



# **A New Aquatic Leisure Centre for Parramatta**

**Analysis of recreational and aquatic needs and  
industry trends**

**February 2017**



# 1. Strategic Context

## 1.1 The Broader Context

The NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy, *A Plan for Growing Sydney*, confirms Parramatta as a dual CBD and highlights the key role it plays in providing homes, jobs, businesses and healthy lifestyles into the future. A new aquatic leisure facility will advance the goals of *A Plan for Growing Sydney* by supporting the following goals:

- *Goal 3 - A great place to live with communities that are strong, healthy and well connected*
- *Goal 1 - A competitive economy with world-class services and transport*

For NSW 2021: *A Plan to make NSW number one*, a new aquatic facility would further a number of goals, including:

- *Enhancing cultural, creative, sporting and recreation opportunities*
- *Building liveable centres*
- *Keeping people healthy and out of hospital*
- *Making it easier for people to be involved in their communities*
- *Increasing opportunities for seniors in NSW to fully participate in community life.*

The Greater Sydney Commission's plan, *Greater Parramatta and Olympic Peninsula* (GPOP) identifies the increasing need for improved recreational facilities. GPOP recognises that a clear path for public and private investment is required in a number of areas with an emphasis on recreation and healthy pursuits.

A new aquatics leisure facility in Parramatta will further the goals of other key NSW Government policies and plans, namely:

- *Game Plan 2012: NSW Sport and Recreation Industry Five Year Plan*
- *Premier's Council for Active Living NSW's Operational Plan*
- *NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2013-2018*
- *Blueprint for Active Australia (Heart Foundation Australia).*

## 1.2 City of Parramatta (CoP) Plans

The development of a new modern aquatic facility will advance a number of actions in the current **Community Strategic Plan** in the areas of Economy, People & Neighbourhoods, and Culture. Additionally it would progress a number of key priorities identified in City of Parramatta's **Operational Plan** including:

- **Sport and Recreation** - We will encourage active and healthy lifestyles by increasing participation in sport, physical recreation and other activities that improve health and wellbeing.
- **Destination for Sport and Culture** - Council will support existing facilities and work with other agencies to develop precincts, facilities and partnerships which maintain and enhance the City as the central sporting and entertainment destination for Western Sydney.
- In December 2016, the City of Parramatta, following significant community consultation, adopted a new **Vision Statement and Priorities**. One of these priorities is to maintain accessible and high quality facilities to promote healthy and active lifestyles amongst the growing local population.

## 1.3 Changes to Aquatics in Parramatta

Several recent and significant changes have occurred to the aquatics services and facilities overseen by the City of Parramatta Council.

- The announced closure of the Parramatta War Memorial Swimming Centre (PWMSC) in March 2017 to make way for the new Western Sydney Stadium development; a \$300 investment by the NSW Government.
- Local government amalgamations, reforming Parramatta's boundaries with a different mix of assets and services under its control and incorporating new communities with unique needs and preferences.

## 2. Local Demand for Aquatic Facilities And Services

### 2.1 Micromex Research

Micromex Research undertook a study of Sport and Recreation Participation in the City in March 2015 and the following is a summary of the key consultation findings.

Key themes associated with aquatic participation and provisions were identified as:

*‘Reasons users participate in indoor/aquatic activities in the nominated suburb rather than somewhere else’.*

Proximity and ease of access are key drivers of participation with just under three quarters (73%) of participants choosing a certain location ‘because it’s close to home’ with a touch over half (52%) of participants only ‘spend up to 10mins to travel’ to the facility.

*‘Main reasons for participation in these aquatic/indoor activities’.*

The survey identified that aquatic and indoor recreation is largely a social experience with just under two thirds of activities (62%) undertaken with someone else, and in 35% of cases, residents cited ‘socialise/part of organisation/meet people’ as a reason for participation.

#### **Drivers of participation**

- General Fitness (75%)
- Lose weight (26%)
- Challenge/achieve goal (25%)
- Sense of community (18%)

#### **Preferred features of aquatic/indoor recreation centre (across users & non-users)**

- 71% Restaurant/café
- 69% Outdoor BBQ and family areas
- 68% Indoor heated pool
- 59% Wellness centre; such as physiotherapy, sports medicine, massage, nutrition
- 57% outdoor heated pool
- 53% Water slides
- 51% basic gymnasium, including cardio, weights
- 49% serviced gymnasium, including group fitness and personal training
- 46% Multisport courts to use for futsal, basketball, netball, badminton
- 41% Program/hydro pool to use for aqua aerobics/aqua fitness, rehabilitation
- 40% water play equipment, for children up to 12

**Aquatic and indoor recreation attitude statements**

- 81% agree or strongly agree that aquatic and other recreation centres and facilities help improve the quality of life for residents
- 69% agree or strongly agree Parramatta needs an indoor recreation facility for sports like basketball, futsal, badminton etc.
- 69% agree or strongly agree Parramatta needs a larger facility combining a wide range of both aquatic and indoor sport and recreation services
- 63% agree or strongly agree Parramatta needs an indoor swimming facility
- 61% of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that they are likely to change their recreation habits should improve facilities be available in Parramatta.

### 3. Assessment of community need and demand

#### 3.1 Benefits to the Community

PWMSC has serviced residents, workers, schools, community organisations and elite sporting bodies for almost 60 years, and recreational opportunities and assets like PWMSC take on major significance as the City continues its enormous growth toward realising its vision of becoming Sydney's central city; sustainable, liveable and productive – inspired by our communities. A focus on recreation has the ability to positively impact on a City's liveability and amenity, and substantially support the wellness of a fast growing population.

