

City of Melton

Aquatic & Leisure Strategy 2026 - 2046

DRAFT - APRIL 2026



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Photo Credit: City of Melton

1. Introduction

Melton City Council is committed to supporting and encouraging residents' involvement in active and healthy lifestyles and improving their health and wellbeing. Melton City Council (Council) recognises that aquatic facilities contribute to the community's wellbeing, improve physical and mental health, and provide an environment to build social networks and connections.

To meet the community's contemporary aquatic and recreational needs, an Aquatic and Leisure Strategy is required to consider residents' current and future needs, the upgrade and renewal requirements of the existing facilities, and projections for future population growth.

Council currently has one operational aquatic and leisure centre, Melton Waves Leisure Centre (Melton Waves), which has indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities. A second facility, Fraser Rise Aquatic and Leisure Centre (FRALC) (working title), is currently under construction and due to open in 2028.

1.1. Project Purpose and Key Objectives

The City of Melton Aquatic and Leisure Strategy will guide the future provision of aquatic facilities and services for the next 20 years across the municipality.

Purpose

The purpose of the Aquatic and Leisure Strategy (Strategy) is to provide a clear direction to enable the Council to meet the current and future provision requirements for aquatic and leisure facilities and services within the rapidly growing Melton community.

This strategy builds upon the recommendations from the previous 2014-2034 Melton Aquatic Plan.

Key Objectives

The key objectives of the Strategy are:



Assess Current Facilities:

Evaluate the condition, usage, and performance of existing aquatic facilities



Community Needs Analysis:

Identify current and future community needs and preferences for aquatics facilities and services.



Strategic Planning:

Develop a long-term vision and strategic plan for aquatics facility provision, which includes defined timelines for the development or redevelopment of identified locations.



Financial and Operational Sustainability:

Ensure the financial viability and efficient operation of aquatics facilities. Provide information about the current sites, condition assessment of the current facilities, financial operational review, future funding requirements and delivery timelines for any new or redeveloped facilities.



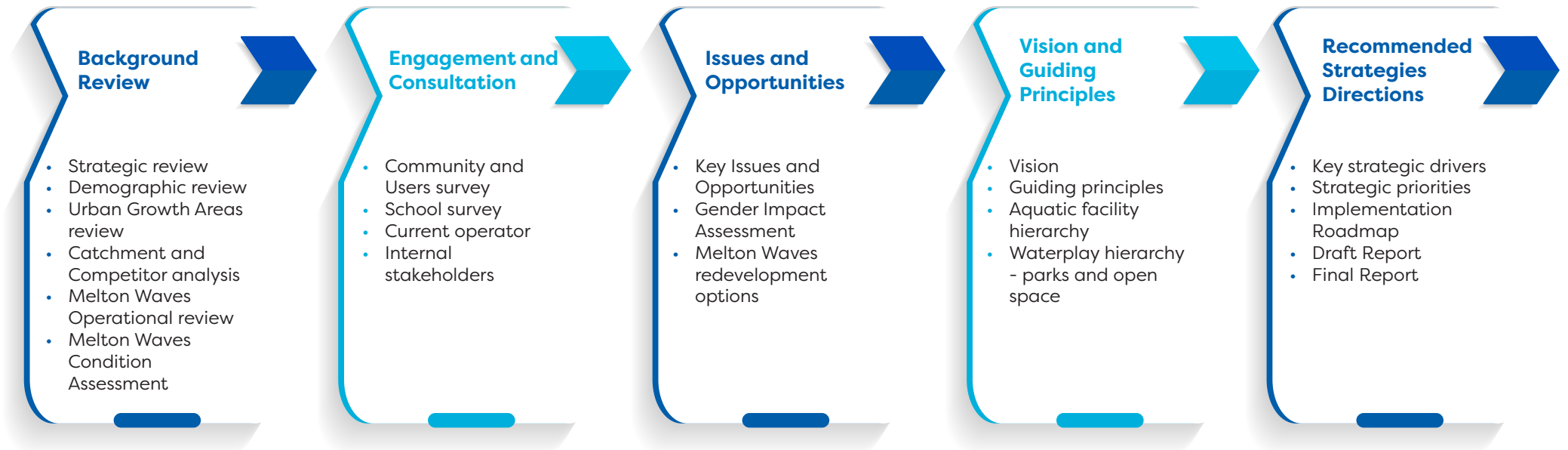
Implementation Plan:

Provide a clear, actionable plan for implementing the strategy over the next 20 years.

2. Background and Objectives

2.1. Methodology

The following methodology was implemented to develop the Strategy.



2.2. City of Melton

The City of Melton is a vibrant, rapidly growing community providing an urban-rural lifestyle.

The municipality is located in the outer western fringe of metropolitan Melbourne, approximately 40 kilometres west of the Melbourne CBD.

The City is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia covering 528 square kilometres and has a current estimated population of 241,121 residents in 2025. Over the next two decades the municipality is expected to grow by 89% and reach 455,980 residents by 2046.

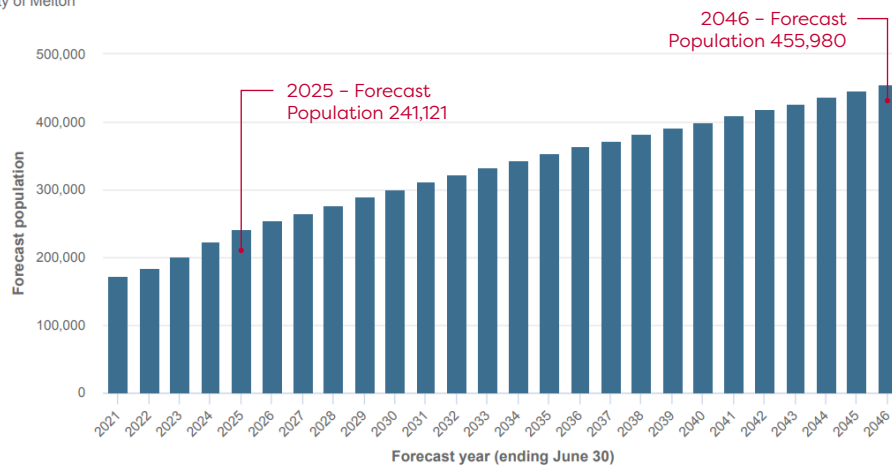


The graph below shows the expected growth forecast for next 20 years. The City of Melton population is expected to grow by 89%, from 241,121 residents in 2025 to 455,980 residents in 2046.

Figure 1: City of Melton Forecast Population Growth 2021 to 2046

Forecast population

City of Melton



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2021 to 2046, National Forecasting Program, .id (informed decisions), February 2025.

.id informed decisions

2.3. Population Profile



The **rapid population growth** is being driven by 13 urban growth areas. In 2025, the total population of the Melton Urban Growth Areas was estimated to be 98,389 people. This is expected to increase by over 173% to 259,000 residents by 2046.



There is a large proportion of the City of Melton population that fall into the **5-49 years old age** bracket that are most likely to make regular use of aquatic facilities. This accounts for 145,341 persons or 69.5% of the population and will grow to 278,157 residents by 2041.



There is a **growing number of young people** aged 0 to 19 years (30.6% of total population) that indicates there will be an increasing demand for learn to swim programs and access to aquatic facilities for recreational swimming.



The City of Melton is a **diverse community**. In 2021, 35.7% of residents were born overseas. The largest non-English speaking country of birth was India, where 8.0% of the population, or 14,314 people, were born. Facilities and services will need to cater for the diverse community needs.



Melton ranks as the **53rd most advantaged** Local Government Authority using the SEIFA index score. Melton scores 985 on the index, whilst in comparison the Victorian average score is 1010 and the Greater Melbourne average score is 1021. The lower-than-average SEIFA index means providing access to affordable aquatic facilities and services will be important for this community.



In the City of Melton, 38% of **residents rate their health as 'excellent' or 'very good,'** slightly below the Victorian average of 39.8%. However, 23.4% report their health as 'fair or poor,' higher than the state average of 20.9%.



