

Resolution of Council

17 February 2025

Item 13.4

Making Pools and Aquatic Facilities Free For All

Moved by Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Ellsmore -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council agree that:

- (i) operating and delivering high quality, accessible pools is a core community service and public good expected of us;
- (ii) as the effects of climate change intensify over the coming years and decades, access to swimming facilities will become increasingly important;
- (iii) according to research undertaken by the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia, for every \$1 spent on operating pool facilities, \$4.87 of social benefit is realised in terms of community health, cohesion and wellbeing; and
- (iv) the current cost-of-living crisis and entry costs are a prohibitive barrier for many in our community wanting to access and use our swimming facilities;

(B) Council note:

- (i) Snowy Valley Council undertook a trial in 2017 providing free entry to their 5 Council owned and operated pools that resulted in:
 - (a) an increase in visits to their facilities of 23%;
 - (b) an increase of 241% to income generated by the facilities, via sales at cafes within the pools, delivery of swimming lessons, aquarobics classes, and a paid after-hours entry pass; and
 - (c) no substantial change to operating costs, with just a small 1.5% increase recorded;

- (ii) Tamworth Council is currently trailing free pool entry over the current summer holidays, with an overwhelmingly positive response from the community thus far, with a report due to be tabled to Council sometime later this year;
 - (iii) a number of other regional councils such as Campase Shire, Central Goldfields Shire, Hepburn Shire, Mildura Rural City Council, Mitchell Shire Council, Buloke Shire and many more offer some form of free entry to their pools;
 - (iv) Melbourne City Council recently moved towards free entry after enacting \$2 entry fees for all of their pools in addition to offering free swimming lessons, recognising the initiative will support community health, wellbeing and safety; and
 - (v) Brisbane City Council also now has moved towards free entry, with pool entry fees reduced to just \$2 during the summer season to huge popularity and success;
- (C) Council agree that everyone, no matter their income, be able to access our pool facilities for free by removing entry costs; and
- (D) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to prepare budget advice and necessary variations to ensure that free entry to pools and insourcing of Council owned aquatic facilities is considered as part of the 2025/26 budget process and future years' forward estimates.

The motion was lost on the following show of hands –

Ayes (2) Councillors Ellsmore and Thompson

Noes (8) The Chair (the Lord Mayor), Councillors Gannon, Kok, Maxwell, Miller, Weldon, Wilson (Arkins) and Worling.

Motion lost.

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