based on improved collaboration and coordination to drive drownings to zero through:

- promotion of shared responsibility in communities
- working with local partners to manage local risk
- improving coordination and collaboration between agencies

The actions outlined in the strategy set a foundation for more effective collaboration by:

- establishing better ways of working together through effective governance
- expanding research and data to underpin policy and decision making
- empowering communities to better assess, and respond to, water safety risks



2021-25

Victorian Water Safety Strategy



LSV industry workshops

Following the success of Aquatics, Fitness & Recreation (AFAR) engagement and professional development workshops held during lockdowns, LSV continued to support the industry through the provision of free quarterly professional development opportunities.

Sessions included:

- aquatic supervision
- pivoting for people
- emergency management
- recruitment and retention

Research and industry strategies



Employee turnover in the aquatic industry

The aquatic industry continues to experience exceptionally high turnover of swim teachers and lifeguards. Human resource management systems and practices across the industry are troubling, meaning a change of approach and attitude is needed. Research conducted by Monash University sought to understand the turnover issues facing the industry.

Unsurprisingly, some employees view positions in the aquatic industry as 'temporary roles' while completing their university studies or before moving into other forms of full-time employment.

However, other employees suggested there is limited or no career progression in the industry. Many swim teachers left the industry when their initial expectations of the work environment did not align with the reality, citing issues with discomfort and extreme conditions such as extended hours in the pool, often with no real breaks.

Concerningly for the industry, many employees expressed negative views of middle-management, describing them as unfriendly and unwelcoming towards frontline staff, and looking after themselves first and foremost.

Previous industry employees also raised the issues of poor communication and decision-making from middle management, including failure to satisfactorily address internal staff issues. These concerns have contributed to the high turnover, and demand a new way of thinking across the industry in the areas of leadership and effective relationship building.

The research also identified the need for managers to develop and demonstrate appropriate positive behaviours that empower employees, support their career development, prioritise their wellbeing, and communicate a clear vision. An overhaul of current practices is necessary and should result in improved employee satisfaction and reduced turnover.

Two journal articles relating to these studies are under consideration in *The Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* and *Managing Sport and Leisure* respectfully.

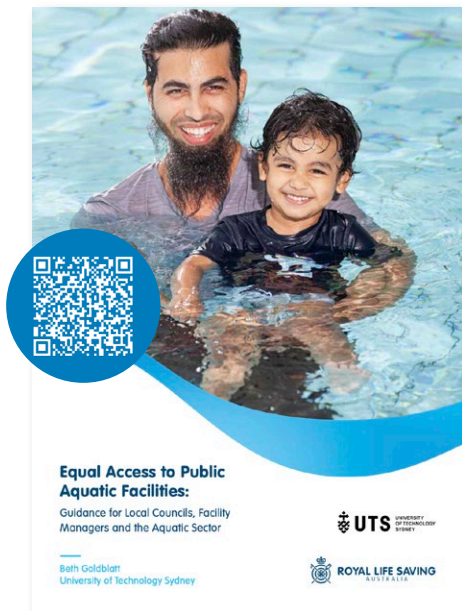
Author: Michael Butson - PhD Candidate at Monash University

Research Team: Michael Butson, Eric Du, Professor Ruth Jeanes, Dr John Tower



Research shines a light on equal access to aquatic facilities

A report commissioned by the Royal Life Saving Society - Australia (RLSSA) has found a new non-discrimination guideline for pool operators is needed to ensure equal access to public aquatic facilities.



The report, Equal Access to Public Aquatic Facilities considers the legal and human rights frameworks governing aquatic facilities in Australia, including discrimination law.

RLSSA National manager, research and policy, Stacey Pidgeon said while research into the barriers of accessing facilities and programs has been previously undertaken, this report delves deeper, to increase our understanding of the less obvious barriers. "We know there are families and communities that are not accessing aquatic facilities, and this report highlights some reasons why not everyone may feel comfortable to do so," said Ms Pidgeon.

"For example, people with disability may need extra support to enjoy an aquatic centre in the same way as other users. Similarly, women from some cultural or religious groups may not feel comfortable sharing intimate spaces with men, and may need certain accommodations at the facility.

"We need to work with communities and local facilities to develop and implement solutions to address these barriers, so that everyone feels welcome and able to access all the benefits of aquatic facilities."

