



Experience Western Downs

It's the  
people that  
make it.

# WESTERN DOWNS AQUATIC FACILITIES STRATEGY

2023–2038

# Mayor's Foreword

Welcome to the Western Downs, where we value a quality lifestyle for our residents and take pride in our active, vibrant communities.

A pivotal part of ensuring our quality lifestyle is about making sure our region's facilities are the best they can be and are suited to our communities' needs.

We value the importance of our aquatic facilities in the Western Downs – as social meeting hubs, places of recreation, sport, rehabilitation, learn to swim, and more.

Aquatic facilities play a diverse and important role in the liveability and prosperity of our growing communities. That's why Council is proud to present its Aquatic Facilities Strategy 2023–2038.

This strategy will help guide Council's investment in our pools, splash parks and supporting amenities to ensure they are safe, attractive and accessible for all members of our communities for generations to come.

**Councillor Paul McVeigh**  
*Mayor*



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## Acknowledgement of Country

Council respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners, the Barunggam, Iman (Yiman), Bigambul, Wakka Wakka, and the Jarowair people, as the custodians of this land. We pay respect to all Aboriginal community Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of the region.



# Introduction

Western Downs Regional Council will provide quality aquatic facilities for residents and visitors.

This *Aquatic Facilities Strategy* guides the future direction of aquatic facilities across the Western Downs, delivering benefit to the community by balancing priorities and needs across the region. This Strategy therefore reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community, as well as material and financial constraints.

The development of this Strategy marks the beginning of a multi-year commitment to pursue future possibilities and opportunities at aquatic facilities across the Western Downs, many of which are nearing end-of-life. This Strategy is necessary to ensure that we adapt to future needs by:

- Guiding Council's investments in developing, maintaining, and managing its portfolio of aquatic facilities
- Maximising community benefits in a way that aligns with appropriate standards of service
- Ensuring the changing needs of residents and visitors are acknowledged and reflected.

Extensive engagement informed the development of this Strategy, including the creation of our vision and aspirations for aquatic facilities across the Western Downs. Rigorous best-practice research processes were employed to identify industry-leading aquatic facility management practices.

**This Strategy will provide the future direction for inclusive and enjoyable aquatic facilities in our region, aiming to improve the lives of residents and visitors who enjoy our them.**





# Our Aquatic Facilities

The current state of aquatic facilities in the Western Downs was reviewed and assessed in development of this Strategy.

All aquatic facilities in the Western Downs are currently managed and operated by SwimFit (excluding Chinchilla Botanic Parkland). A snapshot of key attributes of each facility is provided below. The statistics give insight into the use of aquatic facilities across the Western Downs.

All facilities are well visited relative to the population of the local area in which they exist. This speaks to the important role these facilities play in our community. However, many of our region’s beloved aquatic facilities are nearing end-of-life. This Strategy will help us plan for the future to ensure our community has access to aquatic facilities that are fun, safe, and appropriately managed.



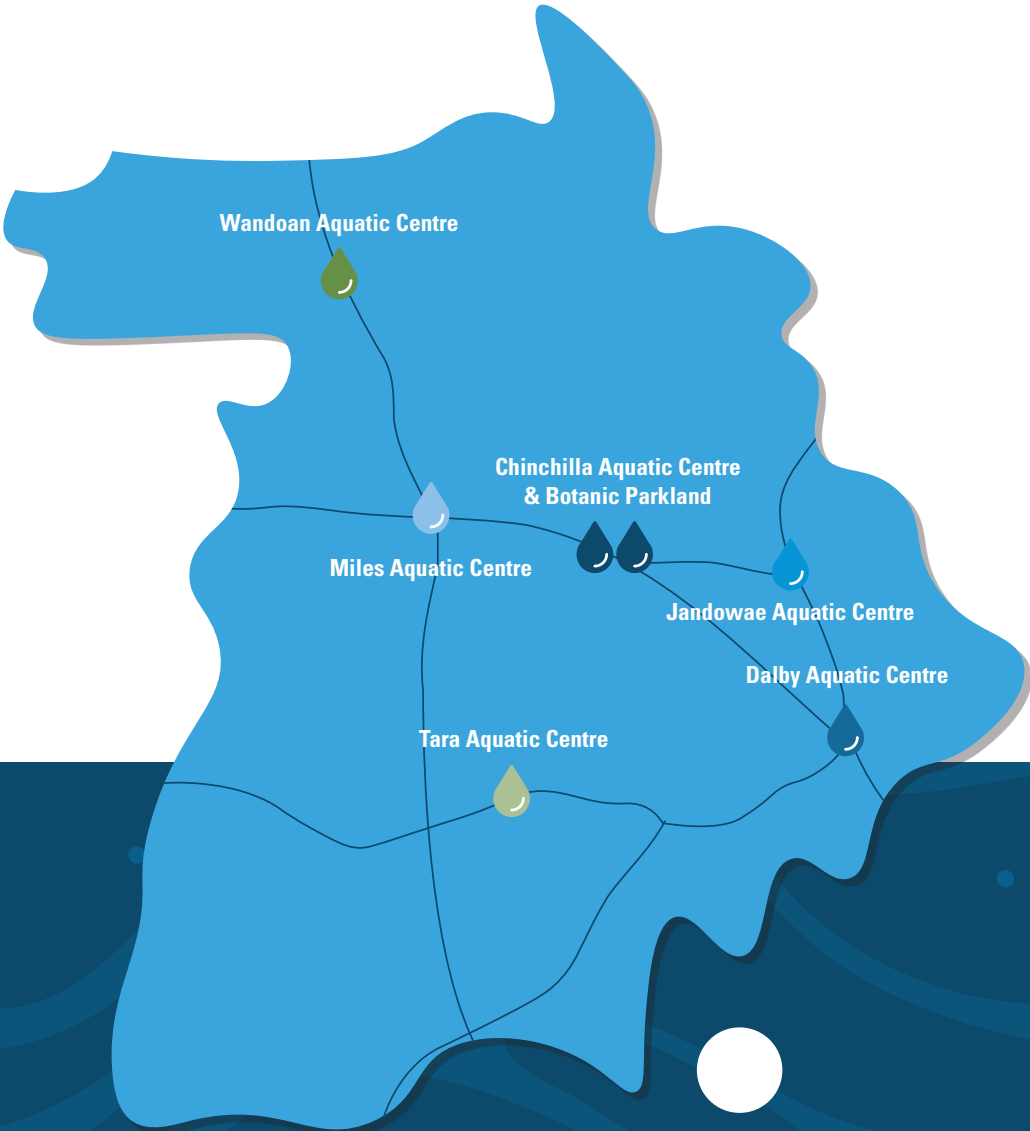
**Chinchilla Aquatic Centre & Botanic Parkland**  
50m outdoor and 25m indoor lap pools and children’s play pool