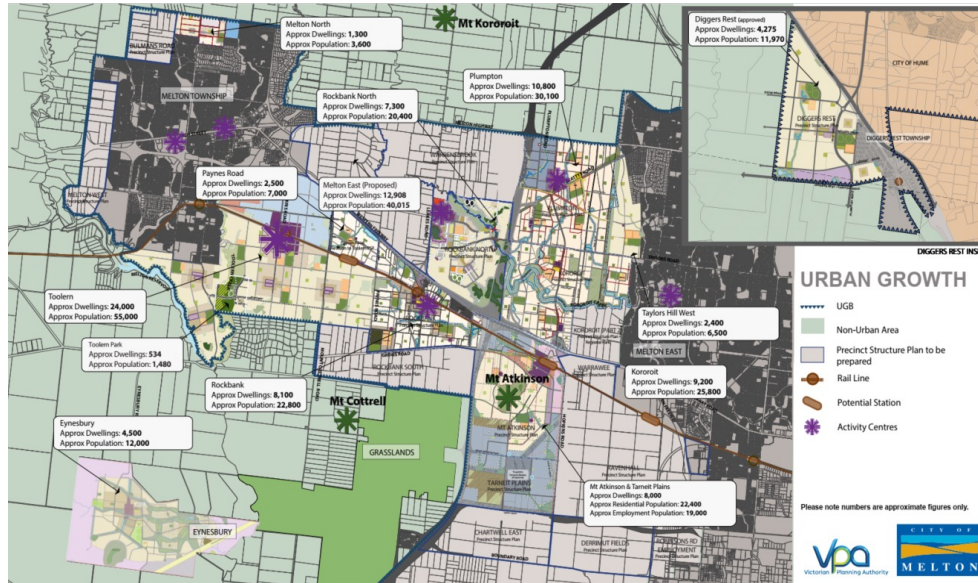
Inactivity is also notable, with 28.4% of residents reporting no moderate to vigorous physical activity, compared to 19.5% statewide. Only 32% meet the recommended 30 minutes of daily physical activity, falling short of the state average of 35.1%.

2.4. Growth Forecast and Growth Areas

Figure 2 shown below summarises the future population and Precinct Structure Plans (PSP) for the growth area precincts in the City of Melton.

In 2025, the total population of Melton Growth Areas was estimated to be 98,389 people. It is expected to increase by over 173% to 259,000 residents by 2046. The number of dwellings in Melton Growth Areas is forecast to grow from 12,055 in 2021 to 93,604 in 2046, with the average household size falling from 3.25 to 2.97 by 2046.

Figure 2: Melton Growth Areas PSP



2.5. Strategic Alignment

Council has several service planning and strategic documents that are important linkages to the planning and delivery of aquatic facilities in Melton.

The diagram below shows the strategic links between City of Melton's key strategic documents, plans and policies and the Strategy.

Figure 3: Strategic Links Overview



Emphasis on the need for well planned, sustainable and accessible aquatic facilities.

The various Council strategic documents highlight the need for well-planned neighbourhoods and accessible recreation and leisure facilities. The Council and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, Health and Wellbeing Profile Report 2020, City We Create Community Vision 2041 and the Growing and Thriving Strategy 2022-2026 all highlight the importance of delivering accessible, high-quality community infrastructure that meets the diverse needs of the population.

The Aquatic Plan 2014 - 2034 recommended three key priorities including:

- FRALC to be developed a district level facility
- Redevelopment of Melton Waves
- Future third facility for Rockbank north.

With the upscaling of FRALC to a regional level facility an updated Aquatic and Leisure Strategy is required, which considers the following:

- Provide a future facility provision model that considers FRALC's Regional status.
- Review the role of Melton Waves in the future facility provision model and if retained whether it should be redeveloped or replaced.
- Review whether as third local level facility is required in Rockbank North.

Investment in the Melton Urban Growth Areas is essential to meet the recreational and health needs of the growing population demands.

The Aquatic Plan and FRALC Business Case specifically identified the Plumpton precinct structure plan as the ideal location for a new, contemporary aquatic and leisure centre designed to accommodate a wide range of activities and user groups. This facility is being designed to cater to the increasing population in the Melton Urban Growth Areas.

Aquatic facilities deliver substantial community health and wellbeing benefits.

Aquatic facilities are a valued part of community life and can help Council meet its Health and Wellbeing Plan targets and objectives. Aquatic facilities provide health, social and economic benefits to the community.

2.6. Aquatic Facilities Current State Of Play

2.6.1. Melton Waves - Facility Overview

Melton Waves is a large indoor aquatic and leisure facility, that was built in 1995. It was added to the site of the original outdoor pools that were built in the 1960's, which includes a 50m pool, intermediate pool and large outdoor grounds area.

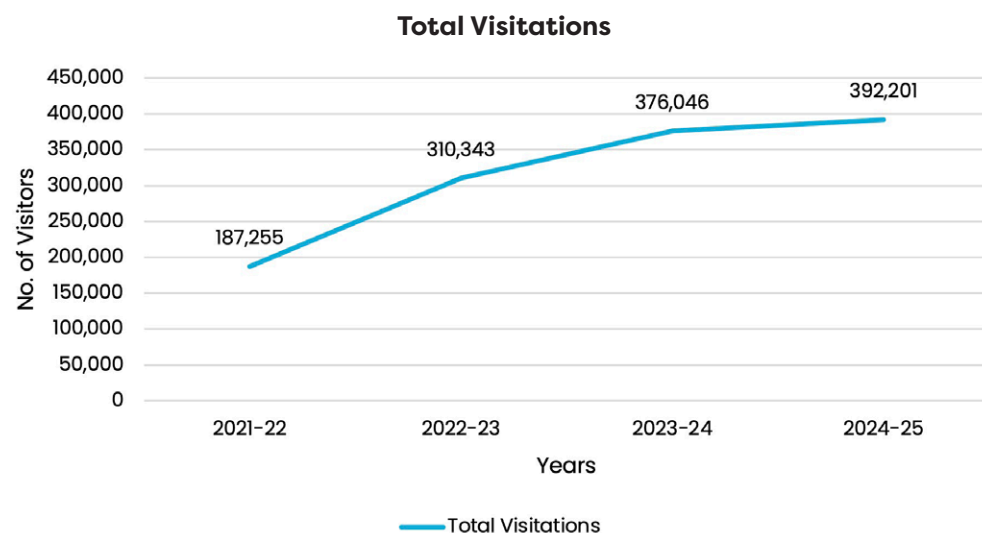
The facility includes:

- 25m x 8 lane indoor pool
- 50m x 8 lane outdoor pool and intermediate pool
- Leisure / Wave pool
- Toddler's pool
- Spa, steam room, sauna
- Changerooms
- Dry spaces - Gym, group exercise rooms, multi-purpose room, entry foyer, admin and café
- Water treatment plant rooms – both indoor and outdoor systems.

Visitation Trends Review

The following graph summarises Melton Waves visitation data over the last four years.

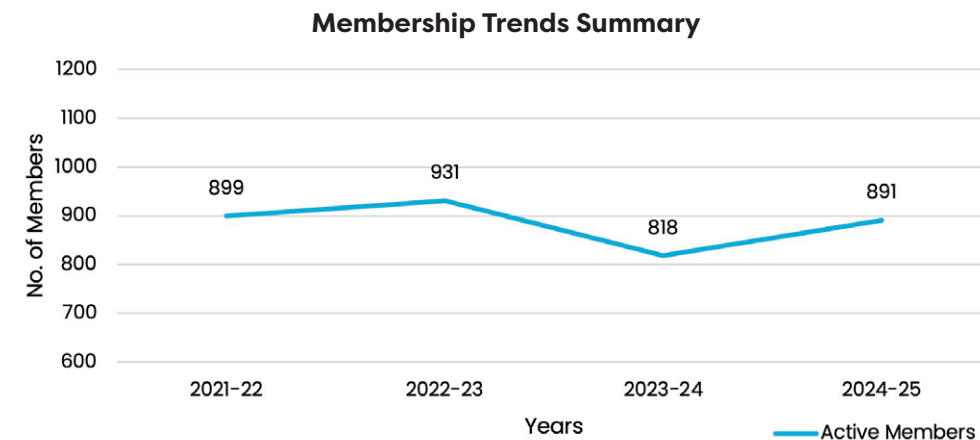
Figure 4: Melton Waves Visitations Review 2021-22 to 2024-25



Membership Trends Review

The following graph summarises Melton Waves active membership base trends over the last four years.

