

Journal

Monday, June 4, 2007

Fairfax Community Network

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Call for pool lifesaver

MONASH JOURNAL 4 JUNE 2007

By Cameron Lucadou-Wells

OAKLEIGH pool is on the verge of being saved as Monash Council decides on its fate tomorrow night.

But even if it votes in favour, the project will then sink or swim depending on whether the council can attract at least \$1 million of State Government funding.

It will be the second time in six years the pool has been saved. The council voted to save it in 2002, only to close it down and, last June, rule out any future outdoor pool or diving facilities on the site.

Tomorrow night, councillors will vote on a steering committee report, which recommends that most of the pool's existing facilities — including heated outdoor 50-metre

Timeline of a sink-or-swim saga

February 2002:

Monash Council agrees in principle to close Oakleigh pool.

March 2002:

After public uproar, the council narrowly votes to keep the pool open.

June 2003-05:

Speculation begins on the pool's future as a \$300,000 review of its recreational requirements is announced.



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Tomorrow night, councillors will vote on a steering committee report, which recommends that most of the pool's existing facilities — including heated outdoor 50-metre and diving pools, renovated changerooms and a shallow pool combined with water-play equipment — be kept and refurbished.

The \$7-million-plus proposal goes well beyond the \$3.5 million originally allocated by the council and matches the recommendations of a consultant's report in April.

Pool committee chairman Stephen Dimopoulos said the council had committed \$6 million, "but not a cent more", to the project in the council's 2007-08 draft budget, also to be announced tomorrow.

He said he was "very confident" the State Government would fill the funding breach if the council accepted the plan.

"If it gets up, it'll be a testament to the activism of a significant group of residents and activists in Oakleigh. It will be a win for the residents."

Cr Dimopoulos said the current resolution was different because "this is coming with a commitment for \$6 million".

Community Life Action Group spokeswoman Julie Clearwater was stunned by the council's turnaround on the issue.

"We couldn't even get [the council] to say there's strong support for keeping the pool, but we've always been asking for the whole [pool to be retained]."

"Hopefully, the council will vote for it and we'll see it."

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June 2003-05:

Speculation begins on the pool's future as a \$300,000 review of its recreational requirements is continually delayed. The council sets aside \$1.5 million for the pool's redevelopment.

June 2006:

The council announces the pool closure and votes against re-establishing an outdoor pool or diving tower.

August 2006:

More than 400 pool supporters attend a 'Save Oakleigh Pool' meeting at Oakleigh hall.

December 2006:

The council announces a five-month public consultation process based on four listed options for the pool site. None of the options propose refurbishing the entire pool complex.

April 2007:

Consultants find the community wants to keep Oakleigh pool.

June 2007:

The council votes to revamp the 50-metre pool, diving tower and toddlers' play area at a cost of \$7 million.



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After public input

June 2003-05

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delays

redesign

June 2006

The council

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More than 400 pool

activists

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The council announced

April 2007

Consultants

June 2007

The council