**Years to end-of-life:** 6–10 (50m), 15–20 (25m)  
**Average cost to Council per visit:** \$5.90  
**Visit to population ratio:** 6.7 (given a local population catchment of 7,200)<sup>2</sup>  
Co-located gym



**Dalby Aquatic Centre**  
50m outdoor and 25m indoor lap pools and children’s play pool

**Years to end-of-life:** 10–15  
**Average cost to Council per visit:** \$6.40  
**Visit to population ratio:** 7.4 (given a local population catchment of 13,200)<sup>2</sup>  
Heritage-listed assets



1. ABS ‘Census All Persons QuickStats’, 2021 (figures rounded to the nearest hundred) 2. Forecast.id, 2023





### Jandowae Aquatic Centre

25m outdoor lap pool and toddler's wading pool

**Years to end-of-life:** 10–15

**Average cost to Council per visit:** \$13.20

**Visit to population ratio:** 7.2 (given a local population catchment of 1,000)<sup>1</sup>



### Miles Aquatic Centre

50m outdoor lap pool and toddler's wading pool

**Years to end-of-life:** 6–10

**Average cost to Council per visit:** \$18.60

**Visit to population ratio:** 6.9 (given a local population catchment of 1,800)<sup>2</sup>



### Tara Aquatic Centre

25m outdoor pool and toddler's wading pool

**New facility:** Opening 2023

**Average cost to Council per visit:** \$13.30

**Visit to population ratio:** 7.2 (given a local population catchment of 2,000)<sup>2</sup>

*Statistics based on historic usage*



### Wandoan Aquatic Centre

33m outdoor lap pool and toddler's wading pool

**Years to end-of-life:** 10–15

**Average cost to Council per visit:** \$28.06

**Visit to population ratio:** 6.0 (given a local population catchment of 700)<sup>1</sup>

# Aquatic Facilities Strategy

## Vision

The Western Downs will support social, wellness, sport, education, and recreation based opportunities in our future focused aquatic facilities. These facilities will be fun, safe, accessible, appropriately managed, available and tailored to each community.

## Conversations with our Community have shaped our Strategy

### What we heard from the community

- Creating more accessible aquatic facilities
- Highlighting the health, social, and broader economic role of aquatic facilities in the community
- Acknowledging the diversity of aquatic facility users and user groups

### What we identified through research

- The Western Downs is forecast to experience changing demographics and a growing population
- Aquatic facilities in the Western Downs are ageing – this aligns to a national trend, with 40% of all public pools in reaching the end of their predicted lives in the next decade
- Average pool replacement costs estimated between \$8–24 million

## Our Guiding Principles



**Accessible**



**Future proofed**



**Activated**



**Well-Maintained**



**Diversified**

## Key strategic options and undertakings

### This Strategy outlines our commitment to:

- Continue engagement and dialogue with the community to plan and amend facilities in the future
- Consider future needs for our changing population
- Enhance management and governance arrangements to support community needs
- Adequately fund the management of community service delivery
- Improve aquatic facility accessibility (in all its forms)
- Explore potential to develop new innovative facilities

### This Strategy also outlines our commitment to specific aquatic facilities, including the:

- Chinchilla Aquatic Centre, Botanic Parkland Splash Park
- Dalby Aquatic Centre
- Jandowae Aquatic Centre
- Miles Aquatic Centre
- Tara Aquatic Centre
- Wandoan Aquatic Centre



# Strategy Evolution

This Strategy is the culmination of extensive research, analysis and community engagement, a process which has helped to identify priorities for future investment. The timeline below tells the story of this Strategy's evolution and next steps.