Author: Dr Beth Goldblatt -
Faculty of Law at the University of
Technology Sydney

Social, health and economic value of the Australian aquatic industry

The social, health and economic benefits of the aquatic industry in Australia are worth more than \$9 billion, according to a new report by PricewaterhouseCoopers.



The report, commissioned by the RLSSA – Australia, looked at the 2,113 publicly accessible aquatic facilities across the country, finding that almost 90 per cent of Australians live within a 20-minute drive of their nearest pool.

RLSSA - Australia Chief executive officer Justin Scarr said the report emphasised the enormous contribution of the aquatic industry to the overall wellbeing of Australians. "We know the headline figure is, in many ways, conservative. Putting a dollar value on the role of the community pool in rural and remote communities is very difficult," said Mr Scarr. "Beyond preventing drowning

deaths, the aquatic industry has been shown to boost health by reducing the burden of disease, improving mental health outcomes, and reduce absenteeism."

"The social benefit is where the aquatic industry has traditionally been under-recognised. Bringing people together, supporting marginalised groups, and supporting early learning are some of the critical ways these pools support their local communities."

The report found the sector employs more than 67,000 employees, with women making up almost three quarters of the workforce.

Social impact of the aquatic industry

Increased social cohesion and improved health and wellbeing are two of the main social benefits of the aquatic industry, according to a report prepared by Swinburne University and the Royal Life Saving Society - Australia.



The report found that far from just being a place to learn to swim, public pools are for many communities a central hub where people come together.

Benefits include:

- health and wellbeing impacts,
- increased social connection,
- safe environments for swimming and education,
- facilitation of social cohesion in communities, and
- provision of significant employment benefits.

The report follows earlier research on the health, social and economic value of the national aquatic industry, which sought to establish a monetary figure for the total contribution of the industry to Australian society each year.

This second report focuses on non-quantifiable benefits such as user experiences, which are believed to be equally as important and compelling as the economic data.

10-year analysis of drowning in children aged five to 14 years in Australia

In the 10-year period to 30 June 2021, 105 children aged five to 14 years drowned in Australia. On average there were 10 child drowning deaths per year.



Drowning is rarely the result of a single cause. Key risk factors for drowning among this age group include growing independence and the continued need for constant adult supervision around water, medical conditions, over-estimation of swimming ability, under-estimation of risk at aquatic locations, and rapid changes in weather and/or aquatic conditions.

Risk-taking is a natural, necessary element of human development. The danger is when the perception of ability is not aligned with actual capabilities.

While unknown aquatic locations are most often where adults can over-estimate their swimming abilities and underestimate the risk, for children aged five to 14 years this report suggests drowning incidents occur primarily at known aquatic environments - either at home or within five kilometres of home.

By identifying areas where children aged five to 14 years are most at risk of drowning, RLSSA - Australia hopes to provide a strong evidence base for collaborative water safety and drowning prevention.

New facilities

Just opened



Source: www.afl.com.au

Danny Frawley Centre

Opened March 2022

Features:

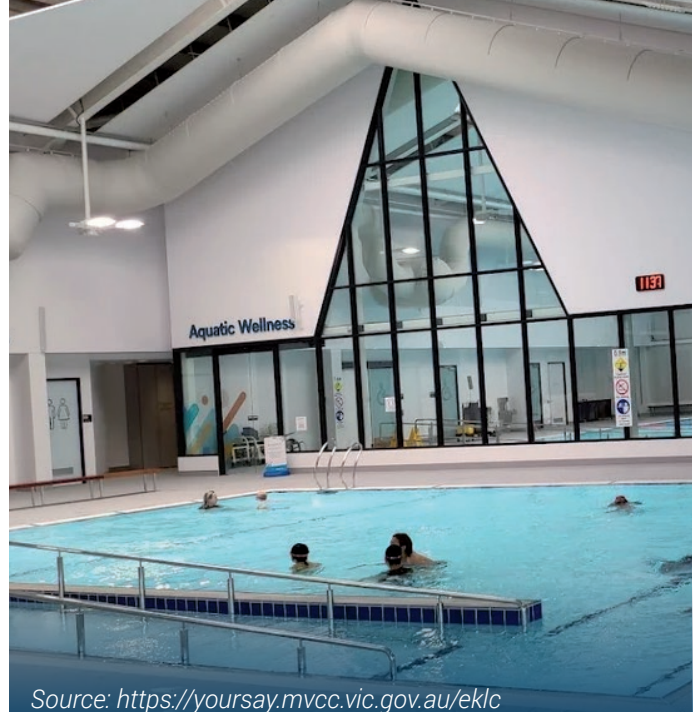
- 55m heated swimming pool
- indoor hydrotherapy pool
- high-tech recovery centre
- infrared saunas
- ice baths
- normatec compression garments
- hyperice massage equipment

On the football field, Danny Frawley displayed all the attributes of a true Saint: toughness, loyalty, courage and heart. They were qualities that made his teammates stand taller and want to play beside him, and traits which warranted irrefutable admiration from St Kilda faithful.

