



# National Aquatic Facility Infrastructure Symposium

➤ Thursday 27 & Friday 28 March  
Life Saving Victoria  
200 The Boulevard, Port Melbourne

Facilitated by:



**ROYAL LIFE SAVING**  
AUSTRALIA

On behalf of the:

**National Aquatic Industry Committee**

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## National Aquatic Infrastructure Symposium

### > CEO Foreword

Aquatic facilities are the heart of most Australian communities. A place to have fun, relax, socialise, get fit and perhaps most importantly a safe place to swim and learn swimming and water safety skills for everyone. They are significant contributors to drowning prevention Australia-wide as identified in the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030.

Perhaps this is why Australia's 2,103 aquatic facilities are visited more than 421 million times each year, with each visit generating \$30.50 in economic benefits.

Royal Life Saving research has shown aquatic facilities contribute \$12.8 billion dollars annually in social, health and economic benefits, while their social impact in qualitative value is also impressive, with aquatic facilities bringing communities together to recreate, socialise and learn.

But there are significant challenges facing communities across Australia when it comes to their much loved local pools: ageing assets, funding challenges, a lack of consistent maintenance expertise, training and development gaps, safety challenges, and the growing needs of diverse and growing communities. These challenges if not addressed create significant risk to the ongoing viability and sustainability of aquatic facilities.

On the upside, there are many positive examples of new facility developments leading the way, innovations in technology and inclusion efforts re-shaping what can be achieved through the local pool. We owe it to community and industry to amplify and strengthen these initiatives.

This National Aquatic Infrastructure Symposium has a distinct purpose, representing a long-standing commitment by Royal Life Saving working in partnership with industry to build safer and more sustainable aquatic facilities for every community, so that no child misses out on a swimming and water safety education.

The Symposium brings together over 100 delegates representing diverse segments of government and industry, convening to address a spectrum of challenges confronting the community and to delve into the formulation of an industry-driven national aquatic infrastructure framework.

This symposium seeks to address recommendations from previous symposia and research which encompassed significant discussions about strengthening the planning frameworks for aquatic facilities.

In concluding, I am genuinely excited about the ideas and discussions that will unfold over the coming two days. This Symposium represents a unique opportunity. We trust it will provide a pivotal platform from which to develop an aquatic industry infrastructure framework that serves to strengthen an industry that plays a critical role in the communities that we all care deeply about.

Dr Justin Scarr  
Chief Executive Officer  
Royal Life Saving Society - Australia



#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We respectfully acknowledge the Yalukit Willam clan of the Boon Wurrung people or language group. Yalukit Willam means 'river home' or 'people of the river'. The Yalukit Willam people are the Traditional Owners of the land on which the National Aquatic Infrastructure Symposium is being held. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present recognising their continued connection to land, waters and communities.

# National Aquatic Infrastructure Symposium

## > Day 1: Thursday 27th March 2025

DAY 1: SESSION 1 - ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXT	
Time	In this session, we will think big about the challenges and opportunities ahead, while reflecting on our progress to date.
9:00am	Arrival and registration (snacks and refreshments)
9:15am	Welcome & introduction Dr Justin Scarr, Chief Executive Officer, Royal Life Saving Australia
9:30am	Presentation: Canadian approach to community centres, case studies, municipal systems & tensions Darryl Condon, Managing Principal, HCMA Architecture + Design
10:00am	Presentation: Pool deserts: insights into access barriers to Australian aquatic facilities RJ Houston, General Manager – Capability & Industry, Royal Life Saving Australia Dr William Koon, National Manager – Drowning Prevention Strategy, Royal Life Saving Australia
10:15am	Panel: State of the infrastructure funding landscape: opportunities and challenges Philip Saikaly, Lead Director Community Sports Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation Victoria Victoria MacKirdy, CEO, City of Victor Harbor Sue McGill, Director - Participation Growth, Australian Sports Commission Kate Maddock, Managing Director, Otium Planning Group Ben Manning, Senior Manager - Advisory and Consulting, Solucio
10:45am	Morning Tea
DAY 1: SESSION 2 – LESSONS FROM RECENT PROJECTS	
Gain insights from architects, planners, designers, and operators on the successes, challenges, and key lessons from recent aquatic facility projects, shaping the future of sustainable and community-focused infrastructure.	
11:15am	Presentation: Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre Brett Diprose, Associate Principal, Warren & Mahoney Jessie Pigott, Venue Manager – Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre, Clublinks
11:30am	Presentation: Palm Beach Aquatic Centre & Gold Coast approach to community hubs Tim Goward, Specialist Project Manager, Service Gold Coast
11:45am	Presentation: Geelong Aquatic Centres - Learnings Tammy Beck, Executive Director, Williams Ross Architects Amanda Locke, Manager Swim Sport and Leisure, City of Greater Geelong
12:00pm	Presentation: Carnegie Aquatic Centre Mike McGrath, Principal at CO-OP Studio
12:15pm	Presentation: Fawkner Leisure Centre Kim Critchley, Unit Manager Aquatic and Leisure Services, Merri-bek City Council
12:30pm	Lunch
1:30pm	Workshop: Establishing the principles & scope for a National Aquatic Facility Infrastructure Framework
DAY 1: SESSION 3 – PLANNING MODELS, FRAMEWORKS & REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS	
To develop a framework, we need a common understanding of the problems we need to solve.	
2:30pm	Presentation & panel: Planning models and frameworks – lessons learned, opportunities & challenges Warren Green, Managing Director, Warren Green Consulting (presenting & chairing) Dr John Tower, Victoria University Ricki Jones, Principal Consultant, Data Consulting Michelle Nolland, Executive Director – LARCAN
3:30pm	Panel: Current challenges and opportunities in access, inclusion & user groups Carly Sanders, Head of Product and Performance, the Y Victoria Sam Watson, General Manager - Government & International Relations, Swimming Australia Matthew Haanappel OAM PLY, Acting General Manager – Operations, WynActive Dr Carleigh Yeomans, Director – Sport Innovation Research Group, Swinburne University
4:00pm	Networking function courtesy of Commercial Aquatics Australia (VIC)