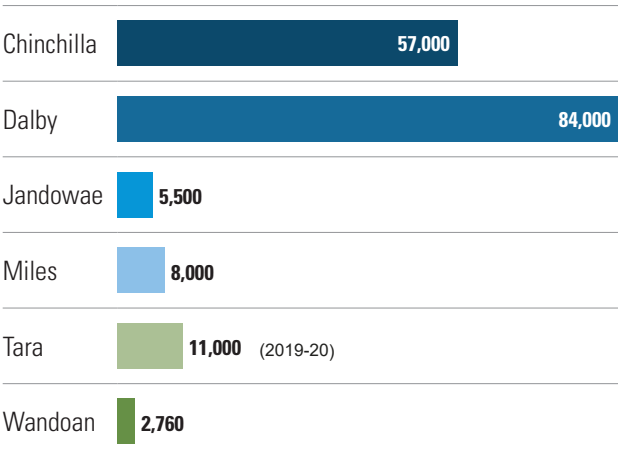


# What We Saw

This section presents a small sample of the statistics and research findings uncovered through the development of the Aquatic Facilities Strategy.

## Use Analysis

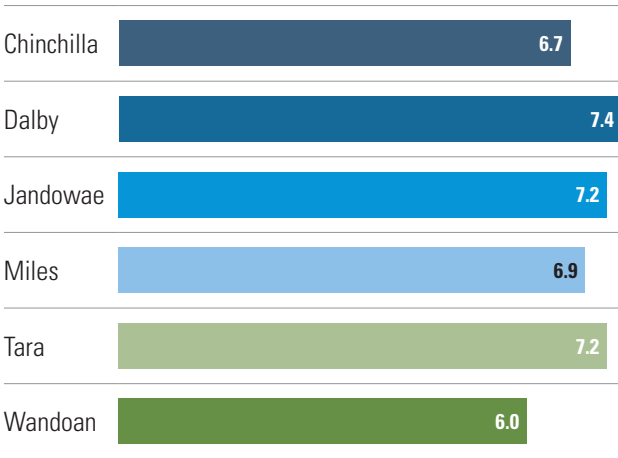
### Aquatic Centres Entry Tickets Sold (2021–22)



Across the Western Downs, aquatic facilities are popular and increasingly well-used. While the Chinchilla and Dalby Aquatic Centres remain popular destinations on an absolute basis, all aquatic facilities continue to draw large crowds relative to the size of local populations:

- There were an estimated 157,000 tickets sold in the 2021–2022 season (not including Tara which has closed for replacement)
- In comparison there were an estimated to be only 76,000 entry tickets sold in the 2016–2017 season

### Aquatic Centres Average Annual Visits per Population of Local Catchment (2018–19 to 2020–21)



\* Please note statistics for Tara relate to the 2018-19 to 2019-20 seasons

Key  
Takeaway

Aquatic facility attendance in the Western Downs moves from strength to strength, highlighting the need for continued investment in these important community assets.

## Demographic profile<sup>3</sup>

The demographic profile of the Western Downs is forecast to change over the next few decades. This will have knock-on impacts for the kinds of aquatic facilities and services provided in the region. A snapshot of statistics forecasting varying population changes over the next 25 years is presented below.

7%

ESTIMATED POPULATION GROWTH

between now and 2046 in the Western Downs Region

12.7%

Dalby

3.2%

Tara

6.0%

Chinchilla

10.5%

Miles

5–9 & 25–29 AGE COHORTS

predicted to grow fastest between now and 2036 in the Western Downs

75–84 AGE COHORT

predicted to grow fastest between 2036 and 2046 in the Western Downs

3. Forecast.id, Western Downs 'Population Forecast 2023 – 2046'



It is important for us to understand how our community will change so that our decision-making now is appropriate. For example:

- Over the next 10 to 15 years, aquatic facilities may have to consider the needs of a growing population of young children and families. This may include initiatives to provide more zero-depth, splash park, and suitable learn to swim facilities.
- Whereas, in the subsequent 10 to 15 years, population ageing may be a key consideration. Catering to an ageing population may provide opportunities for diversified service offerings including rehabilitation and wellbeing.

#### Key Takeaway

**Population growth in the Western Downs will likely increase general demand for aquatic facilities and services. This Strategy will ensure future demand is factored into current decision-making.**

**However, across the region there will be temporal differences in population growth between age groups. Our aquatic facilities will therefore need to be designed to consider the varying needs of different age groups across time.**

**Finally, some geographical areas will experience more population growth than others. This Strategy appreciates these trends and will ensure that future demand is appropriately managed.**



# Managing Aquatic Facilities

Best practice aquatic facility management should reflect local circumstances while responding to emerging trends across Australia and internationally. The development of this Strategy was supported by a research suite which identified how the Western Downs might make the most of these changes and the opportunities they present.