##### 3.1.1 Recreation and Leisure Benefits – Reduced Morbidity

- Sport contributes to economic growth through business investment and employment, and helps sustain the environment through protecting open space and natural areas
- Helps promote the use of active modes of transport
- Positive impacts on physical and mental wellbeing
- Reduces absenteeism and improves productivity
- Health and social benefits for the aged including mobility and engagement.

##### 3.1.2 Water Safety Awareness – Reduced Mortality

- Better access to and efficacy of water safety programs can reduce the incidence of drownings. These programs are important for infants and young children and can further be effective in targeting the specific needs of individual communities. For instances in the Parramatta local government area, there are a range of cultural and migrant groups where swimming may not be a traditional past time.

##### 3.1.3 Social Benefits

- Improved social cohesion and educational outcomes for young people
- Increasing community participation in organised sport and recreation contributes to what is known as 'social capital', it ties members together in a given locality. Sports clubs and community organisations are important conduits for developing such capital and are good barometers of community strength
- Sport and recreation helps to build communities through social inclusion and a sense of connection. Through participation, sport helps address anti-social behaviour and can support education. It can reduce alienation and loneliness.
- Integrated and accessible leisure services are critical to the quality of life of people with a disability and disadvantaged individuals
- Community recreation promotes ethnic and cultural harmony
- Recreating together builds strong families, the foundation of a stronger society
- Open space and recreation facilities are known to improve the property values of surrounding properties

- Sport and leisure provide leadership opportunities that build stronger communities
- Leisure provides opportunities for community engagement and community involvement in the shared management and ownership of resources
- Leisure opportunities, facilities and the quality of the local environment are the foundations of community pride
- Encourages volunteering
- Leisure services enrich and complement protective services for latchkey children through after-school and other recreational services.

### **3.2 Current Aquatics Facilities, Services and Users**

Parramatta War Memorial Swimming Pool (PWMSC) is the aquatic facility Council established and currently manages in central Parramatta on land leased from Parramatta Park Trust. This facility will close on 31 March 2017 to make way for construction of the Western Sydney Stadium. The current facility includes a variety of outdoor pools and associated facilities including kiosk / merchandise facilities, waterslides, diving and program room space for hire.

The PWMSC currently experiences over 160,000 visits per annum:

- 3,300 Learn to Swim enrolments
- 35 swimming carnivals (12,562 students)
- 14 primary school programs (5,666 students)
- 5 high school learn to swim programs (2,608 students)
- Parramatta Memorial Swim Club
- Parramatta Water Polo Club
- Swim Squads
- Recreational swimmers and lap swimmers – Casual Users and Members
- Over 45% of casual swimmers and members live within 3 to 4 km of the Centre and over 70% reside within the LGA. A significant number of those who live further away, but work within the CBD or surrounds.
- Over 75% of Learn to Swim participants (after-school and weekend participants) live locally in the suburbs of Parramatta, North Parramatta and Westmead.
- 12 other user groups on a semi regular basis, including:
  - Parramatta Eels
  - Aussie Masters
  - Youth of the Streets
  - DET – 6 Schools (325 students)
  - Go4Fun
  - Onebody Tri Club
  - Pink Triathlon
  - NSWIS squads and diving
  - School associations and State Sporting Organisations – organised competitions and carnivals – swimming and water polo

### 3.3 Aquatics Market Segments

Modern public aquatic centres service a variety of users by offering a wide array of options, including learn to swim, rehabilitation treatments, community gathering points, weight training and other recreational and health opportunities. In this way, these new centres are tapping into the various markets with a diversity of offerings. Identified markets for these facilities include:

- **Recreation and Leisure**

This market segment involves people that visit pools to relax, cool down, do some modest exercise, socialise, play with their families and friends and/or generally have fun.

- Families
- Children
- Seniors groups
- Holiday programs
- Children's parties

- **Fitness/wellness/health**

The fitness/wellness market includes people who visit pools to enhance their fitness levels and sense of well-being or rehabilitate from injury or illness.

- Rehabilitation programs
- Wellness Programs
- Aqua aerobics

- **Education/skills/safety**

The education/skills market includes people wanting to learn how to swim or enhance their swimming skills.

- School programs
- Learn to Swim (LTS)
- Stroke correction
- Lifesaving training

- **Competition/training/fitness/sports**

It includes schools and swim and other aquatic clubs that hold competition events and train their students or members to participate in these events.

- Adult lap swimming
- Corporate fitness
- Carnivals/competitions
- Club training
- Swim squads
- Aquatic sports (scuba diving, water-polo, synchronised swimming, canoeing)



### 3.4 Participation Trends

The following participation trends show what sports and activities are the most participated in, highlighting swimming participation in relation to all sports and activities. Further it shows sports and activities that are important to this study as they are common activities that complement modern aquatic and leisure facilities by providing a more sustainable business model in offering a diverse range of recreation options.

#### 3.4.1 Adult Participation Trends

The *Exercise, Recreation and Sports Survey (ERASS)* was a joint initiative of the Australian Sports Commission and State and Territory Departments of Sport and Recreation, conducted annually between 2001 and 2010. The Australian-wide survey depicts the average participation rates for people aged 15 years and over for exercise, recreation and sport during the 12 months prior to interview (Table 1 see below).

ERASS provides participation rates nationally and for each state and territory. Both in Australia and NSW, swimming is the third most participated activity. Two other activities important to this study (aerobics/fitness - 2nd, and netball -10th) are inside the top 10 most participated activities. These activities are complementary to aquatic leisure centres, now common in modern facilities where more sustainable business models can be made.

