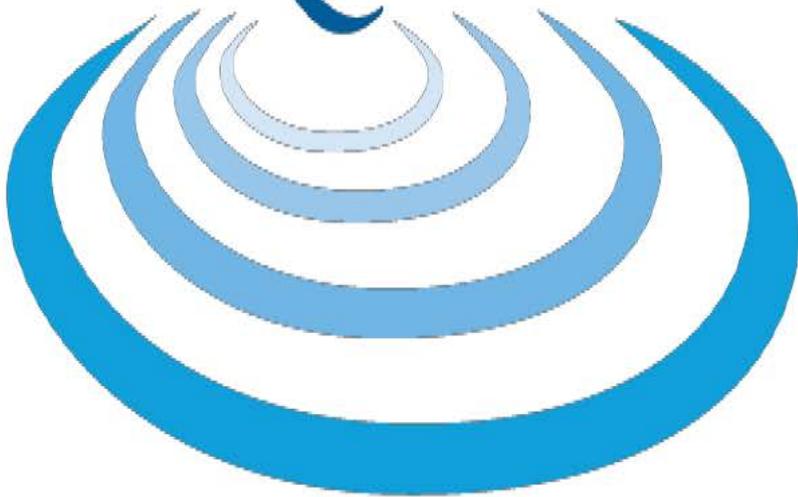


PHILLIP ISLAND
AQUATIC CENTRE

FUND INC.



2014

**Submission
To
Bass Coast Shire Council**

Submission:

The Need for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island, and Its Financial Feasibility

[This Submission has been produced by the Committee of the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Fund Incorporated (PIACFI): to make what the Committee believes is a compelling case for the Bass Coast Shire (BCS) Council to agree to build an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island, based on: the persuasive results of a needs analysis; significant community support; a strong case for a more equitable share of BCS's annual capital expenditure; and the financial feasibility of the proposed build].

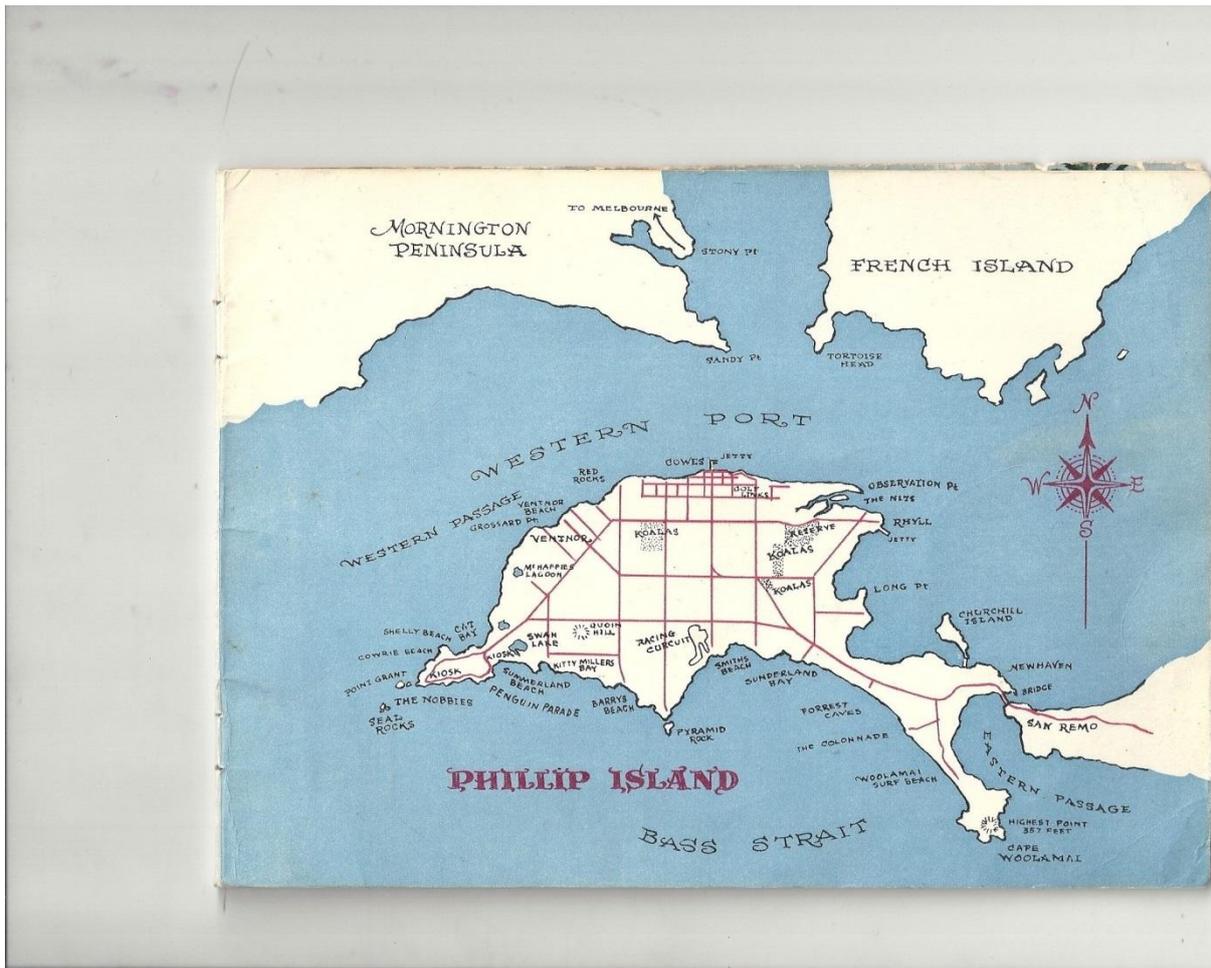


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The Need for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island

Executive Summary

The position of the Committee of the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Fund Incorporated (PIACFI) regarding the **urgent need, significant community support, equitable allocation of resources justification, and the feasibility and cost effectiveness argument** for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island can be summarised as follows:

A. **The needs-based argument for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island**

- ***The continued growth of the local population.***

In recent years, Bass Coast Shire has recorded some of the highest growth rates in regional Victoria. Over the next twenty years, BCS's population is forecast to increase by 56%, much greater than the average growth rate for all the 6 LGAs in Gippsland (at 28%). That trend itself highlights the need for Bass Coast Shire to provide high quality easily accessible infrastructure for its residents, not just at Wonthaggi but also on Phillip Island.
- ***The major contribution that the Aquatic Centre would make to Shire Tourism.***

An Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island would likely have a significant positive impact on tourism, in an area which is already a major contributor to business revenues and the general economic activity and health of Bass Coast Shire. The Phillip Island and San Remo area is a tourist Mecca during holiday periods, weekends and during the numerous public events at the Phillip Island racetrack and because of the attractions of the Penguin Parade, Koalas, Seals, Pelicans and beautiful safe and challenging beaches and many leisure sports. There are 3.4 visitors to BCS each year; 3.1 million of these visit Phillip Island. The Waves Holiday Apartments recently stated, in a letter to the new Bass Coast Shire CEO: "Such a facility could provide a boost to visitor numbers to the island, with considerable economic benefits to business owners, the Shire and the State and Federal governments." They also stated that many of the internationally renowned guests (sportspeople and others) that they host are surprised at the lack of such a facility on Phillip Island.
- ***The aging population and the need for passive, low impact exercise opportunities such as physiotherapist-led hydrotherapy and aqua aerobics, as attested to by medical and allied health services.***

The age profile of the Bass Coast Shire contains a significantly higher proportion of adults over 65 (23.6%) in comparison with the rest of Victoria (17.4%). An Aquatic Centre, with hydrotherapy and pool facilities would assist in the care of aged care residents, making a major contribution to their physical, psychological and mental well-being. This cohort will pose an increasing need in the future, particularly as average life spans continue to increase.

Executive Summary (continued)

- **Benefits for disability groups and individuals**

Hydrotherapy and general pool-based activities can be very beneficial to people with physical disabilities, provided those facilities are easily accessible.
- **The difficulties of swimming in the ocean for a considerable proportion of the year**

Because of a combination of low water temperatures and unfavourable tides/winds, most beaches on Phillip Island and at San Remo provide good and safe swimming conditions for less (at best) than 15% of the year, without a full-body wetsuit. A pool is urgently needed to provide a vehicle for such pursuits for the remainder of the year, and would provide many more hours of opportunities for swimming each day.
- **The growing incidence of obesity and diabetes, etc. in the community and the opportunity aquatic activities provide in terms of non-weight-bearing activity.**

Doctors and allied health services attest that specialist physiotherapist-led hydrotherapy is extremely efficient in combating genetic obesity and inactivity-related obesity, including childhood obesity. In addition, use of the Aquatic Centre could lead to amelioration, delay or avoidance of many other chronic and debilitating diseases of residents (arthritis, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory diseases – including asthma, neurological and sense disorders and mental health problems) through provision of a swimming pool and hydrotherapy facilities. Such facilities could also assist significantly in accident and injury rehabilitation.
- **The need to promote and facilitate general community health and fitness.**

The users of the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre are envisaged as: the general resident community; older citizens; local schools and child-minding centres - particularly for learn-to-swim classes; school camps; residents with health issues; local Swim clubs; local youth for passive recreation; and other visitors to the Island. A major benefit of an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island will be increased health, water safety and amenity for locals and visitors.
- **The critical necessity for children to learn to swim, particularly living on an island, which has many challenging beach environments.**

There are 1,625 children enrolled in schools on Phillip Island and at San Remo. And currently, there are 200 pre-school children attending the Hub. By Bass Coast Shire's own estimates, in the combined area of Phillip Island and San Remo, there were 623 children in the age range 0-4, and 1,668 children and youths in the age range 5-19, in 2011. Those numbers are forecast to be 603 and 1,868, respectively, by 2016. **Each of these children and youths should ideally be competent and confident to engage in appropriate-to-age pool-based and ocean-based leisure activities. But where can they currently gain those skills?**
An Aquatic Centre should enhance membership of local swimming clubs – in the

Executive Summary (continued)

face of the alarming anecdotal evidence that a high proportion of school-aged children on the Island have poor swimming skills at best, even in relatively benign conditions. This situation results from limited access to the Cowes Primary School pool for learn-to-swim programs, a limited number of private pools on the Island used for learn-to-swim training, and considerable access problems to those facilities, **and the absence of a Shire pool.**

- ***The current inadequacies of the Wonthaggi Aquatic and Leisure Centre for people on Phillip Island (and nearby),***

The inadequacies include: restricted lane availability and program range in an overcrowded pool; difficulty of accessibility for before and after-work swimmers; significant barriers to use in terms of travel time from Phillip Island and surrounds and fuel costs. Future fuel costs increases will only exacerbate the problems.