## Trends & Drivers



### Ageing Facilities

500 (40%) of public pools in the country will reach the end of their predicted lifespan in the next decade.<sup>4</sup> The development of this Strategy and its' extensive community engagement presents an opportunity to democratically prioritise the necessary investment in our local aquatic facilities.



### Demographic Shifts

Australia's population is ageing as people live longer and fertility rates decline. Aquatic facilities in the Western Downs must cater to changing demographics in both the short and long term.



### Community Health

Australia would suffer an estimated \$910 million annual loss of social, health and economic value should even 10% of its older aquatic facilities not be renewed.<sup>4</sup> This makes a strong case to continue investing in the future development and upkeep of our facilities in the Western Downs.



### Climate Resilience

Australia, and in particular Queensland, is projected to experience climate change impacts that necessitate the adaption of infrastructure to become resilient to more extreme weather. Our Strategy ensures our infrastructure remains future-proofed.



### Access

Research and engagement across Australia has highlighted the importance of accessibility improvements to aquatic facility users. These works are important to ensure there exists equitable and convenient access to aquatic facilities for the whole community.



### Cost-Efficiency

While there are many ageing aquatic facilities across Australia, remediation and replacement provide opportunities to reduce operational expenditure through more cost-effective, modern and innovative services. Replacement prioritisation in the Western Downs considers the current condition of aquatic facilities, service levels, and the associated costs and benefits of works.



### Data

The use of data and digital technology can play a role in improving the management of aquatic facilities across Australia. Through the strategic development process, Council has identified opportunities to strengthen its data collection processes to support ongoing management and reporting in areas such as asset condition, aquatic facility usership and attendance.

### Key Takeaway

**By staying abreast of the emerging national trends and opportunities this Strategy will ensure our aquatic facilities remain ready for future challenges.**

<sup>4</sup> Royal Life Saving, 2022.



## Case Studies



### Hervey Bay Aquatic Centre, Fraser Coast Regional Council

- Fraser Coast Regional Council undertook a review of its aquatic facilities in 2017 to increase liveability outcomes.
- Consequently a specific Master Plan for the future development of the Hervey Bay Aquatic Centre was developed.
- In November 2022, Council opened a \$1.3m Aqua Adventure Course funded through the Federal Government's Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program.
- The course is made up of nine linked challenges which test strength, agility, co-ordination, and stamina. Water jets, cannons and dumpers are activated as participants move through the course.



### Bay Pavilions Aquatic Leisure Centre, Eurobadalla Shire Council

- Eurobadalla's Bay Pavilions Aquatic Leisure Centre received the Master Building of NSW award for Excellence in Construction in 2022.
- The Centre was designed to support integration of a variety of activities and events, ultimately providing a holistic leisure space and inviting a broader cross-section of the community to participate.
- Bay Pavilions demonstrates how innovative design can improve multi-use functions of aquatic facilities, enhancing amenity and delivering community benefits.
- Co-located with the indoor pool, hydrotherapy pool and play area are a 350 Pax theatre and art gallery.

# Our Engagement Method

By undertaking extensive engagement, we have tailored this Strategy to local needs. To achieve this, Western Downs Regional Council drew insight from community members, staff, and other key stakeholders across two phases of engagement.

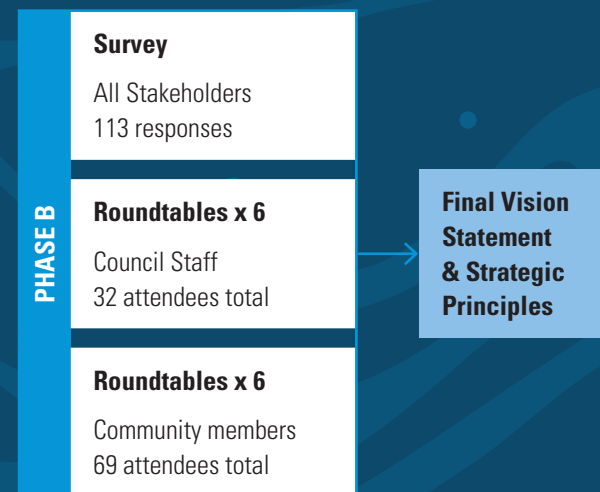
## Phase A December 2022

A range of key stakeholders (such as swimming clubs and other sports groups), community members, Councillors and Council staff were engaged through a variety of approaches. This process established a common vision for aquatic facilities in Western Downs and identified key principles that will guide future investment in a way that acknowledges the respective strengths and challenges of each facility.



## Phase B March 2023

A broader set of stakeholders were engaged to test the strategic core developed following Phase A, ensuring it aligns with their aspirations for the region's aquatic facilities.



# What We Heard

Stakeholders value the provision of quality aquatic facilities in Western Downs. With careful planning, the region can derive substantial health, community and social benefits from this important future-focused infrastructure.

The below summarises key regional priorities distilled from the engagement process.

