

MEDIA RELEASE



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New pool to make splash on north Bellarine

A new 50-metre outdoor pool for the north Bellarine has moved a major step closer, after the Council endorsed concept plans for the facility and put forward significant funding in its Proposed Budget.

As part of the proposed budget released on Tuesday night, the Council has allocated \$1.5 million for the facility in 2021-22, with a further \$2.75 million projected in forward planning for 2022-23.

If each of the amounts are ultimately endorsed following the budget feedback process, it would take the Council's contribution to \$5.15 million – adding to the significant \$10 million commitment from the federal government.

The proposed funding over the next two years follows initial Council allocations of \$150,000 for a feasibility study in 2019-20 and \$750,000 for the design phase in 2020-21.

During the meeting, councillors endorsed concept plans, which have been designed in line with the City of Greater Geelong's funding agreement with the federal government.

In response to community feedback seeking further aquatic facilities at the site, councillors also resolved to advocate for funding for a future stage two of the project.

Mayor Stephanie Asher said the 50-metre outdoor pool would fill a clear need on the north Bellarine and bring huge benefits to the local community.

"We are very excited to have made further progress toward this long awaited 50-metre outdoor pool by endorsing the concept plans, and we greatly appreciate the federal government's \$10 million commitment," Mayor Asher said.

"A 50-metre outdoor pool is ideal for the north Bellarine because it will allow for full scale swim training and Learn to Swim programs – both essential for increasing water safety and creating surf ready swimmers. We are keenly aware that bus fees are the greatest barrier to learn to swim so the co-location with the three schools and the central position in Drysdale is perfect.

"We are also hearing what the community is saying about the need for further facilities and will now identify potential funding avenues to add other features such as a warm water pool and aqua play in the future."

The endorsed concept plans set out a layout for the facility at the Drysdale Sporting Precinct, showing the location of the pool, changerooms and kiosk, seating, lawns and perimeter trees, car parking and other supporting buildings.

The project will meet the federal funding agreement by delivering a 50-metre, eight lane outdoor pool with a depth range of 1.1 metres to 1.8 metres, complying with FINA (International Swimming Federation) and Swimming Australia standards.

The pool has been designed to maximise the range of uses for people of all abilities, and will be able to host lap swimming, water exercise activities for all ages, learn to swim activities, and some events and carnivals – particularly for schools and local swimming clubs.

In line with the Council’s resolution to advocate for stage two funding, the endorsed concept plan will allow for future expansion to create an enhanced aquatic venue.

The pool and supporting facilities have been estimated at \$15.5 million to deliver, however the actual cost won’t be known until a tender for construction has been awarded.

An independent scoping study commissioned by the Council last year confirmed residents in north Bellarine towns such as Drysdale, Curlewis, Portarlington, St Leonards and Indented Head have lesser access to aquatic facilities than those elsewhere in Greater Geelong, with some facing drives of up to 35 minutes to the nearest 50-metre pool.

Extensive community consultation during the development of the Council’s Social Infrastructure Plan in 2020 also identified a new aquatic facility on the north Bellarine as a priority action.

Deputy Mayor Trent Sullivan said the new 50-metre outdoor pool would help address this need, while also serving more than 3,500 students at schools within 200 metres of the Drysdale Sporting Precinct site.

“A new pool has been a longstanding wish for the north Bellarine community, and we are now incredibly close to seeing it become a reality,” Cr Sullivan said.

“The 50-metre outdoor pool will benefit the health and fitness of local residents, and it will help create stronger swimmers who are less likely to find themselves in trouble in the water.”

Bellarine Ward councillor Jim Mason said the \$10 million provided by the federal government was an opportunity that must be taken.

“Everyone knows the Bellarine needs more aquatic facilities – there’s no debate about that,” Cr Mason said.

“The opportunity to build a 50-metre outdoor pool is a fantastic first step, and we will now work with all levels of government to pursue the funding for the stage two facilities the community is asking for.

“Bellarine ward councillors have been on this journey with the community since the beginning and our strong advocacy for this facility will continue.”