- ***The likely positive impact on the leisure, learn to swim and health experience of users of the Wonthaggi Aquatic Leisure Centre.***

It is very likely that, given a choice between two Aquatic Centres in the Shire, potential users closer to the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre would chose to travel to that venue, rather than to Wonthaggi, thereby decreasing demand for the Wonthaggi facility.

- ***Many precedents from other LGAs for providing similar facilities for similar towns/regions.***

The need for high quality infrastructure in the Philip Island area has been identified in the BCS 2010 Structure Plan for Cowes, Silverleaves, Ventnor and Wimbledon Heights. That is a particular case of the general need for investment in infrastructure identified in the July 2012 report “Bass Coast Economic Outlook 2012-2017, An Assessment of Economic Drivers and Opportunities” commissioned by the Shire. That report is also very much in accord with the thrust of the State government’s June 2013 “Draft Regional Growth Plan for GIPPSLAND”, which inter alia identifies regional needs for appropriate community facilities. The provision for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island would also contribute significantly to the Shire’s Mission – “To maximise the quality of life of our community, now and into the future”. It would also respond to the Vision Statement of Bass Coast Community Health – “...for all Bass Coast community members to achieve better health outcomes.” It would also contribute to the municipal public health and wellbeing plans of the Shire, particularly “Living Healthy Bass Coast”.

- ***The contribution the Phillip Island facility will make to the sense of community and the capacity to develop a community hub for the Island.***

- ***The support that an aquatic centre would provide for youth development and entertainment.***

Executive Summary (continued)

The Aquatic Centre would provide active, healthy recreation opportunities for locals and visitors.

- ***The support for local employment, as pool guards etc and the benefits of providing a venue for lifesaving training.***

Initial lifesaving training needs to be done in a pool, before undertaking more advanced training in the ocean, particularly as many ocean beaches on Phillip Island are not patrolled at all or only for a short period in the year. They can be benign but at times can also, at times, be treacherous, even for relatively strong swimmers.

B. The significant community support argument for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island

As a recent feasibility study commissioned by the PIACFI found:

“Summary

It is reasonable to conclude that the current provision of aquatic facilities within the Bass Coast Shire prevents some members of the community from participating in Aquatic activity and also that there is a high level of dissatisfaction with the current aquatic centre provision. Conversely, the community consultation process has clearly identified that there is significant community support for the development of an Aquatic Centre on the Island.”

That feasibility study found that 50% of ratepayers surveyed supported an increase in rates to fund an Aquatic Centre, in the face of widespread dissatisfaction with aquatic facilities within the Shire.

There has been significant support in the past for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island, from various enlightened people: Dawn Fraser; Leanne Barnes; Amanda Drennan and Greg Hunt. Mr Hunt has recently re-expressed his support and backed it with the promise of Federal government funding to the extent of \$1 million - \$2 million.

In addition Jeff Kennett consistently and enthusiastically supported the establishment of an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island. In May 1999, he promised significant State government funding support – a sum of \$2.5 million - for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island. We understand that commitment has been overtaken by the possibility of the Shire applying for an up-to \$3 million grant from the State Government towards the funding of Aquatic Centres in the Shire (Wonthaggi, Phillip Island and elsewhere).

The South Gippsland Sentinel-Times, in its Comment piece on 21 January 2014, under the heading ‘New CEO on notice to make changes’ identified (inter alia) ‘funding for pools at both Wonthaggi and Cowes’ as requiring attention by Bass Coast Shire’s new CEO Paul Buckley.

On 24 January 2014, the Sentinel-Times also said ‘...tourism is the main game in Bass Coast, some might say the only game....’ and ‘....a whopping 39% of the area’s gross regional product is generated by tourism and more than a third of the Shire’s jobs.’ To enhance the tourism experience, a high

Executive Summary (continued)

quality Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island, where most of those tourists visit, is an obvious requirement.

Anne Oswin, The Editor, The Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser, said on 30 January 2014: 'The Advertiser has, in the past, supported the need for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island and will continue to maintain that stance.'

The level of community support in the Shire for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island, and from other interested parties is beginning to go viral:

The Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Incorporated website has 427 members, all of whom support PIACFI's endeavours to achieve an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island. 750 residents have signed a hard-copy version of a petition for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island NOW; a further 123 residents have submitted a website (on-line) version of that same petition. 55 residents have sent individual letters of support to the new CEO and to Councillors.

In addition, 22 prominent Sporting, schools and other Community organisations have sent similar letters of support to the new CEO (these bodies are detailed at Appendix D). They include three of the four aged care agencies on Phillip Island and at San Remo, the Senior Citizens Club, Bass Coast Regional Health, Bass, Valley Primary, Cowes Primary and San Remo Primary schools, the Board Riders' Association, Destination Phillip Island, The Tourism and Business Association, Greg Hunt, the Scouts and Guides, the Bicycle Users' Group, the Cricket, Soccer, Basketball and Tennis clubs, U3A, Judith Wright, Stockdale and Leggo and First National Real Estate Agents and Westernport Water. We expect that many other clubs and service organisations will be similarly moved to write.

Numbers should count in convincing Council to commit to a Phillip Island Aquatic Centre.

There is also unanimous support from all the physiotherapists based on Phillip Island for hydrotherapy facilities at both Wonthaggi and in the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre, with two or three of those based on Phillip Island willing to run classes (these include Gippsland Physiotherapy in Cowes and Bass Coast Community Health Services).

C. The equitable allocation of resources argument

Based on the Shire's own figures, the Phillip Island and San Remo area contains 36% of the resident population of BCS, and 39% of the rateable properties but contributes 46% of the Shire's rate revenue from rateable residential properties. Close analysis of the BCS 2013/14 Budget, highlights that the Phillip Island-San Remo area **is not getting its fair share of the Shire's capital expenditure budget**. Despite contributing 46% of the Shire's rate revenue, it receives only 26% of directly identifiable capital expenditures. The remaining 74% of directly identifiable capital expenditure is spent in the remainder of the Shire – **hardly an equitable division**.

D. The feasibility argument

The scope of the facilities required in the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre and the ranges of activities envisaged at that facility are outlined at page 11 of this Submission. The facilities include a 25 metre, 8-lane lap pool, a toddlers' pool, separate water play area, separate hydrotherapy facilities, a spa and a sauna.

The Phillip Island Aquatic Centre is feasible to build, at a cost of \$7-8 million, provided there is

Executive Summary (continued)

significant Local, State and Federal government financial support, assisted by some level of public/philanthropist financial support. If built adjacent to the existing Cowes Leisure Centre run by the YMCA, with geothermal base load electricity or wind or solar back up electricity for a grid based electricity system, the running costs of the Aquatic Centre could be significantly reduced. And there could be significant synergies with the Leisure Centre, in also reducing its running costs for power and light. Use of that site would obviate the need for the Shire to purchase other land.

A possible concept plan for a Phillip Island Aquatic Centre co-located with the YMCA-run Cowes Leisure Centre, was outlined in "COWES RECREATION RESERVE MASTER PLAN [2009] - Bass Coast Shire Council - prepared by @leisure consultants July 2009". A copy of those plans is attached as Appendix E.

The Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre Pool may not 'fail' for another ten years (Engineer's Report); there is no indication that it is currently leaking; and it does not currently have 'real' hydrotherapy facilities. Logically, it makes common sense to build the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre first - that Centre must include 'real' hydrotherapy facilities – and continue using the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre for the (estimated) two years it will take to have the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre fully operational. Then the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre could be closed and redeveloped to become fully operational two years later. The PIACFI Committee understands that the Council's current strategy regarding redeveloping the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre includes provision for expanding the pool from 8 to 10 lanes. That specific proposal needs to be carefully scrutinised, less it caters for over-design.

Under PIACFI's alternative approach, there would seem to be an up-front saving of \$1.8 million that has currently been estimated to keep the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre operational during the planned redevelopment. Under the proposed 'build the Phillip Island facility first' option, that money would not need to be spent. It is the PIACFI Committee's considered opinion that under its alternative proposal, the Shire could have two Aquatic Centres for not much more than the \$14 million - \$16 million currently proposed for the redevelopment of the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre.