## Key Regional Insights

### Catering to Diverse Usership and Uses

- Stakeholders across the Western Downs noted the diversity of user groups (e.g. Learn2Swim, children, adults, the elderly, and tourists) and how this might require facilities to incorporate varied offerings into design
- Strategic facility provision also mitigates conflict between user groups with conflicting priorities

### Keeping Facilities Local

- 87% of survey respondents never or only occasionally use aquatic facilities outside their own local area
- There is desire for each facility to be designed with a local 'point of difference' to reflect this localised demand

### Interest in Temperature Control

- Stakeholders in towns with heated pools were firmly supportive of them
- There existed a clear appetite to expand this infrastructure (especially from key user groups) in order to extend the swimming season





### Improving Accessibility

- Stakeholders repeatedly highlighted the importance of having access to aquatic facilities that are usable for everyone, which necessitates a holistic approach to site planning
- *'Ensuring equal access to facilities across the region'* was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest survey priority in Phase A (16.4% of responses)

### Facilities Generate Community and Social Benefit

- Pools provide substantial fitness and social benefits, so upgrades create a wider user based are well justified
- Such developments could also be used to attract visitors and/or sporting events (e.g. splash parks, 50m pools)

### Updating Existing Amenities

- *'Ensuring existing facilities are updated and maintained'* was the highest ranked investment priority in the survey (28.5% of responses)
- These updates were seen as a key method for increasing pool utilisation, attracting new users and ensuring continued statutory compliance

## Local Insights

This Strategy appreciates that each aquatic facility plays an important and unique role in the communities they serve. In addition to region-wide insights, the below summarises key local priorities as voiced by the community during the engagement process:

### Chinchilla Aquatic Centre and Botanic Parkland

- Encouraging opportunities for community feedback
- Examining opportunities to relocate or expand the aquatic centre
- Exploring strategies to attract and retain skilled staff
- Improving data collection to enhance services

### Dalby Aquatic Centre

- Improving asset management including protecting and utilising heritage assets
- Considering opportunities for pool heating
- Exploring ways to improve the local experience through aquatic facility management
- Improving outdoor amenities for socialising

### Jandowae aquatic centre

- Exploring initiatives to encourage use
- Improving the accessibility of aquatic facility amenities
- Supporting and enhancing squash club management

### Miles Aquatic Centre

- Exploring the need for master-planned replacement works
- Considering opportunities for pool heating
- Exploring local management operations
- Encouraging aquatic facility use through partnerships, varied pricing models and increased opening hours

### Tara Aquatic Centre

- Strengthening communications between community and Western Downs Regional Council and developing a launch plan for reopening
- Improving family-friendliness of amenities
- Exploring local management options





### Wandoan Aquatic Centre

- Considering ways to maximise facility availability, such as increased opening hours
- Exploring opportunities to co-locate gym facilities
- Considering opportunities for pool heating
- Encouraging the development of accessible infrastructure
- Exploring development of splash park and zero-depth pool area



# Strategic Alignment

This Strategy was developed in alignment with Council's strategic priorities for the 2021-2026 period. Elements within each strategic pillar of the Corporate Plan that are clearly targeted within this Strategy are presented in the table below.

<b>Strong Diverse Economy</b> 	<b>Active Vibrant Community</b> 	<b>Quality Lifestyle</b> 	<b>Sustainable Organisation</b> 
<b>PROGRESS</b>  We aggressively attract business and investment opportunities  We proactively advance our region as a tourism destination	<b>PEOPLE</b>  We are a happy community, proud of where we live  Our parks, open spaces, and community facilities are alive with activities and connect our communities  We are a strong sustainable community supported by volunteers  We actively support local event initiatives	<b>PLACE</b>  Our residents are provided with modern infrastructure and quality essential services across our region  Our recreational spaces and community facilities are attractive, safe and accessible  We attract families to live, work, prosper and play in our region We take pride in our natural assets and environment	<b>PERFORMANCE</b>  We are recognised as a financially intelligent and responsible Council  We focus on proactive, sustainable planning for the future  Our effective asset management ensures that we responsibly maintain our community assets
<b>MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATIONS &amp; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b>			



# Our Vision and Guiding Principles

## Vision

The Western Downs will support social, wellness, sport, education, and recreation based opportunities in our future-focused aquatic facilities.

These facilities will be fun, safe, accessible, appropriately managed, available and tailored to each community.



## Guiding Principles



### Accessible

Aquatic facilities should be usable for everyone. This means actively considering open hours, cost of entry, and managing access of different user groups including children, elderly, and the disabled. Future investment will consider providing facilities such as ramps, priority carparking, improved amenities, pool hoists, and zero-depth features.



### Well-Maintained

The community expects aquatic facilities to be well-maintained, appealing places to visit. Locals and visitors will be more likely to use facilities which are contemporary, clean, and functional.



### Future Proofed

Community and user group populations fluctuate through time, with knock-on effects for regional service demands. Aquatic facilities should be aware of and plan for changing community needs to accommodate future patterns of use. However, Aquatic facilities are more than just pools. They have the capacity to provide opportunities in fitness, health, and socialising. Aquatic facilities could serve as community hubs, with co-located food, health, and lifestyle services where opportunities present.



