



**COMMUNITY
CONSULTATION
REPORT**

**PREPARED FOR
MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE TEAM**

AQUATIC FACILITIES IN THE REGION

28 FEBRUARY 2017



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SUMMARY

During Mid-Western Regional Councils' recent community consultation 'My Community, My Plan', members of the community were surveyed and asked to identify the top 5 major projects they would like to see Council consider as part of the Towards 2030 Community Plan. From this survey the top 20 projects were identified.

The Mid-Western Regional Councils (Canaries) engaged with the Executive Team to determine which project from the top 20 list would benefit from further community consultation and specifically what information would Council wish to obtain.

This report details the findings, a summary of the engagement process and provides an action plan to further engage and develop options for an Indoor Aquatic Centre.

DETAILED REPORT

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The Canaries sent a memo to the Executive Team at Council to ask for their guidance on what project they would like to undertake further community consultation following the 'My Community, My Plan' campaign. The Executive Team determined at their 11 January meeting that additional community engagement would be beneficial in determining the community needs and expectations in relation to providing an All-Year Round Aquatic Centre.

More extensive engagement with the Executive Team was undertaken to formulate questions that would create the basis of the community consultation. These would be used to develop an online survey and to interview members of the community face-to-face for our video presentations. It was imperative that the setup of these questions were aligned with the Executive Team's requirements, including what were people's expectations, how often they would use an all-year round facility, and without having an exact costing, how the community expected Council to pay for a new facility.

PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Canaries went out into the community to seek direct feedback from locals for our video presentation; we interviewed 6 people who reside within our region, aged between 10 and 65 years old, both male and female. We feel our sample was a fair representation of our region's population and were from both the active swimming community and those that use the pool for leisure activities only. This video can be found at https://youtu.be/j6d_FGGfaJQ

In addition to video interviews, an online survey was developed using Survey Monkey covering the same topic. Links to the survey were posted on Council's website, distributed via email, social media platforms, and included the local radio station encouraging listeners to participate in the online survey. 355 responses were received from a cross section of the community representing the regional population demographics. We feel the addition of the survey provided quantitative support to our qualitative video interviews and was able to complement our findings.



FINDINGS

1. Over-whelming community support for an indoor aquatic centre across broad demographics.

The common theme communicated by all of our video interviewees was that they would definitely like to see an all-year round aquatic facility in the region. The benefits for children's health, development and enjoyment were highlighted, as were the health benefits for the injured or elderly by including services such as hydrotherapy.

2. There are varying expectations of what should be included in a new aquatic facility.

There was overall consensus that a new indoor aquatic facility would include a lap-pool, although the size of this was evenly split between 25m to 50m, with no clear indication as to a preferred size across the community.

Many participants highlighted the health benefits of an indoor aquatic facility and mentioned hydrotherapy pools as part of their desires. This would be supported through the provision of physiotherapy to the aging community as well as helping the younger community to recover from injuries.

Other features, highlighted in both our video interviews and online survey, included diving boards, water parks, canteens and other facilities with various levels of support depending upon the demographics of respondents and their personal preferences.

3. Projected usage appears to be an uplift on current pool patronage

All video interviewees mentioned they would use an indoor pool frequently, often implying weekly or similar. When asked about their current usage of the outdoor pool, this is significantly higher than their current patronage.

Similarly, 57% of online survey respondents advised they would use the new facility either daily or 2-3 times weekly. This is a large increase on current average patronage of the existing outdoor pool and therefore this data should be considered carefully in any financial or planning modelling as respondent answers and actual behaviour may differ.

4. Whilst many respondents do not want a household rate increase to fund a new facility, there is overall support for higher entry fees.

The respondents were enthusiastic about the concept of an indoor aquatic centre and appeared to have a comprehension that Council would need to fund such a development possibly via a combination of increased rates and appropriate user charges.

48% of respondents from the online survey agreed a rate increase would be required.

Please refer to the Appendix 1 for a full summary of the online survey findings.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The Canaries recommend the Executive Team consider the following course of action:

1. Ensure Indoor Aquatic Centre is included in the Towards 2030 Operational Plan in the next review.

Due to the overwhelming support for an Indoor Aquatic Centre by the broader Mid-Western community, it is recommended the project is included in the Towards 2030 Community Plan for further investigation. Not only did the original Mid-Western Regional Council community engagement strongly support this project but the videos and 72% of all those surveyed believe this would be a good asset to the region.

2. Commencement of Financial Modelling, Business Case Review and Funding Source Investigation

Due to the various formats, opinions and options for an Indoor Aquatic Facility, it is recommended Council commence financial modelling, feasibility assessments and a business case review. This modelling will assist in the development of a budget that would be feasible for the facility. This study would include both a construction and ongoing cost review.

