

Hornsby Aquatic Centre

Overview of Design and Development Trends



The information below has been prepared by Council based on information provided by RMP & Associates (Leisure Planners & Management Consultants)

- Aquatic Centres are social hubs or community centres that have various size water spaces to meet the needs of the community. The water must be clean at all times and water filtration and sanitation must meet or exceed NSW Public Health Guidelines for Public Pools.
- Aquatic centres must look attractive and inviting with quality change rooms, toilets and adequate provision for disabled. Change rooms should include showers with screens, family change rooms, baby change tables and at least one privacy cubicle. Excellent drainage of both poolside and change areas is important.
- The inclusion of a variety of pools allows for different pool temperatures and depths to meet the needs of elderly users, parents with babies, residents who want to walk or swim for exercise in warm water as well as space for teaching children to swim, in addition to other swim activities.
- Design should make provision for future additions. There should be good flow for users from the entry past a café and spectator area to the change rooms. Consideration needs to be given to parents with strollers or prams and other residents with mobility limitations.
- The use of natural light and design for acoustics in the pool hall is essential. Non-slip, easily cleaned surfaces should be incorporated in the design of pool surrounds and change area flooring surfaces. The pool layout must be easily supervised and materials and finishes practical and easily cleaned and maintained. Bright colours should be used where possible within the pool building to provide a happy encouraging environment.
- Car parking, combined with good illumination of pathways and car parking areas and CCTV surveillance are critical to the creation of a safe and accessible venue. Research shows that over 90% of aquatic centre users travel to the venue by car.
- Councils have traditionally provided access to pools that meet the needs of their communities at an affordable price.
- Modern heated 50m pools can now be divided into different configurations with the invention of the “flip boom” lane divider. This allows both 25m and 50m lanes to be offered at the same time. Some other types of booms do not allow this flexibility.
- Indoor pools offer the public a controlled and pleasant environment all year.
- Water temperature is a critical issue in meeting the needs of the community. Lap swimming and training requires 26 – 27 deg. C while pre-school Learn-to-Swim and those exercising for arthritic conditions, back pain or rehabilitation reasons requires between 30 deg C and 32.5 deg
- The successful modern Aquatic Centre will attract large numbers of users to the various pools and programs. This means that there must be adequate space for patrons to socialise, sit and watch as well as change and shower.

Understanding consumer behavior is also important when designing pools.

- People spend more time out of the water than in the water and they want to come to a pleasant environment. Therefore, the whole atmosphere is just as important as the pool and its features. Grass areas, shaded chairs/tables, pool seating along with quality food and beverage outlets and programs for all ages add to the ambience and experience of patrons. In fact these items not only add to the pool experience but are often expected by customers in order to assure future attendance.
- The overwhelming majority of users enjoy participatory aquatic entertainment for the entire family. To accommodate the whole family and provide entertainment, many new popular pool features have been added. Zero depth children's pools are extremely popular as are 'lazy rivers', mini-waterslides, wave pools, fountains and more recently "wave riders" or artificial waves created for knee boards as a "stand-alone" attraction at public pools and water parks.
- Australian research (ABS 2005) reveals that more children participate in swimming than any other sport or physical activity while for adults it is the third highest participation activity.
- Shallow areas, particularly with interactive and static water features are often the most crowded sections of any pool.
- Attractions for older kids and adults include special waterslides, log walks, 'Tarzan ropes' and diving boards. Families want these extra features and do not just want a square pool with lanes for lap swimming.
- Inflatable rides have been introduced at Public Pools to attract children and families to traditional 50m and 25m pools.
- Many patrons, particularly older users, want warm water to swim and to walk for exercise.
- A variety of recreation opportunities is valued by many users - adequate water space for water based organised activities such as Learn-to-Swim and aquarobics, as well as "dry space" for Pilates, Yoga and group fitness classes.
- Research shows a high correlation between attendance at swimming pools and exercise. Many pools have incorporated Fitness Centres in their design to cater for 'dry' fitness programs, usually on a membership basis, and revenue helps cross-subsidise the pool operation costs.
- Many pools offer Aquatic memberships for regular swimmers to reduce the cost of entry.

In summary, what is important is adequate and flexible water space with access provided by on-site parking and safe, covered pedestrian paths to and from access points to the entry.