### Diversified

Stakeholders sought greater diversity and specialisation in the design of aquatic facilities. New assets should be multipurpose, reflecting varied community needs and incorporate innovative trends and designs (e.g. splash parks). Site design and operations should leverage and accommodate local economic development and tourism opportunities.











### Activated

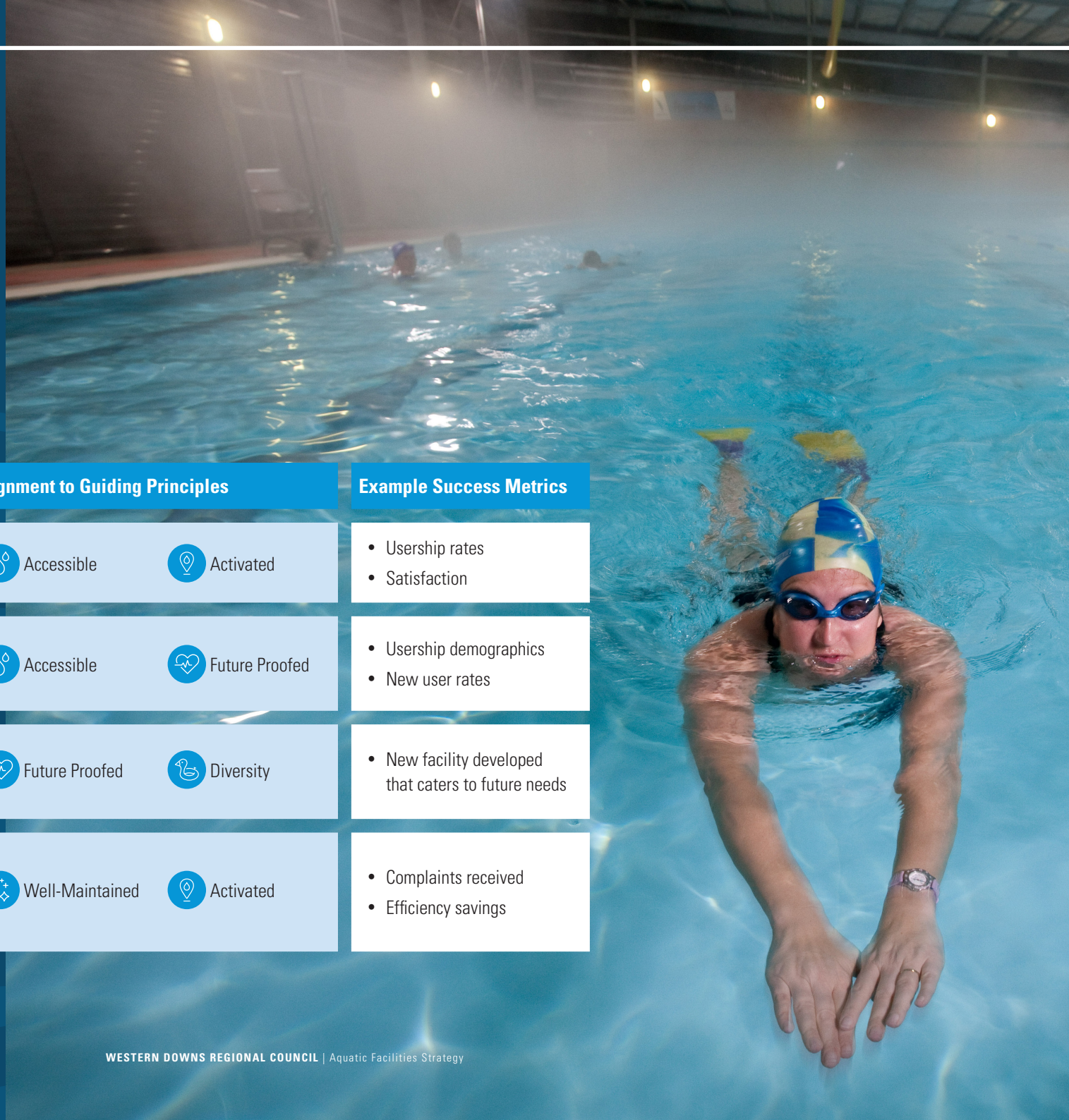
Increasing utilisation and attraction of new users was a key challenge identified through engagement. Council has a role to play in activating aquatic facilities, accommodating new and existing users, and ensuring facilities are optimally utilised.



# Our Strategic Objectives

To translate our Guiding Principles into reality and achieve our Vision, we use the Strategic Objectives below. These objectives ensure actions taken locally are done so in harmony with those undertaken across the Western Downs.