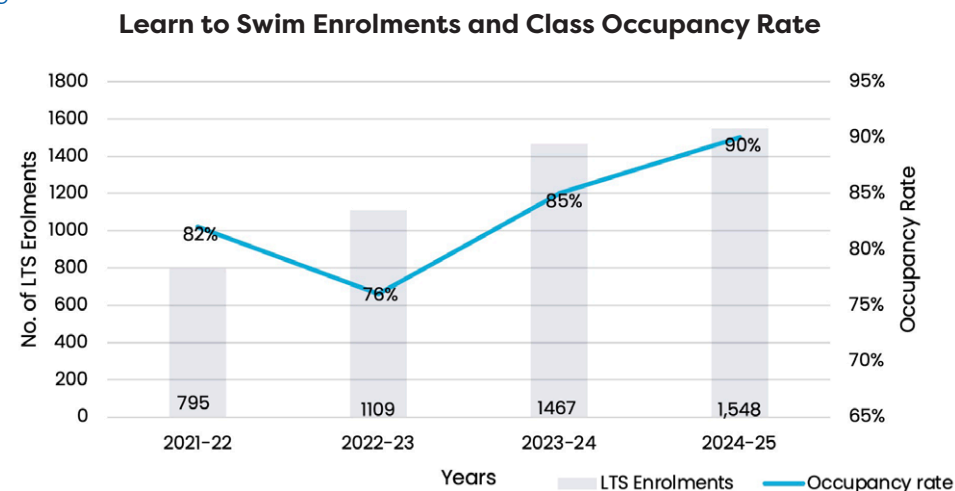
Figure 5: Melton Waves Membership Trends 2021-22 to 2024-25



Learn to Swim Enrolments Review

The following graph summarises Melton Waves Learn to Swim enrolments and occupancy rate over the last four years.

Figure 6: Melton Waves Learn to Swim Trends Review 2021-22 to 2024-25



Condition Assessment

A condition assessment of Melton Waves was undertaken. Overall, according to the report, the facility presents well and is in fair to good condition. However, there are some specific areas of concern with the indoor facilities and building (30 years old) that will require increased maintenance and renewal funding in the short-medium term, and the outdoor pools (65 years old) are nearing end of life with more frequent repairs and maintenance required on the pool shell and pipework infrastructure.

Key insights on the condition, functionality and maintenance of the facility, are summarised below:

- There are several plant room issues that will require significant maintenance in the short term. Further plant room asset assessments are underway or planned which will inform future maintenance priorities.
- The outdoor pool has had several recent asset failures resulting in major works during the season and extended shutdown of the outdoor pool whilst repairs took place.
- It should also be noted that there has been significant capital investment at the site over the past three years including 24/7 gym access modifications, virtual group fitness classes, CCTV upgrades, drowning prevention system technology installed to pool hall, kitchen upgrades and gym equipment replacement.

2.6.2. Fraser Rise Aquatic and Leisure Centre - Facility Overview

The FRALC located in Fraser Rise, is currently under construction and due to open in 2028. Once opened FRALC will be Council's regional level facility.

The facility includes:

- 50m x 8 lane indoor pool
- Two learn to swim program pools
- Warm water pool with spa
- Sauna and steam rooms
- Waterplay structure and splashpad
- Two waterslides
- Sensory aquatic area (first of its kind in Australia)
- Outdoor lagoon style pool and waterplay zone
- Gym
- Four group fitness studios
- Allied health suites and tenancy spaces
- Function space and roof top deck
- Café
- Changerooms and amenities



2.7. What we heard from the community

This section details the community engagement conducted to gather feedback on residents' experiences with Council's aquatic facilities and to understand the future demand for aquatic facilities and services across the municipality. It outlines the engagement approach, and highlights the key issues identified through the consultation process.

Consultation for Council owned pools was conducted over a one-month period in March 2025. The consultation included a wide range of interviews and online workshops with various key stakeholder groups via alternative means including:



City of Melton
Conversations
website



Online video
conferencing



Online surveys
– residents and
schools

The consultation platforms were implemented to gain an understanding of the thoughts and opinions of different sectors of the community including:

- General community
- Schools in the City of Melton
- Current Melton Waves members and users
- BlueFit – Melton Waves operators

This section presents the results from the community survey, school survey and stakeholders. Each section includes a summary of key themes to highlight the main points of the feedback.

2.7.1. Community Survey

This section summarises the key findings from the community survey conducted online through Council's Melton Conversations webpage in March 2025. A total of 1,532 people responded to the survey. The following infographics provides details on who responded to the survey.



70.5%

The majority (70.5%) of respondents identified as female.



44.2%

Age group that represents the highest percentage of the respondents is 35 to 44 years (44.2%) followed by 25 to 34 years (22%).



83

Most respondents were from Melton (83), followed by Kurunjang (60), Melton South (56), Harkness (55), Brookfield (52), and Melton West (49).

Community Survey Key findings

The following points summarise the key findings of the community survey:



Gender demographics:

A higher percentage of females participated in the survey (70.5%) compared to males (27%), with a small proportion identifying as non-binary (0.3%) and 2.2% preferring not to disclose their gender. This gender imbalance in responses indicates a significant representation of female respondents, which may highlight the primary users of facilities.



Age group distribution:

The majority of survey respondents were within the 35 to 44 years age group, comprising 44.2% of the total sample. Other prominent age groups included 25 to 34 years (22%) and 45 to 54 years (14.9%), with only a small proportion (1.9%) opting not to disclose their age, indicating a middle-aged demographic which are commonly the most engaged with the aquatic facilities.



Usage and frequency of aquatic facilities:

Most respondents (74.3%) had visited an aquatic facility within the last 12 months, with 31.4% visiting weekly. The data highlights the need to engage users who visit less frequently, particularly those visiting once a month (12.4%), as there is a notable gap in frequency, indicating an opportunity for increased engagement and participation.



Reasons for improvement and future engagement:

Respondents noted that outdated facilities, lack of maintenance, and overcrowding are key issues affecting their experience. Many expressed a desire for improvements such as more space, better facilities for children, and upgrades to the overall condition of the pools. These responses reflect the growing demand for modernised aquatic facilities to accommodate the community's evolving needs, with many stating they would be more likely to return if these changes were implemented.



Further feedback:

The family change rooms and children's facilities, like the toddler pool, are seen as outdated, and there is a need for private spaces, such as quiet rooms and female-only swimming sessions. Despite these issues, the facility's value for money, swimming lessons, and family-friendly offerings like the wave pool and leisure water continue to attract visitors, with many showing strong community attachment despite the need for improvements.

2.7.2. School Survey

Surveys were distributed to schools in the City of Melton and seven schools responded.

Summary of School Survey Key Findings

The following points summarise the key findings from the school survey.

- **Usage of aquatic facilities:** Seven schools reported using an aquatic facility in the last two years, while one did not. Three schools used aquatic facilities in term 1 only, one school attended in term 2 and one school attended in term 3 and 4. One school used the aquatic facilities year round. Six schools used Melton Waves Leisure Centre, while the others used commercial learn to swim centres. The primary reasons for use were carnivals and swimming lessons.
- **Facility ratings:** When asked about recommending Melton Waves, one school was unlikely to do so, while three remained neutral. Schools rated the centre highly for its welcoming environment, cost of hire, water temperature, and pool depths (all 80%). However, dissatisfaction was noted in areas such as program suitability (25%), insufficient school bus parking (35%), and booking availability (20%).
- **Facility limitations and costs:** Schools raised concerns about shared changerooms and toilets, citing child safety risks. One school chose another venue for its exclusive facilities. Schools also requested upgrades, including a PA system, private changing areas, improved waterplay, and better disability access.
- **Swimming standards and positive aspects:** Schools noted a decline in swimming ability after Year 6 but cannot enrol in lessons due to costs. Despite concerns, they appreciate the helpful staff, responsive management, outdoor space, and convenient location.

2.7.3. Key Stakeholder Engagement

The following is a summary of the key stakeholder engagement key findings.



Population growth is the biggest challenge for Council to keep pace with the aquatic infrastructure provision that is fit for purpose for a diverse community.



The Melton Waves facilities are reaching end of life which is impacting on service provision and increasing maintenance requirements



The Melton Waves facilities are no longer contemporary or catering for the community's needs. Through discussions with the key stakeholders, it was clear that the facility provision is not adequate and will require upgrades including.



Need for a much larger and fully accessible indoor warm water pool.



Growing need for dedicated accessible learn to swim spaces to cater for the expected increase in demand and the needs of a diverse community.



Addition of contemporary waterplay/splashpad facilities to better cater for children and families.



Expansion of gym and health and fitness program rooms to cater for the expected growth in demand. Memberships are a key revenue source so having high quality health and wellness spaces is essential in contemporary facilities.



The ageing outdoor 50m pool is reaching end of life.



The Wave Pool is no longer seen as a contemporary feature in aquatic facilities. It requires a very large footprint, is high cost to operate and has limited capacity for programming such as learn to swim classes due to pool depths and potential safety risks.



There is high level of interest to establish splashparks within parks and open space reserves, particularly in new Urban Growth suburbs to service Melton's rapidly growing community.



There is a high prevalence of anti-social behaviour at Melton Waves, which emphasises the importance of engaging with and catering for the teenage/youth market through waterplay, programming and a welcoming environment for young people to enjoy.



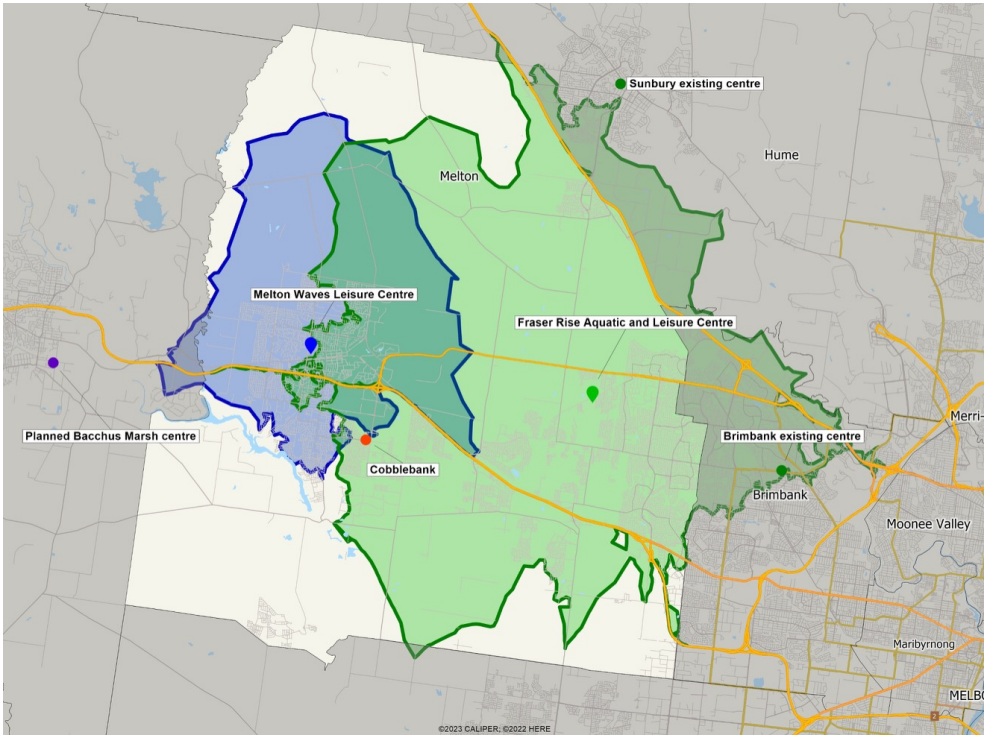
The operating data confirms there is an increasing cost to Council to operate and maintain Melton Waves. The operating costs will continue to increase as the facility ages and if no improvements or upgrades occur at the site.

3.Demand for Aquatic and Leisure facilities in the City of Melton

3.1. Catchment Map

The following map shows the 0-10 minute drive time district catchment for Melton Waves and 0-15 minute drive time regional catchment for Fraser Rise Aquatic and Leisure Centre (FRALC).

Figure 7: FRALC and Melton Waves Catchments



The table below provides a summary of the population catchment from 2021 and future projections between 2026 and 2046.

Table 1: FRALC and Melton Waves Population Catchment Projections 2021 - 2046

Site	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041	2046
FRALC (0-15min)	196,358	238,326	289,263	351,088	426,126	517,203
Waves (0-10 min)	65,238	79,181	96,105	116,646	141,576	171,836
Catchment Overlap	18,265	22,169	26,908	32,659	39,639	48,111
Catchment Gaps (Total of Northwest, Southwest, Southeast areas)	8,940	10,851	13,170	15,985	19,401	23,548
Total Catchments	261,596	317,507	385,368	467,734	567,702	689,039

The catchment mapping analysis completed as part of the Strategy has identified that the location of Melton Waves compliments FRALC by providing the greatest population catchment reach over any other location.

The catchment mapping does not support the provision of a third local level facility in Rockbank North. This location is already well provided for under a two facility provision model being FRALC (Regional facility) and Melton Waves (District facility).

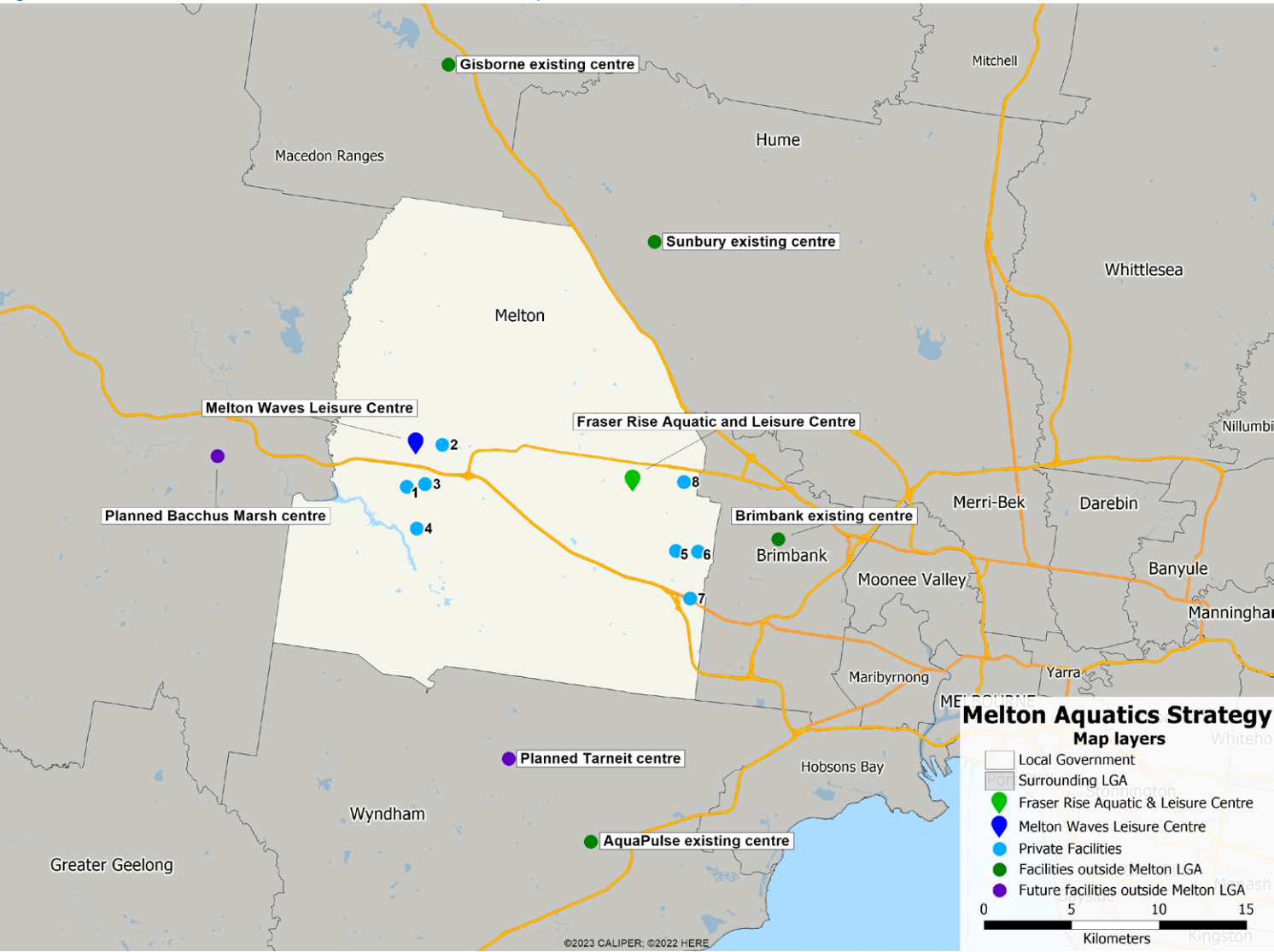
3.2. Other Aquatic Facilities

The following map shows other local government owned and private aquatic facilities surrounding Melton Waves and FRALC. They include facilities in the City of Melton area, outside the City of Melton and future planned aquatic facilities in neighbouring councils. The other facilities include local government owned and commercial aquatic venues.