The lower half of Table 1 identifies additional relevant activities. All of these sports identified in the lower half are complementary activities that are commonly found in modern aquatic centres through program rooms and indoor multipurpose courts, offering diverse recreational opportunities for a variety of different users resulting in a superior business model.

The Parramatta context through a separate community survey (*Micromex Research Survey, 2015*) portrays a similar story. However swimming moves into **second (22%)** accounting for almost a quarter of people's choice for a physical activity, weight training (10%) is ranked 6th choice whilst aerobics/fitness is almost 10% lower in participation rates. Many of the participation rates for Parramatta are low due to a lack of facilities that appropriately accommodate these activities, predominately a lack of indoor sport and leisure facilities.

There is a need to accommodate appropriate activities for seniors that consider their physical capacity. Having healthier seniors provides a range of benefits both for the community and the individual, including reduced social and economic costs on the health system. Within the Parramatta LGA, 17% of residents are currently aged 60 years and over with the overall number expected to increase as the population continues to age (City of Parramatta Demographics 2016).

**TABLE 1:** Total participation in specific activities (organised and non-organised), Australia & NSW, 2010 (ERASS).

			Australia	NSW			Parramatta
	Activity		Participation %	Participation %	Male	Female	Participation %
Top 10	Walking		35.9	34	23.9	43.8	33
	Aerobics/Fitness		23.5	22.4	19	25.7	14
	Swimming		13	13.6	13.8	13.4	22
	Cycling		11.9	10.6	13.7	7.6	14
	Running		10.6	9.1	11.2	7.1	8
	Golf		6.7	7.6	13	2.4	4
	Tennis		6	6.8	7.7	5.9	4
	Bushwalking		4.8	4.8	5.5	4.2	9
	Football (outdoor)		4.8	6.5	9.2	4	14
	Netball		3.7	3	**0.3	5.7	5
RANK							
Additional Activities Relevant to Study (with ranking)	T11	Basketball	3.5	2.6	3.4	1.7	3
	T11	Yoga	3.5	3.4	*0.6	6	3
	15	Weight Training	2.9	2.4	2.9	2	10
	T21	Football (Indoor)	1.9	1.6	2.5	*0.8	3
	T23	Squash	1.4	1.6	2.2	*1.0	<2
	T28	Volleyball	1.2	*0.6	*0.7	*0.5	<2
	30	Aquarobics	1.1	0.9	19	25.7	<2
	T36	Badminton	0.7	*0.4	**0.4	**0.4	<2
	T36	Cricket (Indoor)	0.7	*0.4	*0.8	**0.0	<2
	T41	Table Tennis	0.6	*0.4	**0.3	*0.4	<2
	T46	Gymnastics	0.3	*0.4	**0.3	*0.6	2
	T52	Water Polo	*0.1	**0.1	**0.1	**0.0	<2

\*Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution

\*\*Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use

T = Tied

### 3.4.2 Children Participation Trends

A study of children between the ages of 5-14 years by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) depicts their participation in culture and leisure activities for Australia and NSW. It is important to note that these statistics are for participation outside of school hours during the 12 months prior to the interview.

Based on Australian participation rates, swimming (17.7%) tops the list for the most popular organised sport for children aged 5-14 years see Table 2 below.

Netball and basketball both have strong participation rates at around 8% Australian-wide and are important to this study as they are complementary sports to modern aquatic centres, providing a more sustainable business model.

More boys participated in sport than girls; two thirds of boys (66%) were involved in at least one organised sport compared to just over half of all girls (54%). Participation was higher for children born in Australia (61%) compared with those born overseas (52%) and higher for children in couple families (64%) compared with those living in one-parent families (48%) (ABS 2012). This is significant to the Parramatta context as 44.5% of residents are overseas born and 9.6% of household types are a one parent family with children.

**Table 2:** Children's participation in Culture & Leisure Activities, Australia & NSW, 2012 (ABS 2012)

Participation in organised sports (excluding dancing)	PARTICIPATION RATES (%)			
	NSW			AUSTRALIA
	ALL	MALE	FEMALE	ALL
<b>Swimming and diving</b>	<b>18.2</b>	16.2	20.4	<b>17.7</b>
Soccer (outdoor)	<b>21.3</b>	32.3	9.7	<b>14.3</b>
Australian Rules football	<b>2.6</b>	4.3	0.7	<b>8.1</b>
<b>Netball</b>	<b>8.1</b>	..C	..C	<b>8</b>
<b>Basketball</b>	<b>5.1</b>	6	4.1	<b>7.9</b>
Tennis	<b>6.8</b>	7.5	6.1	<b>7.4</b>
<b>Martial arts</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>5.8</b>
<b>Gymnastics</b>	<b>4.4</b>	1.6	7.3	<b>4.8</b>
Cricket (outdoor)	<b>4.5</b>	..C	..C	<b>4.7</b>
Rugby League	<b>6.6</b>	..C	..C	<b>3.9</b>
Athletics, track and field	<b>2.6</b>	2	3.2	<b>3.2</b>
Rugby Union	<b>2.8</b>	..C	..C	<b>2.1</b>
Touch football	<b>2.9</b>	3.7	2.2	<b>1.8</b>
<b>Soccer (indoor)</b>	<b>1.6</b>	2.5	0.7	<b>1.7</b>
Hockey	<b>0.9</b>	0.5	1.3	<b>1.6</b>
Other organised sports	<b>9.8</b>	10.3	9.2	<b>10.5</b>
<b>SELECT RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES</b>				
Bike Riding	<b>62.6</b>	68.7	56.2	<b>63.5</b>
Skateboard/roller/scooter	<b>52.3</b>	57.5	47	<b>53.8</b>

### 3.4.3 Swimming Trends

Swimming is one of the highest participated recreational pursuits undertaken by Australian's in both organised and non-organised settings. With such high participation rates and a diverse range of users, aquatic facilities and programs have had to adapt to accommodate the broad range of users. The overall average adult participation rate based on Australian figures despite fluctuations has remained fairly

steady at 14.44%. It is observed that every 4 years (Olympic game years - 2004 & 2008) there are spikes in participation rates. Nation-wide for children aged 5-14 years, participation rates had an overall increase from 2003 to 2012, making it one of the most participated activities for children to take part in. See Table 3 below.

