

Group challenges 'inevitable' losses for Oakleigh pool

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By Cameron Lucadou-Wells

MONASH Council is prepared to wear a \$350,000-plus annual bill to keep the redeveloped Oakleigh pool open.

Attendance figures are expected to more than double from 15,000 when it was previously open in 2005-06 to 38,000 when the pool reopens for summer in 2009.

For an October to March

season, the council will subsidise the outdoor complex by \$363,340 a year. In comparison, the Monash Aquatic and Recreation Centre (MARC), which has an 800,000 annual attendance, was budgeted to make a \$455,000 profit in 2007-08.

Monash councillor Dane Manzie was concerned about the refurbished Oakleigh pool's financial health before this month's decision to refurbish the

complex. Last week, he said: "The Oakleigh pool will never, ever turn a profit in its entire lifetime."

"It's something the council has considered, taken on board and is prepared to undertake."

He hoped the council would mount a proactive marketing campaign, particularly with Oakleigh Recreation Centre users, to increase the pool's patronage. "Even if we get a

'I'm sure if Oakleigh pool is well managed and marketed, it could break even.'

Julie Clearwater

100 per cent undertaking of all the [recreation centre] members, it still will not make a profit."

Community Life Action Group

spokeswoman Julie Clearwater said not many indoor or outdoor pools were profitable, and MARC's success was driven by marketing and facilities such as a gym. "I'm sure if Oakleigh pool is well managed and marketed, it could break even."

Ms Clearwater said an outdoor pool at Oakleigh provided a "necessary social meeting place in summer" that couldn't be replicated by an indoor pool.

Monash

Nick's trek to raise sweat and SIDS dollars

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Your View

MONASH JOURNAL 25 JUNE 2007 Water's deeper issue

I AM outraged to learn that after all the publicity about water restrictions, people can still have an in-ground pool built and filled with water by just paying more money for it.

Why are we all adhering to strict water restrictions when people can still get approval to have an in-ground pool filled by just paying more money for the privilege?

Once our precious water runs out we may end up having to use desalinated water, which is not a good alternative as it will not even taste the same.

Is it really worth giving up the nice, fresh-tasting water we already have for second-best for the sake of all those who want the luxury of a pool? And has anyone else noticed that there is already a change in the taste of our water? You can taste the chlorine, and it's less refreshing, leaving a drier taste in the mouth.

Our local and state governments and water suppliers have a lot to answer for.

**Name withheld
Mt Waverley**

Second to none

I WOULD like to publicly thank Julie Clearwater for her tireless effort to save the Oakleigh pool.

Her knowledge of other community pools was second to none.

All through the campaign, Julie was extremely dignified and professional.

Many thanks, Julie.

Betty Sibby, Oakleigh

Gone to the ducks

AFTER 10 years of so-called community consultation, it was disappointing to note the Monash Council agenda item on June 5.

An outdoor heated 50-metre pool, outdoor heated spa . . . in fact, all the facilities are outdoor.

It is our opinion and that of the experts that outdoor pools are a thing of the past.

The Monash Ratepayers Association has always stated that we support indoor heated facilities with provision to open walls to an outdoor green area for those few hot days.

It appears that no consideration has been given by the council to the water evaporation rates and the loss of heat which are costly measures in this major drought period. Nor has any real thought been given to a master plan for the entire sports complex.

Records show that:

■ Oakleigh pool will operate, at most, only three months a year, after which it will become home for wild ducks.

■ Each year the pool must be emptied because of pollution from duck droppings. At what cost?

■ Estimated operating costs are \$363,340 a year.

■ Losses per year have not been stated.

■ \$3.4 million in land sales to pay for renovation. What land sales and where?

After 10 years of 'community consultation', political delays and procrastination, is this the best we can get for Oakleigh?

Jack Davis, MRA president

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