Another of Danny's most humbling characteristics was his honesty, particularly when it came to speaking openly about mental health.

The Danny Frawley Centre for health and wellbeing is an opportunity for St Kilda Football Club to celebrate the life of Danny and immortalise his legacy as both a St Kilda champion and passionate mental health advocate.

The Centre will be a unique asset within the Bayside region, as well as a game-changer in Australian sport for both current and past athletes, as well as for the greater community.



Source: <https://yoursay.mvcc.vic.gov.au/eklc>

Keilor East Leisure Centre

Opened October 2021

Features:

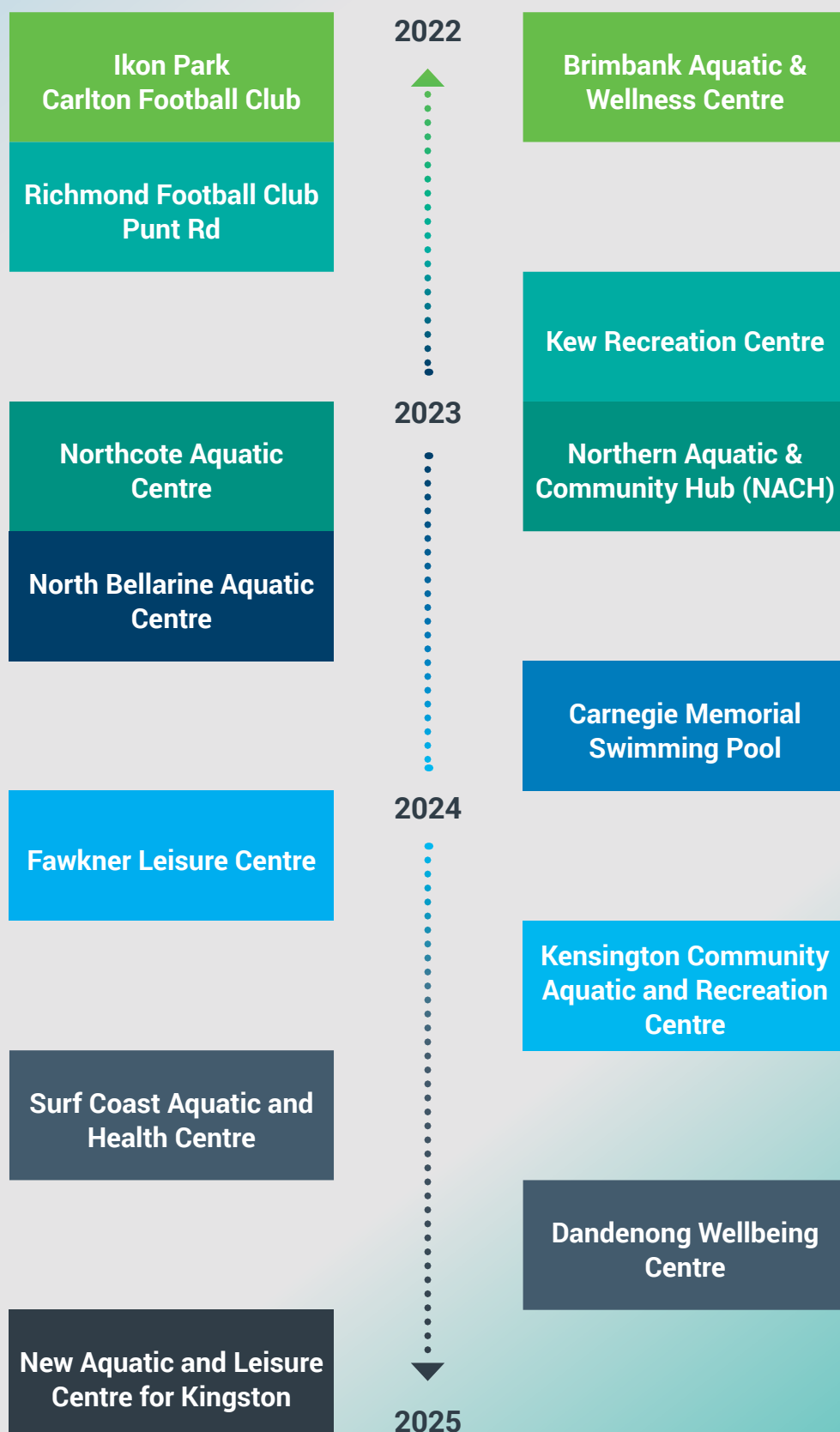
- indoor 25m pool
- outdoor 50m pool
- indoor warm water pool
- spa, sauna and steam
- learn to swim pool
- interactive play features
- fully equipped gymnasium
- group fitness, wellness and cycle studios
- café
- creche

The state-of-the-art Keilor East Leisure Centre is Moonee Valley's largest capital works project ever, encompassing wellness and leisure at one location.

The centre is unlike anything else in Moonee Valley and invites both supporters and community members alike to enjoy the facilities.

New facilities

Coming soon



Industry profiles



Drew Hildebrant

**Manager Brimbank Leisure Centres,
Brimbank City Council**

Drew started in the aquatic industry 25 years ago, at the then new Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre. He spent the majority of his career in facility management, with roles at Hume City Council, several roles with Belgrave Leisure including Victorian state manager and general manager programs. More recently, Drew has worked with BlueFit, helping the company expand into Victorian, West Australian and South Australian markets. He currently manages Brimbank City Council's leisure facilities, including the new \$65million Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre.

During his time in the industry, Drew has witnessed significant changes in the design and operation of aquatic and leisure facilities. The changing needs and diversity of local communities has seen councils respond by developing facilities with bodies of water that serve varying purposes and programs, and the expansion of service offerings in dry areas. Drew now uses his extensive industry knowledge to mentor future leaders of aquatic facilities across Australia.

What opportunities do you see for the future of the aquatic industry?

I see key priorities being the delivery of improved community outcomes and responsible management of facilities through a strong focus on sustainable practices. The new Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre opened in September 2022 and provides the blueprint of what a facility should aim to achieve. Investing in a community hub, as opposed to a basic pool and/or gymnasium, offers more for the wider community, including marginalised, at-risk people. Affordable and accessible opportunities must attract these residents, who traditionally have not visited these community facilities. Measuring these outcomes will be vital in determining success and next steps.

Sustainability must also be a focus, to limit our impact on the environment. Our new facility has invested in a range of features, including an all-electric energy system, an air-tight building envelope, hot water storage tanks, significant solar energy infrastructure, and a sustainable waste management plan aiming to deliver a carbon-neutral venue. The industry must encourage initial investment in these initiatives to become leaders in environmental sustainability, and to achieve significant financial payoffs down the track.



Todd McHardy

Chief executive officer, BlueFit group

Todd's industry journey started in the 90's, when he worked for his stepfather and creator of Links Software, Don Hartley. In 2007, Todd broke away from the family business to create BlueFit, which now manages more than 50 community leisure facilities in partnership with 22 local councils.

Future developments will include ten dedicated learn to swim venues opening in the coming three years, as well as many other exciting programs ready for launch.

Todd started the BlueFit Foundation in 2009, created to fund youth-based sport and recreation programs.

What opportunities do you see for the future of the aquatic industry?

"COVID-19 restrictions, staff shortages, ageing facilities and rising utility costs are thickening the skin of the leisure industry. Collaboration between private, not-for-profit and council operators to face these challenges has never been more important.

Working together and backing industry bodies like ARV will brighten the future of the industry."



Fiona Preston

**General manager venues,
Melbourne Sports Centres**

Fiona has always been involved with community sport, and remains active as president of a swimming club. Her career has spanned a range of industries and sectors, including not-for-profit, public health, corporate, sport and recreation, and education. During this time she has worked at executive level, driven by a passion for learning and leading people.

Fiona entered the sport and recreation sector with YMCA Vic at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, before moving across to Melbourne Sports Centres (State Sport Centres Trust) in the lead up to the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.

Working in these venues and being involved on a day-to-day basis, Fiona has witnessed performance and participation at all levels. Understanding industry trends, patron and community needs and behaviours, planning for the future, and taking a strategic approach that contributes to Victoria's population health and sporting outcomes is what gets her out of bed each day.

What opportunities do you see for the future of the aquatic industry?

Aquatic safety, inclusion, sustainability, community/social impact, and contribution across all activities covered by the industry are important themes in considering its future. However, we must also build understanding and cooperation between safety/survival and sport, competitive and recreational pursuits, on top of and underwater settings, natural and built water environments, and a raft of other variables that support investment and commitment.

We have a lot of catching up to do in rebuilding an industry with a workforce that has been shattered by COVID-19 - from teaching grass roots survival skills and building participation, through to volunteering, use of technology, applying responsible environmental practices, creating performance pathways, and supporting competition.

This will involve taking a whole-of-industry approach that involves genuine collaboration and shared priorities.



Greg Jennings

**Executive general manager
recreation, The Y**

Greg recently re-joined The Y in the position of executive general manager recreation. He has almost 30 years of experience in the aquatic and recreation sector, having worked with local government, private health club operators, Belgravia Leisure and YMCA. Most recently, Greg was part of the executive team for the Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF), overseeing national program operations.

After spending almost three years out of the sector, Greg appreciates how difficult it has been for operators and local government authorities to navigate the post-COVID-19 world and the longer-term recovery impacts. Greg's focus in his role is to demonstrate the value of The Y to all segments of the market, whether that's government, communities or staff.

What opportunities do you see for the future of the aquatic industry?

"Recreation facilities and programs offer a great platform for much needed connection to our communities as we battle major health and social issues, such as mental health and obesity."



Liz Van Deventa

**Group health and safety manager,
Belgravia Health and Leisure Group**

Although initially qualifying as an occupational therapist, Liz quickly found her path into health and safety, gaining masters qualifications in ergonomic safety and health. After working as a safety professional in a variety of industries, including labour hire, the resources sector, petrol convenience and, more recently, health services and aged care, Liz's role as the group health and safety manager at Belgravia has brought her back to her early passion of teaching people how to swim and find joy in movement.

Joining the Belgravia team has provided Liz with the opportunity to apply her risk management skill set across the aquatic, leisure, fitness and tourism divisions of the business, positively influencing the profile of the organisation's safety culture.

Alongside ensuring compliance to legislated, organisational and industry expectations, Liz has a passion for optimising business outcomes by incorporating psychosocial factors in the creation of a great safety culture.

What opportunities do you see for the future of the aquatic industry?

"During the past 10 to 15 years the impact of psychosocial hazards within workplaces has been increasingly recognised as an emerging risk. The past two years has heightened the complex relationship between psychosocial hazards and other hazards more typical to the aquatic industry (such as physical, chemical etc).

The incredible innovation, creativity and passion demonstrated by the aquatic industry during COVID-19 challenges has added complexity to systems of work (experiences of stress and burn out), industrial relations, and community interactions (frustration, reduction in swimming skill etc).

As an industry we are in a privileged position to be able to positively impact the wellbeing of our guests, patrons and communities through leisure and fitness."



Martin Sheppard

Consultant, NSC Facilitator

Martin has more than 40 years of experience in the community sport and leisure facilities industry, in both the UK and Australia. He is passionate about improving community wellbeing by integrating leisure opportunities into community centres to create a positive impact on local communities.

Martin sees the industry moving away from having to justify building a 50m pool by offsetting the cost of water with a fitness gym, or sports hall. Instead, by starting with a clear picture of those in the community in need of improved wellbeing, he believes the industry can start to focus on outcomes, rather than justification for specific facilities.

What opportunities do you see for the future of the aquatic industry?

"As an industry, we need to shift our focus from being facilities driven, towards participation outcomes, and understanding how to make a difference to the health and wellbeing of the community."



Emma Lowe

National aquatics and inclusion coordinator, Belgravia Leisure

Emma has always maintained a passion for aquatics, recreation, and community sports, completing a Bachelor of Applied Science (Human Movement) at RMIT University in 2012. Her first role was with WaterMarc - a large community leisure facility in the northern suburbs of Melbourne - which gave her the opportunity to witness first-hand the physical, mental and social benefits associated with active participation. It was here that Emma also noticed some under-represented community members that were missing out.

In pursuit of connecting all to leisure, she took on the role of community engagement coordinator at WaterMarc in 2015. This role allowed her to look, listen and learn from the Banyule community, and support pathways to participation in a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment.