A recent annual report by the *Royal Life Saving Society Australia (2016)*, recorded a total number of deaths due to drowning was 280, most occurring in NSW (34%). Noteworthy for the Parramatta LGA is that 9% of drowning's were from overseas tourists (almost half of those being from Asian countries) and 33% were aged 14 or under. Within the Parramatta LGA, 44.5% of residents are born overseas with the two of the top three represented counties being from Asian backgrounds. Further, 14.5% of Parramatta's community are 12 years and younger. A large and important role of the aquatic team is developing swimming competency for all ages and communities, many residents are not from traditional swimming nations.

Within the Parramatta LGA, 20% of those with a disability participated in at least one aquatic/indoor recreation activity. This suggests those with a disability can use the facilities and potentially would even more with the inclusion of appropriate programming pools, better access, wellness centre facilities and increased services. The challenge for Council is to understand the needs of those disabled residents who haven't used these facilities previously and how they can be accommodated for, particularly with world class health facilities located at Westmead who could draw on these facilities.

**TABLE 3:** Participation rates from both Australia and NSW for adults (15yrs and over) – (ERASS, 2010). Participation rates for children (5-14yrs) (ABS 2012)

Year	Adult (15 yrs and over)				Children (5-14yrs)		
	NSW		Australia		Year	Australia	
	No. ('000)	%	No. ('000)	%		No.('000)	%
2001	967.4	19	2,415.50	16			
2002	877.5	17	2,278.00	14.9			
2003	915.6	17.5	2,383.10	15.3	2003	439.1	16.6
2004	961.8	18.3	2,605.70	16.5			
2005	871.7	16.4	2,311.20	14.4			
2006	814.7	15.4	2,200.00	13.7	2006	462.5	17.4
2007	737.7	13.8	1,966.20	12			
2008	875	16.1	2,414.00	14.5			
2009	813.1	14.5	2,419.10	14.1	2009	502.9	18.5
2010	771.2	13.6	2,279.20	13			
					2012	492.1	17.7
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>860.57</b>	<b>16.16</b>	<b>2,327.20</b>	<b>14.44</b>	<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>474.15</b>	<b>17.55</b>

### 3.5 Current and future demographics

More than two million people currently live west of Sydney Olympic Park, good for almost one in two Sydney-siders with around 300,000 people travelling outside of the region to work<sup>21</sup>.

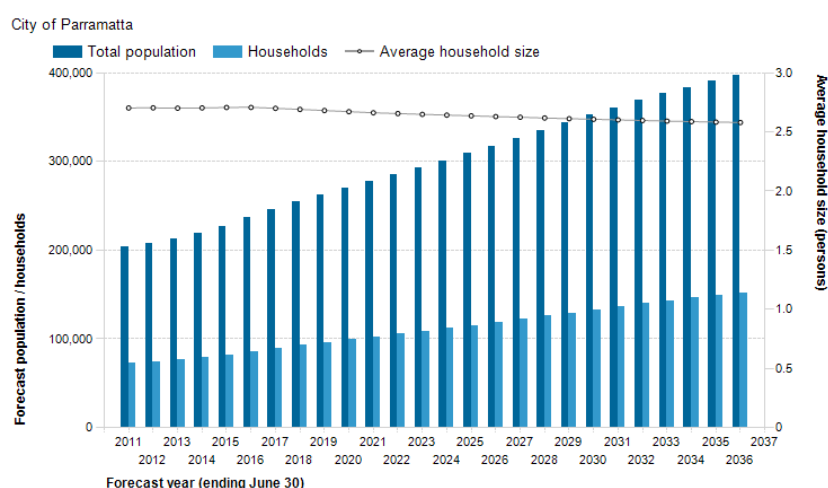
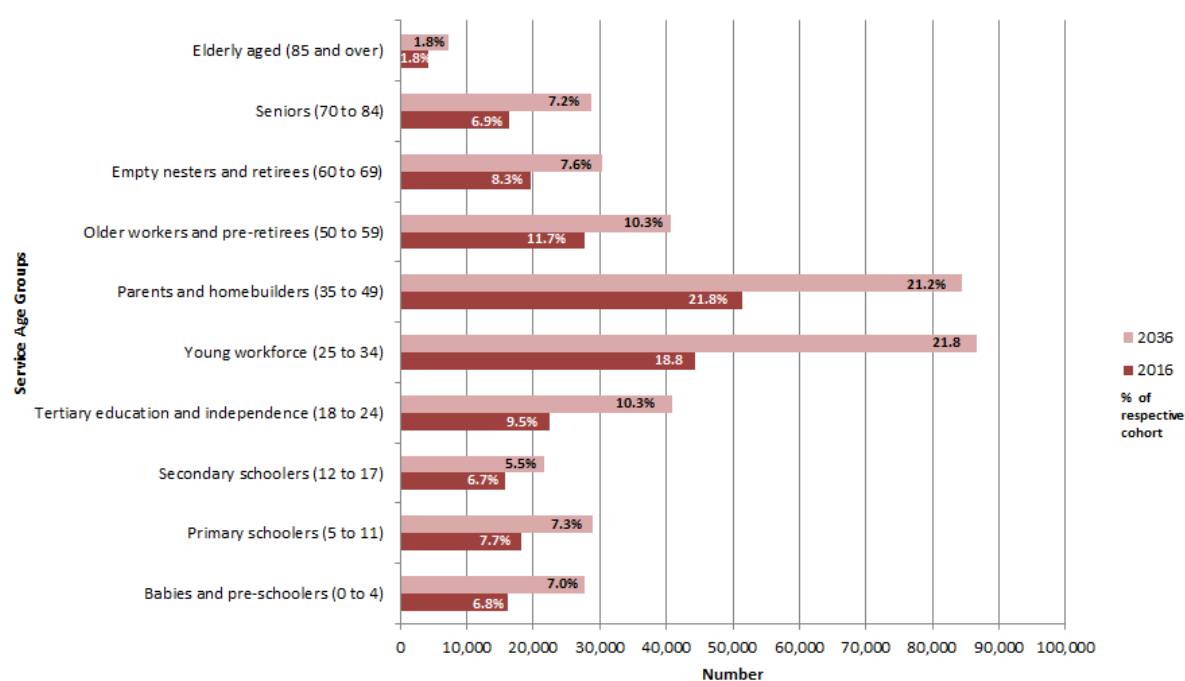
The Parramatta community specifically, is **young and fast growing**. Through the recent council amalgamations an additional 35,719 people have been added to the LGA, resulting in a population of 236,272 in 2016 and a median age of 35. The total population is forecasted to grow exponentially to 397,339 residents by 2036. This equates to a 2.72% growth rate over the twenty year period, the growth rate for 2014-15 alone was 3.5%. In contrast, for the year 2015, NSW's growth was 1.4%, Sydney just up from that at 1.7% and the fastest growing major city, Melbourne, grew at 2.1%.

The fast growing community of Parramatta is very **diverse**, 44.5% of residents were born overseas and 39% of those residents come from non-English speaking backgrounds. The top three countries outside of Australia represented within the LGA are China (8.1%), India (7.8%) and South Korea (3.4%).

The City of Parramatta is **established and family oriented** with 27% of residents completely owning their house, 32% have a mortgage and 28% are renting. The average household size is 2.68 people with 46% of households comprising of 'families with children'.

Overall, the City of Parramatta is **relatively prosperous** having a median household income of \$1,453 a week; however the wealth is concentrated in the upper echelon (28.2% of residents are in the highest bracket and 26.4% in the lowest).

Despite the increased prosperity and growth, there are **still vulnerable communities**. The unemployment rate is relatively high (6.5%) compared to NSW's rate (5.0%). The youth unemployment rate is 14% (National Rate: 12.8%) and youth disengagement is 6.5% (15-24yrs who are neither employed or in education). Further, 14% of residents don't have access to the internet, 6% live in social housing and 4% require daily support due to disabilities.

**Figure 2:** Forecast population, households and dwellings for the City of Parramatta**Figure 3:** Age structure comparison for 2016 and 2036

### 3.6 City Growth

The City of Parramatta has been identified through NSW's *A plan for growing Sydney* as being the second CBD or in the Greater Sydney Commissions plan as the 'Central City' for greater Sydney. As such, there has been significant investment, close to \$10 billion in upgrading important infrastructure, services and transport services.

**TABLE 5:** Greater Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park job estimates for 2016 and 2036

Precinct	2016 Jobs estimate	2036 Baseline estimate	2036 Higher estimate
Greater Parramatta*	96,500	156,000	170,500
Sydney Olympic Park	30,100	45,000	46,500

\* "Greater Parramatta" covers Westmead, Parramatta North Urban Renewal Area, Parramatta CBD, Camellia/Rydalmere employment areas. Greater Parramatta is estimated to increase by between 59,500 and 74,000 workers; and Sydney Olympic Park is estimated to increase by between 14,900 and 16,400 workers

Year	Population LGA	Workers Greater Parramatta	Workers - GPOP	Density GPOP	Density LGA
2000	136000	55000	75000	12.41	16.90
2012	203000	96500	126600	22.29	24.17
2024	317000	130000	150000	44.70	37.74
2036	397000	156000	201000	65.54	47.26

### 3.7 High Density Living

The Heart Foundation identifies high density living as an area that has 60+ dwellings per hectare. With the fast and increasing development of Parramatta, it is becoming evident that high density living needs to accommodate for young families with children and not just the young workforce. Appropriate nearby amenities are required to help support the growing number of people and families living in high rise dwellings, whether they be transport hubs, shopping centres, recreation facilities or green space.

High density living typically requires residents to forgo private open space. As such, this increases the demand of public open space and other recreational offerings to substitute for the lack of private open space. A large part in complimenting high density living is having equitable, close and easy access to open space and recreational opportunities.

### 3.8 The Unique and Diverse Communities of Parramatta

The demographics of Parramatta vary significantly across the LGA with each neighbourhood and suburb having their own ***unique and demographic qualities***. A quick comparison between Harris Park and Winston Hills demonstrates that a blanket approach in planning will be inappropriate and likely miss the desired outcome of a plan.

**TABLE 6:** Comparison between Harris Park and Winston Hill for selected parameters

	High Density %	Low Density %	Overseas Born %	Indian %
Harris Park	65.2	9.7	70.6	40
Winston Hill	0	91.4	26.6	1.9

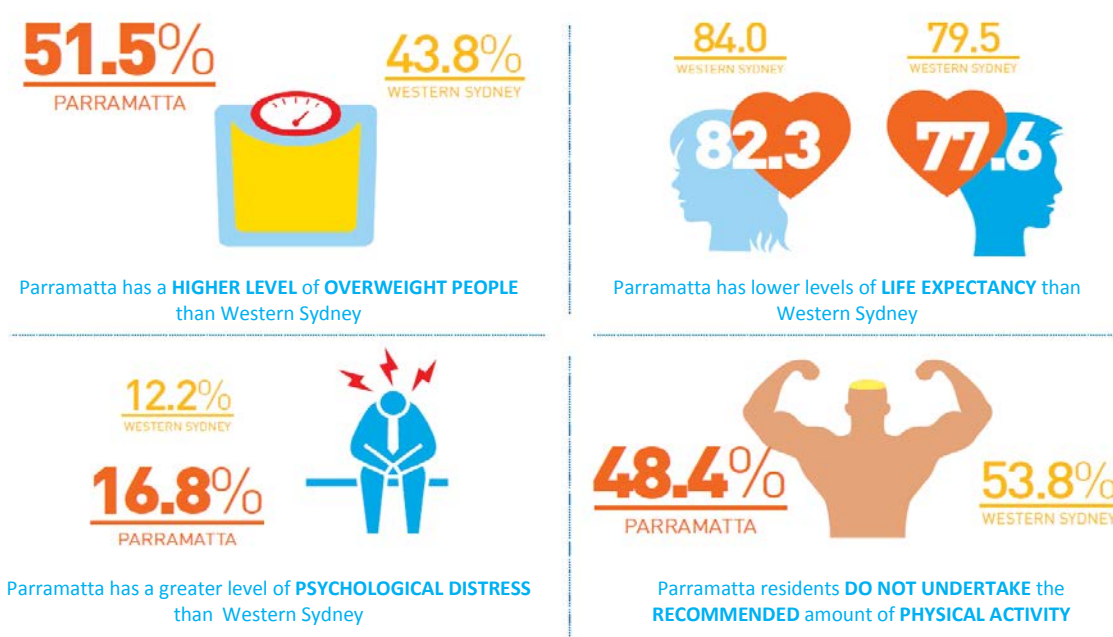
### 3.9 Healthy Active Lifestyles

In response to the following health data (Figure 4), the City of Parramatta Council is committed to providing opportunities for residents, workers and visitors to improve their health and wellbeing.

A new modern aquatic centre would assist in facilitating access to activities and information, providing a platform for new and existing residents to engage with fellow peers, family members and the general public. Furthermore, it would target a wider population including youth, families, over 55's, Australian Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI), Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and workers.

Finally, the importance of supporting and enabling healthy active lifestyles from a young age is extremely important as studies have shown the most important long term consequence of childhood obesity is its persistence into adulthood and the related chronic diseases associated with obesity.

**Figure 4:** Health statistics for the Parramatta LGA prior to amalgamations in comparison to western Sydney





## 4. Aquatic Provision and Facility Trends

### 4.1 Aquatic Facility Trends

While PWMSC is perhaps typical of large, outdoor aquatic facilities built in the 1960s, the inclusion of a variety of pools, play features and hydrotherapy options now available in many modern aquatic centres allows for different aquatic experiences, different needs to be met and more sustainable business models (Warren Green Consulting: Sport and Leisure). Modern aquatic facilities are increasingly diverse to cater to localised needs, gaps in facilities and services and available capital. The features outlined below are now commonly considered when prioritising the elements of a modern aquatic facilities.

#### 4.1.1 Dedicated Learn to Swim Pools

These pools, which are generally around 10m by 12m with a temperature of 34 degrees Celsius and depths ranging from 0.7m to 0.9m, cater for in excess of 50% of a Centre's total LTS participation. A successful learn to swim program is critical to the overall financial sustainability of contemporary leisure aquatic centres.

#### 4.1.2 Water Play Areas – Leisure Water

Leisure water includes sprays, tipping buckets, fountains, small water slides and the like. Modern water play installations are highly interactive and can transform aquatic centres into entertainment destinations and increase activity levels in children aged from 2-14 years of age.

#### 4.1.3 Warm Water Exercise Pools

Physiotherapists, general practitioners, personal trainers and other healthcare professionals are increasingly prescribing aquatic exercise programs for patients and clients. Arthritis patients have an increased range of movement and more flexibility in water, allowing them to improve their physical condition.

As the population continues to age, the demand for venues to deliver aquatic therapies will grow. In response to the increased demand for warm water activities, most new facilities now incorporate either a hydrotherapy pool or a warm water exercise pool.

#### 4.1.4 Universal Design and Disability Access

The concept of Universal Design is to simplify life for everyone by making the built environment more usable to as many users as possible. It differentiates from accessible design as it is based on equitable use of a facility and social inclusion.

Changes to government legislation with regard to disability access means that modern facilities now require ramp access into all pools, hoists and accessible toilets and change facilities. Indoor heated pools are now more widely used by disability groups and individuals.

#### 4.1.5 Family and Group Change Facilities

Change villages are a low cost way of increasing overall change facility capacity and providing dedicated change facilities for families.

