

Shellharbour
CITY COUNCIL

AQUATICS REVIEW ENGAGEMENT REPORT

JUNE- JULY
2026

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND 03

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY 04

SURVEY

DEMOGRAPHICS 05

KEY FINDINGS 06

RESULTS 07-11

LOCATION SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHTS 12

HIGHLIGHTED COMMENTS 13

BACKGROUND

Shellharbour City Council is aiming to complete a full-scale review of its aquatic facilities. Our pools play an important role in the well-being of our community, from swimming lessons and fitness to recreation, rehabilitation, social connection, and community sport. The review aims to understand current asset opportunities and challenges.

Given that the city's aquatic facilities are between 46 and 60 years old, they need significant upgrades to remain safe, accessible, and financially sustainable. Tying these realities to the community priorities helps Council understand what the community needs now and into the future, and what options are realistic.

Council is examining a wide range of information to understand how our pools are performing today and what will be needed in the future. This includes:

- Attendance data for each facility
- Population growth and demographic trends
- Age and condition of each pool, buildings and equipment
- Operational costs and subsidy per visit
- Environmental impacts (energy, water and gas use)
- Community feedback

This approach ensures the strategy is evidence-based, fair and sustainable.

Purpose of Engagement

The purpose of the engagement was to:

- Identify what our community loves most about aquatic facilities.
- Hear community priorities around the future of their local aquatics facility
- Identify current community pinch points for use.
- Understand community appetite for change or increased investment and its cost.
- Establish a basis for ideas and new initiatives at aquatics facilities.

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

How We Engaged

To understand community use of and aspirations for the City's aquatic facilities, a range of promotional channels were used to encourage participation and gather self-selected feedback. The primary target audience was residents and aquatic facility user groups within the Shellharbour Local Government Area. Community engagement opportunities were promoted through Council's Shellharbour Snapshot e-newsletter, social media channels (Facebook and Instagram), the Let's Chat Shellharbour engagement platform, on-site signage, and direct communication with registered user groups. A media release was also issued, generating additional coverage through local print and radio media.

The Aquatics Review Let's Chat page was open from 29 June to 20 July 2026 and invited community feedback through an online survey.



Online survey

- 339 survey responses were received from 323 contributors.
- 1,212 people viewed the page, and 42 people followed for updates.
- Feedback collected across 22 questions covering demographics of users, use priorities, accessibility, improvement and suitability areas, and community ideas or desires.



Written submissions

- 2 emails sent to local swimming clubs
- Feedback was received via email, customer requests, and informal feedback to staff onsite.



Online presence

- 2 social media posts shared to Stories
- 89 likes or reactions, 18 shares, and 23 comments, all with positive sentiment
- 23,739 views