In 2019, Emma took on a leadership position within Belgravia Leisure, as national access and inclusion coordinator. In this role she supports approximately 220 venues across both Australia and New Zealand to create opportunities for under-represented groups to have greater access to healthy and happy activities.

What opportunities do you see for the future of the aquatic industry?

"We all know there is currently a shortage of swim teachers, which presents us with a unique opportunity to train, recruit and employ people who reflect the communities in which we deliver our swim programs."

"Employing a diverse workforce creates opportunities to better engage with people who often miss out on aquatic activities, including people with disability, people from cultural and linguistic diverse backgrounds, and First Nations people."



Liam O'Brien

Regional operations manager, Aligned Leisure

As regional operations manager for Aligned Leisure, Liam oversees the operations of multiple facilities in Victoria. Having entered the industry in 2001, Liam joined Aligned Leisure in 2017 following more than 10 years in various leadership roles with YMCA Victoria. Past roles include personal training, facility management, customer experience and sales management in local government, as well as the commercial and private sector of the recreation and leisure industry.

Liam has a strong background in customer experience, sales and operational excellence, and is known for building teams that deliver quality services and programs.

What opportunities do you see for the future of the aquatic industry?

"Given the experiences of the past 48 months, I see the industry repositioning its aquatic and leisure facilities as key community assets as people find their way back to our centres. We have an opportunity to play a vital role in connecting communities, and become a key employment provider. I look forward to seeing innovative strategies that will attract new customers and staff."

Industry awards

LSV award winners

Education Instructor of the Year

Alex Tsantarlis

Swim and Survive Partner of the Year

Echuca War Memorial Centre

LSV Public Training and Pool Safety Licensee of the Year

Banyule City Council

LSV Public Training and Pool Safety Service Member of the Year

Ivan Key

LSV Public Training Trainer of the Year

John Takac



ARV industry award winners

Customer Service Award

Nicole Ross

Duty Manager Award

Matthew Evans

Pool Lifeguard Award

Caitlin McGraw

Membership Sales Award

Jenna Smith

Most Valuable Employee Award

Libby Dewar

Group Exercise Instructor Award

Mary Albert

Personal Trainer/Gym Instructor Award

Simon McCoy

Swim Teacher Award

Joanna Yang

Swim Teacher of Babies, Infants and Preschool Award

Susan Hill

Swim Teacher for Persons with a Disability Award

Sharon Wrobel

Course Instructor Award

Georgina Eddy

Sustainability Award

Sunshine Leisure Centre –
Brimbank City Council

Emerging Leader Award

Billy Sunjo

Marketing & Communication Award

Nillumbik Leisure Facilities –
Aligned Leisure



Health Club Award

Casey RACE – The Y

Community Impact Award

Sunshine Leisure Centre –
Brimbank City Council

Innovative Program Award

Belgravia Leisure –
Customer Care Program

Outstanding Contribution to the Aquatic and Recreation Industry Award

Don Hartley

Watch Around Water Award

Sunshine Leisure Centre –
Brimbank City Council

Swim School Award

Kingston Active –
Waves Leisure Centre

Facility Management Award – All Year Large

Peninsula Aquatic Recreation Centre –
Peninsula Leisure

Facility Management Award – All Year Medium

Casey Stadium – The Y

Facility Management Award – All Year Small

Echuca War Memorial Aquatic Centre –
Campaspe Shire Council

Facility Management Award – Seasonal

Pines Forest Aquatic Centre –
Peninsula Leisure

Nutrition and Healthy Choices Award

Casey Stadium – The Y

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Stakeholder networks

ARV

ARV facility management standing committee
ARV learning and development standing committee
ARV swim school networking committee
ARV operations networking committee
ARV health club networking committee
ARV traders and suppliers networking committee
ARV stadium networking committee
ARV local government contractors networking committee
ARV local government contractors networking committee
ARV Victorian industry leaders group

Contact (03) 9271 3000 |
admin@aquaticsandrecreation.org.au

LSV

LSV aquatic education industry executive council (AEIEC)
LSV platinum pools steering committee (PPSC)
LSV female leadership network
LSV blue connections
LSV aquatic industry workshops

Contact (03) 9676 6985 | ais@lsv.com.au

Vicsport professionals network

Contact (03) 9698 8100 | admin@vicsport.com.au

Centre for multicultural youth – Youth advisory group

Contact (03) 9340 3700 | enquiry@cmv.net.au

Access for all abilities

Contact 1800 222 842 | request@aaavic.org.au

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