It is recommended that Council should commence investigating funding source opportunities for major projects such as this and consider a range of sources such as Financial Grants (State and Federal), Public/Private partnerships, and Commercial operators. Council should also consider engaging with major industry operators and employers (such as local mining companies) and discuss opportunities for investment.

Once an aquatic centre budget is agreed, then further community consultation is recommended into the funding source. This may include the use of tools such as “Budget Allocator” where the community can review the overall Council budget along with the costing for an aquatic centre and provide feedback on areas from which funds may be sourced including demonstrating impact on rates, and/or the reduction of other council services. This process will assist with buy-in to the final funding model (which may impact rates) and overall support for the project.

3. Further Consultation into the Design of an Indoor Aquatic Centre

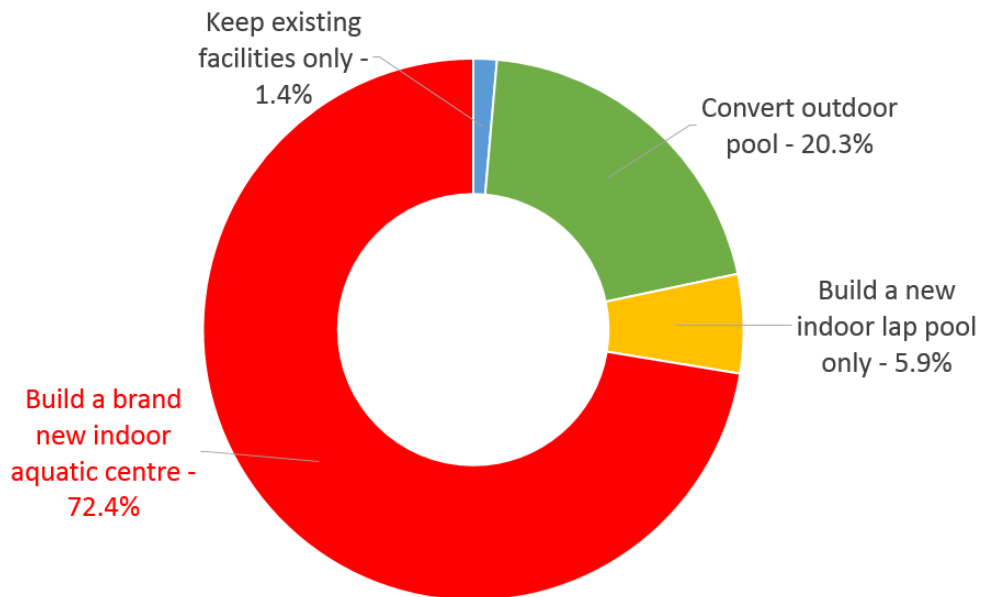
If the project is deemed financially feasible, we recommend further community consultation into the design and features of the centre. As this will be a significant asset to the Mid-Western community, we believe it is important that a sense of ownership is engaged in the early stages such as design and planning. This may take place in the form of sharing a number of designs with the community (within a feasible budget) and sourcing feedback. Feedback may be gathered through a variety of sources from online surveys, street stalls, engagement with local business through the Business Chamber, engagement with medical staff and physiotherapists, as well as schools, sporting teams and other interest groups.

APPENDIX 1 – ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS - AQUATIC FACILITIES FOR THE MID-WESTERN REGION

➤ 355 RESPONDENTS IN TOTAL

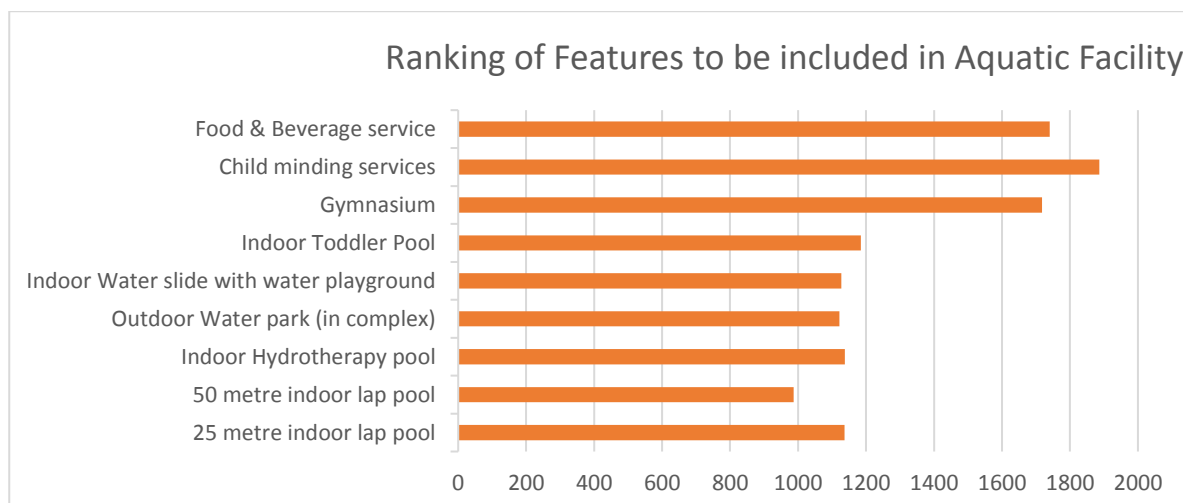
Q1. PLEASE SELECT YOUR FUTURE PREFERENCE FOR AQUATIC FACILITIES WITHIN THE REGION:

- 72.4% would like to see the development of a brand new indoor aquatic centre, in addition to our existing facilities.