Strategic Objectives	Alignment to Guiding Principles	Example Success Metrics
1 <b>Well used and enjoyable aquatic facilities</b>	 Accessible  Activated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usership rates</li> <li>• Satisfaction</li> </ul>
2 <b>Inclusive aquatic facilities with a diverse, accessible, and affordable array of uses</b>	 Accessible  Future Proofed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usership demographics</li> <li>• New user rates</li> </ul>
3 <b>Contemporary, high quality, and future focussed aquatic facilities that are relevant and adaptable to future needs</b>	 Future Proofed  Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New facility developed that caters to future needs</li> </ul>
4 <b>Well maintained, managed, and operated aquatic facilities that are suitably invested in and fulfil community service needs</b>	 Well-Maintained  Activated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints received</li> <li>• Efficiency savings</li> </ul>





# Region-wide Actions

This section provides a summary of the region-wide actions we will pursue to improve management and governance outcomes at our aquatic facilities.

It is important for us to acknowledge the intent behind these actions is primarily to:

1. Improve customer outcomes and service levels
2. Ensure assets and services are provided in the most financially efficient way

## Key Takeaway

**Region wide activities in the Western Downs will strengthen the management and governance of aquatic facilities, ensuring they operate in a way that best aligns with community needs.**

**The overarching intent behind our enhancements to management and governance procedures and protocols is to improve customer outcomes and service levels, while also ensuring assets and services are provided in the most financially efficient way.**

	High-Level Actions	To (desired outcome)
Customer Outcomes	Updating and improving accessibility of amenities	<i>Improve usership and attendance for all residents and visitors</i>
	Examining ways to provide life skills and capabilities in the community	<i>Build skills pathways and local job opportunities</i>
	Evaluating the benefit of co-locating health, fitness, and wellness services	<i>Strengthen health and well-being outcomes in the community</i>
	Investigating the viability of additional temperature control mechanisms	<i>Improve usership throughout the year</i>
	Ensuring remediation works and new facilities embrace sustainability	<i>Build resilience into aquatic facilities</i>
	Ensuring remediation works and new facilities embrace digital technology	<i>Improve access to data for facility management and strategic planning</i>
	Consider development of innovative aquatic options	<i>Improve overall liveability and visitation rates</i>
Financial Reporting	Enhancing reporting and accountability framework	<i>Reduce inefficiencies and increase accountability</i>
	Strengthening data collection processes	<i>Improve accuracy in future strategic planning</i>
	Providing training and education opportunities	<i>Improve accuracy and data utility</i>
Management	Reviewing management contracts	<i>Ensure rate-payer value for money</i>
	Uplifting contract management processes	<i>Improve accountability and functionality</i>
	Reviewing site locations when pool replacement is required	<i>Ensure continued site suitability and appropriateness</i>
Governance	Developing mechanisms for user feedback to Council and management	<i>Improve functionality and service levels</i>
	Clarifying user group privileges and rights	<i>Reduce user group friction and improve functionality</i>
	Routinely reviewing aquatic facility governance arrangements	<i>Identify strengths, challenges and opportunities for improvement</i>



# Site Specific Options and Analysis

This section provides a summary of the site-specific undertakings we will pursue to improve the services and general outcomes at individual aquatic facilities:

	Site-Specific Undertakings	To (example or rationalisation)
Chinchilla	Consider major remediation or alternatively, the timeline for replacement, including site selection and inclusions	<i>Achieve prolonged use of existing assets</i>
	Plan for replacement of amenities block	<i>Replace end of life building</i>
	Plan for storage and staff room needs to be met	
	Monitor gym usage and determine where kiosk upgrades are required	<i>Support the needs of users and staff</i>
Dalby	Undertake repair, maintenance, and resurfacing works	<i>Achieve prolonged use of existing assets</i>
	Explore future opportunities for community role in facility management	<i>Ensure community views are represented</i>
	Replace underutilised outdoor social infrastructure	<i>Improve site activation</i>
	Explore implementation of temperature control mechanisms	<i>Improve accessibility and visitation</i>
Jandowae	Undertake repair, maintenance, and resealing works	<i>Achieve prolonged use of existing assets</i>
	Review squash court operations	<i>Close potential market gap and encourage use</i>
	Explore options to increase accessibility	<i>Increase usership and diversity of users</i>
	Implement marketing and communications to promote the facility	<i>Improve site activation</i>



	Site-Specific Undertakings	To (example or rationalisation)
Miles	Undertake repair, maintenance, and resurfacing works	<i>Achieve prolonged use of existing assets</i>
	Explore partnerships with gym and aged care facilities	<i>Improve usership and increase diversity of users</i>
	Explore additional price discrimination for certain age cohorts	<i>Boost site activation and attendance</i>
	Consider options for local management and staffing	<i>Strengthen relationship with community</i>
	Explore implementation of temperature control mechanisms	<i>Improve accessibility and visitation</i>
Tara	Establish a user group forum as a pilot for continued community engagement across the region	Ensure community views are acknowledged
	Develop a launch program for the redeveloped Tara Aquatic Centre	<i>Support the reopening of the facility and increase usership</i>
	Create an FAQ document	<i>Ensure one source of truth on the ongoing works</i>
Wandoan	Undertake major remediation to make safe and extend remaining life	<i>Achieve prolonged use of existing assets</i>
	Consider provision of gym	<i>Improve usership and attract new users</i>
	Explore provision of family friendly upgrades and landscaping	

### Risk Considerations

Generally, a higher ROI can be expected for longer term investments. This is due to the bringing forward of benefits, which therefore operate over a longer time period. As such, interim measures may yield lower returns than more aggressive interventions.