It is probable that there will be a need for a small operating subsidy to run the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre; this no different to the situation of the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre. And it is no different to the case for most public pools/aquatic centres throughout Victoria and Australia. But the initial capital cost and the ongoing annual operating subsidy are arguably both expenditures that will be well spent, in terms of the multiple benefits to: health and aged care; water safety; recreation; and tourism. Use of alternative energy sources could significantly cut the level of the required subsidy.

In Conclusion

The Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Committee requests that Council gives serious consideration to commissioning the building of an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island, based on the arguments of: compelling need; significant community support; a fairer allocation of Council expenditure to the Phillip Island-San Remo area (which is currently not gaining a fair share of that expenditure); and the feasibility and cost effectiveness of the proposal.

Setting the Context

About Bass Coast Shire

Bass Coast is located in southern Victoria, about 130 kilometres from Melbourne. The Shire encompasses extensive waterlines, bounded by Westernport to the west and Bass Strait to the south. Cardinia Shire and East Gippsland Shire compromise the northern and eastern boundaries respectively. A distinctive topographic feature of Bass Coast is Phillip Island, located to the west of the mainland at the entrance to Westernport Bay.

The settlement pattern is largely rural in nature and includes a large regional centre (Wonthaggi) and smaller townships at Cowes (on Phillip Island) and Inverloch (on the southern coastline). Most settlements are small and reflect their role as coastal and agricultural villages. Wonthaggi, as the main regional centre is, is the main source of employment, with significant health, community service, education, tourism and manufacturing functions. Many of the coastal villages, particularly on Phillip Island, are characterised by large numbers of holiday and second homes, and as a result have high vacancy rates (60% of residential properties in the combined area of Phillip Island and San Remo are usually vacant). But the population of Bass Coast swells significantly during holiday periods, particularly during Easter, the Christmas holidays, weekends and other school holidays. That latter phenomenon places pressures on resources and creates numerous planning and logistical challenges for the shire.

The housing market on Phillip Island is dominated by retirees and mature-age couples and singles, taking advantage of lifestyle opportunities, as well as the natural amenity of the area. Many of these people are moving into their former holiday or second homes.

In recent years Bass Coast has consistently recorded some of the highest population growth rates in regional Victoria. This is characteristic of regional municipalities which are located within a two-hour drive of the Melbourne CBD, because they are increasingly becoming part of the wider Melbourne economic catchment through improved transport links. Employment in Melbourne's southern suburbs includes commuters from the townships of Westernport. Bass Coast has the additional influence of retirement and amenity driven migration. But, like many parts of regional Australia, Bass Coast loses many young adults to Melbourne and other large cities through out-migration.

The age profiles of the Bass Coast Shire and the Phillip Island and San Remo area are relatively consistent. There are a significantly higher proportion of adults over 60 years of age in comparison with the rest of regional Victoria.

Future growth in Bass Coast is likely to be driven by amenity led in-migration (primarily retirees and mature-age singles and couples) but young families will become increasingly important in specific locations such as Wonthaggi, Dalyston and Grantville, which provide relatively affordable housing opportunities as well as access to employment markets. While many retirees will move into their

former holiday/second homes, others will be attracted to the more specialised lifestyle developments on Phillip Island. Regardless, high vacancy rates are likely to remain characteristic of the Bass Coast settlement pattern as the significance of the region as a tourism/holiday destination is unlikely to diminish.

Key statistics for Bass Coast Shire

Population at 30 June 2012: 30,592

Peak population in the Shire: 70,000+

Land Area: 86,414 hectares (865 km²)

Population Density: 0.35 persons per hectare

Kilometres of beaches/coastal reserves: 42 km

Visitors: 3.4 million per year

Number of rateable properties: 29,000

Number of businesses: 8,658

Non-resident households: 52%

Key industries: Tourism and Agriculture

Proportion of residents aged over 50 years: 45.8% (compared to a State average of 32.2%)

Proportion of residents aged over 65 years: 23.6% (compared to a State average of 17.4%)

Contribution of tourism to Bass Coast Shire's regional gross product: \$619 million (39% of the total)

About Phillip Island and San Remo

The Phillip Island and San Remo region is a major part of this dynamic region which brings many Australian and international tourists to our shores.

There are three internationally renowned tourist venues on the Island:

1. The Phillip Island Race Track
2. The Phillip Island Nature Park, including the world famous penguin parade
3. The Vietnam Veterans Museum.

There are many leisure sports engaged in by residents and visitors. These include: boating and canoeing, fishing, yachting, surfing, windsurfing, swimming, ferry trips, tennis, golf, croquet, boules, badminton, football, cricket, basket and net ball, lawn bowls, etc, etc.

Dozens of beautiful coastal and bushland walks, together with bountiful fauna, including penguins, seals, koalas, dolphins, whales and wallabies, and prolific wild bird life, provide unique nature experiences.

Tourism brings more than 3.4 million visitors to the Bass Coast region each year, returns \$1.05 billion to the local economy and has created over 2,100 jobs. And 3.1 million of those visitors come to Phillip Island. As the Australian dollar continues to deflate, it is likely that Australians will increasingly look to holiday in Australia, rather than heading overseas. The Bass region, and more particularly Phillip Island, could be a significant beneficiary of that change.

The Island has economic benefits for the whole State of Victoria, and also other parts of Australia, as most domestic and international visitors to Phillip Island, particularly to the Penguin Parade and the race track, transit from elsewhere in Australia. The combined area of Phillip Island and San Remo makes a significant contribution to Local Government (BCS) revenues. That area has 36% of the total population of the shire, 39% of the rateable residential properties and contributes an estimated 46% of the Shire's rate revenue from residential properties. That is, Phillip Island and San Remo contribute a substantial proportion of the rates and charges which comprise 59.9% of the Shire's total revenues of \$67.4 million.

The area also is responsible for generating 92% (an amount of \$122 m) of the total economic impact of Special Events held throughout the Shire; the majority of the area's economic impact being generated by events associated with the motor racing track on Phillip Island.

To quote from the BCS 2010 Structure Plan for Cowes, Silverleaves, Ventnor and Wimbleton Heights, "**High quality infrastructure is a necessity to facilitate economic activity**".

The July 2012 report 'Bass Coast Economic Outlook 2012-2017, An Assessment of Economic Drivers and Opportunities' produced for BCS, by consultants 'Essential Economics Pty Ltd' stated, inter alia:

"Economic opportunities for the Shire and its residents can be maximised by creating better economic linkages with Melbourne, achieving higher worker productivity and making strategic capital investment in transport and tourism infrastructure" (emphasis added). The same report also states **"Tourism operators and public authorities will need to insure that investment is maintained in order to keep pace with customer expectations of tourism infrastructure, products and visitor facilities and overall service standards."**

The Victorian State government's 'Draft Regional Growth Plan GIPPSLAND' identifies key principles to achieve its vision of growth for Gippsland. Included in those principles is:

“Principle 3: Develop sustainable communities through a settlement framework comprising major urban centres which ensure residents have convenient access to jobs, services, infrastructure and community facilities.” (emphasis added). **And:**

“Principle 4: Deliver timely and accessible infrastructure to meet regional needs for transport, utilities and community facilities” (emphasis added).

The Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Committee sees an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island as a prime example of needed, high quality, tourism infrastructure.

Does the Phillip Island and San Remo area miss out on its fair share of necessary infrastructure provided by BCS?

There is a pervasive perception amongst many businesses and ratepayers on Phillip Island that the Phillip Island and San Remo area is hard-done-by in terms of the attention that the Shire pays to the area, particularly in terms the provision of new infrastructure and road repair, despite its economic importance to the Shire. The closure of the Rhyll transfer station without a replacement, the closure of the Cowes Hospital, many large potholes on the Tourist Road, the recent unaddressed flooding problem in Silverleaves, and the absence of an Aquatic Centre after 22 years of activity by the Phillip Island Pool Committee and the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Fund Incorporated (PIACFI), obviously colour that perception.

Notwithstanding that perception, the PIACFI is cognisant that, in recent years, the Shire has paid a significant amount of attention to Cowes infrastructure, including the Phillip Island Learning Centre; the Cowes Civic Precinct, Cowes Town Square Landscaping; property purchase at 50-52 and 54 Church Street Cowes; property purchase of CA 79 Ventnor Road for recreational purposes; Settlement Road, Cowes from Anderson Road to Justice Road construction; Smiths Beach Road, Cowes reconstruction; and rehabilitation of Rhyll landfill. In addition, as with the rest of the Shire, Phillip Island and San Remo are the beneficiaries of the General Community Grant Program, Minor Capital Works and Special Events Grants.

BUT, Close analysis of the Bass Coast Shire 2013/14 Capital Expenditure Budget highlights that the Phillip Island and San Remo catchment is **not getting its fair share of that budget:** Capital expenditures directly identified to be spent in the Phillip Island-San Remo catchment totals \$2.7 million; those directly identified to be spent in the remainder of the Shire total \$7.6 million (\$10.3 million identifiable in total, out of a total capital expenditure budget of \$14.8 million).

That is, despite the fact that the combined Phillip Island-San Remo area contributes 46% of



the total rate revenues of the Shire, **it receives just over 26% of the directly identified capital expenditures.** Put another way, the remainder of the Shire is budgeted to receive 74% of the identified capital expenditures, despite contributing only 54% of rate revenues. **Indicative of very inequitable treatment.**

The lack of an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island (seen as a key item of additional infrastructure for enhancing tourists' and locals' experiences for recreation and health benefits) is bound to raise ratepayer's ire, particularly when the Shire plans, in the next few years, to expend \$14 million - \$16 million renovating the existing Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre. That is not to diminish the importance of the facility at Wonthaggi. And the local community's angst will remain over the still unaddressed issues of the replacement for the transfer station or the closure of the Cowes hospital. An Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island would be a powerful adjunct to the existing infrastructure on the Island, with the possibility of enhancing the visitor experience and generating increased economic activity. But the major benefit will be for increased health, water safety and amenity for local residents.

Support for and Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island

In 1991 a Phillip Island Pool Committee was formed and soon gained State government approval to carry out a feasibility study, funded by the State. The final feasibility study report, by Michel King and Associates was provided to the newly amalgamated Bass Coast Shire Council, but no action ensued.

Olympians Dawn Fraser, Merv Lincoln and Leanne Barnes and Para Olympian Amanda Drennan, local Federal Member (for Flinders) and now Federal Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt and former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett, have consistently and enthusiastically supported the establishment of an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island.

In May 1999, Jeff Kennett promised significant State government funding support – a sum of \$2.5 million - for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island. We understand that commitment has been overtaken by the possibility of the Shire now be able to apply for an up-to \$3 million grant from the State Government towards the funding of Aquatic Centres in the Shire (Wonthaggi, Phillip Island and elsewhere).

In May 2000, the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Fund was formed and incorporated in October 2000 (to become PIACFI) with Dawn Fraser OBE as the patron and fundraising from the public continued for several years.

Whilst the research into the various aquatic centres was underway, a program was put in place to seek the most suitable site for our aquatic centre. A number of sites were considered, and some research was undertaken to ascertain future development trends on and around Phillip Island. Some significant information was gleaned from the community

survey, and much of the research showed that a site near the centre of Phillip Island would be advantageous to all members of our community. Discussions were held between ourselves and several land holders in the desired area, and soon after, we were made an offer by the management of the CYC Adventure Resort. After nearly 2 ½ years of negotiation, the proposed site on Adventure Resort land was confirmed at our Annual General Meeting in September 2005. This land which is recreationally zoned, and build-ready, was provided almost rent free for an initial 30 year lease, to be negotiated to extended to 60 years. In 2005, the Committee had plans and designs produced to build on the CYC site. Sadly, the development did not proceed.

At its June 2013 Meeting, the Shire Council had resolved to defer the building of an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island for another 10-15 years, but public opinion seems to have convinced BCS that option is not acceptable to many ratepayers in the Shire.

At its September 2013 Meeting, Council resolved (by unanimous vote) to:

“Undertake a representative sample survey of ratepayers of Bass Coast to determine:

- The level of support for the development of two aquatic facilities in Bass Coast Shire;
- The willingness to fund two aquatic facilities in Bass Coast Shire through increased general rates, special rates or special charges.”

Included the resolution was of 18 September 2013, was the investigation of (Quote):

- The potential to sell any land surplus to Council’s operating needs.
- The impact of any additional borrowings.
- The potential to obtain State and Federal government grants.

(End quote)

A number of significant individuals and organisations have recently written to the CEO Bass Coast Shire, to express their support for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island. These individuals and organisations are detailed at Appendix D.

BCS Council is to consider a report at its Meeting in February 2014, detailing the results of the assessment and survey that it resolved to be undertaken at its September Meeting.*

Pre the 2013 Federal election, Greg Hunt publicly expressed his support for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island. Post-election, Mr Hunt met with the Members of the Committee of the PIACFI to discuss funding options for the proposed Centre. He suggested that a significant Federal government funding contribution was possible, and outlined a plan for other funding sources. As Federal Minister for the Environment, he is particularly interested in the building of a centre using renewable energy sources, of which geothermal base load,

and wind and solar backup for gas or grid-electricity base-load energy are three possible options.

The PIACFI Committee has already had preliminary discussions with Professor Ian Johnston of the Faculty of Engineering, at Melbourne University, about the practicality of using geothermal energy to heat the pools, power the spa and sauna and provide hot water for the showers in the Aquatic Centre. Professor Johnston has offered to have in depth discussions with PIACFI Committee, BCS Councillors and staff and with potential BOOT developers, about the geothermal concept. Use of geothermal energy could significantly decrease the likely annual operating subsidy required to be provide by Council, by significantly reducing the heating costs. Obviously, if the Aquatic Centre were located adjacent to the existing recreation centre operated by the YMCA, there may be a possibility of a synergy - to decrease the operating costs of that facility as well.

A possible concept plan for a Phillip Island Aquatic Centre co-located with the YMCA-run Cowes Leisure Centre, was outlined in "COWES RECREATION RESERVE MASTER PLAN [2009] - Bass Coast Shire Council - prepared by @leisure consultants July 2009". A copy of those plans is attached as Appendix E.

In November 2013, the PIACFI published a detailed analysis of all sources of revenue and all forms of expenditure by both the Pool Committee and the PIACFI, from the Committee's inception in 1991 to the present day, in The Phillip Island Advertiser.

The South Gippsland Sentinel- Times, in its Comment piece on 21 January 2014, under the heading 'New CEO on notice to make changes' identified (inter alia) 'funding for pools at both Wonthaggi and Cowes' as requiring attention by Bass Coast Shire's new CEO Paul Buckley.

Anne Oswin, The Editor, The Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser, said on 30 January 2014: 'The Advertiser has, in the past, supported the need for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island and will continue to maintain that stance.'

The Facebook page of the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Incorporated has 427 friends, all of whom support the establishment of an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island. 750 Bass Coast Shire residents (not only from Phillip Island and San Remo) have signed a hard copy of a petition calling for BCS to develop an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island NOW – not in 10=15 years as Council originally proposed. In addition, over 123 additional residents have recently signed an on-line version of that same petition. 55 residents of the Shire have sent individual letters of support for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island, to Paul Buckley, the new Chief Executive Officer of BCS. In addition, 22 prominent Sporting, schools and other Community organisations have sent similar letters of support to the new CEO (these bodies are detailed at Appendix D). The recent groundswell of support, via new friends on the Facebook page, new on-line signatories to the petition and the beginning of individual letters of support, promises to grow significantly in the future. **Numbers should count in convincing Council to commit to a Phillip Island Aquatic Centre.**

Why an Aquatic Centre?

As well as providing a recreational facility for both visitors and locals, the Aquatic Centre should be able to help with ameliorating chronic and debilitating illnesses of our time. (eg. diabetes, arthritis, cardiovascular disease, obesity, chronic respiratory diseases, neurological and sense disorders, mental health problems, to name a few). It will make a major contribution to addressing the goals and objectives of the municipal public health and wellbeing plans, of the Bass Coast Shire Council, particularly 'living healthy Bass Coast' and of the State and Federal Governments.

An Aquatic Centre on the Island seems acutely necessary, as Phillip Island is well known as a particularly difficult environment for asthma sufferers. It is also apparent that childhood obesity (with other associated physical disabilities) is a rapidly growing problem throughout Australia; pool swimming could make major inroads into reducing that incidence.

An Aquatic Centre of Phillip Island would contribute significantly to the Shire's Mission, viz.: **"To maximise the quality of life of our community, now and into the future"**. Sadly, although there is a major Aquatic Centre at Wonthaggi, 45 km from Cowes, there is no such facility on Phillip Island.

Put another way, an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island would also seem to respond to the Vision Statement of Bass Coast Community Health, viz., **"... for all Bass Coast community members to achieve better health outcomes."** The components of health are holistic and include states of physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity. ***What other major tourist facility in Australia, particularly in terms of large tourist numbers and a growing aging resident population, does not have at least a pool or an Aquatic centre?***

The Committee of the PIACFI believes that the premise "a gram of prevention is worth a kilogram of cure" is also a fundamental reason why an Aquatic Centre for Phillip Island is needed – to assist in promoting healthy lifestyles, so that the development of many chronic diseases is avoided, delayed or ameliorated.

The population profile of Phillip Island and San Remo

At the end of 2011, there were 10,730 permanent residents on Phillip Island and at San Remo combined. That number is forecast to grow to 11,726 by the end of 2016 (a 9.3 % increase) and to 15,706 by 2031. Of those residents in 2011, 21% were aged 0-19 years, 63% were aged 20-69 years and 16% over 70 years. The comparative percentage numbers in 2016 are forecast to be much the same. As noted previously, the Phillip Island and San Remo area has a significantly higher proportion of adults over 60 years of age in comparison with the rest of regional Victoria.

By Bass Coast Shire's own estimates, in 2011, Phillip Island and San Remo combined accounted for 35.7% of the population of the Bass Coast Shire. That proportion is forecast to decrease only marginally by 2031.

Population Statistics - Bass Coast Shire

	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031
Pop. PI & S Remo	9,581	10,730	11,726	13,096	14,436	15,706
Total Pop. Bass Coast	27,502	30,023	33,185	37,545	41,545	45,258
% PI & San Remo	34.8	35.7	35.3	34.9	34.7	34.7

The population on the Island swells to in excess of 50,000 during Holiday periods (particularly Christmas, Easter and school holidays).

Interestingly, the Victorian government's 'Draft Regional Growth Plan GIPPSLAND' predicts that the population of the Bass Coast Shire is predicted to grow by 55.8% between 2011 and 2031. That is 9% more than the next highest Local Government Area's (LGA) predicted growth rate of 46.7% (Baw Baw) and compares with just 28.2% as the predicted average growth rate for all the 6 LGAs in Gippsland. That predicted huge increase in the BCS population begs the need for the Shire to provide appropriate community infrastructure – **of which the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre is a key component, as a significant percentage of that increase in population will wish to reside on Phillip Island or at San Remo.**

The weather profile of Phillip Island and San Remo

The Bureau of Meteorology long term, recorded weather-profile for Phillip Island from 1981-2012 shows that only in the months of December, January, February and March is the recorded average air temperature at Phillip as high as 24°C (and only marginally so for March). Average water temperatures are usually 4-5°C lower than average air temperatures, and few people, with the exception of perhaps surfers and others with wetsuits, are inclined to swim in water temperatures below 20°C. Within those four months, there will usually be many days when the temperature is below 24°C. That means that, at best, perhaps only 60 days of the year can be relied on to produce warm enough water for good swimming conditions in the Bay or at the surf beaches around Phillip Island, and only for a limited part of those days. Thus, generally there are many days in the year when most residents or visitors would not be inclined to swim in the sea. By contrast, heated pools are generally heated to 26-28° and for many hours of the day – every day that the pool is open. A heated pool is essential for the majority of both residents and visitors to enjoy swimming on Phillip Island, for possibly up to 85-90% of the days of the year when the sea is too cold.

What facilities and activities are envisaged to be included in and provided for in an Aquatic Centre?

The PIACFI Committee and its predecessors have had 22 years of involvement in trying to acquire an Aquatic Centre for Phillip Island. The facilities and activities envisaged for the Centre include:

Facilities

- 25 meter 8-lane pool;
- separate water play area;
- toddlers pool;
- separate hydrotherapy pool, for the aged, disabled, sports injury repair and non-sports injury repair;
- spa; and
- sauna.

This scope of facilities has been consistently supported by a number of feasibility studies conducted by the PIACFI over the years, including the latest study in 2010.

Activities

- drown proofing for babies and toddlers;
- learn to swim and promotion of healthy lifestyles;
- lap swimming;
- swimming club activities;
- aqua-aerobics;
- synchronised swimming;
- water play for young children and teenagers;
- family social activities with an emphasis on healthy lifestyles;
- appropriate gentle water exercise for people with weight management problems, medical conditions and injuries;
- water polo;
- initial lifesaving training, as a prelude to surf lifesaving training;
- pool guard training;
- Bronze medallion training;
- initial scuba diving training classes; and
- part-time paid employment for local youth as pool guards.

Who will use the Aquatic Centre?

From our feasibility studies, surveys and anecdotally, we have identified the following groups:

- the general resident community – the pool will be a community pool first and foremost, providing scope for recreation, fitness and general health and well-being for individuals adults and families;
- older citizens – water activities for strength and fitness are low-impact, so suited to older people who may not be able to run, cycle, play ball sports, etc.;
- local schools – three of the four local schools have expressed dissatisfaction with the access to suitable facilities to operate Learn to Swim programs and training for competition swimming on Phillip Island;
- school camps – there are several school camps on the island that are booked 40+ weeks of the year. An aquatic centre will be a valuable asset for groups staying at the camps;
- residents with health issues, including people needing physiotherapist-led hydrotherapy and aqua aerobics, diabetics, asthmatics and people with mental health issues, to name a few;
- local Swim Clubs – the biggest barrier to growth for the three local Swim Clubs is access to lane space for training/coaching;
- local young people – for passive recreation in a non-competitive setting; and
- other visitors to the Island – from interstate and overseas, and individuals and families with holiday homes or on site vans, cabins, etc. on Phillip Island.

Establishing the Need Aquatic Centre Feasibility Studies

A number of studies investigating the feasibility of an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island have been conducted since the formation of the Pool Committee in 1991. In November 2010, the Committee of the PIACFI received the final report of the latest study by the consultant “Sport and Leisure Solutions” titled ‘Phillip Island Centre Feasibility Study’. The Project objectives of that study are detailed at Appendix B.

A key part of that feasibility study was a community survey, conducted both on-line and by hard-copy, meetings with relevant stakeholders, backed up by telephone surveys. It would appear that Bass Coast Shire’s current investigation will duplicate much of the work undertaken in PIACFI’s latest feasibility study. Of the 8% of the Phillip Island population that completed the on-line or hard-copy surveys, 91.7% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with aquatic facilities within Bass Coast. And about 50% of respondents to both the on-line or hard-copy surveys and telephone interviews were prepared to pay extra rates to fund the Centre. This latest feasibility study and other consultations provided the basis of the Needs Analysis which follows.

The Needs Analysis

Aged Care facilities

There are three aged care facilities on Phillip Island – Banfields, Grossard Court and Melaleuca Lodge – and one at San Remo – Griffiths Point Lodge. In total, these facilities currently (or plan) to cater for approximately 250 residents.

In the combined area of Phillip Island and San Remo, there were 1,664 residents aged 70 and over in 2011; that number is forecast to grow to 1,909 by 2016 and 2,910 by 2031. In the Shire, there are a significantly higher proportion of residents over the age of 60 years compared to the average for Rural Victoria (25.4% versus 21.1%). The Aquatic Centre would provide programs for appropriate gentle water exercise for aged people with weight management problems, medical conditions and injuries in the main heated pool; and in a separate hydrotherapy pool (for both physiotherapist-led hydrotherapy and aqua aerobics) a spa and a sauna. Provision of those facilities would make a major contribution to improving the physical, psychological and mental well-being of those residents. For those residents, travel to an Aquatic Centre at Wonthaggi is not financially viable or advisable, given their various levels of independence and the distance and time involved.

Between 2011 and 2021, the Shire's population forecasts indicate a 30.9% increase in the resident population of retirement age. For Phillip Island and San Remo alone, the comparative figure is 34.4%. That demographic means that increasingly there will be a need for aged care services for the residents of the Shire, and more particularly in the Phillip Island and San Remo area.

Doctors and Allied Health Services

The feasibility study team held discussions with a number of health service providers in the catchment. The findings of these consultations are summarised below:

- Specialist hydrotherapy facilities (for physiotherapist-led hydrotherapy and aqua aerobics) would be essential in any new facility. Medical practitioners such as doctors, physiotherapists, chiropractors, osteopaths and massage therapists have patients who require remedial hydrotherapy pool access. They believe this would result in significant use of any hydrotherapy facilities.
- They support the development of a new aquatic centre in order to support physical activity participation and help fight obesity and other health issues associated with inactivity.
- It is more cost effective (for the community and government) to invest in facilities and infrastructure that support physical activity participation than

incur the health costs involved in treating disease and conditions associated with prolonged inactivity.

- They are concerned about the current lack of appropriate local indoor aquatic and leisure facilities and the impact this has on local health issues and accident and injury rehabilitation opportunities. There may be demand for allied health consulting suites as part of any new facility. However this needs to be tested with the private sector.
- The distance to the Wonthaggi Aquatic and Leisure Centre is a barrier to increased usage and disadvantages many older adults, people undergoing rehabilitation and those with chronic diseases such as diabetes.
- Warm water physiotherapist-led hydrotherapy and aqua aerobic activities can be accessed only once per week at the WAC on a Wednesday. This is inadequate and causes too much disruption for other users.
- There is limited public transport to the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre. This has an adverse impact on overall accessibility to aquatic programs.
- Concession pricing programs need to reflect the capacity of people with limited income to afford to access facilities. Current concession pricing is a little high.

One respondent to the on-line survey (a physiotherapist practicing in Cowes) stated:

“Many of my patients desperately require local water-based rehabilitation facilities to avoid often lengthy and painful travel times to Wonthaggi. As a clinic, we would wish to run hydrotherapy classes there!”

One resident of Cowes who had a hip replacement and physiotherapy-led hydrotherapy in Melbourne said **“The major factor in my recuperation and return to full fitness after my hip operation was hydrotherapy; I don’t know how I would have coped without it”**

The specific benefits of physiotherapist-led hydrotherapy (also known as aquatic physiotherapy) include: exercise based treatment, in a pool heated to around 34 degrees and ideally around chest level depth. These parameters are different to a regular pool and have therapeutic benefits with regard to pain, swelling and circulation, as well as the benefits of a buoyant environment for reducing weight bearing forces on the body. Hydrotherapy benefits most those undergoing lower back and lower limb rehabilitation complementing land based rehabilitation, and particularly if land based exercise is difficult e.g. the obese and elderly. There are no hydrotherapy facilities as described available in our shire, other than the Wonthaggi

pool being heated by an extra few degrees on a Wednesday, with Gippsland Physiotherapy providing one class weekly. All Phillip Island physiotherapists are unanimous in their support for a hydrotherapy pool with two of the three sources willing to run classes, including Gippsland Physiotherapy in Cowes and Bass Coast community Health Services.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that heated pools are also widely used by disability groups and individuals. To state the obvious, not all disabled people are aged. Modern facilities are now more accommodating of families in design of change rooms that specifically cater for their needs.

General community use of an aquatic centre, including a 25 metre pool, separate hydrotherapy pool, spa and sauna

There should be significant opportunities in an Aquatic Centre for: baby and toddler drown proofing; learn to swim programs; promotion of healthy lifestyles, including lap swimming; competitive swimming training and actual competitive swimming meets; school sports;

Bronze medallion training; initial lifesaving training; initial scuba diving classes; synchronised swimming; water polo; and part-time employment for youth as lifeguards, swim instructors and administrative staff.

The Centre will also provide local youth with another venue for meeting up, and another all-weather, wholesome sporting activity to be involved in to use up their generally high energy levels. It could well lead to less 'youth problems' in the Phillip Island and San Remo area. Local sporting clubs – cricket, football, etc. – could use the pool and the associated facilities for aerobic training and rehabilitation of sports injuries.

Respondents to the telephone survey conducted as part of PIACFI's feasibility study (many of whom do not currently use the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre) stated that they would be more likely to use aquatic facilities if the facility was on Phillip Island. Two thirds of those specific respondents stated that increased usage would occur if the facility was located within 15 minutes of their residences. On-line survey respondents, by an overwhelming majority, believed that travel times should, at maximum, be 20 minutes. Both respondent groups assert an aquatic facility on Phillip Island would most likely lead to increased pool usage by Phillip Island residents.

Another issue faced by residents of Phillip Island and San Remo posed by the absence of a facility on Phillip Island is that pool swimming before-work and after-work is almost impossible, given the long distance and time to travel to Wonthaggi and back.

Given that the average weekly income level in the Shire, including in the Phillip Island catchment, is lower, and average weekly rentals are higher than both the Victorian and

regional Victoria averages, car travel costs to Wonthaggi and back are not an insignificant consideration for Phillip Island and San Remo residents.

Swimming clubs

It is very difficult for parents and children having to travel to Wonthaggi for early morning or after school club swimming sessions (often 2 or 3 times a week) – the very early risings in the mornings; the late arrivals home at night; the cost of the 45 kilometres travel to and from Wonthaggi; and the travel time commitment – leading to significant pressure on both parents and children, which often results in children dropping out. The problems are accentuated during the Winter months. Some talented, young swimmers have found it almost impossible to progress to higher competitive levels because of those difficulties.

Respondents to the PIACFI feasibility study also stated that the Wonthaggi pool is currently too crowded.

The inability of many families to access private pool facilities on Phillip Island, due to long waiting lists, and the limited access to the Cowes Primary School pool means that there is a strong disincentive to join swimming clubs.

One respondent to the latest PIACFI feasibility study said **“We have a great swimming club with dedicated parents who make the trip to Wonthaggi regularly – imagine how great the club would be if we had a facility locally.”**

Lifesaving clubs

Although the sandy Northern bay beaches are usually relatively benign, the ocean (surf) beaches can sometimes be dangerous even for very competent swimmers and many of those beaches are patrolled by surf lifesavers for only a part of the year, and some not at all. The dangers for residents and visitors who are not good swimmers can be perilous at those surf beaches. Lifesaving clubs would prefer poor swimmers – residents and visitors - not to risk swimming at the surf beaches. They would also prefer recruits to their organisation to be well pool-trained before joining their body. They also assert that the preferred venue for initial lifesaving training is in a pool.

Learn to Swim

Cowes Primary school has its own outdoor (uncovered) solar-heated pool, operated by the School Council. But, because it outdoors, even with solar heating it can only be used from around Melbourne Cup Day, to the end of the school year and for the 10 weeks of Term 1 the following year. The school program is sometimes cancelled if the weather is cold or wet. The school program leaves no scope for other schools to use that pool.



The Phillip Island Swim Club has access to the pool for coaching on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays **only**, but **only** in the afternoon, and **only** from Cup Day to the end of the following Term 1. A 3-week Learn To Swim program is conducted at the pool during January on week-day mornings.

Learn to swim classes at other private pools generally have long waiting lists.

The Aquatic Centre Committee has been advised that it is unlikely that the pool would be available to the general public for purely recreational purposes at any time Monday-Friday during school terms. The YMCA has been contracted to open the pool to the public during the summer school holidays. However, that occurs only when the forecast, ambient air temperature is at least 24°C. But even on those days, the pool is open only from 12.00 midday to 6.00 pm.

The intermittent nature of these programs is particularly worrying in the context of rapidly increasing childhood obesity across the whole of Australia. Swimming is one of the few active sports that are relatively easy for youth with obesity problems, and presumably associated relatively lower fitness levels, to participate in.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that water play facilities (envisaged as an essential part of the proposed Phillip Island Aquatic Centre) are complementary to aquatic education programs and invariably lead to an increase in swim lessons.

Feasibility study consultation with Newhaven, Cowes and San Remo Primary schools and with Newhaven Secondary College

Although Cowes Primary has its own pool, Newhaven College, and San Remo and Newhaven Primary schools have limited access to that pool. That means that usually swim lessons for their students can take up half a day – travel to Wonthaggi and return, and the actual time changing and swimming, obviously with longer than desired disruptions to other programs in the school.

Cowes Primary (currently 508 students) is satisfied that the students at the school receive adequate aquatic education instruction and are well prepared to swim in the bay and patrolled open beaches.

San Remo Primary (currently 140 students) assesses that at least 10% of students have no water familiarisation experience by the time they begin school. They believe that an aquatic centre on Phillip Island would result in a significant increase in aquatic education opportunities for San Remo Primary students.

Newhaven Primary (currently 127 students) teachers now believe that almost 50% of the children at the school cannot swim to a level that reflects the aquatic risks of a seaside area. The school has been unable to secure learn to swim hours at the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre

this year. They believe that the construction of an aquatic centre on Phillip Island is a necessity if children are to learn basic aquatic safety skills.

Newhaven College (currently 850 students) believes that the provision of an aquatic centre on Phillip Island would result in a significant increase in aquatic activities and programs conducted by the school.

That is a total of 1,625 primary and students are enrolled in Phillip Island and San Remo schools. In addition, many secondary school students who live in those two locations travel to Wonthaggi secondary schools – Wonthaggi Secondary College and St Joseph’s Catholic College. The two Wonthaggi secondary schools and Inverloch Primary have a total enrolment of 2,186. The students who live at Inverloch or around Wonthaggi have relatively easy access to the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre, but, sadly, those students living in the Phillip Island–San Remo catchment do not. **That is hardly equitable treatment.**

In addition, the Phillip Island Hub has 200 children, in the age ranges 0-5, currently enrolled in pre-school sessions. Ideally, each of those children should be beginning learn to swim programs by the age of 2-3 years, not to say that they should not also be undergoing drown-proofing sessions at an even earlier age. But where can that currently happen in the Phillip Island-San Remo catchment, other than the already capacity-inadequate Cowes Primary School pool, or at a few private pools with severe problems of available places?

By Bass Coast Shire’s own estimates, in the combined area of Phillip Island and San Remo, there were 623 children in the age range 0-4, and 1,668 children and youths in the age range 5-19, in 2011. Those numbers are forecast to be 603 and 1,868, respectively, by 2016. **Each of these children and youth should ideally be competent and confident to engage in appropriate-to-age pool-based and ocean-based leisure activities. But where can they currently gain those skills?**

Total Population Phillip Island & San Remo

Age group	2006	%	2011	%	2016
0-4 years	476	5.0	623	5.8	603
5-9 years	507	5.3	561	5.2	683
10-14 years	616	6.4	574	5.3	644
15-19 years	517	5.4	533	5.0	541
> 19 years	7,465	77.9	8,439	78.6	9,255
Total	9,581		10,730		11,726

Tourism

The provision of an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island would be a major additional attraction for visitors to Youth camps, Caravan Park visitors and Day visitors, for the obvious recreational uses.



Destination Phillip Island, the Regional Tourism Board, has added its support for an aquatic centre in Cowes for use from the community and visitors. They believe that the local community would benefit greatly from that infrastructure, assessing that it would enhance the visitor experience to Cowes and Phillip Island.

The Phillip Island Tourism and Business Association has also added its support for an Aquatic Centre in Cowes for use from the community and visitors. They also believe that the local community would benefit greatly from that infrastructure, also assessing that it would enhance the visitor experience to Cowes and Phillip Island.

The Waves holiday apartments recently stated, in a letter to the new BCS CEO:

“Such a facility could also provide a boost to visitor numbers to the island, with considerable economic benefits to business owners, the Shire and the State and Federal governments.”

And they also stated“

“For The Waves Apartments the desired facilities in such a centre would include: a recreational heated swimming pool for the extensive Winter months when our guests wish to utilise swimming facilities other than the freezing ocean upon our doorstep. We also have many internationally renowned guests that require a heated swimming pool to maintain a certain level of fitness training during the weeks of large events that are hosted at Phillip Island. Tourism is a huge drawcard for our business and largely that of the island, you would think that any State or Federal Government would invest in such a valuable location and make it better for general Tourism if not for the local population who are obviously not catered for.”

How will the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre be financed?

Various cost estimates, in the range of \$8-10 million, have been advanced in recent years, for the acquisition of land and construction of a Phillip Island Aquatic Centre (of the scale envisaged by the desirable facilities identified above). With possible State government grant of \$3.0 million (assuming half was allocated for the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre and half allocated for the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre) donated land from the Shire (estimated at \$2.0 million, assuming that Shire land adjacent to the Phillip Island leisure centre is the preferred location) and a likely substantial grant from the Federal government of at least \$1 million to \$2 million, the capital shortfall is of the order of \$3.5-\$5.5 million. The Committee

of the PIACFI will be actively exploring avenues to source funds from various businesses, community organisations and philanthropic bodies – both in cash and in-kind - to redress part of that shortfall. But, it is likely that a temporary increase in general rates, special rates, a special charge or limited Shire borrowings will be necessary also to finance part of the shortfall.

A general rate increase of 4% across all rateable residences, commercial and industrial sites and rural landholdings would raise approximately \$1.3 million per annum and result in an increase of just \$59.12 for the average ratepayer (assuming an average rate of \$1,478). The imposition of special charges has a number of precedents in the Shire, including: the Pine Avenue and Churchill Drive, Cowes Special Charge Scheme; the South Dudley Estate Special Charge Scheme; and the Graham Street Special Charge Scheme.

Where should the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre be built?

The PIACFI Committee believes that there are a number of options for location of the Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island. But the land adjacent to the Cowes Leisure Centre has obvious benefits:

- it is already owned by BCS;
- it is adjacent to the Leisure Centre, with the possibility of many synergies with the facilities of that Centre.

The Leisure Centre is managed by the YMCA, which arguably has significant expertise in running pool complexes. It may wish to take on an expanded role running the Aquatic Centre, and it may prefer to have the Centres adjacent to each other, in order to make economies on running costs.

Other locations on the Island could be considered, eg. on private land. We understand that Newhaven College may be prepared to donate some of its land for development of the Aquatic Centre. The PIACFI Committee is not opposed in principle to that option, but would need to be assured that there was a Memorandum of Understanding (or like instrument) in place to govern adequate public access, lane availability, hours of operation, sharing with the school, etc. Such an option would of course not be able to access the synergies mentioned above regarding co-location with the existing Cowes Leisure Centre.

When should a Phillip Island Aquatic Centre be built?

The Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre Pool may not 'fail' for another ten years (Engineer's Report); there is no indication that it is currently leaking; and it does not currently have 'real'



hydrotherapy facilities. Logically, it makes common sense to build the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre first - that Centre must include 'real' hydrotherapy facilities – and continue using the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre for the (estimated) two years it will take to have the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre fully operational. Then the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre could be closed and redeveloped to become fully operational two years later. The PIACFI Committee understands that the Council's current strategy regarding redeveloping the Wonthaggi

Aquatic Centre includes provision for expanding the pool from 8 to 10 lanes. That specific proposal needs to be carefully scrutinised, less it caters for over-design. Under PIACFI's alternative approach, there would seem to be an up-front saving of \$1.8 million that has currently been estimated to keep the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre operational during the planned redevelopment; that money would not need to be spent. It is the PIACFI Committee's considered opinion that under its alternative proposal, the Shire could have two Aquatic Centres for not much more than the \$14 million - \$16 million currently proposed for the redevelopment of the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre.

The need for an annual operating subsidy

It is probable that there will be a need for a small operating subsidy to run the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre; this no different to the situation of the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre. And it is no different to the case for most public pools/aquatic centres throughout Victoria and Australia. But the ongoing annual operating subsidy (and the capital cost) are arguably both expenditures that will be well spent, in terms of the multiple benefits to: health and aged care; water safety; recreation; and tourism.

Appendix A

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Appendix B

Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study - for the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Committee

Project objectives

The clear objectives of the study include:

- to establish the level of demand and need for an aquatic centre on Phillip Island.
- to understand the provision of aquatic facilities in similar regional locations, their impact on community benefit and their financial performance.
- to explore and recommend the facility elements and overall facility development that will best respond to community needs and demands.
- to provide a clear understanding of the financial implications for the ongoing operations of the centre, including the start-up phase.
- to provide clarity on the impact of the site location on potential usage of facilities and programs.
- to provide an upper level view of the potential capital costs for the development of the centre.

Appendix C

Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study - for the Phillip Island Aquatic Centre Committee

Summary of community consultation

Community dissatisfaction with current aquatic provision

There is a high level of dissatisfaction within the Phillip Island and San Remo Community with regard to the provision of Aquatic facilities within the Bass Coast Shire with 91% of respondents either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Community demand for an aquatic centre on Phillip Island

There is a high level of demand for an aquatic centre on Phillip Island with 82% of respondents stating it is extremely important.

Current travel time impact on usage

The greatest barrier to use of aquatic facilities is the travel time to the Wonthaggi Aquatic Centre. The construction of an aquatic centre on Phillip Island would see a significant increase in use of Aquatic Centre activities within the Shire.

Council rate increase

Nearly 50% of respondents would be willing to pay additional council rates of up to 7% per annum to fund an aquatic centre on Phillip Island.

Funding mix

The funding should be through a mix of local, state and federal sources.

Facility location

A new facility should be located midway between Cowes and San Remo.

Facility components

The types of components that should be included in a new facility development are a lap swimming pool, hydrotherapy pool (for both physiotherapist-led hydrotherapy and aqua aerobics) kid's play pool and learn to swim pool.

Summary

It is reasonable to conclude that the current provision of aquatic facilities within the Bass Coast Shire prevents some members of the community from participating in aquatic activity and also that there is a high level of dissatisfaction with the current aquatic centre provision. Conversely, the community consultation process has clearly identified that there is significant community support for the development of an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island and that its provision will result in increased aquatic activity levels in all sectors of the community.

Appendix D

List of individuals and organisations who/that have written to the CEO Bass Coast Shire expressing support for an Aquatic Centre on Phillip Island:-

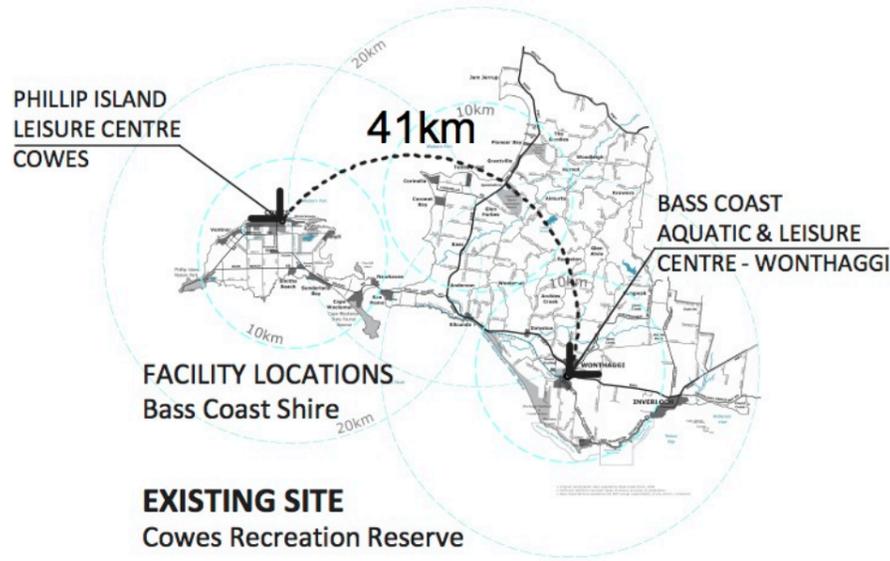
1. Hayley Chambers - Facility Administrator, Melaleuca Lodge
2. William Giles – President, Committee of Management, Melaleuca Lodge
3. President – Phillip Island Senior Citizens Club
4. Robyn Dunlop – Residential Manager, Grossard Court
5. Mike Foenander – Principal, Judith Wright, Stockdale and Leggo
6. Zena Archibald – President, Phillip Island Board Riders Association
7. Karen Barker – Principal, San Remo Primary School
8. Kim Storey – General Manager, Destination Phillip Island, the Regional Tourism Board
9. Pauline Boulton – Co-ordinator, The Phillip Island Tourism and Business Association
10. Greg Hunt MP, Federal Member for Flinders
11. Bhvani Rooks – Director, Health on Course
12. Ian McKay – President, Phillip Island U3A.
13. Sue Viney – Gippsland Regional Manager, Phillip Island Girl Guides
14. David Rooks – President, Phillip Island Scouts
15. Ron Hateley – Secretary, Phillip Island Bicycle Users’ Group
16. Maxine McDonald – Secretary, Phillip Island Tennis Club
17. Leanne Edwards – Principal, Bass Valley Primary School, Corinella
18. Liam Keating – President, Phillip Island District Cricket Club
19. Janet Lodge – Director of Nursing, Bass Coast Regional Health
20. Murray Jackson – Managing Director, Westernport Water
21. Sue Becker – Principal, Cowes Primary School
22. Terry Robinson – President, Phillip Island Basketball
23. Max Wells – CEO, Surfing Victoria
24. Daren Dempsey – President, Phillip Island Soccer Club
25. Gea Lovell – Principal, Newhaven College
26. Carolyn Thurgood – General Manager, The Waves
27. Michael McLeod – Director, first national REAL ESTATE
28. Matthew Jackson – CEO, Phillip Island nature parks australia

And more to Come!!!!



Appendix E

Is made up of the following pages along with some ideas for potential partnerships for the Centre.



EXISTING SITE

Cowes Recreation Reserve

- ① PRIVATE ALLOTMENTS
No 19 - 21 Chapel Street
- ② WESTERNPORT WATER
Asset - Pumping Station
- ③ BASS COAST SHIRE COUNCIL
Asset Management - Crown Land
- ④ PARKING & PUBLIC AMENITIES - Chapel St
- ⑤ PHILLIP ISLAND FOOTBALL NETBALL CLUB INC.
Netball Courts
- ⑥ PHILLIP ISLAND TENNIS CLUB
Courts - Shared Rooms - Playground
- ⑦ COWES FOOTBALL & CRICKET GROUND
- ⑧ PHILLIP ISLAND DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB
Practice Nets
- ⑨ PARKING - Church St
- ⑩ BASS COAST SHIRE COUNCIL
Asset - Land with current facilities
- ⑪ PHILLIP ISLAND FOOTBALL NETBALL CLUB INC.
Social and Sports Rooms
- ⑫ YMCA PHILLIP ISLAND LEISURE CENTRE
- ⑬ YMCA PHILLIP ISLAND SKATE PARK



YMCA-Phillip Island Leisure Centre located at Cowes Recreation Reserve (Dunsmore Park) offers a health club facility for group training and individual fitness sessions, a multi-purpose indoor court for basketball and soccer programs, a squash court and modest spa & sauna. Management extends to supervision of the adjacent skate-park and their creche facility includes a Vacation Care Program for children 5-12 years old. The YMCA have operated an external Summer Swim Program at Cowes Primary School Pool for a number of years.

The current building is of basic construction and age appropriate to renewal and expansion.

PROPOSED FACILITIES

The scope of facilities proposed to complement the development of an aquatic centre in Cowes has been consistently supported by several feasibility studies conducted by PIACF, the most recent in 2010.

In early 2014 Council will release a Draft Master Plan recommending long-term development options for recreational land reserves within Cowes. Improving the environment of community recreational space and access to multiple sports facilities can only be delivered in a time-frame suitable to capital works funding and resources.

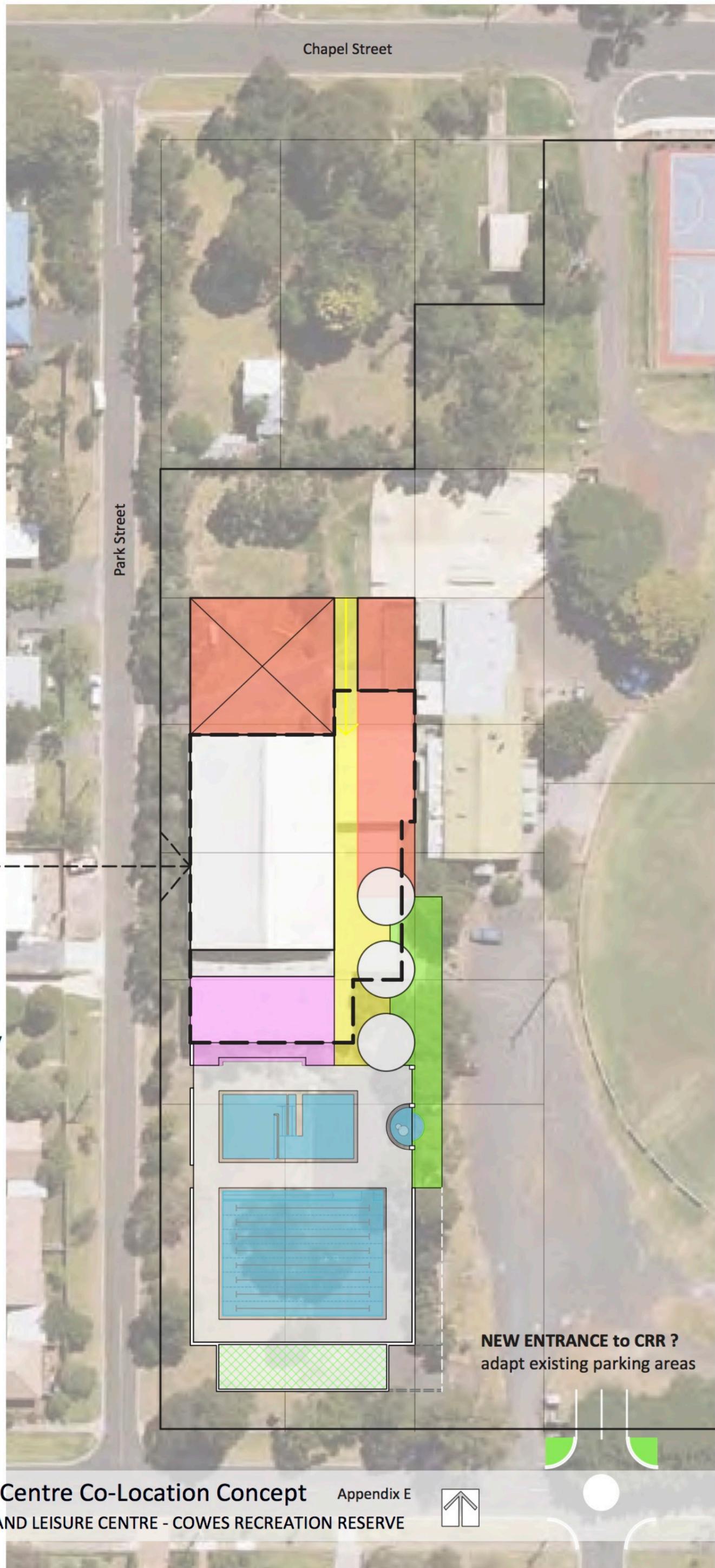
The PIACF seek to raise the priority of development and consolidate support for an aquatic - recreational facility on Phillip Island. PIACF forward this concept to Council and community for evaluation and discussion.

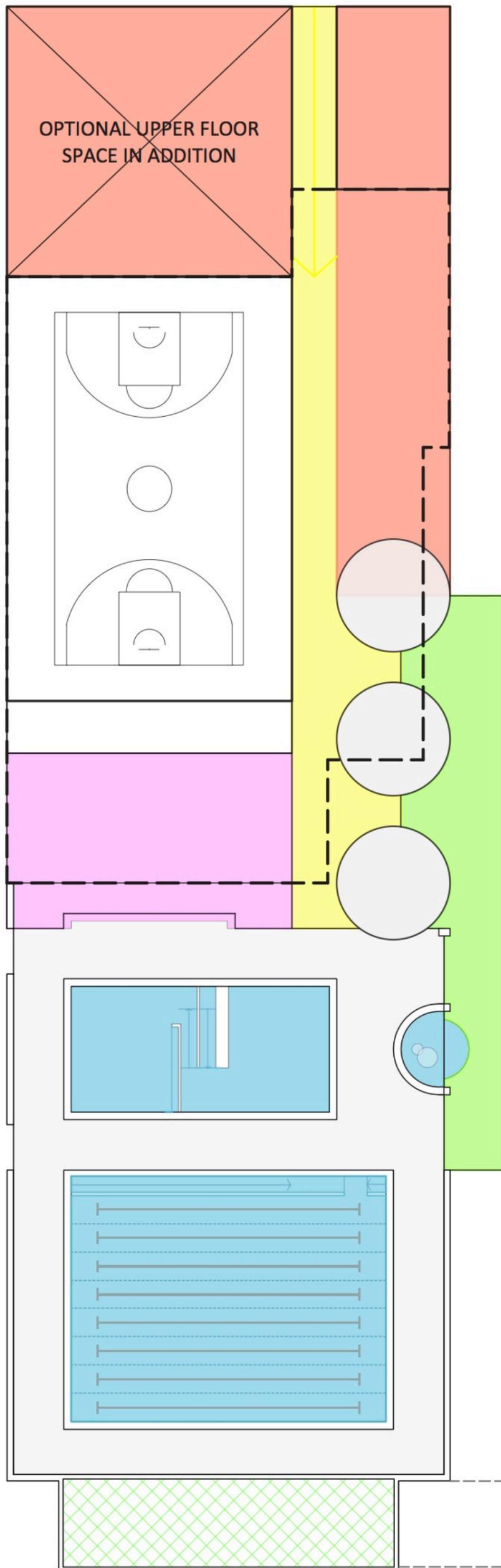
-  Allied health / fitness / creche and first aid facilities relocated
-  Option to include upper floor space in addition

EXISTING BUILDING ENVELOPE for staged redevelopment

-  Shared reception / ticketing office / first aid and kiosk spaces
-  Entrance court + ramp / secure access and table space for wet/dry kiosk servery
-  Gallery access and foyer
-  Change rooms - Change village M-F / Group / Family / Accessible
-  25 metre x 8 lane lap pool
Warm water / program pool
Learn to swim pool
Toddlers splash deck
-  Pool Plant / Store / Delivery access

AERIAL PHOTO ©2014 BCSC Mapping
extract from
COWES RECREATION RESERVE MASTER PLAN [2009]
Bass Coast Shire Council - prepared by @leisure consultants July 2009





EXISTING FACILITY
YMCA Phillip Island Leisure Centre

APPROX.
1,635 sq.m

CONCEPTUAL REDEVELOPMENT
Incorporating existing and new facilities

APPROX.
4,250 sq.m

RETAIN & INTEGRATE EXISTING

INDOOR SPORTS COURTS - Basketball - Squash
DRY CHANGE ROOMS - EQUIP. STORE

REDEVELOP & EXPAND EXISTING

DRY FLOOR PROGRAM SPACES - ACCESS CORRIDOR

ENTRANCE - OFFICE - FIRST AID - STORE - (SPA - SAUNA)
RELOCATED IN NEW SHARED USE

FLOOR AREAS

ESTIMATE

NEW SHARED RECEPTION / TICKETING 180 sq.m.
OFFICE-ADMIN / FIRST AID / KIOSK (3 x 60 sq.m)

NEW SHARED GALLERY / FOYER 370 sq.m.
AIRLOCKS / SECURE ACCESS

NEW CHANGE ROOMS 290 sq.m.
Male / Female / Group / Family / Accessible

ADDITIONAL CHANGE VILLAGE 18 sq.m.
lockers / benches accessible off concourse

POOL HALL 1,500 sq.m.

CONCOURSE 682 sq.m

25 METRE x 8 LANE LAP POOL 487 sq.m.
with RAMP ENTRY

WARM WATER / PROGRAM POOL 205 sq.m.
LEARN TO SWIM POOL
with COMBINED RAMP ENTRY

TODDLERS SPLASH-DECK 16 sq.m.

POOL PERIMETER GRATING SYSTEM 100 sq.m.

PLANT / POOL STORE 195 sq.m.



PHILLIP ISLAND AQUATIC CENTRE POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIP





Possible Strategic Partnerships