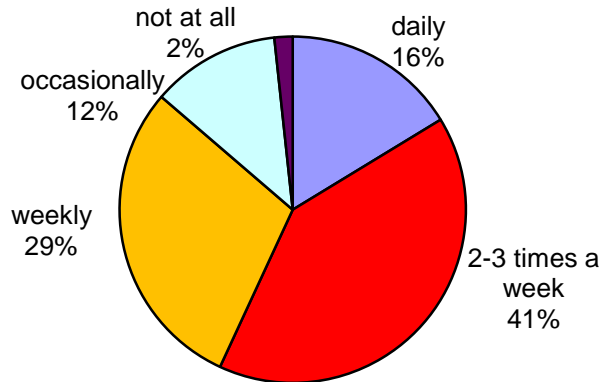


Q2. WHAT FEATURES WOULD PEOPLE LIKE TO SEE INCLUDED IN A NEW AQUATIC FACILITY.

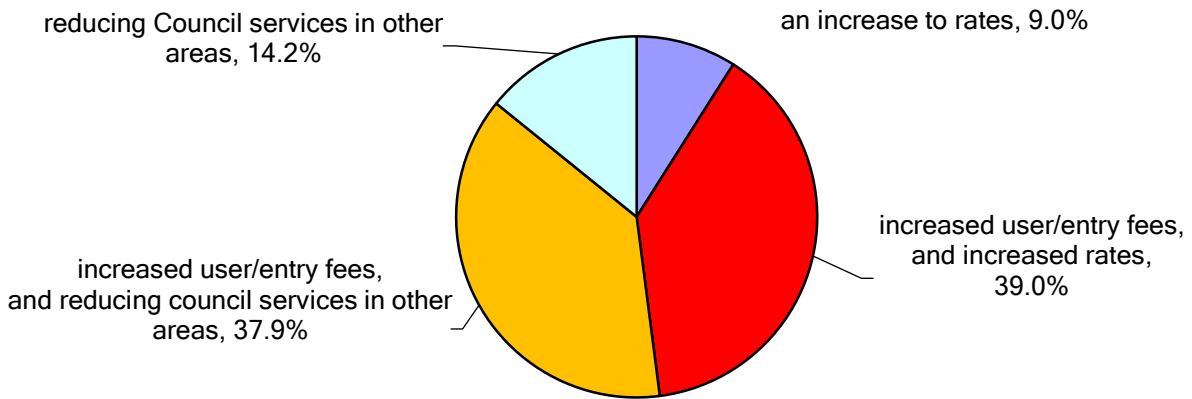
Respondents were asked to rank the below features they would like to see in a new aquatic facility and once ranks were added for all features the below results were found. All respondents included an indoor pool but they were divided as to whether this was a 25m or 50m pool.



Q3. HOW OFTEN WOULD YOU USE AN ALL YEAR ROUND FACILITY?

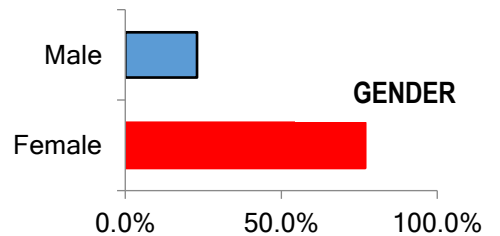


Q4. HOW SHOULD COUNCIL PAY FOR A NEW ALL YEAR ROUND AQUATIC FACILITY?

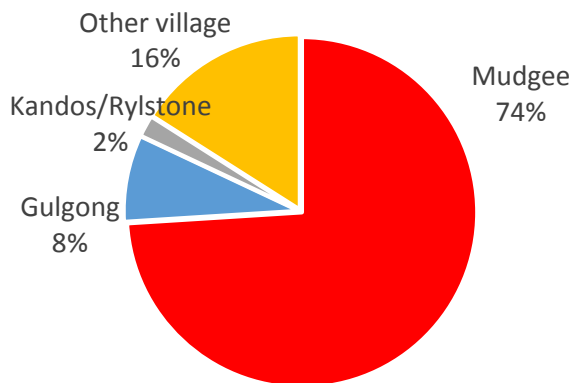


DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

A good representation of the region was included in the online survey respondents, noting a bias to female respondents, which is common for online surveys.



TOWN / VILLAGE



AGE BRACKET

