

REPORT

Corryong and Tallangatta Swimming Pools Review - Advisory Group

Overview

Towong Shire Council (Council) manages seasonal (outdoor) pools in Corryong and Tallangatta (both situated on crown land owned by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning). The provision of swimming pools is a service traditionally delivered by Councils throughout Australia and provides well documented physical, social and health benefits to communities.

In the 2017/18 financial year the pools incurred a total combined cost to Council of \$129,812 (including depreciation). Neither of the pools currently have potential to generate sufficient revenue to cover its running costs.

Council requested a review of current pool operations to determine whether there may be more efficient and sustainable ways of managing the pools. This request is reflected in item 2.4 of the Council Plan: *Review options for delivery of swimming pool service including consideration of a community based model.*

In response, an Advisory Group consultation model was implemented to consider the question:

How could we run the Corryong and Tallangatta Pools

- *To ensure ongoing provision of access to community members;*
- *To ensure no further increase in costs;*
- *To ensure maintenance of safety standards?*

The Advisory Group explored a range of pool management models, reviewed relevant data, considered local community needs, expectations and capacity, and developed a set of recommendations for Council to consider in deciding a way forward for the continued delivery of pool services.

Process

The Advisory Panel community engagement process included;

- Recruitment of advisory group members via an open application process (resulting in an Advisory Group of four current Tallangatta pool users and four current Corryong pool users);
- Compilation and circulation of extensive background briefing materials;
- three intensive facilitated group sessions.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1	That Council retain direct management of the pools in the short term
Timeframe	Short term
Rationale	<p>Key pools user groups do not have capacity in terms of time, volunteers or technical expertise to effectively and efficiently manage either pool. Outsourcing management of pools to a commercial entity risks a reduction in community access to pools and potential increased cost for users. Increasing use of pool sites through activation strategies and promotion will go some way toward offsetting the financial cost of pools by increasing the social, physical and wellbeing outcomes for the community.</p>
Proposed Actions	<p>Continue current pool management structure</p> <p>Revise position descriptions of lifeguard staff to include minor pool maintenance requirements to assist in reducing demand on the outdoor team (as required at other Council run pools and permitted under the current Award)</p> <p>Broaden recruitment of lifeguards to target active retirees with availability during school hours and after university terms begin</p> <p>Explore other mechanisms for gate entry in Tallangatta to support fee collection and the development of accurate data</p> <p>Consideration of processes to allow flexible hours of access to the pool</p>
Council Plan	Strategy 2.4 <i>"Review options for delivery of swimming pool services, including consideration of a community based model"</i>

Recommendation 2	That Council employ a Pools Coordinator
Timeframe	Short Term
Rationale	<p>A designated Council employee to act as a single point between Council, pool employees, user groups and the general public will avoid inconsistent implementation of procedures and processes, fragmentation of responsibilities and weak relationships with key stakeholders. Responsibilities of this role include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive management, training and development of lifeguard staff • Review and oversight of processes and procedures • Partnership and liaison with key stakeholder groups – swimming clubs, other sporting clubs, health services, schools, etc.

- Liaison with internal stakeholders – outdoor team, WHS, HR
- Establishment of and liaison with "Friends of the Pool(s) Committee(s)" as key community liaisons
- Establishment of partnerships to implement events and promotions to increase pool visitation
- Requirement for some weekend work during pools season

Proposed Actions

Investigate options to embed Pools Coordination into an existing or additional Council staffing resource with similar strategic objectives

Explore funding models to support the provision of a Pools Coordinator position

In recruiting, specify a preference for an employee with qualifications in pools operations management

Council Plan

Strategy 2.10 *"Encourage development of proactive community groups to progress local initiatives"*

Recommendation 3

That Council explore the potential for operation of pool kiosks by a local small business or community group

Timeframe

Short term

Rationale

Lifeguards are currently required to supervise swimmers while operating pool kiosks. Taking this responsibility from lifeguards provides more time for lifeguards to implement other tasks such as maintenance and cleaning, which provide more value for Council. In the past, kiosks were able to generate some profit. This may be attractive to an existing business or a community group as a fundraiser activity.

Proposed Actions

Explore means to develop an attractive offer for community groups / small businesses to operate kiosks at both pools e.g. incentives, access to facilities or equipment

Seek funding to upgrade and/or relocate the kiosk at Tallangatta, and upgrade the kiosk at Corryong

Implement an Expression of Interest process to test local appetite for management of pool kiosks. Include a requirement to consider the Healthy Communities Plan in kiosk operations.