#### 4.1.6 Group Training or Meeting Spaces Provision

Major redevelopments have incorporated the provision of additional group training or meeting spaces for a range of activities including: community meetings, educational sessions, allied health services, spin classes, traditional aerobics, older adult programs, special needs groups sessions, programs for minority or ethnic groups and alternate training (e.g. yoga, tai chi, Pilates etc.) These spaces have been shown to increase customer retention, facilitate social interaction between users, create a sense of belonging, enhance overall financial performance and create a point of difference with the private sector.

#### 4.1.7 Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) and Management

Reducing energy usage is an increasingly critical part of centre management plans, facility design and operations. Energy and water costs are predicted to continue to rise, therefore requiring increased capital investment in ESD to assist with long-term viability. This trend is likely to continue as people become more educated regarding the impact of ESD.

#### 4.1.8 Reception Foyer Areas Designed to Take Into Account Self-Entry Opportunities

Changes in technology have made the implementation of self-entry options possible in leisure aquatic centres. Self-entry involves customers swiping their membership cards over a scanner to gain access through entry gates in the foyer. Self-entry systems have many benefits including quick entry for members, reduction of queues, enhanced capacity to manage over the counter enquiries and some reduction in staff costs.

### 4.2 Provision Standards

**Regional Aquatic Facility** - for every 100,000 to 150,000 people:

- Extensive and varied program leisure water attractions
- Inclusion of indoor 50m pool and separate warm water pools
- Wellness/health club and extensive program room inclusions
- Complementary services and amenities, crèche', food and beverage

\* (Aquatics and Recreation Victoria (2011) Guidelines)

**Indoor Sport Facility** - for every 40,000 to 60,000 people:

- A high order 4-6 court or;
- 1 indoor court for 15,000 people
- Multipurpose spaces
- Complementary amenities

\* (Planning for Community Infrastructure in Growth Areas (2008))

Based on the current size and forecast growth of the Parramatta CBD and surrounding areas (within 3-4km), **regional scale facilities would service a local catchment** of residents, workers and students.

The summary below provides a sample of aquatic and leisure facility visitation levels at local government aquatic and leisure facilities 2015.

**Table 4:** Council Aquatic and Leisure Participation Levels (2015)

Council (pre amalgamation)	LAC Attendances per LGA (per annum)	Number of Facilities per LGA	Average Visits per Centre (per annum)	Visits per Head of Population (per annum)
Bankstown	424,408	4	106,102	2.1
Canterbury	295,000	2	147,500	2
Fairfield	1,144,000	3	381,333	5.6
Holroyd	178,000	3	59,333	1.6
Hurstville	1,051,000	1	1,051,000	12.2
Liverpool	483,000	3	161,000	2.4
<b>Parramatta</b>	<b>280,000</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>140,000</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Sutherland	1,140,000	3	380,000	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,995,408</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2,426,268</b>	<b>2.1</b>

Table 4 indicates that the average 2014/15 level of aquatic and leisure participation for the Councils reviewed was 2.1 visits per head of population, whilst the Parramatta participation was 1.5 visits per head of population. This was the lowest level of participation at the Councils reviewed at the time.

In addition to the above, some examples of multi-purpose, indoor/outdoor, aquatic and leisure facility attendances are as follows:

- Hurstville Aquatic Leisure Centre - 1.05M per annum
- Prairiewood Leisure Centre - 544K per annum
- Sutherland Leisure Centre - 800K per annum.

### 4.3 Service and Facility Delivery

The Centre for Environmental and Recreational Management (CERM) at the University of South Australia has been operating a benchmarking program for public recreation and aquatic centres in Australia and New Zealand for over 20 years. This project is known as CERM Performance Indicators (CERM PI) and enables benchmarking against like facilities in over 60 management performance indicators.

Councils and management operators are able to compare their results against the average results for their group of like facilities. CERM PI data can also be used to make comparisons against previous year's results and be used to set KPI's in business plans or personal performance plans (*Guidelines for Outdoor Seasonal Pools, 2016*).

Parramatta War Memorial Swimming Centre (PWMSC) is categorised in 'Group 5' facilities, meaning it only has outdoor pools. Below is a comparison of key identified benchmarks for PWMSC to the CERM PI for the year 2014-15:

<b>CERM PI 2014-15</b>	<b>PWMSC 2014-15 Actual Figures</b>
56% expense recovery	61% expense recovery
29 visits per metre squared	39 visits per metre square
59,132 total visits per year	159,321 total visits per year
Total Space 2,075m <sup>2</sup>	Total Space 4,100m <sup>2</sup>
37,000 catchment (5km radius)	164,153 catchment (5km radius)
-\$3.81 surplus (subsidy) per visit	-\$5.83 surplus (subsidy) per visit
Secondary spend per visit \$1.02	Secondary spend per visit \$1.67
Fees per visit \$4.02	Fees per visit \$7.39
Full time equivalent staff (7)	Full time equivalent staff (29)
Labour Costs \$348,896	Labour Costs \$1,419,401

The CERM benchmark for this category of facility includes both large and smaller outdoor operations. PWMSC is a larger facility with 4,100sqm compared to the average facility in this category and offers a larger range of services and capacity. This is reflected in the significantly higher annual visitation and it performs well on relative scale, observing 39 visits per square metre to 29 visits per square metre.

The current PWMSC subsidy per visit is \$2.02 higher than the benchmark, despite higher additional secondary spend per visit and overall visitation figures. This is due mainly to the layout of the large facility (and thus greater quantum of plant and staffing required), type of services provided (consistent with a district scale facility – e.g. dive/water polo pool and large water slides), all-year operation and the service quality provided (through higher staffing numbers). For example the dive and water polo pool is not common in all facilities within this category and has a similar quantum of water and plant to manage to the Olympic 50m Pool, therefore has a similar operating cost but far less usage. Also, all-year round facilities are more expensive per visit to run over the cooler months with the typical drop in attendances and higher costs of heating in colder conditions.