SURVEY - DEMOGRAPHICS

339 SURVEY RESPONSES

38.5% AGED 35-49
32.4% AGED 50-64
18.5% AGED 65+

94.1% LIVE IN SHELLHARBOUR
24.4% CAME FROM ALBION PARK AND THE GREATER WEST

73.2% FEMALE
26.8% MALE

50.44% VISIT THE POOL 5-7 DAYS A WEEK

74.3% USE OAK FLATS POOL

SURVEY - KEY FINDINGS

What we heard









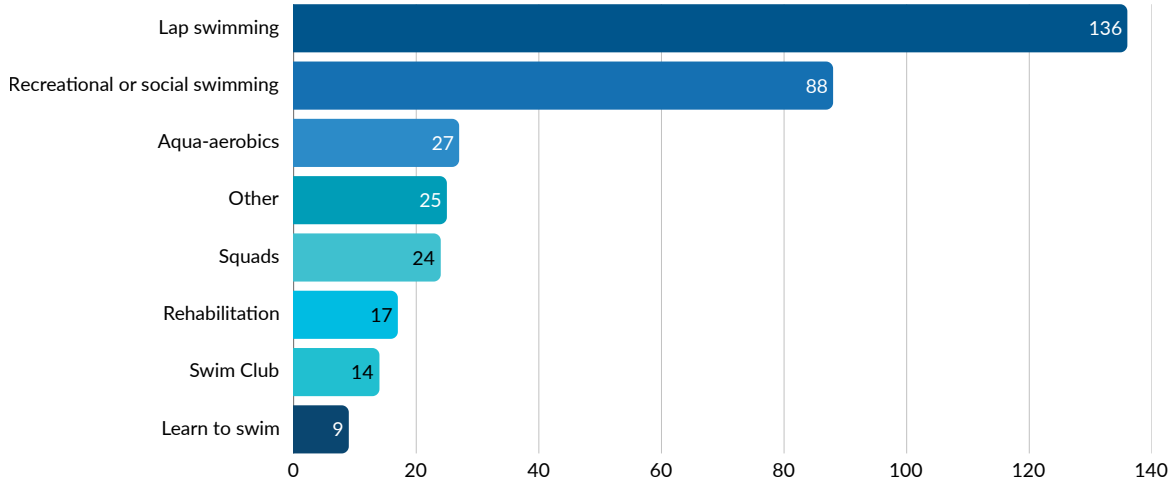




SURVEY - RESULTS

Q: What brings you to the pools most often?

(Multi choice)



Our pools are used for a variety of activities every day. To see what the most common use is, we asked respondents to pick from a list of activities that we see in our pools.

40% **Of survey respondents use the pools for lap swimming.**

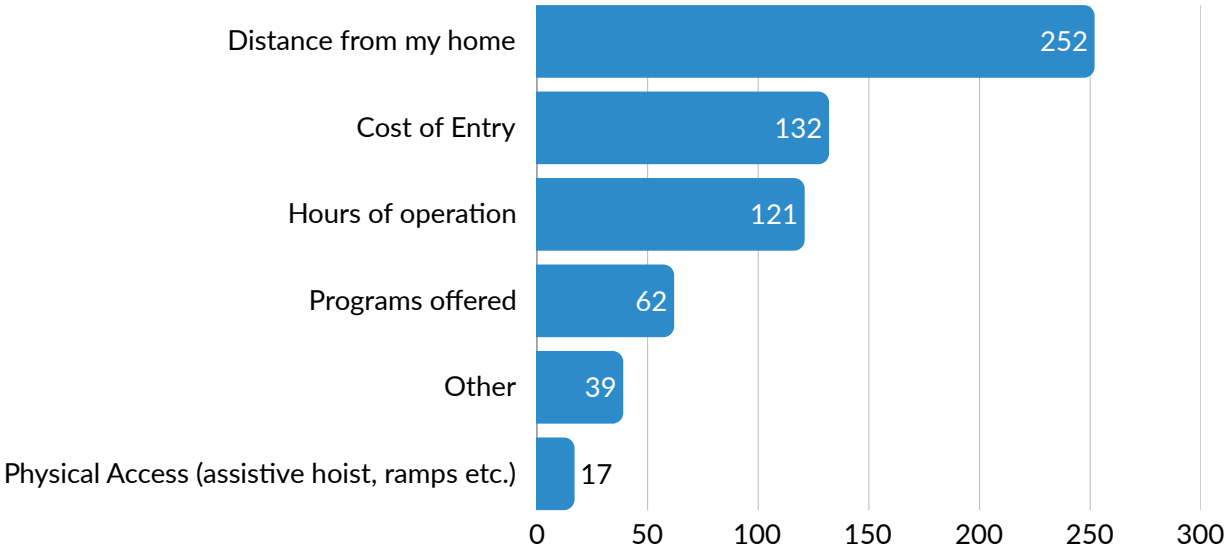
Q: How do you get to the pool?

We asked respondents how they get to our pools. Respondents typically drive themselves or travel with family to the pool. No respondents stated that they used Taxi or ride-share service as their mode of transport.

87.9% **Of survey respondents drive themselves to the pool.**

SURVEY - RESULTS

Q: What makes Shellharbour Pools most accessible for you?



Q: Please tell us why

Beverley Whitfield and Oak Flats pools were mentioned as the most accessible.

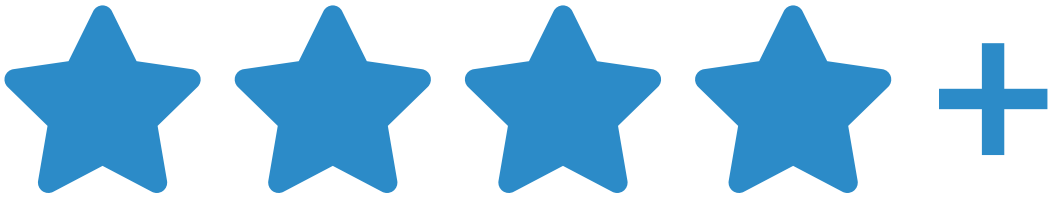
The most common reasons include:

- Cost
- Accessibility
- Albion Park is not open year-round
- Aqua aerobics or other programs

Most common reasons pools are inaccessible:

- Overcrowding at Oak Flats pool
- Need for updates –highlighted indoor heated facility
- Extend AP open season and hours

Q: Rate our pools



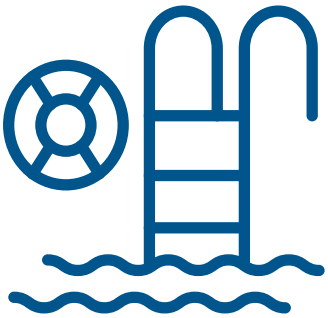
59% **Respondents rated our pool 4 stars or above**

Respondents highlighted a high satisfaction rate with our pools, with an average star rating of 3.7 stars. More than 59% of respondents rated them 4 stars or higher, with over 25% of respondents rating the pools 5/5 stars.

SURVEY - RESULTS

Q: Share why the pools do or do not meet you or your family's needs

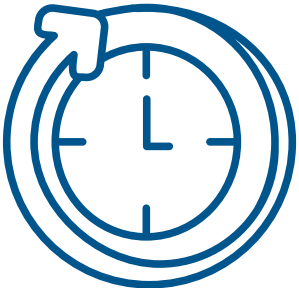
Respondents highlighted these key themes:



11% seeking a indoor heated facility



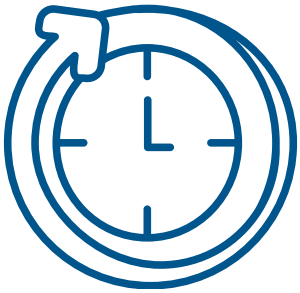
10.9% highlighted Oak Flats is overcrowded



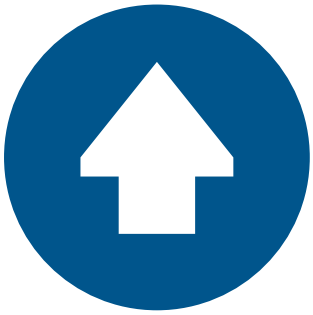
9.9% suggested extending Albion Parks season

Q: Tell us what you think could be changed or improved to encourage more people to use Shellharbour's Pools

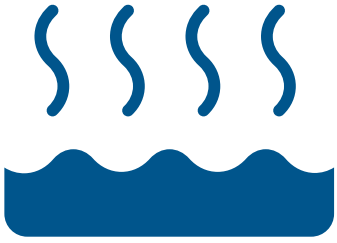
Respondents highlighted these key themes:



27.5% extend opening hours, particularly of Albion Park Pool



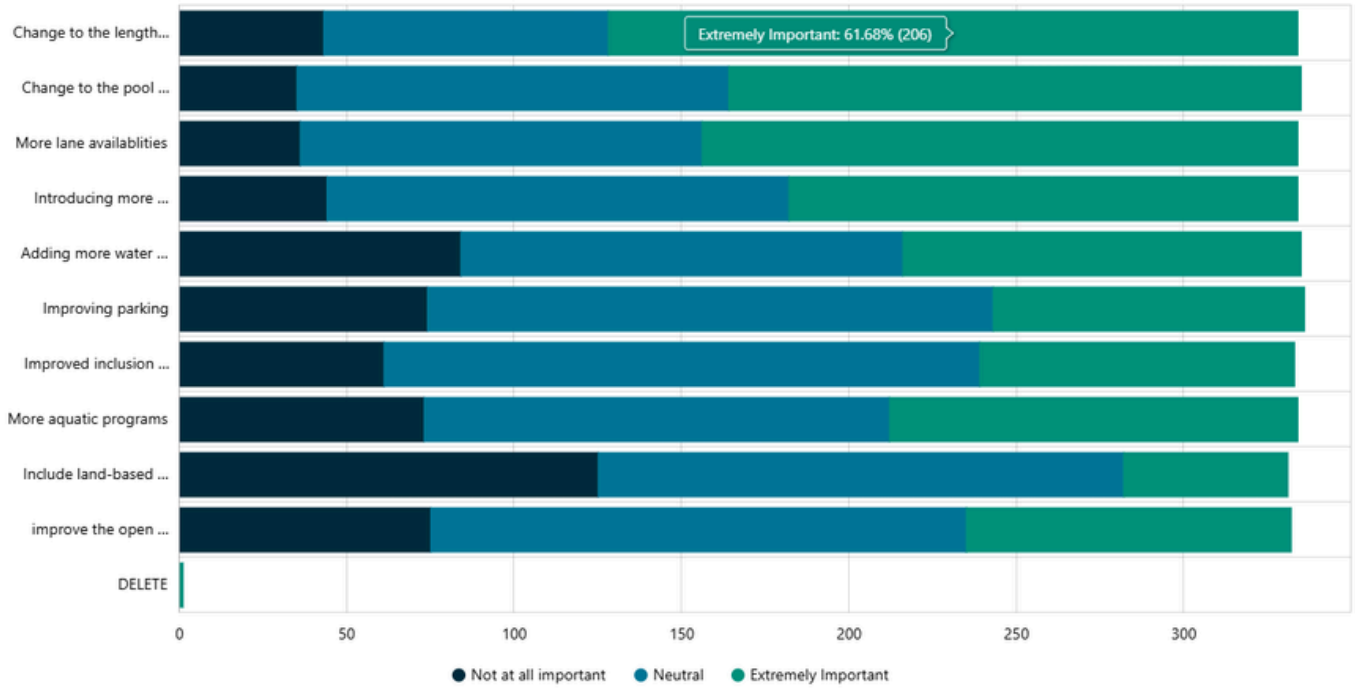
24.4% updated facilities including showers, maintenance or the possiblity of an indoor heated facility.