Table 2: Private Facilities in the City of Melton

Map ID	Facility
Existing Locations	
1	Melton Swim School - in Genesis
2	Paul Sadler Swimland (Melton)
3	Swimmers
4	JUMP! Swim Schools (Melton South)
5	State Swim Caroline Springs
6	Kingswim Caroline Springs
7	JUMP! Swim Schools (Caroline Springs)
8	Paul Sadler Swimland (Parkwood Green)

Figure 8: Other Local Government Owned and Commercial Aquatic Facilities



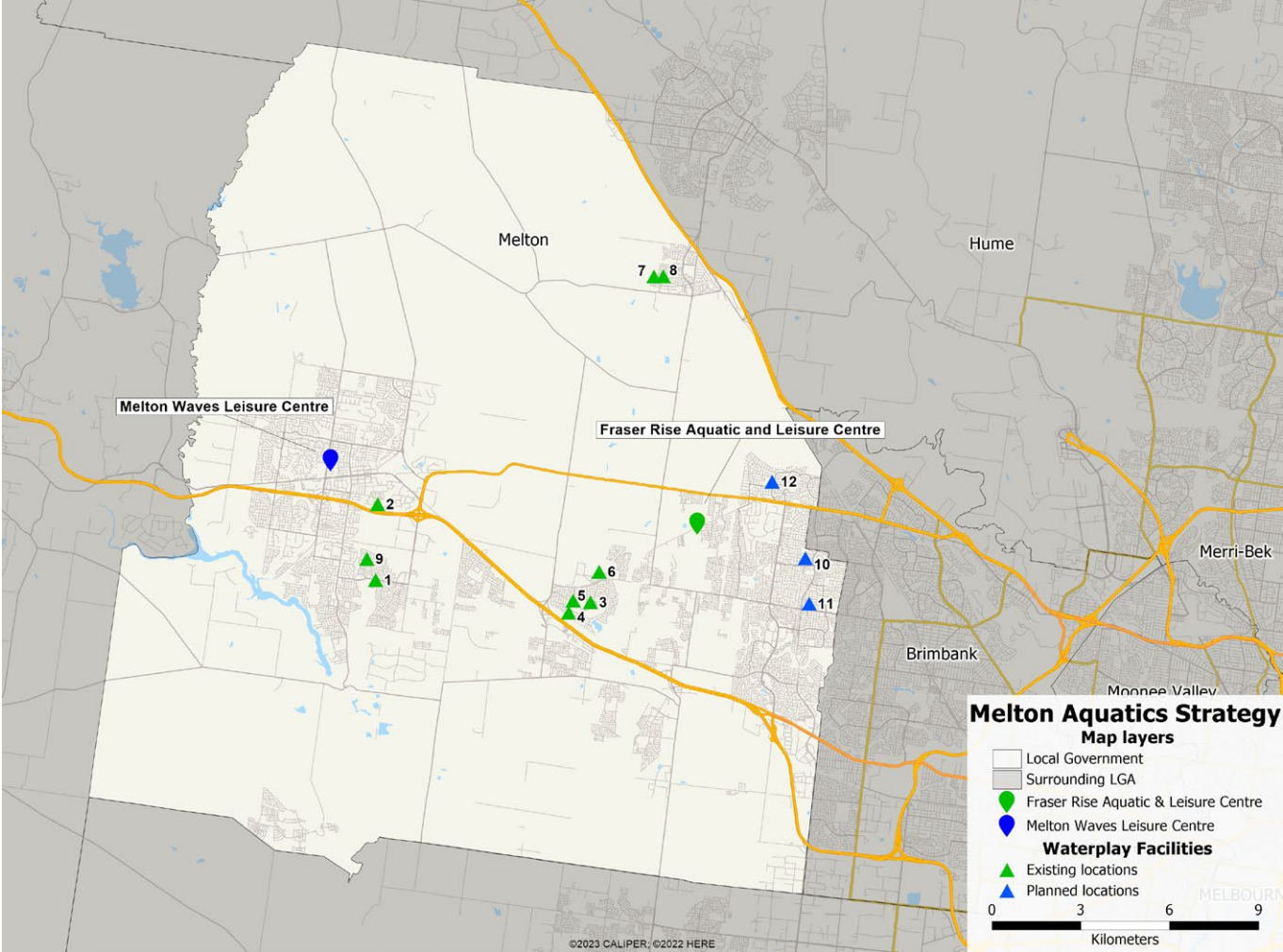
3.3. Waterplay in Parks and Open Space

An emerging trend over the last ten years is the provision of waterplay experiences in parks and open space reserves. These services are free and often integrated with playground equipment zones. The scale and features of waterplay installations can vary from simple interactive waterplay elements through to splashparks/splashpads with complex waterplay features. These facilities are not staffed but do require some level of regular maintenance and water treatment. Following is a map of current and planned waterplay locations within the City of Melton.

Table 3: City of Melton waterplay locations

Map ID	Facility
Existing Locations	
1	Bridge Road Playspace
2	Melton Botanic Garden Playspace
3	Aintree Town Centre Reserve
4	Jackwood Park
5	Frontier Park
6	Stagecoach Way Reserve
7	Bouquet Crt Reserve (Flore Park)
8	Figwood Drive Reserve (Gecko Park)
9	Settlers Creek Reserve
Future Planned Locations	
10	Taylors Hill Central Park
11	Barwon Street Reserve/Jacaranda Reserve
12	Hillside Recreation Reserve

Figure 9: City of Melton waterplay locations



Below are some images of existing waterplay destinations across the City of Melton's parks and reserves.

Figure 10: City of Melton park setting waterplay case studies



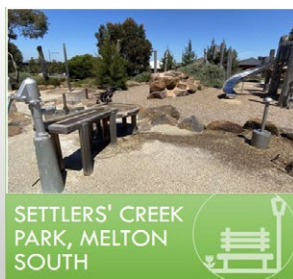
FLORE PARK,
DIGGERS REST

WATER TAP AND A CHANNEL WITH A
SPLASH TABLE.



JACKWOOD PARK
PLAYGROUND,
AINTREE

WATER PUMP WITH A SMALL SAND PIT
AREA.



SETTLERS' CREEK
PARK, MELTON
SOUTH

WATER PUMP, TWO SPLASH TABLES, AND
TWO WATER PLAY-HINGED GATES



FRONTIER PARK,
AINTREE

MULTIPLE EQUIPMENT



AINTREE RESERVE
PLAYGROUND,
AINTREE

TWO WATER PUMPS AND A WATER TABLE
WITH MULTIPLE WATER SLUICES



ATHERSTONE
REGIONAL
PLAYSPACE, MELTON
SOUTH

WATER PUMP, TWO SPLASH TABLES,
WOODEN CHANNELS



4. Key Issues and Opportunities

4.1. Aquatic Facility Trends

There has been a much greater emphasis on the development of a variety of water spaces within public aquatic centres including:

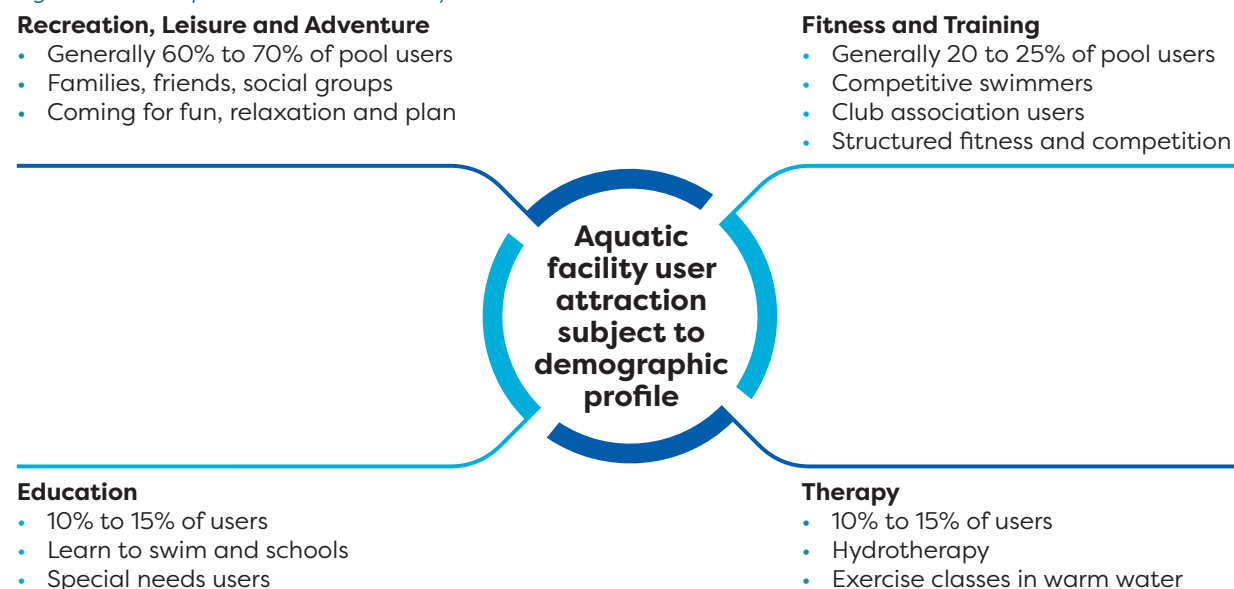
- Program pools designed for learn to swim and a variety of aquatics programs.
- Warm water pools, which are used for rehabilitation and therapy, are one of the highest-use spaces within public aquatic and leisure centres.
- Water play including large, enclosed slides, water jets and other leisure play opportunities.