As such, PWMSC is a more expensive facility to run compared to the average outdoor and summer only community facilities, but services a much larger population base, provides more services and thus greater outcomes to the community.

The PWMSC performs relatively well for its facility type in most financial metrics but is considered to be only a moderate performer in terms of annual attendance when compared to other metropolitan facilities. In comparison to centres at nearby Wentworthville, Granville and Merrylands (whom experience between 40,000 and 90,000 visits per annum), it is the most popular and well used facility, but more extensive facilities in Blacktown and Ryde with indoor and other features experience numbers well over 400,000 visits per annum. Sydney Olympic Park Aquatic Centre averages over 1 million visitors per annum.

## 4.4 Other Key Influences on Aquatic Facility Provision

### 4.4.1 Leisure and Wellness

Prior to the council amalgamations, residents of Parramatta LGA noted that having wellness facilities located within an aquatic centre was the fourth most desirable feature that would likely increase their visitation (*Micromex Research Survey, 2015*).

Modern aquatic centres with both wet and dry recreational offerings typically record higher visits per square metre, higher expense recovery, high secondary spend and provide an excellent range of programs for users.

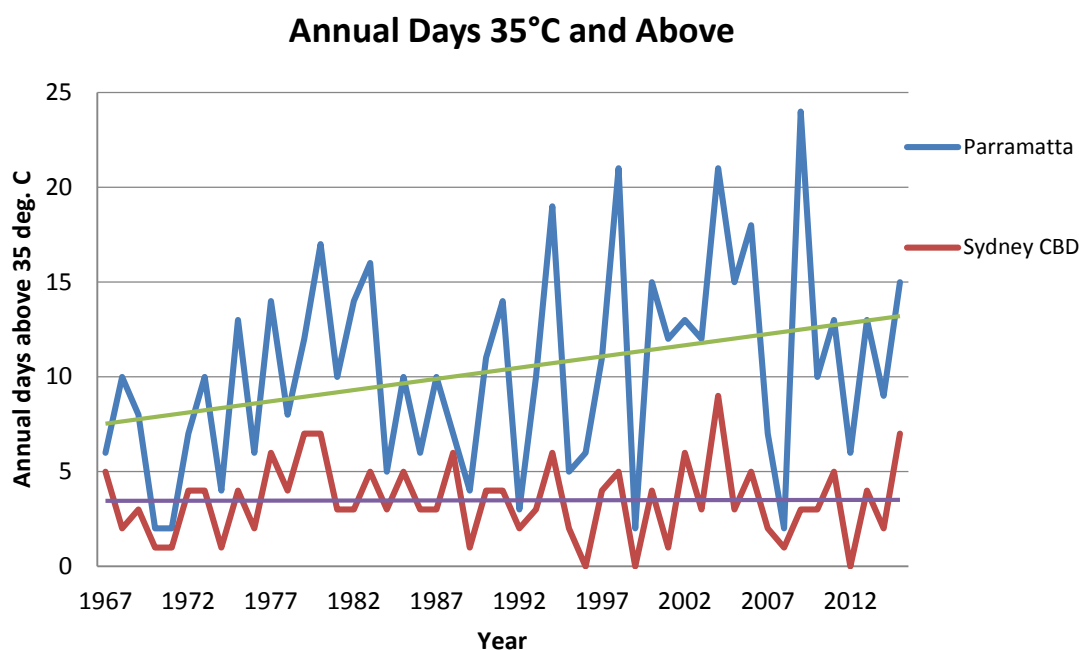
### 4.4.2 Cooling Off

There has been a 72% increase in the days equal to or above 35°C in Parramatta in 2015 than in 1967 with this trend predicted to increase. Parramatta has averaged 10.4 days equal to or above 35°C a year since 1967 compared to only 3.5 days in Sydney.

A further analysis indicates that in the 2015 year, Parramatta had:

- 15 days (4%) with temperatures over 35°C (5 days above the 48 year average)
- 32 days (9%) with temperatures between 30°C and 35°C
- 95 days (26%) with temperatures between 25°C and 30°C
- 106 days (29%) with temperatures between 20°C and 25°C.
- 117 days (32%) with temperatures under 20°C.
- **142 days (39%) with temperatures 25°C and above.**

**Figure 1:** Annual days > 35°C from 1967 to 2015 comparing Parramatta to Sydney CBD.



#### **4.4.3 Private Swimming Pool Use**

- There is a small substitution effect of people with private swimming pools only using their own and not needing public swimming pools however, private swimming pools generally provide a limited form of recreational aquatics. They generally won't service people's needs for aquatic sport, water safety skills and substantive recreation for fitness (limited). Further, they only in fortunate circumstances provide water play (small slides) and have limited social connection.
- This is not stating one is better than the other, but rather they are complimentary in providing for the broad spectrum of wants and needs. Importantly, having private swimming pools won't defer the need for a public offering.
- Prior to the amalgamations, the Parramatta LGA had close to 5,000 private swimming pools on council records. With the boundary change new data is being collected to update this figure, however a number of assumptions can be made: many of the pools previously accounted for remain within the new LGA boundary, assume higher number as there is an increase in households within the new LGA (7,875 new dwellings) and assume higher number as many households in new areas are single detached houses (most common housing type for private pools).