Long term planning and aggressive intervention lowers the risk profile of known risks. They can be addressed and mitigated. However, it also raises the degree of path dependency and limits agility moving forward.

As with all community facilities, the commencement of major remediation works at an aquatic facility can reveal other unforeseen issues which may require additional work. To mitigate against this risk (which can't be eliminated) Council will continue to enhance and enact its procedures relating to regular and thorough investigation of assets prior to and during works in order to appreciate the exact condition of the asset with the highest level of confidence.

# Implementation and Next Steps

This Strategy marks the beginning of a multi-year process to pursue future possibilities and opportunities for aquatic facilities in the Western Downs. These opportunities are pursued, recognising the financial constraints which necessitate the prioritisation of asset replacement across the region.

As a next step, Council will begin to implement a range of recommendations supported by existing analysis, while undertaking deeper evaluation of the key infrastructure undertakings outlined in this document. Strategic undertakings will be implemented through Council's annual budgetary processes, and continually reviewed to ensure their suitability to address community needs and future demand.



## Next steps

A summary of key dimensions that will be pursued as next steps is provided below. It is noted that these outcomes will be pursued alongside one another, together working towards the continual maintenance and improvement of aquatic facilities in the Western Downs.

1

### Major project designs

22/23 – Developed with stakeholders to be grant ready (for next 5 years priority projects)

23/24 – Grant funding sought

23/24 – Detailed design

24/25 – Projects commenced

2

### Proactive projects to extend life to improve usability

23/24 – Planning and funding for site specific and across-region projects

24/25/26 – Delivery of elements including resurfacing, heating, accessibility reviews and ancillary facilities

3

### Governance and management

23/24 – Arrangements reviewed, and operational plans developed, governance and management, communications plan, site activation and promotion

It is important to note that Council has adopted a long-term view of aquatic assets, and with this in mind will continue to assess facilities to understand their expected life and prioritise refurbishment and upgrades accordingly.

While the Strategy has a 15-year lifespan, over the 5-year period Council will continue to:

- Identify ongoing maintenance opportunities that efficiently sustain aquatic assets and extend life
- Understand assets, prioritising remediation and replacement of assets accordingly
- Investigate investment options and undertake full due diligence processes on priority sites
- Develop funding options (including grant applications)
- Commit to funding (either with or without grant support) and run a procurement and project process



## Decision-making Guidelines

As part of the evolution of this Strategy, Council has developed guidelines for future decision-making related to key investment topics, innovations, and national trends. The purpose of these guidelines to ensure these important issues are given due consideration in any investment decisions. In sum, the desired effects of these guidelines are to:

Key Factor	Effect
Temperature Control	Address community concerns and increase aquatic facility usership
Digital Technology	Maximise the integration of technology that improves the efficiency and management of facilities
Ownership	Enable opportunities for community input and improve management outcomes
Governance, Management, and Contracts	Improve service levels and reduce risk for Council
Capability Building and Retention	Encourage local employment and staff availability
Splash Parks, Zero Depth Facilities, Hydrotherapy, and Learn to Swim Pools	Improve liveability and ensure these innovative assets are deployed where community need and sustainable operation can be demonstrated Improve liveability and ensure these innovative assets are deployed where community need and sustainable operation can be demonstrated
Safety and Accessibility	Ensure Council adopts a proactive approach to enacting safety and accessibility improvements (in compliance and beyond Queensland and Australian standards)
Ancillary Facilities and Multi-Functional Facilities	Improve cost efficiencies through co-location and improve facility usership
Renewable Energy and Sustainability	Improve operational cost efficiencies and build facility resilience to climate impacts
Equity	Improve social equity and affordability of facilities as well the financial sustainability of assets





# Staying Involved

Our recent *Communications and Community Engagement Strategy* marked a turning point in Council's approach to engaging with the community.

This Aquatic Facilities Strategy integrates the key objectives of this refreshed approach to community consultation, including our commitment to:

- Increase awareness and understanding in the community of Council's programs, services and decision-making processes
- Develop and maintain opportunities for local people and groups to inform policy, service delivery and what happens in their communities
- Improve responsiveness to existing queries and feedback channels
- Build the capacity, confidence, and competence within Council to communicate, engage and deliver this Strategy.

For more information head to [haveyoursay.wdrc.qld.gov.au/aquatic-showgrounds-strategies](https://haveyoursay.wdrc.qld.gov.au/aquatic-showgrounds-strategies)

This Aquatic Facilities Strategy represents the culmination of extensive research and engagement.

For further information, these documents are available at the have your say website:

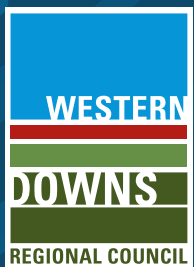
- **Phase A** Research and Engagement Summary
- **Phase B** Engagement Report











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