## > Day 2: Friday 28th March 2025

DAY 2: SESSION 1 – CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES	
Time	This session provides information about the external infrastructure planning environment and explores trends, opportunities, realities.
9:00am	Arrival and registration (snacks and refreshments)
9:15am	Presentation: research into ‘save the pools’ campaigns Dr Elizabeth Taylor, Senior Lecturer in urban planning and design, Monash University
9:30am	Presentation: Swim Melbourne: Mapping places to swim in Melbourne Dr Rebecca Olive, Vice Chancellor’s Senior Research Fellow, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
9:45am	Panel: When it comes to community aquatic and recreation centres, is bigger always better? Kelly-Sean O’Connell, Project Manager, City Venue Management Brooke Atkins, Executive Director – LARCAN Kara Monaghan, State Manager VIC / TAS, Belgravia Leisure
10:15am	Panel: Current challenges and opportunities in safe design for aquatic facilities Craig Roberts, General Manager - Drowning Prevention & Education, Royal Life Saving NSW Aleks Olszewski, Senior Manager – Aquatic Industry Services, Life Saving Victoria Nikki Thornhill, State Manager, Royal Life Saving Queensland Kate Barnett, Health Safety & Environment Manager Recreation, the Y Victoria
10:45am	Panel: Current challenges and opportunities for regional and remote Australian communities Travis Doye, Acting Executive Officer, Leisure Institute of Western Australia Aquatics (LIWA) Kimberley Nitschke, General Manager - Property, Fleet and Emergency Management, Townsville City Council Ray Smith, Senior Leisure Services Officer, City of Greater Bendigo Kacey McEwen, Chief Brand Officer, Lifeguarding Services Australia
11:15am	Morning Tea
DAY 2: SESSION 2 – SUSTAINABILITY	
We will hear from key experts as to the opportunities, challenges, technologies and imperatives facing the industry in the sustainability space.	
11:45am	Presentation: Current case studies, challenges and opportunities in sustainability Derek Harbinson, Director, Negawatt Projects
12:00pm	Presentation: Global work to benchmark energy at aquatic facilities – lessons from IAKS Nick Yannakis, Director – Aquatic Services, Beca
12:15pm	Sustainability panel: challenges and solutions Steve Meikle, Managing Director, Commercial Aquatics Australia (VIC) Alexia Morgan, Manager, Sustainability and Environment, Belgravia Health & Leisure Group Alan Pears, Australian Alliance for Energy Productivity
12:45pm	Lunch
DAY 2: SESSION 3 – INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS	
We will hear from suppliers and others who are driving innovations in technology which make aquatic facility operations more sustainable, adaptable, efficient and that are driving positive change.	
1:45pm	Presentation: Case studies in technologies making pools more accessible, flexible and sustainable Jeremy Smith, General Manager – Commercial, Fluidra Australia
2:00pm	Presentation: Case studies in renewing regional and remote pools Chiara Cenati, Business Development Manager Australia, Myrtha Pools
2:15pm	Presentation: Case studies in applying AI to make operations more efficient Dan Mulvey, General Manager Australia / New Zealand, Lynxight
2:30pm	Presentation: Deep dive into renewing existing infrastructure with Mattioli Jason Hellwig, CEO Swimming Victoria
DAY 2: SESSION 4 – FRAMEWORK & FACILITY COMPONENTS FOR VARYING COMMUNITY PROFILES	
Facilitating a common understanding of facility components appropriate for different communities	
2:45pm	Workshop: Facilitating a common understanding of facility components appropriate for different communities
3:45pm	Event close



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