Health and fitness programming have also advanced with a greater emphasis on programs for older adults as well as a much broader range of opportunities including Pilates, Yoga and Boot Camp.

4.2. Key User Markets

Detailed planning and comprehensive feasibility studies show targeted user profiles with the majority of aquatic facility market research indicating facilities must equally cater for four distinct aquatic user markets, summarised in the figure below.

Figure 11: Main Aquatic and Leisure Facility User Markets



The key revenue streams of successful leisure centres are primarily driven by two of the key markets noted above. This includes **education**, which include Learn to Swim, and **fitness and training**, which includes membership. Industry benchmark research indicates these two-revenue streams account for approximately 70-80% of total operating income.

The **recreation, leisure and adventure**, and the **therapy** markets are key attractors for a successful leisure centre but require significant staffing and operating costs to service these markets. They typically generate 20-30% of the total operating income.

4.3. Market Research Analysis

The key findings from the Market Research Analysis include:



The total population for Melton Waves catchment is 65,238 (0-10 minute) while the total population for FRALC is 196,358 (0-15 minute). There is a shared overlapping catchment of 18,196 residents (0-10-minute Waves and 0-15-minute FRALC).



The catchment mapping scenarios demonstrate that under a two-facility aquatic strategy FRALC and Melton Waves will have the highest population catchment reach, lowest catchment overlap and lowest catchment gaps. This should be a key consideration in the future decision making for aquatic facility planning.



There are currently 17 other aquatic facilities in the City of Melton and surrounding municipalities. This includes 13 Learn to Swim facilities and four aquatic centres. There are two future facilities proposed in the neighbouring municipalities of Wyndham and Moorabool.



Melton City Council is investing in waterplay features at many parks and reserves, which is an emerging trend across local government areas which provide alternative waterplay experiences for young children and families.



The aquatic facility design trends highlight some of the gaps in the current provision of facilities at Melton Waves, which will be addressed at the new FRALC facility when it opens in 2028. To meet the needs of the growing population any future upgrades or redevelopment of Melton Waves should consider the inclusion of a large warm water program pool, dedicated learn to swim pool, contemporary waterplay features, wellness spaces and suitable health and fitness facilities.



Future planning for Melton Waves upgrades or redevelopment should consider facilities that cater for the various market segments which include:

- Leisure, adventure and fun activities
- Health, fitness and wellness services
- Aquatic education and learn-to-swim programs
- Therapy and rehabilitation facilities
- Competitive and recreational swimming options
- Food/beverage and merchandise services.



The facility and programming gap analysis of Melton Waves highlights that many services are only partially catered for or not provided for at all. Noting that FRALC will fill these gaps once it opens in 2028. Below is a summary of the gap analysis findings:

- Although the Wave Pool is a unique attraction, the venue lacks contemporary indoor and outdoor waterplay opportunities such as waterplay structures and splashpads.
- The water space for Learn to Swim programs and warm water therapy is insufficient given the growing demand for these services. A large warm water program pool and separate dedicated Learn to Swim pool are key priorities in any future redevelopment of the facility.
- There is currently a small gym and two health and fitness rooms. Expanded health and fitness facilities should be key priorities in any future redevelopment as they are key revenue drivers for memberships that underpin operational sustainability of the facility.
- There is a lack of wellness spaces and allied health services onsite, which is a missed opportunity considering the health profile of the community.

4.4. Facility and Services Gap Analysis

The following table provides an analysis of the current facilities and services offered at Melton Waves under the key user markets, to identify potential service gaps to be considered in future redevelopment or expansion opportunities.

Table 4: Facility and Services gap analysis

	Recreation, Leisure and Adventure					Training, Fitness and Education			Health and Fitness						Hospitality and Merchandise		
	Indoor Water Play	Outdoor Pools	Wave pool	Outdoor Water Play and Splashpad	Waterslides	Competition Training Pools 25m or 50m	Program Pool/ Learn to Swim Pool	Training room	Weights room/Gym	Group Fitness Rooms	Wellness Rooms	Warm Water Program Pool	Allied Health Rooms	Sauna and Spa	Meeting and Social Spaces	Café	Merchandise
Melton Waves Aquatic Centre	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

● Provides for market ● Partially provides for market ● Does not provide for market

A review of the facility gap analysis indicates the following:

Although Melton Waves has the Wave Pool as a unique attraction, it **lacks contemporary indoor and outdoor waterplay opportunities** such as leisure pools, waterslides, waterplay structures and splashpads.

The **water space for Learn to Swim programs and warm water therapy is insufficient** given the growing demand for these services. A large warm water program pool and separate dedicated Learn to Swim pool are key priorities in any future redevelopment of the facility.

There is currently a small gym and two health and fitness rooms. **Expanded health and fitness facilities should be key priorities** in any future redevelopment as they are key revenue drivers for memberships that underpin operational sustainability of the facility.

There is a **lack of wellness spaces and allied health services onsite**, which is a missed opportunity considering the health profile of the community and need for better access to these types of services.



What does the research, analysis, investigations and community engagement tell us?



4.5. Key Issues and Opportunities

The key issues and opportunities that will guide the development of the aquatic and leisure strategy are summarised in the section below.



Demographic Profile

- Rapid population growth over the next twenty years the municipality is expected to grow by 89% and reach 455,980 residents by 2046.
- There is a large proportion of the City of Melton population that fall into the 5-49 years old age bracket that are most likely to make regular use of aquatic facilities. This accounts for 145,341 persons or 69.5% of the population and will grow to 278,157 residents by 2041. The young age profile of the municipality in the 0-to-19-year age group (30.6% of total population) indicates there will be an increasing demand for learn to swim programs and access to aquatic facilities for recreational swimming.
- The City of Melton is a diverse community. In 2021, 35.7% of resident were born overseas, same as 35.7% in Greater Melbourne. A high proportion of the cultural groups generally have lower levels of swimming competency. Access to learn to swim programs for people of all ages should be a priority.
- The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage for the City of Melton in 2021 was 985. The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) measure the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage and/or advantage based on a range of Census characteristics. The national median is 1000, therefore any score above 1000 shows higher advantage. The City of Melton SEIFA index indicates that there are some areas of disadvantage within the community and therefore providing access to affordable aquatic facilities and services will be important for this community.
- The Health and Wellbeing Report recorded low levels of physical activity of Melton residents compared to the Victorian average. The aquatic and leisure network therefore plays an essential role in supporting and encouraging increase physical activity levels for residents.
- Rapid population growth, age profile and cultural diversity are the key demographic drivers that will influence the future provision and network of aquatic and leisure centres. The development of the FRALC will address the population growth in the east of the municipality.



Current and Future Facility Provision

- There is currently only one operational Council owned aquatic and leisure facility in Melton (Melton Waves). A second facility, FRALC, is under construction and planned to open in 2028.
- Melton Waves is an ageing facility and struggling to service demand due to a lack of contemporary facilities. The Melton Waves condition assessment recommends significant maintenance is required over the next 5 years but this won't improve functionality. The venue is costing Council over \$1.5 million per year to operate which is considered high compared to contemporary facilities in the industry. This is likely to increase further as the facility ages over time and if no facility improvements or upgrades occur in the short to medium term.
- The Melton Waves outdoor pools are reaching end of life, and some infrastructure may fail or require major investment in the next 5-10 years. Council needs to plan for this scenario and determine whether the outdoor pool at Melton Waves will be replaced. Noting FRALC will have an indoor 50m pool and outdoor pool available once it opens in 2028.
- There are number of regional facilities in surrounding municipalities such as Wyndham, Brimbank and Hume, which are servicing some City of Melton residents. However, these sites are already reaching capacity with their localised catchments for programs such as learn to swim.
- There are several facilities in surrounding municipalities in the planning phase for development or upgrades including Moorabool, Tarneit and Sunbury. However, these will likely be local or district size facilities catering for local catchments.



Trends

- The most successful aquatic and leisure facilities have components that cater for the four key user markets. Melton Waves is lacking contemporary fit for purpose facilities to service some of these user markets.
- The key provision gaps at Melton Waves includes larger warm water pool, dedicated learn to swim pool, contemporary waterplay/splashpad facilities and larger health and fitness spaces.
- FRALC will be City of Melton's regional facility that will assist with bridging current gaps in aquatic facilities and services.
- Creating a complimentary network of sustainable aquatic facilities and waterplay destinations should a key consideration in the aquatic strategy.
- Aquatic centres that fail to meet customer expectations for quality and lack a broad range of services are trailing behind, resulting in poor participation rates and financial outcomes.