12.9% heat Albion Park and Warilla Pools

SURVEY - RESULTS

Q: Thinking of the pool you visit most, tell us how important the below improvements are:
(Matrix)



The improvement rated most important was “change to the length of the pool season with 61.7% rating it extremely important. The least important was the inclusion of land-based activities, with 37.8% rating it not at all important.

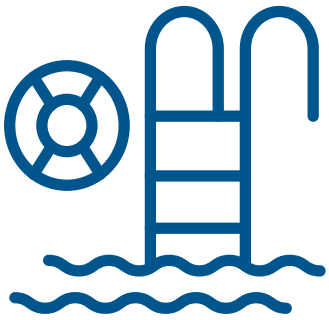
Q: Council's aquatic centres are ageing, the cost of new facilities or upgrades and refurbishments must be considered. As a community member do you support major investment in aquatics?

88.7% **Average support rating for investing financially in facilities upgrades or refurbishment.**

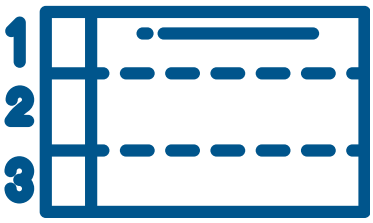
SURVEY - RESULTS

Q: Tell us in order what you would like to see in a future or new facility by ranking these ideas from most want to least want:

Top 3 rated ideas



Indoor heated pool



Increased lane capacity at all pools



Shade areas including over pools

Q: Do you support an increase in entry fees for improved facilities?

53.6% Support increased fees for improved facilities

The top reasons given for support were:

- If it means the facilities will be updated, particularly showers, heating or an extended season.
- Conditional support for increased service delivery and then fee's returning to the normal rate.
- Support for a user-pays model (i.e. only facilities that have upgrades incur a higher fee.).

The top reasons not to support were:

- The fees are already too expensive
- Cost of living is too high.
- Council should only use rates to cover improvement costs.

LOCATION SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHTS

Comparison of fee increase support between different pool users

Reviewing the user responses by which pool they identify as visiting, we can see some variation in support for a fee increase; the following identifies these differences:

- Warilla - 61.7% support
- Albion Park - 56.5% support
- Oak Flats - 51.7% support
- Beverley Whitfield - 50% support

A common theme underlying this variation in support was that Beverley Whitfield is currently free to access; therefore, users are not supportive of changing this arrangement.

Priority improvements that were identified for each location

Some differing common themes were submitted depending on the location. The top two requests for each location are listed below.

Albion Park Pool:

- Upgrading the diving blocks.
- Creating a space for water polo with deeper water.

Oak Flats Pool:

- Reducing overcrowding (particularly by providing more lanes for lap swimming).
- Provide more Aqua Aerobics.

Warilla Pool:

- Heat the facility.
- Provide more family-friendly activities (toddler space, inflatable play).

Beverley Whitfield Ocean Pool:

- Improve the lane ropes.
- Provide lockers for belongings.

HIGHLIGHTED COMMENTS

We received many positive comments from the community, particularly about staff and the social environment, some highlights are:

