

Sunshine Swim & Leisure Centre

Service and Amenity Needs

A Local Community Perspective

23 October 2003

# Sunshine Community Pool Action Group (SCPAG)

## PART A: CONTEXT

### 1. Background

Brimbank Council is preparing to make an application to Sport and Recreation Victoria in December 2004 for a grant from the Better Pools Program.

SCPAG is participating on a Council sponsored Sunshine Swim & Leisure Centre Redevelopment Reference Group to advise Council on community views emanating from consultative processes it has been sponsoring.

This document has been developed in advance of a Brimbank Council sponsored municipality wide strategic planning exercise for aquatic services which is scheduled for completion in the first quarter of 2004.

SCPAG has therefore made considered assumptions about Sunshine Pool catchment areas and associated matters in order to clearly demonstrate need for a proper and adequate restoration of Sunshine Swim and Leisure Centre.

### 2. Purpose of document

This document has been produced by SCPAG in response to a request from Brimbank Council for the Action Group to advise on its perspective of Sunshine community needs for aquatic services.

### 3. Process

In order to obtain a broad cross section of community input SCPAG has over the past two months:

- run public meetings;
- established Sunshine Pool Action Network (SPAN) – a collective of local schools, sports clubs, traders, service clubs, unions, community groups and service providers;
- run weekly action meetings to obtain community support and feedback;
- surveyed and communicated with different groups;
- discussed options and received verbal input; and,
- held a community rally in support of a full and proper redevelopment of Sunshine Swim & Leisure Centre

The clear and unanimous outcome of community input to the process has been a united call for the restoration of the Sunshine Swim and Leisure Centre as a centerpiece of community life in Sunshine including a reopening of the closed outdoor pools.

The community recognizes that the proposed Council / State government project budget of \$4.49M is inadequate and is calling for more capital funds to be provided to bring service levels back to where they were in the early 90's.

The community is calling on Brimbank Council and the State Government to meet Sunshine community requests for these facilities and not to plan to deliver a less than adequate outcome for current and future generations.

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## 4. Sunshine community profile

The Sunshine community is recognised as:

- culturally diverse
- having a youth population greater than the Melbourne average
- having significantly increasing numbers in older age groups
- significantly disadvantaged in relation to health status
- having higher than average levels of unemployment
- having a level of socio economic disadvantage below both the Victorian and Western Region IRSID scores with highest levels of disadvantage in the Sunshine area

## 5. Drivers for change at Sunshine Swim and Leisure Centre

There are a number of critical drivers impacting on the need for widespread improvements in the levels of service and amenity at Sunshine Pool:

- Population growth
- Severe inequity
- Respond to unmet demand
- Need to obtain Best Value – community service outcomes and financial outcomes
- Community water safety
- Improve social capital through community building
- Minimal and virtually non-existent private sector capable / willing to fill the service gap
- Need to improve health status and reduce obesity levels across all age groups

## 6. Sunshine Swim & Leisure Centre catchment population

Table 1 below sets out the projected population of the Sunshine area through to 2011 to demonstrate that population is growing and is at a level considerably higher than the northern growth area of the municipality where further enhancements in provision of public pool services are also needed.

**Table 1**

Catchment	Suburbs	2001 Pop'n *	2006 Pop'n *	2011 Pop'n *
<b>Sunshine</b>	Sunshine	8646	8845	9034
	Sunshine North	11232	11325	11399
	Sunshine West / Ardeer			
	Albion	20269	20034	19803
	Deer Park	4185	4262	4337
<b>TOTALS</b>		20554	21699	22833
		64886	66165	67406 (36.5%)
St. Albans	St Albans /Kealba	37982	38864	39732
	Kings Park	13522	13445	13258
	Keilor	5632	5582	5530
	Keilor Downs	12241	12175	12104
	Keilor Park	3354	3498	3628
<b>TOTALS</b>		72931	73564	74252 (40.2%)
Sydenham (incl. Hillside which is in East Melton)	Sydenham / Hillside	9127	9932	9911
	Taylor's Lakes / Keilor Lodge	17520	18120	17969
	Delahey	7129	10976	15213
<b>TOTALS</b>		33776	39028	43093 (23.3%)
<b>Total Brimbank Population</b>		171593	178757	184751 (100%)

\* Source: City of Brimbank Small Area Population Forecasts 1996 -2011 (June 1999)

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## PART B: STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

### 7. Key priority

The key priority is to build a strong and healthy Sunshine community and to increase the numbers of people involved in sport, community and recreation activities.

Swimming pools play an important role in achieving these goals as they should be the hub of local recreation precincts.

### 8. Overall goals

The Brimbank Council's provision of swimming pools contributes to the goal of building strong and healthy communities through:

- increasing participation
- improving health
- developing water skills
- contributing to excellence in aquatic sports
- developing a sense of community.

The existing Sunshine Swim & Leisure Centre fails to meet these goals due to the inadequate nature of the program and service mix; the sub standard facilities and general amenity of the overall site.

### 9. Desired outcomes for Sunshine Swim & Leisure Centre

The following set of desired outcomes for Sunshine Swim and Leisure Centre have emerged from SCPAG research and subsequent discussions with local residents about them.

#### *9.1 Desired outcome one – participation*

Increase participation in aquatic activities at Sunshine Pools by catering for the needs of its diverse community. It is most important to provide a wide range of opportunities to Sunshine's ethnically diverse community.

Global research indicates that there are certain sectors of communities who would like to use swimming pools but don't for a number of reasons. The biggest barrier to using swimming pools is often negative or incorrect perceptions of what's available at the pools.

Overall, the objective is to see more Sunshine people participating in physical activities and obtaining important life skills by learning to swim. Swimming pools provide numerous opportunities for safe and enjoyable water-based activities.

The affordability of Sunshine Pool and gym services is an important factor influencing participation for all members of the community. The biggest barrier for participation is lack of knowledge of what is on offer or available at swimming pools and at what price.

#### *9.2 Desired outcome two – health*

People's health improved through aquatic activity, stress relief and rehabilitation.

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The health status of the Sunshine community has long been recognized as one of the worst in Victoria. Restoration of Sunshine's swimming pools would assist greatly with community health promotion and prevention activities that have not been possible for the last decade due to the pool closures.

## *9.3 Desired outcome three – water skills*

Aquatic opportunities enable people to attain and develop water skills.

Provide learn-to-swim programmes for sectors of the community that have limited access or involvement in learn-to-swim, taking account of issues such as financial or language barriers, and geographic areas.

## *9.4 Desired outcome four – excellence in aquatic sports*

Facilities and funding contribute to people excelling in aquatic sports.

Currently there is virtually no likelihood of any Sunshine resident excelling in aquatic sports due to poor access to aquatic services and programs. Local people are looking for role models to generate pride in the community.

Sunshine residents can only hope to be spectators at the World Swimming Championships in 2007 – if they can afford entry.

## *9.5 Desired outcome five – sense of community*

Aquatic facilities promote social interaction and act as a hub for community activities. They are places where communities are built. The Sunshine Pools were previously a centerpiece of community life in Sunshine. Since their closure in the mid 90's there have been no replacement spaces provided for communities to congregate and grow.

Local community health plans identify the impact of social isolation on ageing CALD residents and new migrant families.

Brimbank Council must recognise the needs of youth, families and older people for water based activities and investigate ways to increase their use and enjoyment of Sunshine Pools. Similarly the needs of the disabled must be properly accommodated in any redevelopment.

## **10. Guiding policies & plans**

There are a raft of Brimbank Council and State Government policies and plans that provide clear insights into the aquatic and recreation and leisure service needs of the service – starved Sunshine community.

They include but are not limited to:

- Best Value
- Municipal Health Plan
- Community Health Plan
- Disability Action Plan
- Youth Action Plan

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- Access & Equity Policy
- Older Persons Action Plan
- Community Safety Plan
- IRSED Data on Health and Welfare status
- Demography of local catchment including Age and Multicultural status
- Better Pools Funding Criteria
- State Govt. Health Plans
- State Govt. Water Safety Program recommendation
- Melbourne 2030
- Results of local community petitions, surveys, public meetings, rally's and community network meetings

As well, Brimbank Council has commissioned a suite of studies and reports over the past decade that provide an evidence base in support of the needs being identified in this document. These reports have been evidenced in prior SCPAG documentation provided to Brimbank Council e.g. Strategic Vision document of September 2003.

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## PART C: NEED IN SUNSHINE

### 11. Historical markers

In talking with local residents and community groups in the local community, SCPAG has found it striking that so many older people can recall the days of the first Sunshine swimming pool built in Kororoit Creek (off Forrest St.) that was the scene of the Victorian State Swimming Championships in 1936. One resident recalled with pride participating in the State championships and generally enjoying the facility until the creek was polluted by industry during the Second World War years.

The opening of the Sunshine outdoor pools in 1961 was a very fond time for local residents and the ensuing enjoyment for youth, families, older people and different ethnic groups was evident in their stories of days at the pool during the 60's, 70's, 80's and early 90's. Similarly the use of the new indoor pool was a significant memory for many.

Others recalled their good times at the old Deer Park pool before a previous Council bulldozed it in a midnight raid.

The aquatic services provided during those decades were highly valued and well patronized just as they would be today if they were still in place. The sense of loss was expressed many times during the two months and in the most vocal of terms.

It was clear to SCPAG that all residents had little respect for successive Council's that had failed to maintain and sustain the resource they were entrusted to manage on behalf of the community.

The closure of the Sunshine outdoor pools and the bulldozing of Deer Park pool are directly attributed to Council mismanagement.

Virtually all local residents and groups involved in this consultation process are demanding that this Council have the vision and commitment to provide the Sunshine community with a set of services and facilities that will meet the needs of future generations and not force them to travel out of Sunshine for basic aquatic services or not participate at all.

### 12. Key SCPAG findings

The key findings from the recent two-month SCPAG process remain the same as the findings from previous consultation processes except this time there was a much stronger voice for the reinstatement of Sunshine Swim and Leisure Centre as a centerpiece of the Sunshine community.

The desired outcomes set out in section 9 of this document are the outcomes Sunshine people want – virtually unanimously.

The need identified in previous community health plans; municipal public health plans; youth plans; older persons plans was all confirmed. Findings from prior consultancies and reports commissioned by Brimbank Council that justified the need for more aquatic spaces were re-confirmed.

Sunshine people think that:

- swimming pools are very important and perceive them as a basic community amenity rather than a luxury;
- swimming pools also create their own community, where people interact and meet on a regular basis;
- the location of swimming pools as the key factor in choosing which pool to visit, being close to either home or work;

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- swimming pools should provide for people wishing to undertake activities on a regular basis such as learning to swim, lap swimming and water exercise.

The frustrations of all groups and individuals contacted during the process with Brimbank Council's long-term stance on this issue was evident right through the process.

In summary, the groups contacted via the SPAN network and the residents involved in weekly meetings and public meetings and rally's felt the following amenities were required at Sunshine Swim & Leisure Centre:

## *12.1 Free play*

Adequate free water space for playing, mostly un-structured, either indoors or outdoors or both.

## *12.2 Learning*

A teaching pool, preferably separate, and a variety of water depths to build water confidence.

## *12.3 Fitness and health*

A lap pool that provides sufficient space for lane swimming, aqua-aerobics, aqua-jogging, water-walking. A significant area for dry fitness programmes and/ or a fitness center was also required.

## *12.4 Outdoor leisure space*

Outdoor leisure spaces for families, young people, older people to socialize and enjoy recreation and leisure opportunities. A place where the Sunshine community could once again start to build its networks and its future.

## **13. Sunshine Pool visitation estimates**

The SCPAG visitation (demand) estimates below again prove recommendations made in previous consultancy reports to Brimbank Council that at least two major aquatic centres are needed to service the community demand.

The current planning for Sunshine Swim and Leisure Centre Redevelopment is catering for facilities that will accommodate around 200,000 visitations.

A redeveloped facility of this size will be a half measure and only meet half the community needs for access to aquatic and leisure services. Future generations would be locked out of an adequate community meeting place.

The Sunshine and St. Albans catchments have sufficient critical population mass at this point in time to justify significant investments in major formal and informal aquatic services.

SCPAG estimates that by 2006 further development plans will need to be put in place for the development of a third major aquatic service in Sydenham catchment when the 2016 population forecasts are around the 60,000 mark.

Council and SRV need to heed the data and approve a Brimbank aquatic service strategic development program and a Sunshine Swim and Leisure Centre redevelopment based on these population trends lest it create even more inequity than is currently in place in access to aquatic services across Melbourne.

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Table 2

Catchment	2001 Pop'n	2006 Pop'n	2011 Pop'n	Visitation Range Based on 2011 Populations *2
<b>Sunshine</b>	<b>64886</b>	<b>66165</b>	<b>67406</b>	<b>330 - 480,000</b>
St. Albans	72931	73564	74252	370 - 520,000
Sydenham	33776	39028	43093	215 – 300,000
<b>Totals *1</b>	<b>171593</b>	<b>178757</b>	<b>184751</b>	<b>915 – 1,300,000</b>

Sources: 1. SCPAG September 2003 based on Table 1 data  
2. YMCA Aquatic Service Planning Benchmarks of 5 – 7 visitations per head of population

SCPAG has produced a map of every pool across Melbourne and it shows graphically the level of access denied to people who live west of the Maribyrnong River.

The sub standard levels of aquatic service in the west of Melbourne is striking to say the least and should be the source of major embarrassment to policy makers and politicians of all ilk's. The current strategic planning template – the Western Region Aquatic Strategy – needs a complete review with access and equity principles at the forefront of thinking.

Sunshine Swim & Leisure Centre needs to be planned and developed for a minimum 300,000 – 400,000 visitations.

## 14. Profiling Sunshine aquatic service needs

The Sunshine community requires access to a range of user focused aquatic services within the amenities such as:



### LEARN TO SWIM LESSONS

- Pre-school
- School Age
- Adult
- School groups\*



### STROKE CORRECTION LESSONS

- For more advanced "Learn to Swim" individuals
- School Groups
- For adults wishing to improve skills



### VICSWIM INTENSIVE HOLIDAY PROGRAMS



### SQUADS

- Swim School Graduates
- Sunshine Swimming Club
- School groups NB. School groups – include multiple local Primary, Secondary and Special Schools
- Adults/Masters (Nb. Group ran at time our action group formed in 2000, but has since been left without coach or designated time slot by pool management)



### SUNSHINE SWIMMING CLUB

- Intra-club competition each Sunday
- training each Friday
- inter-club competitions annually

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## METRO WEST – SWIMMING VICTORIA INC.

- Weekly Competitions/swim meets between up to 17 member clubs at a time including competitors from the following Swimming Clubs:
  - Sunshine
  - Footscray
  - East Keilor
  - Streamline
  - Strathmore
  - Craigieburn
  - Melton
  - Aqua Spirits
  - Aqua Wolves
  - Altona
  - Werribee
  - Maidstone
  - Sunbury
  - Laverton
  - Brimbank
  - Oak Park
  - Broadmeadows



## WATER AEROBICS



## RECREATIONAL

- Family groups
- Individuals



## GYM USERS ( pre or post work-out)



## AQUA THERAPY

- Groups
- Individuals



## LAP SWIMMERS



## INJURED



## DISABLED

- Groups
- Individuals



## SPORTS CLUBS



## WATER SAFETY

- Mother/toddler sessions
- Lifesaver training



## SWIMMING CARNIVALS

- Intra school and interschool carnivals

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## 15. Guiding development principles

SCPAG believes that the following principles should guide Sunshine Swim and Leisure centre redevelopment:

- 15.1 As the highest priority for Sunshine, provide sufficient water space for the core activities of free play, learning and health and fitness.
- 15.2 Provide water space for a full range of programmes for the community including activities which cater for:
  - free play and fun activities
  - lane swimming
  - fitness programmes
  - learn-to-swim / water safety
  - schools
  - disability groups
  - clubs and community organisations
  - sport training
  - water therapy
- 15.3 Customise the provision of water space and programmes according to the needs and preferences of the Sunshine community catchment population taking account of:
  - cultural preferences for indoor/outdoor water space.
  - demographic make-up of the local community, e.g. age groups, income, gender.
  - opening hours that reflect the community's desired use of swimming pools.
- 15.4 Balance demands for water space by giving priority to those groups/activities that make the most efficient use of the space so long as the competing group can be catered for in some other way.
- 15.5 Display clear timetables of water space programming at all swimming pools and highlight the best times to undertake different activities.

## 16. Recommendation

SCPAG felt that it was essential that the Reference Group note that the needs for aquatic and sport and recreation services in Sunshine have not diminished over the decades and in fact have risen.

Factors such as population growth, poor health status, levels disability, a working class community profile and a melting pot for new arrivals are all as they have been for past decades yet services and facilities have been withdrawn over that period.

SCPAG therefore recommends on behalf of the Sunshine community that the needs of the Sunshine community as set out in this document be affirmed by Brimbank Council and the State Government and that a full restoration of Sunshine Swim and Leisure Centre be undertaken as an urgent priority.

The following activities and programs are recommended for implementation in a new redeveloped Sunshine Swim & Leisure Centre to meet community needs:

### 16.1 *Free play*

Unstructured water fun and play.

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Aquatic entertainment water play that requires special interactive water features, technology and/or (Interactive water play) equipment, e.g. hydro slides, interactive toys.

## **16.2 Fitness and health**

Fitness activities such as lane swimming, aqua-aerobics, aqua jogging, aqua walking and a dry fitness programmes and a fitness centre. Also activities for people with disabilities are much needed.

## **16.3 Learning**

Learn-to-swim programmes, developing water confidence and safety.

## **16.4 Sport training**

Training for competitive swimming, water polo, and other water sports.

## **16.5 Sport events**

Specialized facilities for competitions and school carnivals.

## **16.6 Water therapy**

Therapeutic results from sitting in warm water (spas, saunas and steam rooms) or from undertaking exercises in water. A more specialist element can involve special water-based rehabilitation pools and equipment.