Community Engagement

- Significant community feedback relating to the condition of the facilities and limited capacity in busy times are key issues affecting their experience at Melton Waves. Attracting and retaining users will continue to be a challenge at this ageing facility.
- The community consultation highlighted issues such as overcrowding in aquatic areas, no water play adventure areas, size and quality of indoor swimming pools, limited health and fitness/group fitness programs, outdated indoor change rooms and children's facilities.
- Many residents expressed a desire for improvements such as more space, better facilities for children, and upgrades to the overall condition of the pools. These responses reflect the growing demand for modernised aquatic facilities to accommodate the community's evolving needs, with many stating they would be more likely to return if these changes were implemented.
- Despite these issues, the facility's value for money, swimming lessons, and family-friendly offerings like the wave pool and leisure water continue to attract visitors, with many showing strong community attachment despite the need for improvements.
- The community consultation identified considerable demand for indoor warm water pool, indoor spa and saunas, longer opening hours, more or improved health and fitness classes and wellness facilities



Strategic Opportunities

The above key findings suggest the following strategic opportunities that will be further considered in the next phase of the Strategy.

- Develop a clear hierarchy of facility provision. FRALC will become Council's regional facility, the redevelopment or upgrade of Melton Waves should be focused as a district level facility, and the need for a third local level facility.
- The Melton Waves site is a good strategic location to provide aquatic and leisure facilities, however the mix of facilities offered needs improvement to provide greater diversity to meet the current demand and community expectations.
- The timing for Melton Waves redevelopment is an important consideration in the context of the FRALC construction timeframe.
- Reviewing the need for a third local level facility and where it would be best located is important to guide future planning for aquatic facilities. Strategically the redevelopment of Melton Waves should be prioritised ahead of a potential third aquatic facility given the existing large catchment population and the ageing infrastructure.
- Planning for the future aquatic network provision should include interactive waterplay in key locations in the Urban Growth areas to provide alternate, low cost and inclusive opportunities for waterplay and cooling off during summer months.
- The Melton Waves redevelopment and other future aquatic facilities should examine possible mixed-use opportunities on the site that may incorporate other services.
- Greater engagement with schools, to understand their facility needs and improvements required to drive higher participation outcomes.
- Investigate funding opportunities including developer contributions, State and Federal Government grants to assist Council with funding future aquatic facility developments.

5.Strategic Framework

Based on the key findings and analysis, a vision and guiding principles have been developed for the Strategy.

5.1. Vision



“As the City of Melton grows, our community will have access to a diverse network of accessible, affordable, and financially sustainable aquatic programs, services, and facilities. These facilities will improve community wellbeing outcomes, enable increased participation, and deliver social and health benefits to our diverse and rapidly expanding population.”

5.2. Guiding Principles

Figure 12: Aquatic and Leisure Strategy Guiding Principles

Provide contemporary and quality facilities

Aquatic facilities are well managed, maintained and presented, meeting industry and safety standards.

Sustainable, efficient and affordable

Community aquatic facilities will be financially sustainable with fee structures to encourage use by all sections of our community.

Aquatic facilities will be strategically planned and operated to ensure environmental sustainability, incorporating initiatives to conserve energy and water.

Improve community health and wellbeing

Services will support participation and improved health outcomes in the Melton community, including people with a disability, youth, older adults, families and children.

Maximise equity and access

Provide access to a network of aquatic facilities to meet demand and support health and wellbeing outcomes for our community.

5.3. Strategic Directions

5.3.1. Aquatic Facility Hierarchy Provision

As City of Melton's urban growth areas expand and population grows it is proposed that aquatic facilities be provided using a network approach. The recommended aquatics provision is a combination of:

- Two Council-owned aquatics facilities, including the soon to be developed FRALC and the existing Melton Waves facility. Consideration for the future redevelopment or replacement of Melton Waves is a key recommendation of the Strategy.
- Waterplay experiences in parks and open space areas within City of Melton suburbs.
- Facilities and services available from the commercial sector (e.g., swim schools, private gyms, personal training studios, and private warm water/therapy pools).
- Other facilities in neighbouring LGA's including Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre and Sunbury Aquatic and Leisure Centre. Noting there is also future aquatic facilities planned in Bacchus Marsh and Tarneit which will play a role as population expands in the northwest corridor of outer Melbourne.

The following aquatic and leisure facility hierarchy has been developed to help inform the aquatic and leisure strategy recommendations for any future developments within the municipality.

Table 5: Facility Hierarchy

Facility Hierarchy	Catchment Indicators	Facility Service Level Objective
Regional Fraser Rise Aquatic and Leisure Centre	• Catchment Population: 100,000-200,000+ • Caters for diverse users of all ages for various purposes, including wellbeing, aquatic, health and fitness and social activities. • Highly prominent location and easily accessible. • Typically, 0-15 mins drive time. • Attracts use from outside the LGA.	• Extensive and varied program leisure water and attractions. • Consideration of an indoor 50m pool and separate warm water pools. • Wellness/health club and extensive program room inclusions. • Complementary services and amenities, food, and beverage.
District Melton Waves Leisure Centre	• Catchment Population: 20,000-100,000. • Caters for diverse users of all ages for various purposes, including wellbeing, aquatic, health and fitness and social activities. • Primarily attracts people from across the municipality. • Typically, 0-10 mins drive time.	• Consider 25m pool. • Ability to separate program and leisure water. • Provision of larger dry/gym facilities and some program rooms. • Café and Retail.
Local Future third Facility (to be revisited once trigger points of population and facility capacity are hit at FRALC and Melton Waves)	• Catchment Population: 0-50,000. • Caters for diverse users of all ages for various purposes, including wellbeing, aquatic, health and fitness and social activities. • Primarily attracts people from its own suburb and some from neighbouring suburbs. • Typically, 0-10 mins drive time.	• Provides local aquatic experience, i.e. program pool or water play feature. • Limited program water combined with leisure water. • Limited dry/gym facilities. • Small café.

5.3.2. Waterplay Hierarchy – Parks and Open Space

The following waterplay hierarchy has been developed for parks and open space developments, which are important in the aquatic network provision for families to cool off in their local neighbourhoods.

Table 6: Waterplay Hierarchy – Parks and Open Space Settings

Scale	Small	Medium	Large
Hierarchy	Local Level	District level	Regional Level
Description	Park with some small interactive water features within a traditional play space. Attracts users from within suburbs.	Park with some waterplay features and typically adjacent to playgrounds, may have amenities provided. Attracts users from within the municipality.	Destination Park with multiple waterplay features, supporting infrastructure, and amenities. Attracts users from across and outside the municipality.
Equipment	1 or 2 elements	4-5 elements	5+ elements
Supporting Infrastructure	None to 1	Shelter, maybe toilets	Shelter, toilets and other amenities
Approximate cost	\$20-50k	\$50-100k	\$1-3 million
Maintenance	Low to none	Little maintenance required	High level of maintenance required



5.3.3. Melton Waves – Development Options Analysis

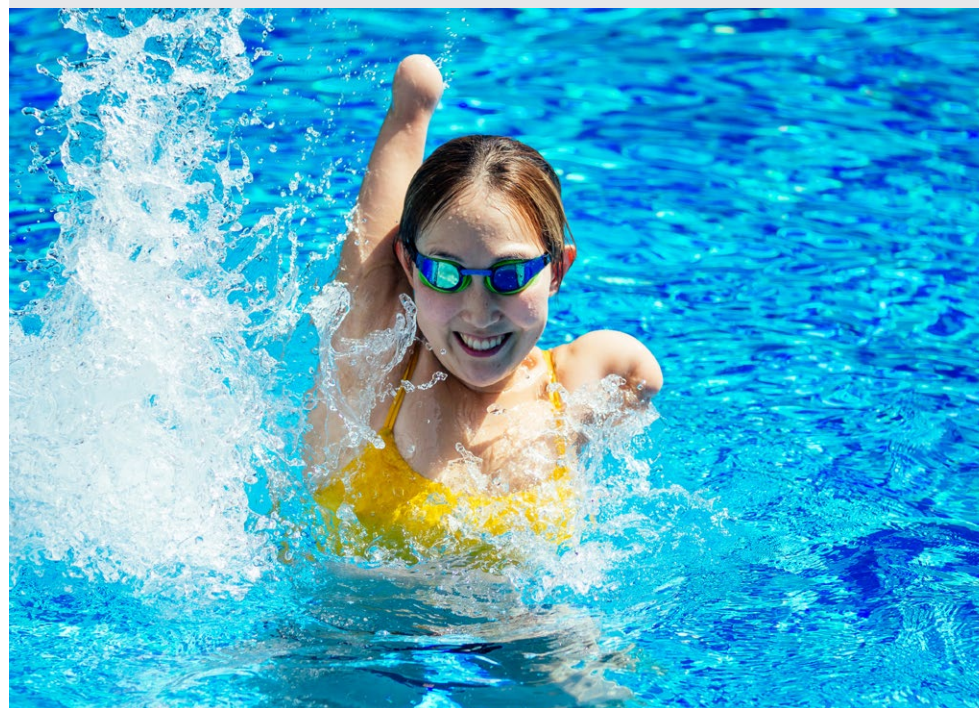
The following table provides a high-level analysis of the expected outcomes of replacing compared to redevelopment of Melton Waves site. The following decision-making factors should be key considerations for Council to determine the best long-term outcome for residents.

Table 7: Melton Waves Upgrades - Options Analysis

Decision Making Factors	Replacement Outcomes	Redevelopment Outcomes
Asset condition and age	New asset – 30-50-year lifespan.	Existing components are 30-60 years old. Nearing the end of life.
Functional layout and component relationships	Contemporary layout can be fully achieved.	Retrofitting or bolting on to an ageing shell – challenging to achieve an efficient layout with building footprint constraints.
Facility component mix – need vs demand	Components tailored to meet demand and greater flexibility with design features.	Reuse of some existing components is possible but constraints with layout and functional relationships.
ESD Principles and design efficiency	Greenstar design achievable, full electrification of plant, and greater energy efficiency opportunities.	Greenstar design is not achievable. It is very difficult to achieve energy efficiency targets in ageing facility. Conversion to electric may be problematic.
Operational cost implications	Greater probability of better operating performance. Facility better targets 4 key user markets to maximise usage.	Refurb improvements will improve the operating performance but will depend on components that can be added.
Capital cost implications	Higher capital cost but lower asset management costs in the short-medium term.	Potentially lower capital cost but retrofitting ageing building shell may require higher asset management investment in the short – medium term.

The options analysis clearly demonstrates that replacing Melton Waves with a new facility will provide the best long-term outcomes including:

- New asset with 30–50-year asset lifespan.
- Better environmental sustainability outcomes, using modern design and technology.
- More contemporary facility components to service the growing population needs.
- A facility that is more inclusive, accessible and functional for users.
- Greater likelihood of lower operational costs to Council.



6. Implementation

The following list of strategic questions were debated, analysed and tested to inform the most appropriate aquatic facility and service provision model to service the City of Melton's future growth projections.

6.1. Key Strategic Drivers

The recommended strategic directions are based on the following outcomes of the research and analysis of Council's aquatic facility and service provision:

Melton Waves Asset Condition and Functionality

Melton Waves is an ageing facility and struggling to service current demand due to a lack of fit for purpose facilities. A more contemporary and functional design will enable the site to better meet the needs of the growing City of Melton population, particularly catering for the learn to swim, therapy and recreational swimming markets more effectively.

The Melton Waves condition assessment recommends significant maintenance over next 5 years, but this won't improve functionality, provide for new markets or address identified community need. The venue is costing Council over \$1.5 million per year to operate which is considered high compared to contemporary facilities in the industry. This is likely to increase further as the facility ages over time and if no facility improvements or upgrades occur in the short to medium term.

Fraser Rise Aquatic and Leisure Centre (FRALC) Development

Construction of the FRALC commenced late 2025, with the facility set to become a leading regional venue upon its opening in 2028. Purposefully designed and future-proofed, FRALC will address the growing population needs within Melton's urban growth areas. With a comprehensive range of components, FRALC will bridge existing service gaps not currently met by the ageing Melton Waves site.

Population Catchment Analysis

Catchment mapping undertaken for this report indicate that a two-facility model will adequately meet the population demands of Melton for the next 10 to 20 years. The analysis further confirms that the FRALC and Melton Waves sites offer the greatest population catchment reach, minimal overlap between catchments, and limited catchment gaps. These findings provide compelling evidence supporting Melton Waves as the preferred site for a second District-level facility, rather than an alternative location.

Other Facilities

Research identifies 17 aquatic facilities in City of Melton and neighbouring LGAs, comprising both Council owned and commercially operated sites. Facilities like Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre and Sunbury Aquatic and Leisure Centre already serve Melton residents, while the planned Bacchus Marsh and Tarneit centres are expected to attract some Melton residents due to their proximity and easier access as urban growth areas expand. Currently, the City of Melton has eight private swimming schools, with an additional five sites in adjacent councils that may also cater to local residents.

Outdoor Waterplay in Strategic Locations

Council currently has eleven locations in parks and open space settings that offer waterplay experiences. These sites are well used by the community and are an important part of the aquatic network mix. A further three sites are in the planning stage. Strategic investment in waterplay in parks and open spaces as an affordable, safe and accessible alternative for locals to cool off in summer.

6.2.Strategic Priority Recommendations

Based on the research and key findings it is **recommended that Council adopt a two-facility model** which includes the soon to be constructed Fraser Rise Aquatic and Leisure Centre (Regional Facility) and Melton Waves (District Facility). The following strategic priorities are recommended for the next twenty years.

1. Strategic Priority One – Asset Management

- Short-term funding investment is required to address the asset condition issues identified through the technical assessment conducted on Melton Waves.
- After construction, create a ten-year Asset Management Plan for FRALC to ensure ongoing proactive maintenance of facility standards and quality.

2. Strategic Priority Two– Management and Operation

- Evaluate the optimal management model for the proposed aquatic and leisure facilities to ensure alignment with health and wellbeing objectives, customer service standards, financial and environmental sustainability, and asset management requirements.

3. Strategic Priority Three – Fraser Rise Aquatic and Leisure Centre development (underway)

- Development of Fraser Rise Aquatic and Leisure Centre to support year-round access to aquatic and leisure facilities to provide greater access for resident to learn to swim program, health, and fitness programs, waterplay experiences and therapy-based activities.

4. Strategic Priority Four – Planning for future Melton Waves replacement

- Commence planning for the replacement of Melton Waves which is approaching end of life. The future facility design should consider supporting the four key user markets with access to aquatic and leisure experiences at a second District level facility.
- The short to medium-term priority is to maintain the existing Melton Waves facility. A Business Case, funding strategy and delivery timeline for the new Melton Waves facility should be prioritised in the next two years.
- If the existing outdoor pools reach the end of their operational lifespan before the planned redevelopment of the Waves site, it is recommended that the outdoor pool infrastructure be decommissioned. Upon completion of the FRALC construction in 2028, both the outdoor pool and the 50-metre indoor pool will be available at this location.

5. Strategic Priority Five – Expanding the network of aquatic facilities and services

- Consider strategies to encourage commercial swim schools and health and fitness operators in establishing or expanding facilities to address gaps in the learn-to-swim market—which is an important consideration given Melton’s young age demographic profile.
- Undertake further planning for waterplay provision via a review of Council’s Open Space Strategy.

6. Strategic Priority Six – Monitoring and Evaluation of planning triggers

- Given the significant population growth the Council will need to continually monitor the usage of FRALC and Melton Waves. If program areas such as Learn to Swim, health and fitness and warm water space reach capacity, the development of a third local level facility may be required to support these key program needs. The triggers for further planning and investigation of a potential third local level facility should include:
 - « Learn to Swim Members.
 - « Health and Fitness Members.
 - « Total visitations.
 - « Population growth and uptake of housing developments.

6.3. Implementation Roadmap

The following roadmap of key tasks and timelines has been developed as a guide for implementation of the Strategic Priorities.

Table 8: Aquatic and Leisure Strategy Recommendations - Implementation Roadmap

Strategic Priority	Short Term (0-5 years)	Medium Term (6-10 years)	Long Term (11+ years)
Strategic Priority One – Asset Management			
Implement recommendations of Asset Condition Assessment to extend of the life of Melton Waves			
Develop and implement FRALC Asset Management Plan			
Strategic Priority Two – Management and Operation			
Undertake a Management Model Options Assessment for FRALC and Melton Waves			
Undertake the recommended procurement process for the management of FRALC and Melton Waves			
Strategic Priority Three – Fraser Rise Aquatic and Leisure Centre development			
Facility start-up/operator transition period			
Facility open to public (early 2028)			
Strategic Priority Four – Planning for future Melton Waves replacement			
Business Case			
Funding Strategy			
Design phase – master, concept, schematic, detailed design			
Strategic Priority Five – Expanding the network of aquatic facilities and services			
Develop and implement a plan for the provision of waterplay in open space			
Private enterprise investment/business attraction strategy for swim schools and health and fitness providers			
Annual monitoring of private enterprise facility developments and competitor analysis			
Strategic Priority Six – Monitoring and Evaluation of planning triggers			
Continue to monitor operations of FRALC and Melton Waves against population growth and participation data			
Initiate planning for potential future third local level aquatic facility, if planning triggers are reached			