Council Plan

Strategy 3.12 *"Complete condition assessments for road assets and non-road assets"*

Recommendation 4	That Council review processes and procedures related to management and use of the pools
Timeframe	Short term
Rationale	Procedures and forms have been implemented inconsistently causing confusion for user groups and damage to relationships between Council and users groups. Pools users have been charged inconsistently for use. A review of procedures and updating of forms to meet current conditions will avoid future confusion and discontent.
Proposed Actions	<p>Review pool procedures with a view to creating consistency between the Corryong and Tallangatta pools.</p> <p>Review and update pool related forms, fees and charges before the beginning of the 2019 summer swim season.</p> <p>These actions could be performed by the recommended Pool Coordinator position.</p>
Recommendation 5	That Council deliver lifeguard training to community members
Timeframe	Short term
Rationale	The cost of qualification is seen to be a barrier to attracting sufficient lifeguards to staff the pool, particularly to retirees. Council subsidising the investment required for training would increase the number of lifeguard trained community members which has broader benefits to public health and safety.
Proposed Actions	Source grant funding to provide lifeguard training to local community members who are interested in providing paid volunteer hours as lifeguards at local pools
Council Plan	Strategy 2.10 <i>"Encourage development of proactive community groups to progress local initiatives"</i>
Recommendation 6	That Council develop a Pools Marketing and Events Plan to increase visitation of the pools
Timeframe	Short term
Rationale	Pools offer an attractive community space for people of all ages. In the past, events such as movie nights, Blue Light discos and family relay races have attracted strong participation. A strong sense of community ownership of and

pride in the pools was strong when these activities were happening on a regular basis. User groups are enthusiastic about working collaboratively with Council to develop activities and events that promote the pools and market to different age groups and cohorts.

Proposed Actions In collaboration with user groups, develop an annual calendar of events to be held at the pools.

Develop and strengthen relationships with potential user groups and community organisations such as health services, sport clubs and neighbourhood houses.

Invest in activity-based equipment that can be shared between the two pool sites such as water polo goals, inflatable play mats

Encourage family activities at pools through promotion of barbecue and picnic facilities, fenced green spaces, children’s birthday parties

Council Plan Strategy 2.1 *“Develop the 2017-2021 Towong Shire Healthy Communities Plan”*

Strategy 2.15 *“Actively participate in the Towong Alliance with the three local health services”*

Recommendation 7 That in the future, Council explore contract management of the pools by local families, small businesses or community groups

Timeframe Medium Term

Rationale Once short-term recommendations have been implemented, and short term maintenance issues at the Tallangatta pool are attended to, the pools will be in a more attractive position to garner interest in management from local families, small businesses or community groups if it becomes necessary

Proposed Actions Consult user groups and the wider community to test support for a contract management approach if it becomes financially necessary.

Explore options for subsidizing insurance costs to create a more financially attractive option for contract management of the pools

Develop an expression of interest or tender process for management of the pools targeting local families, small businesses or community groups.

Evaluation criteria should be weighted toward consideration of health, social and wellbeing outcomes. Exclude large commercial operations from the process to reduce the risk of community losing a sense of ownership or connection to the pools

Council Plan *Strategy 2.4 “Review options for delivery of swimming pool services, including consideration of a community-based model”*

Recommendation 8	That Council promote a “Culture of Swimming” across all life stages across the Shire
Timeframe	Long term
Rationale	At present, local pools are mainly used by primary and high school students. There is scope to cultivate an interest in swimming and participation in pool activities beginning from an early age through to the older years. Provision of family friendly facilities, parent rooms, accessibility supports including optimising opening hours, and targeted programs and activities will support the pools becoming social hubs. With water a prominent feature of our local geography, swimming becomes a safety requirement as well as a sport and past time.
Proposed Actions	<p>In order to support the strategic development of pool facilities to encourage an attitude or culture of swimming as part of our everyday community life, the following actions are recommended.</p> <p>Develop partnerships with local health services to source health promotion funding in order to implement water based activities such as water aerobics</p> <p>Encourage and support local user groups to implement a range of activities and events</p> <p>Create new partnerships to enable innovative activities to be implemented such as water polo, outdoor movie nights</p> <p>Implement community working bees to further develop a sense of community ownership and pride in local pools</p> <p>Seek funding to create family friendly spaces within pool sites that are not directly related to swimming such as beach volley ball, beach cricket etc.</p>
Council Plan	<p><i>Strategy 2.14 “Seek funding for recreation facility upgrades / renewals (e.g. netball courts and shade sails”</i></p> <p><i>Strategy 2.16 “Develop a four-year Youth Plan and deliver FReeZA and other responsive youth programs”</i></p> <p><i>Strategy 2.23 “Update recreation masterplans to determine future recreation priorities”</i></p> <p><i>Strategy 2.15 “Actively participate in the Towong Alliance with the three local health services”</i></p>

Recommendation 9	That Council develop an Asset Development Plan for Corryong and Tallangatta Swimming Pools
Timeframe	Long term
Rationale	Significant investment is required in terms of management, volunteering and financial contributions to maintain pools to meet safety and other regulatory requirements. Without relevant supporting facilities, equipment and activities ongoing use of and community pride in the pools will fall away. A long-term plan is required to ensure effective provision of the right resources at the right time to continue building a successful community asset that provides long term outcomes for the community.
Proposed Actions	Development of a Pool Asset Development Plan that identifies ongoing maintenance, renewal and resource needs to meet the health, social and wellbeing potential of the pools. Long term resources to consider include: Outdoor shower, improvements to kiosks, lighting, solar heating, shade provision, storage, gates and access, play equipment
Council Plan	<i>Strategy 2.23 – “Update recreation masterplans to determine future recreation priorities”</i>